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Newlyweds spend first year on opposite sides of Atlantic because of UK's visa rules

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CAT SUTTON is set to leave the country after her husband's visa was rejected - because she doesn't earn enough.



Cat and John Sutton

A NEWLYWED couple are being forced to spend their first year of marriage 3500 miles apart because of red tape.

Cat and John Sutton married this summer after meeting at a camp in the US in 2008 and planned to settle in Inverness, where Cat grew up.

But she is now preparing to leave Scotland to be with her man in Washington DC after his visa to live here was rejected because she wasn't earning enough.

Cat, 23, said: "After years of sustaining a long-distance relationship, they are denying us the chance to spend our first year of marriage together.

"We have been informed that John will have to apply for a visitor visa to be

able to even come here on holiday because there is a good chance he may be flagged as an overstay risk.”

When they made the application, trainee teacher Cat was earning less than the visa threshold of £18,600.

Even though she has started her first post in Falkirk with a salary of £21,438, the rules state she must hold the position for at least six months before a visa can be granted.

Now the couple are so fed-up with living on opposite sides of the Atlantic that Cat has decided to give up the battle and apply for a green card, which would let her move to the US.

She said: “There seems to be a much kinder system to people going to the US than coming to the UK.

“We could apply again for a visa but it would cost more money, take up to a year to process and I am not -confident that we would be successful.

“Over the past few years, we have spent -thousands on flights to see each other and thousands on rejected visa applications and we don’t get a penny back.”

A spokeswoman at the UK Border Agency defended the rules for giving visas to spouses.

She said: “British citizens can enter into a relationship with whoever they choose but if they want to establish their family life here, they must do so in a way which works in the best interests of our society.

“We welcome those who wish to make a life in the UK with their family, work hard and make a -contribution.

“But family life must not be established here at the taxpayer’s expense.”

NB John is a qualified secondary school teacher (Web comment by L Geddes.)