

BLACK ACHIEVERS NETWORK

UK Newcomer Onboarding Toolkit

A practical, step-by-step companion for your first weeks and months in the United Kingdom — covering documents, housing, healthcare, money, work, schools, and community.

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Welcome

Arriving in a new country is exciting — and overwhelming. This toolkit gathers the essentials so you can move from *landing* to *settling* with confidence. Work through it at your own pace; tick off each section as you go.

Tip: keep digital and printed copies of every important document. Store them in a secure cloud folder you can access from any device.

Your First Week — Quick Checklist

- Confirm your immigration status and download your **eVisa / share code** via the UKVI account.
- Apply for a **National Insurance (NI) number** at gov.uk if not already issued.
- Open a **UK bank account** (Monzo, Starling, Revolut accept most newcomers digitally).
- Get a **UK SIM card** (giffgaff, Lebara, Lyca, EE, Vodafone).
- Register with a local **NHS GP surgery** — free and essential.
- Find temporary or permanent **accommodation** and note your full UK address.
- Save emergency numbers: **999** (emergency), **111** (NHS non-urgent), **101** (police non-urgent).

1. Documents & Immigration

Your right to live, work, and access services in the UK is proven by your immigration status — most often through an **eVisa** linked to your UKVI account.

Set up your UKVI account

Create or recover access at gov.uk/evisa. Generate a **share code** when proving your right to work, rent, or study.

Keep originals and certified copies of:

- Passport (and any dependants' passports)
- Visa decision letter / BRP (if still held)
- Birth, marriage and academic certificates (translated if not in English)
- Police clearance / character certificates
- Driving licence from your home country

2. Housing

Most newcomers start in temporary accommodation, then move to a private rental. Councils only provide social housing in priority cases.

Where to look

- Rightmove, Zoopla, OpenRent, SpareRoom
- Local Facebook groups for your city
- University accommodation services (if studying)

Before you sign

- Check the landlord is registered and the property has an **EPC** and **gas safety certificate**.
- Your deposit (usually 5 weeks' rent) must be held in a **government-backed deposit scheme** (DPS, MyDeposits, TDS).
- Read the tenancy agreement fully — ask about council tax, bills, and break clauses.
- You will need a **right-to-rent share code**, references, and often a UK guarantor or 6 months' rent in advance.

3. Healthcare (NHS)

The National Health Service provides most care free at the point of use if you paid the **Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)** with your visa.

- **Register with a GP** near your address — find one at nhs.uk. You don't need proof of address or ID to register.
- For urgent but non-life-threatening issues, call **111** or visit a walk-in/urgent care centre.
- Dial **999** only for emergencies (chest pain, severe bleeding, breathing difficulty, etc.).
- Dental and eye care usually carry a fee — check NHS-subsidised dentists in your area.
- Free maternity care, child immunisations, and mental health support are available via your GP.

Mental wellbeing

The transition can be heavy. Free, confidential support is available via **NHS Talking Therapies** (self-refer online), **Samaritans 116 123** (24/7), and BAN's wellbeing programmes.

4. Money & Banking

Bank accounts

- **Digital banks** (Monzo, Starling, Revolut, Chase) — fastest to open, ID via app.
- **High-street banks** (Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds, NatWest, Santander) — may require proof of address.
- Bring: passport, visa/BRP/share code, proof of UK address (tenancy, utility bill, employer letter).

Tax & National Insurance

- Apply for your **National Insurance number** at gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number.
- Income tax and NI are usually deducted by your employer (PAYE).
- Self-employed? Register with HMRC within 3 months of starting.

Credit & cost of living

- Build UK credit history early — register on the **electoral roll** (if eligible) and use a credit-builder card responsibly.
- Compare energy, broadband and mobile deals on Uswitch or MoneySavingExpert.
- Check eligibility for **Council Tax discounts** (single occupancy, students, low income).

5. Work & Career

UK CVs are typically 2 pages, no photo, no date of birth. Tailor each application to the role and use clear, measurable achievements.

Job search platforms

- LinkedIn, Indeed, Reed, Totaljobs, CV-Library
- Sector-specific boards (e.g. NHS Jobs, Civil Service Jobs, Guardian Jobs for charity/education)
- Recruitment agencies for temp-to-perm and contract roles

Right to work

- Generate a **right-to-work share code** at [gov.uk/prove-right-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work).
- Employers must verify before your first day.
- Some visas restrict hours (e.g. Student visa: 20 hrs/week in term time).

BAN can help

Our Career Acceleration programme offers CV reviews, interview coaching, mentor matching, and access to UK employers actively hiring international talent.

6. Schools & Childcare

- Apply for a **school place** through your local council's admissions team — state schools are free.
- Children aged 3–4 are entitled to **15–30 free childcare hours** per week (eligibility varies).
- For higher education, check UCAS for undergraduate routes and university websites for postgraduate.
- Adult learners: free **ESOL** (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes are widely available at FE colleges.

7. Transport

- **Driving:** you can usually drive on your foreign licence for up to 12 months. After that, exchange or take a UK test ([gov.uk/driving-licence](https://www.gov.uk/driving-licence)).
- **Public transport:** contactless bank cards work on buses, trams, the Tube and most rail networks.
- **Railcards** (16–25, 26–30, Family & Friends, Senior) save 1/3 on rail fares — pays for itself in 2–3 trips.
- **Cycling** is widely supported — many cities have bike-hire schemes.

8. Community & Belonging

Loneliness is one of the biggest challenges newcomers report. Build community early.

- Join **BAN's LinkedIn community** for peer support, mentoring and opportunities.
- Sign up as a **mentee** or request a **relocation buddy** via our Get Involved page.
- Find faith groups, cultural associations, and diaspora networks in your city.
- Volunteer locally — a fast way to build friendships, references, and UK experience.

9. Key Numbers & Links

Service	Contact
Emergencies (police, fire, ambulance)	999
NHS non-urgent medical help	111
Police non-urgent	101
Samaritans (mental health, 24/7)	116 123
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247
Citizens Advice	0800 144 8848 / citizensadvice.org.uk
UKVI / immigration	gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-uk
HMRC (tax, NI)	gov.uk/contact-hmrc
Find a GP	nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp
BAN — Get Involved	blackachievers.network/get-involved

About Black Achievers Network

BAN is a UK Community Interest Company empowering Black and minority ethnic communities through cultural integration, mental wellbeing, career acceleration, and business growth. This toolkit is provided free as part of our cultural integration pillar.

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