

Higher standard of English now required to settle in the UK

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Raising the English fluency level will allow migrants to contribute and integrate into British life.

Migrants will need to speak English to a higher standard if they wish to stay permanently in the UK, under landmark reforms introduced tomorrow.

They are being given a full year's notice to prepare – giving them the best opportunity to integrate into British life.

The change marks the first delivery moment of the government's Earned Settlement reforms – designed to reward those who contribute, integrate and play by the rules.

Since January, applicants for most work visas have been required to meet the higher A level standard in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Most foreign nationals applying for settlement must now meet the new A-level equivalent standard, raised from the current GCSE level.

It takes an estimated 200 hours of learning to move between the two levels, which must be proved by a test with a Home Office-approved provider.

The move comes as Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood will introduce new legislation this week to restore order and control to our borders. She will make a speech tomorrow at the IPPR think tank outlining how these reforms are in line with her British values.

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said:

Migration will always be a vital part of Britain's story, but the public rightly expect those who come here to integrate, contribute and share our British values.

Fluency in English is the single easiest path to integration and contribution. It is how you find work, support your family, and play a full part in British life.

Work hard, learn the language, and contribute to your community. That is the contract we are now writing into law.

The change will be introduced through an Immigration Rules change tomorrow (5 March) and come into effect in March 2027.

Last November, the government began a public consultation on its Earned Settlement reforms. This will see the standard qualifying period for settlement double to 10 years for most migrants – with reductions for those making a positive contribution to Britain's economy and society.

Under the Earned Settlement reforms, skilled frontline public service workers such as doctors and nurses may be able to settle after 5 years – with high earners and entrepreneurs fast-tracked to just 3.

The government received more than 200,000 responses to the consultation, which closed in February. Those responses are being considered carefully before further reforms are brought forward.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/higher-standard-of-english-now-required-to-settle-in-the-uk>