

From: Jas Athwal MP, Member of Parliament for Ilford South

Date: Monday, 22 June 2026

Subject: Re: Changes to Immigration Rules

Dear constituent,

Thank you again for contacting me about the government's proposed immigration changes, including changes to indefinite leave to remain, and for sharing your concerns.

The last year has been full of uncertainty, confusion, and worry for many residents across Ilford South. The Government is considering doubling the wait for settlement from five years to ten, and up to fifteen years for care workers. Undoubtedly, one of the most contentious elements of the consultation is that this would apply retroactively to people who are already here — people who are already on a pathway to settlement. Since the Immigration White Paper's publication, you and countless other constituents have been asking for one thing: that we do not change the rules for those who have already complied with them. I agree with you.

As you may know, there was a Westminster Hall debate on 2 February 2026 on Indefinite Leave to Remain, during which two recent petitions on ILR were debated. Ilford South ranked second in the country for the number of signatures on the petition titled "Keep 5-Year ILR and Restrict Access to Benefits for New ILR Holders".

I wanted to let you know that I spoke in the debate and made my position clear: do not change the rules, and do not move the goalposts mid-game. Families uprooted their lives on the basis of a five-year route and this should be honoured.

[The full contribution to the debate, and an excerpt, are available on the parliamentary record.]

I raised the fundamental point that changing the five-year ILR route retrospectively for those already on that pathway is wrong and breaks a basic principle of fairness.

I also mentioned the plight of constituents who wrote to me telling me their stories.

I also share concerns that employer-sponsored visas leave workers open to exploitation. Care workers are the very best of us. They go above and beyond in their work, helping people in need live with dignity. The threat of sponsorship withdrawal from dubious employers strips vital protections from workers. I believe that a national social care sponsorship body would be a constructive step towards providing our key workers with the security and safety they deserve.

It must be acknowledged that the mismanagement of the Health and Care Worker visa by the Home Office between 2022 and 2024 meant that far more care workers and their dependents came to the UK than expected. However, I do not believe that care workers should be punished for the failings of the previous Conservative Government. Taxable income is not a reliable predictor of the societal value a job provides, and I do not believe that it should be used to retrospectively differentiate between pathways to settlement. With net migration at an all time low, we must focus on supporting rather than penalising our care workers.

I accept that there is an immigration crisis facing our country and that the Government is trying to restore order to our immigration system – but order must never mean abandoning fairness.

I understand that many are feeling demoralised by these proposed changes. Many of my constituents have made life changing decisions based on the ILR rules in place at the time they applied. They are working hard – often in essential roles – paying their taxes, and some have started families here. Some people are even nearing the end of the settlement pathway and are unsure what these consultations and proposed changes mean for them. I know there is significant uncertainty affecting residents who are worried about what these changes may mean for their children and spouses. People should not be left in limbo about their right to remain, and everyone, including you, deserves clear answers.

I have always said that immigrants are the backbone of our country. Having immigrated to the UK from Punjab myself at the age of seven with my family, I know what it is like to leave a land you once knew in search of a better life, not only for yourself but for those you love. I was proud to represent your views, as

well as my own, in the debate and will continue to use every opportunity possible to highlight the thoughts, feelings, and lived realities of our neighbours.

I have also submitted the following questions to the Home Office for reply:

1. To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what consideration her department has made of potential merits of implementing transitional arrangements for those current on the 5 year ILR route?
2. To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what considerations her department has made of the potential impact of implementing retrospective increase in the 5 year ILR route to 10 years on children and families currently in the UK?
3. To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the cumulative impact of the extension and retrospective application of settlement requirements, including impacts on (a) workforce retention, (b) industrial productivity and (c) overall economic security?
4. To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has been made of the potential impact of the retrospective increase in ILR from 5 years to 10 years on skill shortages in key industries such as health and social care?
5. To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has been made of the impact of the proposed Earned Settlement framework on (a) the family stability and (b) day-to-day security of existing Skilled Worker visa holders and (c) ability to access credit?

I have since received a response from Mike Tapp MP, the Minister for Migration and Citizenship:

"The earned settlement model, proposed in 'A Fairer Pathway to Settlement', announced changes to the mandatory requirements and qualifying period for indefinite leave to remain. It is currently subject to a public consultation, running until 12 February 2026.

The consultation seeks views on whether there should be transitional

arrangements for those already on a pathway to settlement. Transitional arrangements refer to temporary measures or rules put in place to manage the shift from one system, or policy framework, to another. We are also seeking views on the potential impacts of the proposed changes on different groups.

Details of the earned settlement model, including any transitional arrangements for those already in the UK, will be finalised following that consultation.

The final model will also be subject to economic and equality impact assessments, which we have committed to publish in due course."

I have also signed a letter to the Home Secretary asking her to carefully consider several key principles when finalising these proposed immigration reforms, to ensure they do not undermine the very outcomes they are intended to achieve. Firstly, fairness must be upheld through "grandfathering" existing arrangements, as changing settlement rules for those who have already built their lives in the UK risks breaking trust. Secondly, settlement pathways should be capped at a reasonable length, as excessively long routes discourage integration and increase the risk of people falling into undocumented status. Thirdly, the removal of permanent precarity is essential; frequent reviews of refugee status would create unnecessary instability, harm mental health, and place unsustainable pressure on an already overstretched system.

I also urge the government to prioritise support for vulnerable groups, particularly children, ensuring they are not pushed into poverty or penalised for circumstances beyond their control.

In the many years that I have served my community of Ilford South, first as Leader of the Council and now as a Member of Parliament, I have met countless honest, hardworking care workers, eager to contribute to their community in any way they can. As we await the full outcome of the consultation to be published, I will continue to work with colleagues to ensure that the voices of care workers do not go unheard.

I know this may not be the response you were hoping for in full, but I hope it is reassuring to know that I understand your concerns and will continue to represent them at every opportunity.

Very best wishes,

Jas Athwal MP

Member of Parliament for Ilford South

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA