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Dear Sir,

Thank you for your email of 9 December to the Prime Minister about changes to the qualifying period for Indefinite Leave to Remain. As I am sure you will appreciate, the Prime Minister receives a large amount of correspondence and is unable to respond to each item individually. Your email has therefore been passed to the Direct Communications Unit for a response.

The Immigration White Paper sets out the principle that settlement should be earned through contribution to the UK economy and society. Current criteria do not reflect this, and reforms will seek to reward those migrants demonstrating sustained work, strong English language skills, and community contribution before gaining settled status.

The standard qualifying period will move from five years to ten years. However, the earned settlement model will allow earlier settlement for those who meet contribution criteria such as continuous employment, National Insurance Contributions, and not having been in receipt of public funds.

Shorter pathways will remain for dependants of British citizens (five years), and safeguards will be retained for vulnerable groups, including victims of domestic abuse.

Some changes to the Immigration Rules, such as increased English language requirements for those coming to the UK, are planned to take effect from January 2026. Settlement reforms require public consultation and will not come into force until after the responses of that consultation are considered.

The Immigration White Paper included a commitment to consult on these changes by the end of this year. The changes involve significant reforms to the settlement pathway, and it is right that we consult to assess public support for such changes and their impacts on affected groups.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks and will end on 12 February 2026. Anyone can contribute via the online questionnaire on GOV.UK at: https://ukhomeoffice.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1yMmiaG7zqwPuM6. If individuals have difficulty accessing the website, they can request a paper copy or submit responses by email or post.

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. Without any transitional arrangements, the earned settlement policy will affect people already in the system, who are not already settled when relevant Immigration Rules come into force.

Transitional arrangements may be designed to ease the impact of policy change, especially for individuals or groups already afforded permissions by the previous system.

Yours faithfully,

A Gomes
Direct Communications Unit