

Research Briefing

16 August 2023

By CJ McKinney,  
Michael Potter,  
Terry McGuinness

# The Common Travel Area and the special status of Irish citizens in UK law



## Summary

- 1 The Common Travel Area
- 2 Special status of Irish citizens in UK law
- 3 Recent and future developments

### Contributing Authors

Dr Michael Potter is Assembly Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office at the Northern Ireland Assembly, and co-authored this briefing;

Dr Terry McGuinness is a former senior researcher at the House of Commons Library, and co-authored a previous edition of this briefing

### Image Credits

[Great Britain and Ireland](#) by [NASA](#). This file is in the public domain – no copyright required.

### Disclaimer

The Commons Library does not intend the information in our research publications and briefings to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. We have published it to support the work of MPs. You should not rely upon it as legal or professional advice, or as a substitute for it. We do not accept any liability whatsoever for any errors, omissions or misstatements contained herein. You should consult a suitably qualified professional if you require specific advice or information. Read our briefing '[Legal help: where to go and how to pay](#)' for further information about sources of legal advice and help. This information is provided subject to the conditions of the Open Parliament Licence.

### Sources and subscriptions for MPs and staff

We try to use sources in our research that everyone can access, but sometimes only information that exists behind a paywall or via a subscription is available. We provide access to many online subscriptions to MPs and parliamentary staff, please contact [hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk](mailto:hoclibraryonline@parliament.uk) or visit [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/resources) for more information.

### Feedback

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Please note that authors are not always able to engage in discussions with members of the public who express opinions about the content of our research, although we will carefully consider and correct any factual errors.

You can read our feedback and complaints policy and our editorial policy at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk). If you have general questions about the work of the House of Commons email [hcenquiries@parliament.uk](mailto:hcenquiries@parliament.uk).

# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 The Common Travel Area</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Legal basis for the CTA	6
1.2 Immigration controls within the CTA	8
1.3 (Very) brief history of the CTA	12
1.4 Cooperation on immigration and border issues	13
<b>2 Special status of Irish citizens in UK law</b>	<b>16</b>
2.1 Exemptions from UK immigration law	16
2.2 Why do Irish citizens have a special status?	17
<b>3 Recent and future developments</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 The Common Travel Area after Brexit	18
3.2 Electronic travel authorisations: Hardening the land border?	19

## Summary

The Common Travel Area, or CTA, is a special travel zone covering the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom (as well as the Isle of Man and Channel Islands). British and Irish citizens can, at least in principle, travel passport-free within the zone.

Irish citizens can also take up long-term residence and access public services in the UK without immigration restrictions, and British citizens can do the same in Ireland. These reciprocal residence rights are sometimes also referred to as being part of the CTA.

The CTA dates back (in various forms) to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. The Government of Ireland has [summed up the basic principle \(PDF\)](#) as being “that the Irish and UK Governments treat each other’s citizens in a similar manner to enable them to freely move between the two jurisdictions, and thereby reside and work in either jurisdiction, without the need for special permission”.

This briefing focuses on travel between the UK and Ireland, and on the rights of Irish citizens in the UK. It does not cover the Isle of Man or Channel Islands (which are not in the UK) or the rights of British citizens in Ireland.

## The CTA allows for passport-free travel for British and Irish citizens – in theory

The UK and Ireland have for a long time arranged to minimise immigration controls on journeys between the two jurisdictions, particularly on the Northern Ireland land border.

A 2019 agreement states that [this is to facilitate free movement only for citizens of the UK and Ireland](#). British citizens are not regarded as ‘non-nationals’ under Ireland’s immigration laws, and Irish citizens are largely exempt from UK immigration laws.

But because passport-free travel is only guaranteed for British and Irish citizens, in practice they may still need to bring one if going by air or sea to prove they have British or Irish citizenship. Passengers arriving in Ireland from Great Britain [usually face border controls at the port or airport](#) (although not the other way around). Airlines and ferry companies also require official photo ID as a condition of carriage.

## People who need visas for travel to the UK or Ireland cannot rely on the CTA

The legal situation for citizens of other countries is more complicated. There is generally no mutual recognition of visit visas, apart from the [British–Irish visa scheme for Indian and Chinese citizens](#). Someone who is required to get a visa to visit one country will usually require a separate visa for travel to the other country and cannot rely on the CTA (although [Ireland unilaterally accepts UK visitor visas for certain nationalities](#)).

The lack of routine border controls on the land frontier means that there is potential for abuse of the CTA for unauthorised migration. The British and Irish governments cooperate closely to guard against this, [including through data sharing and the joint Operation Gull \(PDF\)](#), but do not disclose the details of how this works. The immigration authorities of both countries conduct occasional checks within their own territory.

People who can visit Ireland without a visa, such as US or EU citizens, can usually do the same for the UK at present. But under the [forthcoming scheme of electronic travel authorisations](#), such visitors will need to apply for permission before they can legally enter the UK. Irish citizens and legal residents are exempt, but there are some concerns about [the impact on Northern Ireland tourism](#) and a general [hardening of the land border](#).

## Irish citizens have unrestricted residence rights in the UK

As well as being able to travel freely to the UK, [Irish citizens can take up long-term residence with no visa or work permit requirements](#), and are treated as though they have permanent immigration status or British citizenship. This means they can work and access public services without the restrictions that apply to other migrants.

The domestic legal basis for the rights of Irish citizens to healthcare, education and so on is complicated. The arrangements are outlined in a [non-binding memorandum of understanding](#) between the two governments but not confirmed in a formal treaty, [which some feel it should be](#), especially following Brexit. But the special treatment of Irish citizens long predates joint membership of the EU, and the UK Government has been consistently committed to implementing it in practice for the past 100 years.

# 1 The Common Travel Area

The Common Travel Area, or CTA, is a special travel zone covering the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom (as well as the Isle of Man and Channel Islands).<sup>1</sup> British and Irish citizens can travel within the CTA without being legally required to carry a passport.

The arrangements for non-CTA nationals are more complex. Although there are often minimal controls on journeys within the CTA, especially on the Northern Ireland land border, travellers must have the relevant immigration permission for the country they are seeking to enter. The UK and Ireland have separate visa rules but there is significant degree of practical cooperation and policy coordination to ensure the security of the CTA.

CTA arrangements between the UK and Ireland have existed (in some form) since the Irish Free State was established in 1922.<sup>2</sup> This briefing does not cover the Isle of Man or Channel Islands, which are not part of the UK.

## 1.1 Legal basis for the CTA

The UK and Ireland signed a [memorandum of understanding on the Common Travel Area in 2019](#). It is not a treaty and not legally binding in international law.<sup>3</sup>

The memorandum of understanding mostly covers residence rights of Irish citizens in the UK (see section 2 below) and vice versa. It does not go into detail on the CTA as a travel zone. Paragraph 6 simply states:

The CTA allows British and Irish citizens to move freely between the UK and Ireland. The Participants are to continue to ensure that their national laws facilitate such movement.

The UK and Ireland take different approaches to implementing the CTA in their national laws, as outlined below. But there is close cooperation on an administrative level, which is not always visible in published laws or policies.

---

<sup>1</sup> People from the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey are British citizens, but the islands themselves are not part of the UK: see Commons Library research briefing CBP-8611, [The Crown Dependencies](#)

<sup>2</sup> See generally Bernard Ryan, “[The Common Travel Area between Britain and Ireland](#)” (2001) 64(6) *Modern Law Review* 855; Elizabeth Meehan, “[Free Movement between Ireland and the UK: from the ‘Common Travel Area’ to the Common Travel Area](#)” (PDF), The Policy Institute, 2000

<sup>3</sup> Cabinet Office, [Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland](#), para 17

## UK immigration law

Irish citizens do not need permission to enter the UK.<sup>4</sup> Nor does anyone else entering the UK from Ireland, according to section 1(3) of the Immigration Act 1971.<sup>5</sup> But section 9(6) allows the Home Secretary to make exceptions to the general rule in section 1(3).

That power has been exercised in the Immigration (Control of Entry through Republic of Ireland) Order 1972 (as amended).<sup>6</sup> Article 3 of the 1972 Order says that certain groups of people are not covered by the section 1(3) exemption from immigration control. This includes people who need a visa to visit the UK but do not have one.

As a result, despite the CTA, it is a breach of UK immigration law for someone from a country on the [visa national list](#) to enter via Ireland without a visa. For example, a South African tourist travelling from Dublin to Belfast with no visa would be in the UK without permission.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, people from countries not on the visa national list are automatically granted permission to be in the UK for six months when they enter from Ireland. This is known as ‘deemed leave’, granted by Article 4 of the 1972 Order. So an American tourist travelling from Dublin to Belfast, or flying from Shannon to London, would have permission to be in the UK.

Home Office guidance on the CTA includes a detailed flowchart showing when entry from Ireland is legal or illegal. Its starting point is whether or not the person is excluded from deemed leave by Article 3 of the 1972 Order.<sup>8</sup>

Barrister Colin Yeo has commented “this all falls notably short of the hollow promise at section 1(3) of the Immigration Act 1971 that travellers from within the common travel area will be free from control”.<sup>9</sup>

## Irish immigration law

Irish immigration law is aimed at ‘aliens’ or ‘non-nationals’. British citizens are not considered aliens/non-nationals, and never have been.<sup>10</sup>

Under the Immigration Act 2004, non-nationals arriving in Ireland by air or sea are required to present themselves to an immigration officer to get permission to enter.<sup>11</sup> Non-nationals arriving over land from Northern Ireland must have a visa if required; if they are visa-exempt, they cannot stay for

---

<sup>4</sup> [Immigration Act 1971, s3ZA](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Immigration Act 1971, s1\(3\)](#). See also [paragraph 15 of the Immigration Rules](#).

<sup>6</sup> [Immigration \(Control of Entry through Republic of Ireland\) Order 1972](#), SI 1972/1610

<sup>7</sup> Home Office, [Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Visa national list](#), accessed on 27 July 2023. The example has been chosen because [South Africans are visa-exempt in Ireland \(PDF\)](#).

<sup>8</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Common Travel Area](#), version 12.0, 9 March 2022, p73

<sup>9</sup> Free Movement, [Briefing: what is the Common Travel Area and how does it work?](#), 12 June 2023

<sup>10</sup> [Aliens \(Exemption\) Order 1999, SI 97/1999](#); Bernard Ryan, “[The Common Travel Area between Britain and Ireland](#)” (2001) 64(6) *Modern Law Review* 855, at 864

<sup>11</sup> [Immigration Act 2004, s4\(2\)](#)

longer than a month without seeking permission.<sup>12</sup> Immigration officers have had the legal authority for checks on land routes since 1997.<sup>13</sup> EU citizens have prevailing rights of entry under free movement law.

There is a separate requirement for people arriving in Ireland (by land, air or sea) to present a passport or equivalent document. Irish, British and EU citizens are exempt from this rule if entering Ireland from the UK.<sup>14</sup> Other non-nationals must still show a passport.

## 1.2 Immigration controls within the CTA

There are no immigration controls at the Northern Ireland land border. There are occasional checks away from the land border, and usually controls on air and sea journeys from Great Britain to the Republic of Ireland (but not the other way around). Abuse of the CTA is policed by the joint Operation Gull.

### Journeys from the Republic of Ireland to the UK

The UK does not operate routine immigration controls on journeys from the Republic of Ireland, and there are none on the Northern Ireland land border.<sup>15</sup> The land border is largely open and invisible, although there are number plate recognition cameras.<sup>16</sup> Passengers arriving in Great Britain by air or sea do not usually go through an immigration control area.

Home Office guidance confirms there are “no fixed immigration control points” for journeys from the Republic of Ireland to the UK.<sup>17</sup> But there are occasional “intelligence-led” checks on journeys from Northern Ireland to Great Britain, as part of Operation Gull.<sup>18</sup> These are carried out by immigration enforcement officers, not border guards.<sup>19</sup>

There have been concerns that such checks involve racial profiling.<sup>20</sup> Ministers insist “people should not be being pulled over purely on the basis of their ethnicity”.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> [Immigration Act 2004, s4\(5\)\(b\) and s4\(5\)\(d\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Aliens \(Amendment\) \(No. 3\) Order 1997, SI 277/1997](#), and now s4(2) of the Immigration Act 2004

<sup>14</sup> [Immigration Act 2004, s11 \(as amended\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> [HC Deb 18 July 2023 c240WH](#)

<sup>16</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Northern Ireland and the EU referendum](#), HC 48 2016-17, 26 May 2016, para 71

<sup>17</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Enforcement visits \(PDF\)](#), version 3.0, 22 December 2020, p20

<sup>18</sup> PQ 197597 [on: [Immigration Controls: Northern Ireland](#)], 30 November 2018

<sup>19</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area, HC 795](#), 8 December 2021, Q33

<sup>20</sup> Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, [Race case supported by Commission settled with Home Office](#), 20 July 2016; Dr Nazia Latif, “A Difficult Journey? Immigration Enforcement in Northern Ireland”, *Journal of Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law*, 2009

<sup>21</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area, HC 795](#), 8 December 2021, Q7



## Journeys from the UK to the Republic of Ireland

There are no fixed immigration control points at the south side of the land border either. But the Irish authorities sometimes operate what they describe as “mobile immigration controls”. This involves immigration officers stopping and boarding southbound buses and trains close to the border.<sup>22</sup>

The Irish Government says these checks are not passport controls and the purpose is to tackle illegal immigration and human trafficking. They are both “preventative” (spot checks) and “intelligence-led”.<sup>23</sup> NGOs complain that because Irish, British and EU citizens are exempt, this leads to racial profiling.<sup>24</sup> The Irish authorities deny this.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike in the UK, there is no CTA arrivals route at Irish airports, so passengers flying from Great Britain go through immigration control irrespective of nationality.<sup>26</sup> There are usually, but not always, controls for ferry journeys.<sup>27</sup>

## Operation Gull

Both governments recognise that there is potential for the CTA to be abused by people seeking to evade the usual controls on entry to Ireland or the UK. A 2011 inspection report spells out how this could happen:

... flights from Great Britain into Belfast or the City of Derry airport can also be used to connect to the road and rail networks for onward travel to the Republic of Ireland. The reverse of these routes (from Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland across the Irish land border then using a ferry or flight from Northern Ireland to return to Great Britain), would also constitute an in-country journey between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.<sup>28</sup>

Operation Gull is a longstanding joint scheme by the UK and Ireland immigration authorities which aims to intercept and remove migrants who use this route to enter illegally. In Ireland, relevant activities are sometimes called Operation Sonnet.<sup>29</sup>

In the UK, operations focus on ports and airports in Northern Ireland. Enforcement guidance says that immigration officers do not have all of their

---

<sup>22</sup> [“Carry your passport, says man quizzed on Belfast to Dublin bus”](#), Belfast Telegraph, 9 May 2019; Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, [Garda Reform and Related Issues](#), 18 September 2019

<sup>23</sup> Dáil Éireann debate, [Garda National Immigration Bureau](#), 20 November 2019

<sup>24</sup> North West Migrants Forum and Committee on the Administration of Justice, [CTA and Freedom of Movement in the Island of Ireland \(PDF\)](#), November 2021, paras 11-17; [“Cross-border travellers face ‘racial profiling’, says human rights group”](#), The Journal, 19 September 2019

<sup>25</sup> Dáil Éireann Debate, [Garda Operations](#), 6 October 2015

<sup>26</sup> Department of Justice, [Common Travel Area](#), accessed on 31 July 2023; *Pachero & Anor v MJE & Ors [2011] IEHC 491*, 29 December 2011, para 18

<sup>27</sup> Dáil Éireann debate, [Departmental Data](#), 23 May 2023: “All arriving passengers will generally [so not always] pass through immigration controls at Dublin Port”. One of the authors travelled from Holyhead to Dublin by ferry in June 2023 and encountered no immigration control.

<sup>28</sup> Independent Chief inspector of Borders and Immigration, [Inspection report of the common travel area in Scotland and Northern Ireland](#), 20 May 2011, para 4.17

<sup>29</sup> [Seanad Éireann debate, 31 January 2018, Vol. 255 No. 10](#)

normal powers when working within the CTA. “Operation Gull relies on the voluntary cooperation of the travelling public”, who are “under no obligation to comply”.<sup>30</sup> But in other guidance and statements, the government says people are “required” to produce an ID document if asked.<sup>31</sup>

The Home Office says it does not “publish statistics on request for Operation Gull”.<sup>32</sup> Previously it had done so, reporting 200 to 300 immigration offenders a year detected in Northern Ireland from 2010 to 2014.<sup>33</sup> By 2015/16, the Police Service of Northern Ireland had reported a significant rise to 775 interceptions, “including 73 criminals who had previously been deported from the UK”.<sup>34</sup>

Belfast had a higher rate of immigration enforcement activity than other major cities in the UK between 2012 and 2019, analysis by The Detail has found. This may be because of Operation Gull.<sup>35</sup>

The UK Government does not discuss operational details, such as how ports are selected for checks. Then immigration minister Kevin Foster told MPs in 2021:

They can be based on data suggesting that some people on the flight may, for example, be travelling without the relevant permission. I do not want to get into the exact details of how we select a particular location. By the way, this is not just at airports. It would... be at ports of entry as well, such as Holyhead.<sup>36</sup>

Around 2,800 people trying to enter Ireland by land were refused entry between 2013 and 2022 inclusive. Refusals peaked at 465 in 2019. Controls on sea journeys, most of which are from the UK, turned away another 2,200 people over the same period (including 420 in 2022).<sup>37</sup>

The British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly has noted “some anecdotal evidence that the CTA was seen as vulnerable to exploitation by those wishing to enter the UK illegally”. But it recorded the view of the Irish Government that Operation Gull was a “success” overall.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Enforcement visits \(PDF\)](#), version 3.0, 22 December 2020, pp20-21

<sup>31</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Common Travel Area](#), version 12.0, 9 March 2022, p43; PQ 44479 [on [Common Travel Area](#)], 7 September 2021. See further Free Movement, [Immigration checks within the Common Travel Area](#), 1 October 2021 and Úna Boyd, [Shifting Sands of the Common Travel Area \(PDF\)](#), *The Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland* 2022, p70

<sup>32</sup> PQ 275698 [on [Immigration Controls: Northern Ireland](#)], 10 July 2019

<sup>33</sup> PQ 222365 [on [Immigration Controls: Republic of Ireland](#)], 28 January 2015

<sup>34</sup> House of Lords European Union Committee, Brexit: UK-Irish relations, 12 December 2016, HL 76 2016/17, [Written evidence – Police Service of Northern Ireland \(BU10015\)](#), 2 November 2016. The 775 figure was up 66% on 2014/15, which is consistent with a [BBC report of 468 interceptions that year](#).

<sup>35</sup> [“Scale of immigration checks higher in Belfast than London”](#), *The Detail*, 8 June 2020

<sup>36</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area, HC 795](#), 8 December 2021, Q16

<sup>37</sup> Eurostat, [Third country nationals refused entry at the external borders, MIGR\\_FIRFS](#), 15 May 2023

<sup>38</sup> British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly, Committee B (European Affairs), [Report on Visas](#), 5 July 2016, paras 18-19

## Why might British and Irish citizens still need a passport to travel?

Although the CTA arrangements mean that British and Irish citizens are not strictly required to carry a passport when travelling between the two countries, in practice they may still need to bring one if going by air or sea. This is explained on the Irish Government's Citizens Information website:

There are no routine passport controls in operation for Irish and UK citizens travelling between the 2 countries.

However, you must show identification to board a ferry or an airplane, and some airlines and sea carriers only accept a passport as valid identification. You may also be asked by an immigration officer to prove that you are a citizen of Ireland or the UK, so you should carry a passport with you. You can also use an Irish passport card, or other proof that you are an Irish citizen.<sup>39</sup>

Airline and ferry companies will also require photo ID for journeys between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, or indeed any other UK internal flight. As immigration minister Kevin Foster told the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, "people have to identify themselves to get on a plane".<sup>40</sup>

Most carriers confirm on their websites that British and Irish citizens do not require a passport but must have some form of official photo ID.<sup>41</sup> Ryanair reportedly insists on passports.<sup>42</sup>

Those flying from Great Britain to Dublin Airport, in particular, will be asked to prove their British or Irish citizenship at the border.<sup>43</sup> A passport is an obvious way of doing this. The High Court of Ireland has commented:

While in theory both Irish and British citizens are entitled to arrive here free from immigration control by virtue of the common travel area, increasingly in practice such passengers who arrive by air from the United Kingdom are required to produce their passports (or, at least, some other form of acceptable identity document) in order to prove to immigration officers that they are either Irish or British citizens who can avail of the common travel area. Whatever about anyone else, Joseph Heller [author of *Catch-22*] certainly would have approved.<sup>44</sup>

None of this applies to land border crossings, which remain passport-free except for the occasional checks mentioned above.

---

<sup>39</sup> Citizensinformation.ie, [Common Travel Area between Ireland and UK](#), 19 July 2023

<sup>40</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area, HC 795](#), 8 December 2021, Q15

<sup>41</sup> Aer Lingus website, [Travel to and from Britain](#); British Airways website, [Passports and ID cards](#); Irish Ferries website, [Passports and Identification](#); Stena Line website, [What identification documents do I need to travel?](#); all accessed on 2 August 2023

<sup>42</sup> According to a statement provided in ["Common Travel Area: What is it, and how can it help travellers without a passport?"](#), Independent, 12 April 2023

<sup>43</sup> Dáil Éireann Debate, [Common Travel Area](#), 15 February 2022

<sup>44</sup> *Pachero & Anor v MJE & Ors* [2011] IEHC 491, 29 December 2011, para 18

## 1.3

### (Very) brief history of the CTA

The adoption of a CTA is linked to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. Professor Bernard Ryan explains:

When the Home Office was faced with the imminent establishment of the Free State, its view was that it ‘would not propose to require under the Aliens Order a passport system between this country and Ireland, and could not make any use of such a requirement if they were asked to impose it’. The status quo depended however upon Free State agreement to continue to participate in the British system of immigration control [...] Irish officials appear to have accepted the proposal with enthusiasm... .

Immigration legislation in Ireland and the UK provided that ‘aliens’ would not generally need permission to enter if coming from the other CTA jurisdiction. This “unrestricted movement” remained in place until controls were reinstated at the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>45</sup>

Although some restrictions were relaxed once the war ended, UK border controls (including checks on people travelling between Northern Ireland and Great Britain) remained in place until the Irish Government once again agreed to follow immigration and border control policies similar to the UK’s, in 1952. As previously, the 1952 CTA arrangements were based on administrative agreement between the two states, and details were not made public.<sup>46</sup>

A 2016 briefing by Professor Ryan points to some reasons for successive UK and Irish governments’ long-running support for the CTA arrangements:

- The assumption of the UK authorities that it is “impractical for the Irish border to be an immigration frontier”
- The “many social and economic connections” between the two countries
- Facilitation of the free movement of labour, traditionally of Irish workers to Great Britain, but increasingly in both directions<sup>47</sup>

Library briefing CBP-1905 covers the [history of the Northern Ireland border](#).

### Has the CTA been eroded over time?

The original version of the CTA envisaged a common external frontier with no controls on movement within the zone. Before the Second World War, the two countries had a shared list of countries whose citizens needed visas.<sup>48</sup> The High Court of Ireland says that “at its height, the common travel area

---

<sup>45</sup> Bernard Ryan, “[The Common Travel Area between Britain and Ireland](#)” (2001) 64(6) *Modern Law Review* 855, at 856-857

<sup>46</sup> The lifting of controls was announced in the House of Commons: [HC Deb 27 March 1952](#)

<sup>47</sup> Free Movement, [Brexit briefing: impact on Common Travel Area and the Irish](#), 5 June 2016

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Meehan, “[Free Movement between Ireland and the UK: from the ‘Common Travel Area’ to the Common Travel Area](#)” (PDF), The Policy Institute, 2000, p23

operated more or less in the manner of the [EU] Schengen system... with genuine passport free travel between the two countries”.<sup>49</sup>

Modern guidance emphasises that the CTA is intended to benefit British and Irish citizens only.<sup>50</sup> The 2019 UK–Ireland memorandum of understanding is “concerned with the rights of British and Irish citizens”.<sup>51</sup> Úna Boyd of the human rights charity Committee on the Administration of Justice calls this a “concerning shift” which “fails to recognise the importance of free movement in the CTA for many non-British and non-Irish citizens”.<sup>52</sup>

British and Irish citizens do continue to enjoy genuine passport-free travel into the UK, but are advised to carry a passport if travelling into Ireland by air or sea.<sup>53</sup> As the High Court has noted, the lack of a CTA lane at Irish airports (which it says was once in place) means “all persons arriving by air from the United Kingdom face Irish immigration controls”.<sup>54</sup>

## 1.4

## Cooperation on immigration and border issues

The CTA is underpinned by close and active cooperation between the UK and Irish border and immigration authorities. Then Home Office minister Baroness Williams of Trafford told the House of Lords in 2017 that this includes information sharing, alignment of border policies and processes, and “use of data to inform immigration and border security decisions”.<sup>55</sup>

Details of these arrangements are not published. Several relevant pages of the guidance for immigration officials have been redacted, as are documents released under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.<sup>56</sup> A 2011 [joint statement on strengthening the external border of the Common Travel Area \(PDF\)](#) gives some relevant information.

---

<sup>49</sup> *Pachero & Anor v MJE & Ors* [2011] IEHC 491, 29 December 2011, para 16

<sup>50</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Common Travel Area](#), version 12.0, 9 March 2022, p7

<sup>51</sup> Cabinet Office, [Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland](#), para 17

<sup>52</sup> Úna Boyd, [Shifting Sands of the Common Travel Area \(PDF\)](#), *The Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland* 2022, pp66-67

<sup>53</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Travelling to the UK from Ireland, Isle of Man, Guernsey or Jersey](#), 23 November 2021; Citizensinformation.ie, [Common Travel Area between Ireland and UK](#), 19 July 2023

<sup>54</sup> *Pachero & Anor v MJE & Ors* [2011] IEHC 491, 29 December 2011, para 18

<sup>55</sup> PQ HL2085 [on [Borders: Security](#)], 16 October 2017

<sup>56</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Common Travel Area](#), version 12.0, 9 March 2022, pp48-53; “[Revealed: Hundreds Refused Entry to Ireland Over Fears They Would Travel to Britain](#)”, VICE, 29 October 2020

## Meetings and information sharing

A Common Travel Area forum, jointly chaired by a Home Office director-general and their Irish counterpart, meets regularly to discuss border security. Details of what is discussed are intentionally kept secret.<sup>57</sup>

The British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly received evidence about the nature of cooperation on border security from UK and Irish government officials for a 2016 report. It noted that regular meetings took place:

... officials from the immigration services of both countries met on a fortnightly basis to share information on CTA issues and abuses identified. There was also other regular contact through the UK Home Office’s liaison officers at the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) in Dublin and between immigration officers at Dublin Airport, Dublin Sea Port and the Immigration Unit based in Dundalk.<sup>58</sup>

The 2011 joint statement also refers to data sharing:

The two countries will work together to the greatest extent possible to roll out the exchange of biographic and biometric visa data across overseas locations and to continue co-operation on establishing the immigration histories and identification of failed asylum seekers for the purpose of reaching final decisions in respect of such cases and, where appropriate, facilitating returns to countries of origin. Data sharing initiatives will be the subject of Memoranda of Understanding concluded between the UK and Ireland, and carried out in compliance with the domestic law and policy of each country.<sup>59</sup>

One such memorandum was agreed in 2014 in relation to the British–Irish visa scheme (see below), but the Home Office has declined to publish it.<sup>60</sup>

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee held a hearing on [UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area](#) in December 2021. A senior civil servant said “we exchange a considerable range of data with the Republic around immigration and security”, but declined to give further details.<sup>61</sup> Then immigration minister Kevin Foster noted that the two countries have a shared interest in preventing certain people from entering any part of the CTA:

... the Republic of Ireland is a sovereign country and we do not have the ability to tell the Republic of Ireland not to allow someone to enter. That said, the type of people we would absolutely not want to see on the island of Ireland are probably the sort of people the Irish Government do not want to see on the island of Ireland—i.e. people who have committed serious criminal offences here in the UK. We work closely with the Irish authorities to ensure that, from

---

<sup>57</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: Cross-border co-operation on policing, security and criminal justice after Brexit](#), HC 766, 3 March 2021, Q359

<sup>58</sup> British–Irish Parliamentary Assembly, Committee B (European Affairs), [Report on Visas](#), 5 July 2016, para 17

<sup>59</sup> Home Office and Department of Justice and Equality, [Joint statement regarding co-operation on measures to secure the external Common Travel Area border \(PDF\)](#), 20 December 2011, para 4

<sup>60</sup> Home Office, [FOI response 59389 \(PDF\)](#), 21 July 2020

<sup>61</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area](#), HC 795, 8 December 2021, Q39

our perspective as well as theirs, we do not facilitate the entry to each other's territory of people who would be a threat.<sup>62</sup>

A press release accompanying the 2011 joint statement gives some practical examples of data sharing in action. These include checks of Irish visa applications lodged in Nigeria against UK immigration records, resulting in 200 out of 1,700 found to have an “adverse UK immigration history”. It also mentions data swaps on asylum seekers in Ireland discovering that many had previously applied for asylum or a visa in the UK under a different identity.<sup>63</sup>

## Harmonisation of visa and border rules

The UK and Ireland have separate visa policies. Each jurisdiction has its own list of countries whose citizens are required to get a visitor visa before travel.

But the two lists are similar. As of 2017, 103 nationalities were subject to visa requirements in both the UK and Ireland. Six were visa nationals in the UK only and seven in Ireland only.<sup>64</sup> This is deliberate: the two governments have committed to “co-operating to the fullest extent possible to align the list of nationals who are visa required for travel to the two countries”.<sup>65</sup>

In both the UK and Ireland, immigration legislation provides that someone can be refused entry if they intend to travel to the other country illegally.<sup>66</sup>

## Mutual recognition of visitor visas

The UK and Ireland usually issue separate visas that are not valid for travel to the other country, but there are some exceptions.

The [British–Irish visa scheme](#) allows Chinese and Indian citizens to visit both countries using a single visitor visa (one issued by either the UK or Ireland).<sup>67</sup> The scheme is supported by an unpublished memorandum of understanding which includes provisions on data sharing. Applications for an Irish visa are “routinely checked against UK immigration databases”, according to a Freedom of Information response.<sup>68</sup>

In addition, the Irish Government unilaterally accepts some visitor visas issued by the UK as also valid for Ireland. The [Short Stay Visa Waiver programme](#) is open to citizens of 22 countries, provided they enter from the UK (starting the visit in Ireland is not allowed).

---

<sup>62</sup> As above, Q33

<sup>63</sup> Irish Government, [Ireland-UK accord to further secure the Common Travel Area](#), 20 December 2011

<sup>64</sup> HM Government, [Northern Ireland and Ireland - position paper](#), 16 August 2017, para 28. The list of countries that are visa-required in the UK only has increased since, to 11 including Taiwan.

<sup>65</sup> [Joint statement regarding co-operation on measures to secure the external Common Travel Area border \(PDF\)](#), 20 December 2011

<sup>66</sup> Home Office, [Immigration Rules part 9: ground for refusal](#), para 9.10.1, accessed on 3 August 2023; [Immigration Act 2004, s4\(3\)\(h\)](#)

<sup>67</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [British–Irish visa scheme](#), 8 May 2019

<sup>68</sup> Home Office, [FOI response 59051 \(PDF\)](#), 6 July 2020

## 2 Special status of Irish citizens in UK law

Irish citizens are largely exempt from UK immigration requirements and are treated as ‘settled’ from the date they take up ordinary residence. Ireland is also not considered a “foreign country” for the purpose of UK laws.

### 2.1 Exemptions from UK immigration law

Before 1922, Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. Between 1922 and 1949, the Irish Free State was within the Crown's dominions and people born there were British subjects.

The Republic of Ireland Act 1948 (implemented in the UK by the Ireland Act 1949) established the Republic of Ireland and broke its last link with the Commonwealth and the Crown's dominions.<sup>69</sup>

Section 2 of the Ireland Act 1949 provides that Ireland is “not a foreign country” for the purpose of “any law in force in any part of the United Kingdom” and references to “foreigners, aliens, foreign countries... shall be construed accordingly”. Section 50(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981 similarly provides that a citizen of the Republic of Ireland is not an “alien”.<sup>70</sup>

Modern immigration legislation does not make use of terms such as “foreigners” or “aliens”. This gave rise to concern, in the context of Brexit, that these provisions did not provide a firm legal basis for the special treatment of Irish citizens.<sup>71</sup>

That uncertainty was addressed in section 2 of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020. It inserted a new section 3ZA into the Immigration Act 1971.<sup>72</sup> Section 3ZA provides that “an Irish citizen does not require leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom”, with certain exceptions. Irish citizens can still be deported from the UK or excluded from entering in the first place. But as a matter of policy, Irish citizens are not routinely considered for deportation.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> [Republic of Ireland Act 1948](#); [Ireland Act 1949](#)

<sup>70</sup> [British Nationality Act 1948, s50\(1\)](#). See also [section 32 of the British Nationality Act 1948](#).

<sup>71</sup> Bernard Ryan, [Recognising Irish citizens in immigration law as free movement rights are withdrawn](#) (PDF), 9 June 2020; The Traveller Movement, [Brexit and Irish citizens in the UK: How to safeguard the rights of Irish citizens in an uncertain future](#) (PDF), December 2017

<sup>72</sup> [Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination \(EU Withdrawal\) Act 2020, s2](#)

<sup>73</sup> [HC Deb 19 February 2007](#). Even if they wish to be deported, in order to secure early release: *R (Foley) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] EWHC 488 (Admin), 5 March 2019



Irish citizens are also regarded as settled in the UK from the date they take up ordinary residence.<sup>74</sup> This means they can live in the UK indefinitely and their children born in the UK will automatically have British citizenship.

As well as the basic right of residence, Irish citizens also enjoy a range of related rights to work, study, vote and access education and healthcare, as though they were British citizens.<sup>75</sup> The legal underpinnings are complicated, as exemptions for Irish citizens appear in multiple statutes and regulations.<sup>76</sup>

## 2.2 Why do Irish citizens have a special status?

During second reading of the Ireland Bill in May 1949, Prime Minister Clement Attlee said the alternative would be impractical and undesirable:

As everybody knows, there are in Britain large numbers of people of Irish descent, some born in Eire and some born in this country, and there is a continual passage to and fro of people who come over to work or to study or for pleasure. It would be an extremely difficult thing to decide in every case from day to day as to what the exact status was of a person with an Irish name, and if we had to attempt to make all citizens of Eire aliens, it would have involved a great expenditure of men and money and a great extension of control of aliens. We had in particular also to remember the difficulties caused because of the fact of the land frontier between Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, and Eire.<sup>77</sup>

During committee stage of the British Nationality Bill 1981, Enoch Powell moved an amendment to remove the Irish exception to the definition of an alien. The Home Office minister, Tim Raison, opposed the amendment, invoking the “long historical connection” between the UK and Ireland and the “close personal ties” between the people of the two countries. The Thatcher Government, he said, was not persuaded that the relationship had changed so much that the principles of the 1949 Act should be altered.<sup>78</sup>

Similarly, introducing the Immigration Bill 2020, Home Secretary Priti Patel said “We are enormously proud of our deep and historical ties with Ireland, and of the contribution Irish citizens have made to the UK over many years [...] Both Governments are committed to preserving the unique status and special rights in each other’s countries enjoyed for over 100 years”.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> PQ 253726 [on [British Nationality: Republic of Ireland](#)]; Free Movement, [Home Office concedes that Irish citizens are settled in the UK](#), 8 August 2018

<sup>75</sup> Cabinet Office and Home Office, [Common Travel Area: rights of UK and Irish citizens](#), 23 December 2022

<sup>76</sup> Sylvia de Mars, Colin Murray, Aoife O’Donoghue and Ben Warwick, [Discussion Paper on the Common Travel Area](#), 13 November 2018

<sup>77</sup> [HC Deb 11 May 1949 c1855](#)

<sup>78</sup> British Nationality Bill Deb 13 May 1981 c2002

<sup>79</sup> [HC Deb 18 May 2020 c400](#)

## 3

# Recent and future developments

## 3.1

# The Common Travel Area after Brexit

The UK's departure from the European Union gave rise to concerns about the Common Travel Area, particularly in the context of the land border.

## UK–Ireland agreements

In May 2019, the UK and Irish governments signed a new memorandum of understanding, and said they were “committed to maintaining the CTA in all circumstances”.<sup>80</sup> David Lidington, on behalf of the UK Government, said the agreement “guarantees that whatever the terms of the UK's exit from the EU, there will be no change to the rights of British and Irish citizens”.<sup>81</sup>

The memorandum of understanding largely set out the rights that already exist and commits both governments to upholding them. Paragraph 17 specifies that it is not intended to be legally binding.

There is a separate non-binding memorandum on healthcare for British and Irish citizens under the CTA.<sup>82</sup> The two governments have also signed a separate treaty on social security rights, which is legally binding.<sup>83</sup>

A 2018 report sponsored by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission argued that there should be a general CTA treaty covering both travel rules and residency rights.<sup>84</sup> The head of the commission has said this would “create certainty” about the CTA:

while there are some legal underpinnings around social security, for example, quite a lot is based on memorandums of understanding and other kinds of documents that do not really have a solid legal foundation.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Cabinet Office, [Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Ireland on the CTA](#), 8 May 2019

<sup>81</sup> [“British–Irish conference: Brexit rights deal signed”](#), BBC News, 8 May 2019

<sup>82</sup> [Memorandum of Understanding between the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the government of Ireland concerning Common Travel Area healthcare arrangements \(in recognition of residency-based health systems\)](#), 23 February 2022

<sup>83</sup> [Convention on Social Security between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland](#), CP 379, 1 February 2019

<sup>84</sup> Sylvia de Mars, Colin Murray, Aoife O'Donoghue and Ben Warwick, [Discussion Paper on the Common Travel Area](#), 13 November 2018, p11

<sup>85</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: Citizenship and Passport Processes in Northern Ireland](#), HC 1111, 10 March 2021, Q16

## UK–EU agreements

Before Brexit, there was very little reference to the CTA in international law. It was mentioned in [Protocol 20 of the Treaty on European Union](#), introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997: “The United Kingdom and Ireland may continue to make arrangements between themselves relating to the movement of persons between their territories (‘the Common Travel Area’)”.

This is reaffirmed in the UK–EU Withdrawal Agreement treaty, signed in January 2020. Article 3 of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol states that the CTA can continue after Brexit and obliges the UK to ensure that it operates without prejudice to Ireland’s EU law responsibilities:

The United Kingdom shall ensure that the Common Travel Area and the rights and privileges associated therewith can continue to apply without affecting the obligations of Ireland under Union law, in particular with respect to free movement to, from and within Ireland for Union citizens and their family members, irrespective of their nationality.<sup>86</sup>

The Protocol also requires the UK to ensure there is “no diminution of rights” provided by the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. This includes protection against discrimination under certain EU directives.<sup>87</sup> There is a ‘dedicated mechanism’ to monitor implementation, comprising the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.<sup>88</sup>

The two commissions have raised the Common Travel Area in their dedicated mechanism annual reports, recommending measures to prevent racial profiling of people moving within the CTA (see section 1.2 above).<sup>89</sup>

## 3.2

## Electronic travel authorisations: Hardening the land border?

While Brexit has not led to significant changes to the existing CTA arrangements, new UK travel rules will make it illegal for some people to enter the UK without a visa where they previously could.

‘Electronic travel authorisations’ will require non-visa nationals, such as US or EU citizens, to get advance permission to enter the UK. Irish citizens and lawful residents of Ireland are exempt.

---

<sup>86</sup> Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, [Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland](#), Article 3

<sup>87</sup> As above, Article 2.1. The relevant EU directives are listed in Annex 1 to the Protocol.

<sup>88</sup> See Northern Ireland Act 1998, [s78A](#) and [78B](#)

<sup>89</sup> [Annual Report of the NIHRC and the ECNI on the implementation of Protocol Article 2 2021 – 2022](#), July 2022, paras 5.11-5.15; [Annual Report of the NIHRC and the ECNI on the Implementation of Article 2 of the Windsor Framework 2022–2023](#), July 2023, para 5.21-5.25

Similar schemes exist in other countries and the EU is setting up its own version (Ireland is not taking part).<sup>90</sup> The UK version is being rolled out from October 2023 and is due to be in place for all relevant nationalities by the end of 2024, although it will not be enforced until 2025.<sup>91</sup>

The legal basis is section 75 of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.<sup>92</sup> During passage of the legislation, the House of Lords proposed an exemption for people travelling from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland.<sup>93</sup>

The Commons disagreed and the bill passed without the exemption. A Home Office minister explained that the Government opposed the amendment because it “could result in an unacceptable gap in UK border security that would allow persons of interest or risk who would be otherwise refused an electronic travel authorisation to enter the UK legally, undermining the very purpose of the ETA scheme”.<sup>94</sup>

Electronic travel authorisations will not affect [visa nationals](#), who already need permission to enter the UK from Ireland (see section 1.1 above). But there have been concerns about the impact on visa-exempt nationals, both those visiting the UK and those living in Ireland (particularly near the land border).<sup>95</sup>

## Impact on tourism

Critics note that the island of Ireland is often marketed abroad as a single tourism destination.<sup>96</sup> At present, non-visa nationals such as US tourists can (for example) fly into Dublin and drive on to Belfast with no need for a visa. In future, they will be expected to apply and pay £10 for an electronic travel authorisation at least three working days in advance.<sup>97</sup>

The Home Office accepts there will be an impact on tourism in Northern Ireland.<sup>98</sup> But ministers argue that the process will be quick and light-touch and the cost will be competitive internationally.<sup>99</sup> It is not a full-blown visa application and tourism operators can apply on the person’s behalf.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> See Commons Library constituency casework article [The EU Entry/Exit system and EU travel authorisation system](#), 18 July 2023

<sup>91</sup> Home Office, [Electronic Travel Authorisation: impact assessment](#), 16 June 2023, paras 34 and 119

<sup>92</sup> [Nationality and Borders Act 2022, s75](#)

<sup>93</sup> [HL Bill 127 \(PDF\)](#), 8 March 2022, clause 80

<sup>94</sup> [HC Deb 22 March 2022 c269](#)

<sup>95</sup> For example, [HL Deb 10 February 2022 cc1926-1939](#); [HL Deb 8 March 2022 1340-1354](#); [HL Deb 17 July 2023 cc2040-2045](#); [HC Deb 18 July 2023 cc234WH-243WH](#)

<sup>96</sup> [“Varadkar concerned new UK visa waiver scheme will deter tourists from visiting NI”](#), The Journal, 21 March 2023

<sup>97</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Electronic Travel Authorisation \(ETA\)](#), 25 July 2023

<sup>98</sup> [HC Deb 18 July 2023 c241WH](#)

<sup>99</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, [Electronic Travel Authorisation \(ETA\)](#), 25 July 2023

<sup>100</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: Tourism and the Common Travel Area, HC 1242](#), 20 April 2022, Q33

## Impact on residents of Ireland

Electronic travel authorisations also have the potential to harden the border for non-visa nationals living in the Republic of Ireland. For example, an EU citizen living in County Donegal who regularly travels to Derry/Londonderry for errands or recreation was originally expected to have an electronic travel authorisation.<sup>101</sup>

There is now a blanket exemption for people lawfully resident in Ireland.<sup>102</sup> Although there will be no border checks, the Home Office says that if someone happens to be encountered by an immigration official, they will need to “provide physical evidence that demonstrates that they are legally resident in Ireland”.<sup>103</sup> Examples of what can be accepted as evidence include a range of official ID issued in Ireland, such a driving licence or medical card.<sup>104</sup>

Irish citizens are also exempt, as are people with existing UK immigration permission, such as a frontier worker permit.<sup>105</sup>

## Enforcement of electronic travel authorisations

The Home Office stresses that there will still be no immigration controls whatsoever on the land border. But “anyone entering the UK without an ETA or any other form of immigration permission where required will be entering illegally and may be subject to enforcement action, if encountered during intelligence-led operational activity”.<sup>106</sup>

It will be a criminal offence to knowingly enter without an electronic travel authorisation where required.<sup>107</sup> Immigration minister Robert Jenrick has stressed that the UK would take a “sensible and pragmatic” approach to prosecution for illegal entry if discovered, focusing on “the most egregious cases and not on accidental errors”.<sup>108</sup>

There is no carriers’ liability within the Common Travel Area, so airlines carrying someone from Ireland to Great Britain without an electronic travel authorisation would not be fined.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> PQ 76149 [on [Electronic Travel Authorisations: Northern Ireland](#)], 1 November 2022

<sup>102</sup> Home Office, [Immigration Rules Appendix Electronic Travel Authorisation](#), accessed on 7 August 2023, paras ETA 1.3 and 1.4

<sup>103</sup> House of Lords Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee, [Corrected oral evidence: Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules and Immigration \(Electronic Travel Authorisations\) \(Consequential Amendment\) Regulations 2023](#), 11 May 2023

<sup>104</sup> Home Office, [Electronic Travel Authorisation: Irish resident exemption](#), version 1.0, 25 July 2023

<sup>105</sup> House of Lords Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland Sub-Committee, [Letter from Baroness Williams to Lord Jay of Ewelme \(PDF\)](#), 17 February 2022

<sup>106</sup> As above

<sup>107</sup> [Immigration Act 1971, s24\(D1\)](#)

<sup>108</sup> [HC Deb 18 July 2023 c241WH](#)

<sup>109</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: UK immigration policy and the Common Travel Area](#), HC 795, 8 December 2021, Qq 36-38; House of Lords Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland Sub-Committee, [Letter from Baroness Williams to Lord Jay of Ewelme \(PDF\)](#), 17 February 2022

The House of Commons Library is a research and information service based in the UK Parliament. Our impartial analysis, statistical research and resources help MPs and their staff scrutinise legislation, develop policy, and support constituents.

Our published material is available to everyone on [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk).

Get our latest research delivered straight to your inbox. Subscribe at [commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/subscribe) or scan the code below:



 [commonslibrary.parliament.uk](https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk)

 [@commonslibrary](https://twitter.com/commonslibrary)