



## SKILLED WORKER JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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Subject: The Future of Immigration Policy - Update for Walthamstow Residents from Stella Creasy MP (Case Ref: ZA104278)

Hello

I'm writing to you as someone who has been in touch with my office about immigration legislation to update you on my ongoing discussions with Ministers about this topic. I apologise that this email is impersonal and lengthy - I have written it myself but as so many residents have written about this issue and raised a variety of concerns I wanted to try to update you all.

Getting this right in this country matters for many reasons and I know from your correspondence that Walthamstow residents hold a wide variety of views about immigration and what its impact is or should be. Debates in public life about immigration and asylum are increasingly toxic -both off and online making separating fact from fiction harder to achieve. You can see a short video I made recently about this here:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/16vfhScinM/>

As the Government also looks to reform the system again and is currently consulting on an 'earned citizenship' model I have also spoken out about past mistakes which continue to blight the lives of people in Walthamstow- you can read this here in the recent coverage of a Windrush case from our community:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/jan/26/im-part-of-this-country-windrush-man-left-homeless-by-home-office-inaction>

Above all I know our immigration system needs to change because I see so many local residents experience hardship and uncertainty with the status quo, and a wider society that struggles to plan effectively as a result. The time I give to this subject as your MP is therefore as much about how change should happen and



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finding a way through the sharp divisions on this topic, as it is to scrutinising any current proposals being put forward. Our community in Walthamstow has been enriched by those who have made it home- both economically and culturally- and I wish to ensure that we can continue to experience those benefits whilst addressing the problems that mean reform is required.

Thank you to everyone who sent me case studies of how the current proposals would affect them or their business- I had hoped to meet with Ministers before Christmas on this issue, but our meeting was delayed until the week before last. Following our discussion the Minister has agreed to continue talking to me about these proposals and has asked for a copy of these case studies which I will anonymise so he can study them in more detail.

The case studies show the distress many of you feel that any change could be retrospective- such as increasing the time before which anyone can apply for settled status or removing the right to apply for citizenship even if you have status because you arrived through an irregular route. Walthamstow residents have consistently highlighted how this would put those affected in a precarious position – facing challenges to secure work and so be self sufficient, housing or with life administration such as getting a bank account.

I raised these concerns with the Minister and am pleased to say that he acknowledged the case that transitional protection for those already here in the UK must be included in any reforms. He committed that any changes must also take account of the age of applicants, their family status including periods of maternity and parental leave as well as illness. He was also clear that partners of British citizens would be exempted from these changes- though I recognise there are remaining concerns as to how this will be achieved.

I also highlighted to the Minister that the proposals themselves could deter those with skills and talents from coming to the UK. Many of you have shared with me your plans to potentially move because of the uncertainty these changes would create in your ability to progress in your chosen career or settle in the UK. I shared this with the Minister and the evidence of the negative economic and social impact this could have on our community and our country. I also set out my concerns about restricting benefits from those who have also made national insurance



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payments - given this is the basis for our contributory system – and plans that would increase even further the period before anyone here on a health and social care visa could apply for settled status and restrictions on their earning potential during this time. The minister agreed to look in detail at the practical implications of this for several Walthamstow residents.

Above all, I pressed the Minister that immigration reform should be focused on the decision to grant a visa, and the original conditions of securing one, rather than creating an environment which makes working and living in the UK once you are here more difficult and costly. In my ongoing work on this I will continue to press for proposals to focus on how to clarify purpose of travel and residency as an alternative to retrospective measures.

I also flagged with the Minister how recent changes around visas for skilled workers and the increase in the threshold from RQF level 3 to RQF level 6 in order to apply for one did not reflect the high regard we should all have for vocational skills and qualifications. I shared with the Minister that many of you have experienced difficulties with recruitment or employers because this change doesn't reflect either the incomes that these roles generate, or a category that means you know you can renew your visa if you wish. Finally I also highlighted my concerns at the treatment of refugees, and the proposal to refuse citizenship, but not leave to remain, to those who had travelled by irregular routes to the UK as an automatic decision.

In my next meeting with him I hope to be able to explore how reform will impact EU citizens, those who came from Ukraine and on British National Overseas visas, questions around student visas, domestic worker visas, ECAA visas and the healthcare surcharges and costs of application. I do not have a date for this discussion as yet but will keep residents informed as and when I do. If you had intended to send me a case study but had not yet done so please do respond to this email so that I may add to my evidence dossier on this matter.

I hope even if you do not agree with the concerns that I have raised it is of interest to hear of these ongoing debates within parliament. Please do feel free to share with other local residents interested in immigration policies. I would also encourage you to join our in person 'town hall style' discussions to share your



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views on these matters as this issue has come up frequently. The next one is scheduled for Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February at 7pm in a central Walthamstow location – if you can make it please reply to this email to RSVP and for the venue details.

With kind regards

Stella Creasy MP