



Submitting a response to the Government's earned settlement public consultation

A FOLLOW-ALONG GUIDE
FOR INDIVIDUALS

JANUARY 2026





KEY INFORMATION

This consultation is your opportunity to feed back on the Government's proposed changes to settlement in the UK (also known as Indefinite Leave to Remain).

Please remember this is a **guide only**, and you should respond in a way that feels right for you.

WHEN

The consultation will close on 23:59 on **12 February 2026**.

WHERE

To respond to the consultation, [fill in this survey](#). It should take 20-30 minutes to complete. You can only complete it once.

WHAT

The consultation is on the proposed changes to settlement in the UK introduced in November 2025 by the Government. [Read our full explainer on the proposed changes](#) and [our MP briefing](#).

NEXT STEPS

Once you have submitted your response, we recommend:

- **Screenshotting the final submission page** as proof of completion.
- **Emailing your MP** about the settlement changes, which you can do quickly and securely [on our website](#).



BACKGROUND

In November 2025, the Government published a [statement and a consultation](#) on their planned changes to settlement in the UK (also known as Indefinite Leave to Remain or ILR).

In short, they plan to make settlement harder to achieve for most people who are in the UK on a visa.

The Government plans to extend the standard route to settlement from five years to 10 years. But for some groups, they are proposing routes to settlement of 15, 20, or even 30 years. This wait time is reduced or increased according to how people are judged to have contributed in the new “earned settlement” model.

The statement says that as well as those who arrive in the UK in the future, the Home Secretary would like all the changes outlined to apply to people who are already in the UK but who have not yet attained ILR, with certain groups exempt.

At the moment, attaining settlement means no longer having to worry about visa fees, being turned away from state support, or waiting for Home Office decisions.

It's a goal that many thousands of people are working towards, counting on the relief and security that settlement will bring.

BACKGROUND



We're worried about the changes because:

- They will **punish lower-income households** by disadvantaging those who earn less. Lower earners will have to pay far more in visa fees. At the time of writing, a 10-year route to settlement for one adult costs £20,000 in fees. In particular, health and care workers are targeted.
- They will **punish refugees** by subjecting them to a 20-year wait for settlement.
- They will **punish people who have claimed benefits perfectly legally**. Although only a tiny proportion of migrants actually access benefits (fewer than 1% of the total), it's usually women and single mothers in particular who need help, so they will be penalised.
- They will punish people who have made mistakes or missed application deadlines, often **through no fault of their own**.
- More families will end up facing **poverty and homelessness**. The insecurity and costs associated with this wait vastly increase the chance of people in this group facing poverty, housing insecurity and exploitation, as well as losing their immigration status entirely.
- Children who have spent years in the UK and had no choice about moving here, and who are trying to navigate young adulthood, will be subjected to **requirements to "earn" settlement or face punishingly long routes**.
- They make an already confusing and delayed system **impossibly complex**. The Home Office already struggle to make timely and well-founded decisions within the current system. They are multiplying the number of applications they will have to process, while also making the criteria they have to judge people on more complex. This may lead to **chaos in the system**, causing even longer waits and poorer decisions.

We know that the proposed changes have caused a lot of fear and anxiety among migrant and refugee communities and many are concerned for their friends and neighbours who could be impacted.

This consultation is an opportunity for your voice to be heard.



BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

First, you're asked:

Are you responding to this survey as an individual or as a representative of an organisation?

As you are responding as an individual, you should select **individual**.

The following section then asks about your immigration status, age, gender, ethnicity, where you live and your most recent occupation.

Note: You do not have to answer these questions about your personal circumstances if you don't want to.



CONSULTATION BEGINS

Overall, how clear do you find the proposed changes to the settlement framework?

You may wish to respond with **Somewhat unclear**.

Many key issues that will have a dramatic effect on people's lives are not spelled out sufficiently in the consultation documents or accompanying statements.

[If unclear] Which aspects of the proposed changes to settlement are not clear?

You may wish to respond with **Other**, so you can list more detailed questions. You may wish to include any questions you have or the following:

- Will new mandatory settlement requirements apply to everyone?
- Will Indefinite Leave to Remain with No Recourse to Public Funds apply to people who already have Indefinite Leave to Remain?
- Has the Government assessed how the changes proposed impact people with protected characteristics?
- Has the Government assessed how its proposals will impact the economy?
- Has the Government assessed how its proposals will impact rates of child poverty and homelessness?



CONSULTATION BEGINS

- How will people on an existing 10-year route to settlement based on their family or private life rights be affected by these proposals? People in this group are likely already to have been penalised for not meeting the minimum income requirement, needing access to public funds, or experiencing gaps in their leave to remain, for example, by being placed on a 10-year route to settlement. Will they now be penalised again by having to wait additional time before settlement?
- If a person unintentionally loses their leave to remain (e.g. by making a mistake on an application form or missing a deadline), will their settlement process start again as is currently the case with the existing 10-year route?

Overall, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to the settlement framework?

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree**.

Settlement is the foundation of security and stability, and a precondition to integration. It should not be considered a privilege to be earned based on income, occupation or English language skills. We reject the concept of “earned settlement” entirely and urge the Government to change course.



CHARACTER

Character is the first of the four core pillars designed to ensure that applicants make a meaningful contribution to UK society and meet clear, measurable standards.

It outlines that applicants must have no current litigation, NHS, tax or other Government debt or criminal convictions.

Do you have any comments on how 'Character' should be considered in relation to settlement? (max 200 words)

You may wish to respond with:

- Treating historic convictions as a bar to settlement undermines the concept of rehabilitation in our criminal justice system. As well as entrenching a double standard for migrants, this is deeply impractical and will undoubtedly drive growth in the undocumented population.
- People with historic convictions will not simply disappear from the UK, especially if they have British or settled family members or have lived here for a long period of time. Should they struggle to maintain temporary legal status because of the cost and complexity of repeat applications and with no hope of settlement, we would expect that more people will lose their immigration status.
- Barring people with Government debt from settling is counterproductive. The stability of settlement makes it easier for people to maintain employment, increase their earnings and pay off their debts. People worried about incurring NHS debt will be discouraged from seeking early treatment for health conditions, which will lead to worse outcomes and higher costs in the long term.
- Overall, this will drive poverty, homelessness and exploitation amongst migrant communities. Local authorities will face increased pressure as they retain statutory duties to support children and adults with care needs regardless of status.



INTEGRATION

The Government's "earned settlement" model means that an applicant's wait time for settlement can increase or decrease according to how they are judged to have contributed.

To be eligible for settlement, applicants will need to demonstrate meaningful engagement with British society. This includes passing a Life in the UK test and speaking English at B2 level (lower grade GCSE equivalent).

What do you think about a 1-year reduction for applicants who can demonstrate advanced English language ability (at C1 standard)?

You may wish to respond with **Don't know/prefer not to say.**

We don't believe migrants who speak better English should get quicker settlement than those who don't. Access to English language courses is difficult for a variety of reasons, including cost, time and availability and no support is provided by the Government.

How do you think integration should be assessed?

You may wish to respond with **In another way (please specify).**



In this answer you may wish to include:

- Integration is complex and multi-faceted and cannot be reliably assessed through a formal test or course.
- I have doubts about the ability of Government departments to accurately and consistently assess it.
- There is evidence that long, complicated and expensive settlement processes work against integration.
- They drive financial hardship, housing insecurity and a feeling of not belonging.
- There is evidence from other countries that acquiring settlement aids integration.
- By extending insecurity and conditionality, they deepen existing harms for already disadvantaged groups who will struggle to meet new criteria and face exclusion as a result.
- Insecure status is a well-established driver of child poverty, restricting access to stable housing, social security, and essential services, and placing children at heightened risk of long-term harm.
- For disabled migrants, the emphasis on work, productivity and compliance compounds exclusion, particularly where people are unable to meet requirements due to illness or caring responsibilities.
- Rather than supporting integration, these measures replicate the logic of the hostile environment by using immigration status as a tool of control and exclusion.



Do you have any further comments on how 'Integration' should be considered in relation to settlement? (max 200 words)

You may wish to respond with the following:

- To promote integration, the Government should make settlement processes simple, quicker and more affordable. The way to achieve safe and resilient communities is to give people the opportunity to settle and become citizens.
- More long routes and insecure status will have the opposite effect.
- In Praxis' 2023 research (A Punishing Process, about the existing 10-year route to settlement), 40% of people who responded in the survey said their status stops them from feeling properly at home or settled in the UK, while 32% said they feel completely insecure because of their status.
- Access to English language courses is difficult for a variety of reasons, including cost, time and availability.
- Certain groups will face higher barriers to learning English, such as those with caring responsibilities, or learning difficulties.
- Being held back from attaining settlement will leave these groups in an insecure position over an extended period, compounding their exclusion.
- If the Government wants more people to acquire English language skills, they should invest in the provision of more accessible courses and address the barriers that make learning English difficult.



CONTRIBUTION

Contribution reinforces the principle that settlement should be earned through active participation in the economy and wider society.

To be eligible for settlement, applicants must:

- Have contributed to the Exchequer by having annual earnings above £12,570 for a minimum of three to five years (subject to this consultation),
- Have no outstanding litigation, NHS, tax or other Government debt

Do you think the following groups should be exempt from the requirement to have earned above £12,750 for at least 3 to 5 years?

You may wish to respond with **yes** for each of the following:

- Those on maternity leave or long-term illness/disability.
- Those in certain occupations with different pay arrangements.

CONTRIBUTION



**Are there any other groups that you think should be exempt from the requirement to have earned above £12,750 for at least 3 to 5 years?
You can list up to five separate groups. [200 words max]**

You may wish to highlight specific groups that come to mind or mention the groups listed:

This should not be a mandatory requirement for settlement because it ignores structural inequalities which influence employment/earning patterns, including gender, racial and disability pay gaps. The groups which will most struggle with this requirement are:

- Parents, especially single parents. The ongoing cost of living crisis, coupled with high costs of childcare mean that in some families only one parent can work. Children and young people will also be impacted.
- Women are overrepresented in care, cleaning and other “low-skilled” and poorly paid roles. They are still more likely to be primary caregivers and second earners, so will be doubly disadvantaged by this requirement.
- People of colour are more likely to be paid less than their white counterparts and to already have insecure or short-term leave to remain, which can limit employment opportunities.
- People with disabilities and elderly people, who may struggle to work sufficient hours or be unable to work.
- Refugees who face numerous barriers in securing employment that is well-paid.

CONTRIBUTION



To what extent do you agree or disagree that migrants who have worked in an occupation below RQF level 6 should have their standard qualifying period for settlement set at 15 years? (Occupations skilled to RQF level 6 include healthcare assistants and nursing assistants)

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree**.

No-one should be penalised simply for working in a role considered low-skilled by the Government. These are the same people who were clapped for during the COVID-19 pandemic. People working at RQF level 6 and below are likely to be in roles that are poorly paid. Extending settlement pathways will also increase the costs of pathways for these poorly paid workers (as they will need to pay for more extension applications).

To what extent to you agree or disagree that applicants who earn a taxable income above £50,270 should be eligible for a reduction in their time to settlement?

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree**.

Do you think those employed in a public service occupation (i.e. health and education occupations where going rates are based on national pay scales) should be eligible for a reduction in their qualifying period to settlement?

You may wish to respond with **Don't know/prefer not to say**.

We do not agree that some occupations are more worthy of a faster settlement process. Migrants contribute to our society and the economy in a vast array of different ways, many of which are hard to quantify. Public sector employees make a valuable contribution, but so too do hospitality workers or delivery drivers, who often face even lower pay and more precarious conditions. No one should have to wait more than five years for settlement, regardless of their occupation.



PENALTIES FOR ACCESSING PUBLIC FUNDS

According to the Home Office, under the proposed reforms, applicants who claim public funds (e.g. benefits and housing assistance) would face a penalty depending on the length of time they claimed public funds during their route to settlement.

The Home Office recognises that some applicants (such as those from vulnerable groups) may have extenuating circumstances to claim public funds. Later questions will explore whether specific groups should be exempt from the proposed reforms.

What do you think about the proposed penalties for applicants claiming public funds?

5-year penalty for applicants who claim public funds for less than 12 months during their route to settlement.

You may wish to respond with **There should be no penalty for these applicants.**

PENALTIES FOR ACCESSING PUBLIC FUNDS



What do you think about the proposed penalties for applicants claiming public funds?

10-year penalty for applicants who claim public funds for more than 12 months during their route to settlement.

You may wish to respond with **There should be no penalty for these applicants.**

Most migrants are already subjected to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) restrictions until or unless they attain settlement, which means they have no access to welfare benefits anyway. Some people on some types of visas may be able to apply to have the NRPF condition lifted from their leave to remain, but only if they meet strict criteria set by the Government. Adding more time to settlement pathways to people because they have needed or may need support through the benefits system would effectively penalise a particularly vulnerable group.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that once someone has been granted settlement in the UK they should be eligible to claim public funds (e.g. benefits and housing assistance)?

You may wish to respond with **Strongly agree.**

We strongly oppose the proposal to attach NRPF restrictions to settlement. Extending the use of NRPF restrictions up to the point of citizenship will entrench inequalities between settled migrants and citizens. Making settlement subject to these restrictions, with the accompanying risk of poverty and homelessness, will undermine the extent to which settlement can help integration.

PENALTIES FOR ACCESSING PUBLIC FUNDS



To what extent do you agree or disagree that giving back to local communities (e.g. by volunteering) should be considered as a contribution that can reduce the length of time required to qualify for settlement?

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree**.

Migrants already give back to their local communities in countless ways, many of which are hard to quantify. Imposing this as a requirement to shorten settlement processes will create a two-tiered system, where migrants are compelled to volunteer on top of work and other commitments. This proposal also goes against the spirit of volunteering, which must by definition be voluntary, not a requirement shaped by coercive settlement timelines.

Do you have any further comments on how 'Contributions' should be considered in relation to settlement, including any potential benefits or challenges of recognising giving back to the community as a contribution towards settlement? (max 200 words)

You may wish to respond with some of the below points:

- I strongly oppose the proposal to attach NRPF to the settlement.
- No one should be seen as worthy of a faster settlement pathway because of their occupation, earnings or ability to volunteer.

PENALTIES FOR ACCESSING PUBLIC FUNDS



- Making lower-earners wait longer for settlement and pay more in fees will reinforce wealth inequalities and increase financial hardship for low-income households.
- A volunteering requirement creates a two-tiered system, where migrants are effectively compelled to volunteer. This goes against the spirit of volunteering and creates an ethical dilemma for all working with volunteers.
- People should not be penalised for having legally accessed welfare benefits to which they are entitled. Most who have made a change of conditions application have already been penalised by being moved to a 10-year settlement pathway. They must not be punished again.
- Women, particularly single mothers, are much more likely to have applied for a change of conditions, so they will be disproportionately impacted.
- Evidence from other countries is clear that settlement facilitates integration precisely because it brings migrants' rights and entitlements closer to citizens'. Making settlement subject to these restrictions, with the accompanying risk of poverty and homelessness, will undermine the extent to which settlement can help integration.



RESIDENCE

Under the proposed reforms, applicants who arrived in the UK illegally (e.g. via a small boat), arrived in the UK on a visit visa, or who have overstayed their visa for six months or more, will have additional time added to their standard qualifying period for settlement, or will be prevented from settling in the UK altogether.

Which of the following penalties do you think should be applied to each of the following applicants?

Applicants who arrived in the UK illegally

You may wish to respond with **There should be no penalty for these applicants.**

Applicants who initially entered the UK on a temporary visit visa (typically this visa permits stays of up to 6 months for tourism, visiting family or friends or short-term business activities)

You may wish to respond with **There should be no penalty for these applicants.**

Applicants who have overstayed their original visa by 6 months or more.

You may wish to respond with **There should be no penalty for these applicants.**



Do you have any further comments on how 'Residence' should be considered in relation to settlement?

You may wish to respond with the following points:

- Many people with this experience are already being penalised for non-compliance with immigration rules by being placed on a 10-year route to settlement. They must not be punished twice.
- Existing evidence suggests that many people who have overstayed leave have done so unintentionally or through no fault of their own, such as by missing an application deadline, making a mistake, being unable to afford the fees or because of bad advice.
- Penalising overstaying or irregular entry by adding years to the settlement process undermines the Government's stated expectation that migrants contribute and integrate. Research shows that long, complicated and expensive settlement processes drive financial hardship, housing insecurity, and undermine a sense of belonging.
- Long waits for settlement create insecurity and instability, making it harder for migrants to establish themselves, secure well-paid employment and/or progress in work or study. This increases the risk of poverty and destitution, especially when coupled with the need to pay repeat visa fees.
- Extending pathways to settlement, or barring people from settlement entirely, also increases the likelihood that some will lose their immigration status.
- If the Government wants migrants to integrate and contribute, they should make the settlement process timely, simple, and affordable.



ELIGIBILITY AND EQUALITY

The following section focuses, according to the Home Office, “on whether specific groups (including potentially vulnerable groups) should be exempt from, or receive reductions to, the proposed “earned settlement” reforms.”

Where the standard qualifying period is proposed to increase from 5 to 10 years, which of the following options do you think should apply to each of the following visa holder groups?

You may wish to respond following the table below:

	Reduction (of 5 or 7 years from the standard qualifying period of 10 years)	Apply full change (standard qualifying period of 10 years)	Don't know/Prefer not to say
Applicants who currently require 3 years continuous residence under the Global Talent route			X
Applicants who currently require 5 continuous years residence under the Global Talent route			X
Applicants who currently require 3 continuous years residence under the Innovator Founder route			X
Applicants on humanitarian visa routes (e.g. Syrian, Afghan)	X		

ELIGIBILITY AND EQUALITY



We reject the concept of “earned settlement” in its entirety, and do not believe that any group should be judged more or less worthy of a shorter settlement process, including whether or not they are considered to be highly skilled. We believe that all settlement processes should last a maximum of five years for everybody. In the case of applicants on humanitarian visa routes, timely access to settlement is key to integration.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that dependants of migrants who hold Global Talent or Innovator Founder visa status should retain their current 5-year path to settlement?

You may wish to respond with **Don't know/prefer not to say.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there should not be transitional arrangements for those already on a pathway to settlement?

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree.**

We reject the idea that any of the changes proposed by the Government should be applied retrospectively to people already in the UK on a settlement pathway. People in this category came to the UK and began their pathway to settlement in good faith, on the basis of the rules at the time that they arrived.

ELIGIBILITY AND EQUALITY



Do you think the following vulnerable groups should retain their current arrangements and be exempt from the proposed settlement changes?

You may wish to respond following the table below:

	Yes	No	Don't know/prefer not to say
Victims of domestic violence and abuse	X		
Bereaved partners	X		
Children and young adults who grew up in the UK without immigration status	X		
Adults with long-term care needs	X		

Do you think the following vulnerable groups should retain their current arrangements and be exempt from the proposed settlement changes?

You may wish to highlight specific groups that come to mind or mention the groups listed below:

- People at risk of or experiencing homelessness: these proposals will make it more difficult for people to exit homelessness and leave more people at risk of homelessness.

ELIGIBILITY AND EQUALITY



- People with disabilities, and those with mental or physical health conditions: the Government’s proposals make requirements more complex and difficult to meet.
- Families with children under the age of 18: children are likely to be negatively affected by these proposals because navigating longer, conditional settlement processes means facing housing insecurity, stress and poverty, which harm children’s wellbeing, development and access to education.
- People on the existing 10-year route to settlement should also be exempt.

Do you think the following Armed Forces groups should retain their current time period to settlement, or should further reductions be available to this group?

	Retain current arrangements	Further reductions should be applied	Don't know/prefer not to say
Members of HM Armed Forces			X
Immediate family members of HM Armed Forces			X

It is unacceptable to treat people differently based upon their circumstances.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that dependant partners of migrants should earn settlement in their own right?

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree**.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that dependent children of migrants should earn settlement in their own right? (with employment-related requirements waived if they were admitted as a dependant under 18)

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree**.

We reject the proposal to treat main applicants and their dependents differently. This proposal would increase the number of families in which different members have different pathways to settlement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that resettled refugees should have a 10-year route to settlement?

You may wish to respond with **Strongly disagree**.



Do you have any further comments on how specific groups should be considered in relation to settlement? We particularly welcome views on how the proposed changes could affect children in the UK. (200 words maximum)

You may wish to respond with some of the below points:

- I reject the idea that these proposals are applied retrospectively to people already in the UK on a settlement pathway, who came to the UK in good faith on the basis of the rules at the time that they arrived, often at considerable expense.
- Should the Government push ahead, transitional arrangements are essential. These must ensure that people in the UK on a pathway to settlement prior to any rules change are allowed to complete their settlement according to the rules that were in place at the time of their arrival. Specifically:
 - People who are in the UK and already submitted an application for settlement prior to rule changes coming into force must also be subject to the rules that were in place at the time their application was submitted. This is especially important for applications with long processing times.
 - There must be no additional penalties for people who have accessed benefits perfectly legally.
 - There must be no additional penalties for people who arrived irregularly or overstayed a visa, many of whom are already penalised by being placed on a 10-year route or being required to wait 20 years before they can apply to regularise their status.

This completes your consultation response. Don't forget to:

- **Screenshot the final submission page** as proof of completion.
- **Email your MP** about the settlement changes, which you can do quickly and securely [on our website](#).

