

Written Evidence by the Skilled Worker Justice

Alliance SWJA (SCI0129)

My name is Zonglin Lyu (I use my preferred name Luigi). I am writing on behalf of the **Skilled Worker Justice Alliance (SWJA)**, a volunteer-led organisation representing more than **1,000 Skilled Worker visa holders** residing and working across the United Kingdom. Our members contribute to essential sectors including health and social care, pharmacy, IT, technology, education, finance, hospitality industry and other public services.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide early evidence and observations regarding the potential impact of the proposed "**Fairer Pathways to Settlement**" reforms.

1. About Our Organisation and Current Engagement

Since the announcement of these proposals, SWJA has begun engaging with multiple immigration law firms, civil society organisations, and community groups. We are also preparing internal structures to collect systematic case studies from our members (not yet launched), so that evidence can be submitted in a structured format should the Committee find it helpful.

Our rapid formation—over 1,000 members joining within the first week—reflects both the scale of concern and the deep uncertainty experienced by Skilled Workers currently on the 5-year settlement route.

2. Human Impact and Community Response (Contextual Evidence)

We wish to draw the Committee's attention to the significant emotional and psychological impact that recent policy signalling has had on lawful long-term migrants.

Since the White Paper in May, public discourse from Government and certain political figures has increasingly framed immigration in negative terms. In this environment, lawful Skilled Workers are often implicitly grouped together with irregular migration issues. We do not wish to comment on irregular migration; however, we must express that such rhetoric affects those of us who entered the UK legally, pay taxes, integrate into local communities, and work in essential sectors without access to public funds.

For many members, this is now the *third* major episode of public uncertainty within a short period. These repeated signals of significant changes—most recently the Earned Settlement proposal—

have created a prolonged atmosphere of instability. Members report anxiety, loss of sleep, and concern about their long-term future in the UK.

It is important to highlight that Skilled Workers already face demanding circumstances. Supporting families, adapting to a new country, building careers, and contributing economically leave little time or energy. Many describe feeling that—despite doing everything correctly—they are repeatedly placed in situations where long-term expectations are unsettled. The emotional burden of having to defend a pathway they believed to be stable has been substantial.

Should major rule changes be applied to those already part-way through the established 5-year route, the consequences for some individuals may be severe. Many have made irreversible commitments based on the existing rules—financial, professional, and familial. Altering settlement conditions mid-route could have profound wellbeing implications, especially for those with high sunk costs and no remaining flexibility.

While we fully acknowledge the Home Office's authority to amend immigration rules, we respectfully submit that maintaining stability for those already on established routes is essential for fairness, legal certainty, and public confidence.

We would also like to draw the Committee's attention to the significant mental health impact already being reported within our community. Recently, a member of our volunteer management team shared that she has a history of mental health difficulties which had been stable for a long period. However, the sudden uncertainty created by the Earned Settlement proposal has caused a relapse of severe anxiety, leading to emotional breakdowns and the need for medical support in the past few days.

We believe her experience is not isolated. Many Skilled Worker migrants already face substantial pressure in their workplaces, and the added uncertainty around their long-term security in the UK has created a level of psychological distress that should not be overlooked.

One of our members, for example, recently became a new mother. While on maternity leave, she is still actively volunteering within our management team, driven by the need to protect her family's security and her child's future under the current rules. Many others have shared similarly distressing experiences, and we are able to provide further anonymised examples should the Committee find them helpful.

3. Key Concerns Identified by SWJA Members

a. Impact of mid-route rule changes on legal certainty

Many members structured their long-term lives around the **5-year settlement pathway**, which has been a consistent feature of the Skilled Worker route.

The proposal to apply **new or extended settlement requirements to individuals already part-way through the 5-year route** raises concerns about:

- Predictability and stability of immigration rules
- Legal certainty for individuals who have relied on published policies
- The fairness of altering settlement terms after significant commitments have already been made

These issues have been emphasised repeatedly in our discussions with legal professionals.

b. Financial pressure and affordability concerns

Extending eligibility to settlement could require:

- Additional visa renewals
- Repeated immigration health surcharge payments
- Higher salary or financial thresholds
- Increased costs for dependants

For single-income households, caregivers, or families with young children, the cumulative financial burden may become unsustainable.

c. Impact across essential UK industries

Early reports from our members indicate potential consequences including:

- Loss of talent retention for employers
- Reduced workforce stability in sectors already facing shortages (e.g., pharmacy, health, STEM)
- Decreased global competitiveness in recruiting skilled professionals
- Disruption to long-term projects and service provision

We aim to provide structured, sector-specific case evidence as our internal collection progresses.

d. Consequences for dependants and family unity

Under the proposed framework, dependants may face new requirements that many will not be able to meet, particularly full-time caregivers.

This may result in situations where:

- The principal Skilled Worker qualifies for settlement
- Their partner or children do not
- Families face potential separation or forced departure

This raises significant social and human rights concerns, which we ask the Committee to carefully consider.

4. Request to the Committee

We respectfully ask the Committee to examine:

- The fairness of applying new settlement rules to individuals already part-way through the 5-year route
- Whether adequate legal certainty is maintained for lawful long-term migrants
- The economic and workforce impacts on essential UK sectors
- The disproportionate effects on families and dependants
- Whether appropriate equality and human rights impact assessments have been carried out

Our intention is to support the Committee's work by providing insight from those directly affected.

5. Willingness to Provide Further Evidence

As our evidence-gathering progresses, we would welcome the opportunity to provide:

- Structured individual case studies
- Industry-specific summaries
- Survey-based quantitative data
- Family impact assessments

Given the large number of members involved and the sensitive nature of their personal circumstances, we have not included individual evidence files within this initial written submission. SWJA stands ready to provide anonymised case studies, aggregated data, or any further supporting documentation the Committee may require at a later stage.

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