

A parent's guide to obtaining an emergency travel document for a premature baby

Meet *Katie* - this is her collecting her son's emergency travel document from the British Embassy in Paris, their ticket home.

Louis was born at 31 weeks during a family trip to Disneyland Paris. To help other families facing a similar situation, Katie has put together this guide with tips to save time, reduce stress, and help you get your baby home as quickly as possible.

We'd recommend taking a screenshot of all these pages so you can refer back to them if you lose signal.



"I didn't know anyone that had been in this situation, but there are lots of people who have been through this... I had so much help, so I'd like to pass it on."
- Katie

Step 1 - Register your baby's birth

To start the process of obtaining an emergency travel document, you will first need a birth certificate for your baby, which will be issued in the country where they were born. The place this is issued will depend on the country you are in. For example, the hospital may do this, or you may need to go to a local registry office. There may also be a time limit on how quickly the birth needs to be registered, e.g., in Spain, babies must be registered within 10 days of birth, and in France, they must be registered within 5 days.



Tip: Ask for an international or translated version if available, and for multiple copies incase you need to give any away.

Step 2 - Apply online

If your baby was born early and needs to travel back to the UK, you'll need to apply for an emergency travel document (ETD) through the UK government. This will cost £125.

- [Apply here](#)
- Apply on behalf of your baby
- Select "British national"
- Explain that your baby was born prematurely abroad and needs to return to the UK.
- You'll be asked when you expect to travel. This doesn't need to be accurate. It's just a formality, and you can give them more information in the interview.



Tip: Apply as soon as possible as it can be a lengthy process.

Step 3 - Sourcing required documentation

For the emergency travel document application, you will need to provide various documents to prove that your child is entitled to enter the UK. These include:

Identity & nationality:

- ☐ Baby's birth certificate
- ☐ Both parents' passports
- ☐ Parents' birth certificates

Family lineage:

- ☐ Paternal and maternal grandmothers' birth certificates
- ☐ Grandparents' marriage certificates

Medical evidence:

- ☐ Notes confirming premature birth
- ☐ Due date evidence (e.g. MatB1 form)
- ☐ Hospital report (translation)

Travel proof

- ☐ Proof you travelled to (e.g. train/flight outbound booking)
- ☐ Proof you intended to return to the UK (e.g. train/flight return booking)

Countersignatory form:

- ☐ Someone (e.g. teacher, professional) to confirm parents' identity

Photo:

- ☐ A passport-style photo of your baby. This is often very difficult with premature babies, so make sure to include a note explaining the situation.

You will receive individual emails asking to upload each document separately, but be prepared to submit all of these documents.

Step 3 - Sourcing required documentation (continued)

Below is a list of documents that I was asked to provide for Louis' application. These were not all requested in one go, and it was a bit frustrating having to keep finding them (or, in my case, requesting documents from the registry office), so try to collect them all now, and hopefully this helps speed things up for you.

What is helpful is that they accept photographs of documents, which makes it easy to upload everything from your phone or tablet once you have the documents ready.

Every time I submitted a document, I sent a follow-up email to:

- ETD_centre1@fcdo.gov.UK
- ETDcentre@frdo.gov.uk

There is no guidance on the website or application that says you must do this, but I took this approach to ensure that nothing was missed. In every email, I included my application reference number in the subject line, along with my mobile number in case someone needed to contact me. You won't get responses over weekends, unfortunately, so be prepared for some delayed responses.

In the table below, I have included a description of each document along with what I provided in each instance:

Document	Description	What I submitted
Passport photograph  <i>Louis' official ETD photo</i>	We were asked to provide a passport-style photo.	The photo to the left is the photo that was approved and used on Louis's ETD. It was taken on a smartphone in the hospital. When I submitted the photo, I followed it up with an email explaining that this was the best I could provide, given Louis' medical needs. I said: "Attached is the best photograph I have been able to obtain. As he is premature, Louis requires frequent feeding and sleeps for most of the day. I called yesterday and was advised this would be considered when approving the photo."

Tips:

- Upload clear photos of documents (phone photos are accepted)
- Send documents as soon as you have them.
- Include your mobile number and application reference number in every message.

Step 3 - Sourcing required documentation (continued)

Document	Description	What I submitted
Copies of both parents' passports	We were required to provide images of both parents' passports.	I took photos on my phone of our passports and submitted them using the link provided via email.
Copies of parents' birth certificates	We were required to provide images of both parents' passports.	We didn't have these readily available, so we contacted our local registry office to obtain copies. We paid for an expedited service, so they were delivered within two working days (standard delivery is five working days). Once the documents arrived, we photographed them and submitted them using the link provided via email.
Copies of both maternal and paternal grandmothers' birth certificates	Copies of both mine and my husband's mothers' birth certificates.	Obtained from the relevant registry offices and submitted as photographs via the link provided. As the maternal grandmother has passed away, and we did not know the details of her place of birth, we provided a copy of her death certificate instead. I sent an email to say that we would be doing this.
Copies of both sets of grandparents' marriage certificates	Copies of grandparents' marriage certificates.	Obtained from the relevant registry offices, as we knew the dates and locations of the weddings. Again, we paid for an expedited service. Once they arrived, we photographed them and uploaded the images using the link provided.
Copy of baby's birth certificate	A copy of an official birth certificate.	I was able to register my baby's birth in the hospital (although I appreciate this may not be the case everywhere). When I received the certificate, I ordered multiple copies, including one in English. I submitted a copy of this using the link provided.
Copies of antenatal notes detailing baby's expected due date	Evidence that I was expecting a baby and that the baby arrived earlier than expected.	I provided a copy of my MatB1 form (given by my midwife), along with a hospital document confirming my estimated due date.

Step 3 - Sourcing required documentation (continued)

Document	Description	What I submitted
Copies of medical notes to prove early birth	Evidence that it was medically necessary for the baby to be delivered early.	As I was still in hospital, I obtained a copy of the birth report. This was in French but was accepted without requiring formal translation.
Proof of outward journey	Evidence that I have travelled to our current location.	I provided a copy of a LeShuttle booking showing me as a passenger.
Proof of intended return journey to the UK	Evidence that I was due to return to the UK.	I provided a copy of a LeShuttle booking showing me as a passenger.
First-time applicant's form	Form to be completed by someone who can confirm both parents' identities.	I initially thought it related to confirming the baby's identity. After a phone call, I realised this was not the case. I downloaded the form and asked a teacher from my children's school to complete it. Once ready, I uploaded the document to the link provided.

Step 4 - Interview

You will receive an email inviting you to an interview on Microsoft Teams. You will need to download the app if you haven't got it already, and make sure you're in a location with strong WIFI. My interview took 15-20 minutes, and both parents had to be on the call. I dialled in from France, Steve dialled in from home. The interviewer:

- Asked what had happened
- Checked that we were who we said we were
- Asked how Louis would be getting home and who would be travelling with him. Anyone travelling with the baby will need to be listed, with their passport number, on the official ETD document.
- Asked when we think we'll travel home. I gave them a rough date of when Louis could be discharged, and a two-week window to make sure we could comfortably travel within that time. If this window expires, you'll need to request a new document with valid travel dates; however, this shouldn't reset the whole process

They may also request additional documents afterwards. This is completely normal.

Step 5 - Submission and collection

Once approved, you, your partner or a nominated contact will need to collect the emergency travel document from the local British Embassy or Consulate, and you'll probably be as relieved as I was here!

Don't forget to take your passport as photo ID for collection! If a parent isn't collecting the passport, you'll need to let them know in advance.

A typical timeline for this whole process is a minimum of four weeks.

Application → Interview: 2-3 weeks

Interview → ETD issued: a few days

(This can vary depending on complexity and documents)

As an example, this was my timeline:

24th February – Began application online

17th March – Interview date

20th March – Collected ETD



General tips *(to help speed things up)*

- Send documents as soon as you have them.
- Don't wait for everything before uploading.
- Take photos instead of scanning (faster and accepted).
- Follow up by email if you haven't heard back.
- If you can't find a document like your parents' marriage certificate, go to their local Council. You can get copies from the registry office.
- Keep everything organised on your phone.
- Use Google Translate. It was excellent, especially because the nurses didn't have very good English.

It can be a long and frustrating process when you're in it, but you will get there. Whilst they're asking you for documents, the UK Home Office is working through endless checks to make sure your baby is entitled to British citizenship. Give them everything they need, and keep nagging. You will get there. Also, remember that you have Lia's Wings. They can support you throughout this process and beyond. Don't be afraid to reach out to them.