

Earned Settlement



Together with Migrant Children

An explainer and statement

November 2025

Introduction

This briefing is about the proposed changes to settlement rules, known as ‘earned settlement’ contained in the [‘A Fairer Pathway to Settlement’](#) statement and consultation.

The proposals introduce a system that for many people greatly increases the time it takes to settlement in the UK (whilst reducing it for some others) and takes an approach that reduces or adds time to settle, based on ‘contribution’ and ‘compliance’.

It is important to point out at this stage these are only proposals. And a [consultation is running until the 12th February 2026](#) that anyone impacted by these changes can respond to.

Our overall view

These proposals, much like the asylum reform proposals, set out no additional considerations for children and young people and the impact on them, though have suggested that reforms that impact children are subject to open consultation.

We are generally concerned about any proposals that mean a longer route to settlement for children, or a change in welfare entitlements that mean more children can experience disadvantage and poverty. We would oppose proposals to further no recourse restrictions on indefinite leave to remain for the same reason.

Considering the situation of the majority of children we work with, we are concerned that settlement under the current proposals would be unattainable for them before they reach adulthood. We oppose any policy change that places settlement outside the reach of children and firmly believe all settlement should be capped at 5 years, giving everyone a fair and realistic opportunity.

A summary of 'earned settlement'

The consultation is seeking views on who this would apply to and any 'transitional' arrangements for those already in the UK on existing visas. The government have suggested that these changes could already apply to those in the UK with limited leave to remain. They have confirmed it would not affect those who already hold a settled status.

A longer baseline period for many before they can be considered for settlement. Under the proposals, the baseline qualifying period for settlement would become 10 years, and to 15 years for those on the skilled worker route (in a role below RQF level 6 – bachelor's degree).

Earned settlement The concept of '[earned settlement](#)' means that from the baseline, time can be taken off, or added, based on proposed set 'contributions' and 'compliance' factors. These include factors such as entry and residence compliance, access to public funds, earnings, public service and community / integration factors. Using the periods provided in a statement, periods of up to 20 years could be added to settlement periods to those who have overstayed visa's or entered as visitors for example. It would also add penalties for those who need public funds during their limited leave period.

Changes to qualification for settlement The eligibility for settlement would change under the proposals. A person would need to have no criminal record, current litigation, NHS, tax or government debt, meet certain income requirements and English language / life in the UK requirements.

No recourse to public funds The government is proposing to allow settlement to be granted with a condition of No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), shifting entitlement to benefits to being a British Citizen.