



# Immigration Specialists for Every Journey

Guidance Document: Indefinite Leave to Remain

# Indefinite Leave to Remain

*"I have to be very honest I have been travelling all around the world and working with many different departments. I haven't seen this precise services!!! They care about every detail, they reply really fast, they're up to date with you about all the steps. They're fast in the process in general, we are very happy to have chooses to work with them."*

*SA, Skilled Worker visa applicant*

## Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)/settlement is a major milestone for anyone looking to build a long-term future in the UK.

### What Is Indefinite Leave to Remain?

It is a type of immigration status that gives you permanent residency rights, including the freedom to live, work and study in the UK without time restrictions.

These rights can be obtained via several immigration routes, including but not limited to the UK Partner (family route), UK Ancestry, Skilled Worker, Global Talent and Innovator.

### Who Can Apply for ILR?

You may be eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) once you have completed the required period of lawful, continuous residence under an eligible visa category.

Note that time spent on a Student Visa does not count towards standard ILR pathways and visitors cannot switch into settlement routes from inside the UK.

Some visa holders—such as Global Talent, Innovator migrants, and high earners with a taxable income of £125,140 for the three years before applying—can qualify for accelerated ILR in three years.

Dependants of British citizens (including partners, spouses, parents and children) and BNO visa holders typically qualify for ILR after five years of continuous residence.

Other routes, like UK Ancestry and Skilled Worker visas (RQF Level 6+), usually require 10 years, though this can be reduced with higher taxable earnings. Certain vulnerable groups—such as bereaved partners, victims of domestic abuse, or those on resettlement schemes—are exempt from any minimum residence requirement.

# Indefinite Leave to Remain

*"Have had a wonderful experience dealing with Migrate UK twice over. I got prompt and clear answers to all my queries and constant support from all levels in the organisation"*

*SB, UK Ancestry Visa Applicant*

## To be granted ILR, you must meet the core requirements:

- stay within the permitted absence limits (except for UK Partners),
- be of good character,
- earn at least £12,570 annually for 3–5 years
- pass the Life in the UK Test (if aged 18–64), and
- show B2-level English under the CEFR framework (if aged 18–64 and not from a majority English speaking country).

If you are unable to meet the core requirements but have circumstances involving human rights considerations, you may be placed on a 10-year route to settlement. Those in roles below RQF Level 6 have a 15-year baseline, reducible with higher earnings.

## Documents You'll Need

- Include copies of all passports held during the qualifying period
- If you have an e-Visa, provide copies of previous BRPs or visa vignettes to evidence your continuous residency
- Provide evidence of residency such as utility bills, local health authority documents, tenancy agreements/mortgage statements, employer letters covering the qualifying period.
- Provide proof of employment income: P60s and bank statements for the past three years to demonstrate your income.
- Proof of having met test requirements (English language, Life in the UK) where applicable
- Provide additional documents for exceptional or compassionate circumstances (pandemic, family emergencies) or evidence of having worked in the community
- Provide documents specific to your visa category such as cohabitation or evidence of joint responsibilities for the UK Partner route or evidence of your relationship to a UK born grandparent for UK Ancestry.

# Indefinite Leave to Remain

*"I highly recommend Migrate UK! From start to finish, the entire visa application process was incredibly smooth and stress-free, all thanks to their expert guidance. Dealing with visa applications can be confusing and overwhelming, but the team at Migrate UK made it feel completely manageable. They were thorough, professional, and exceptionally responsive to all my questions, often getting back to me within the hour."*

*MK, Skilled Worker visa applicant*

## How to Apply for ILR

Applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) can be complex, with strict eligibility criteria, documentation requirements, and timing rules. At Migrate UK, we guide you through every step, helping you avoid mistakes, save time, and maximise your chances of success.

### Step 1 – Check Your Eligibility

Before applying, it is vital to confirm that you meet all requirements for your ILR route. Migrate UK helps you:

- Verify your UK Partner relationship is genuine and ongoing throughout the qualifying period.
- Assess whether your UK Ancestry visa qualifies for a shortened route through higher earnings or recognised community work.
- Determine if your Global Talent or Innovator visa allows for accelerated ILR
- Check whether all your dependants have completed their qualifying periods.
- Calculate your absences and identify any risks if you exceeded 180 days in a rolling 12-month period.
- Confirm you meet income requirements
- Advise how a shortfall on some of the good character requirements may impact your application.

Our specialists review your personal circumstances in detail, flag potential issues early, and provide tailored advice so your eligibility is clear before submitting an application.

### Step 2 – Prepare Your Documents

Migrate UK helps you gather, organise, and review every document needed for a smooth ILR application. Our specialists carefully check each document to ensure it meets Home Office requirements, identifying any gaps or issues before submission.

We provide tailored document checklists and expert guidance, so nothing is overlooked, minimising the risk of delays and giving you confidence that your application is complete and accurate.

# Indefinite Leave to Remain

*“Amazing Team, seamless experience.”*

*SP, GBM Visa Applicant*

## **Step 3 – Submit Your Application**

Migrate UK ensures your application is submitted at the right time, fully compliant, and with all supporting evidence, so you start the process with confidence.

## **Step 4 – Biometrics & Decision**

After submission, you will need to book a biometric appointment to provide fingerprints and a photo. You must remain inside the Common Travel Area (UK, Ireland, Channel Islands, Isle of Man) until your application is decided. Travelling outside this area during processing may result in your application being considered withdrawn.

Migrate UK guides you through these final steps, advising on timing, document requirements, and travel considerations, so you can avoid common pitfalls and move smoothly toward receiving ILR.

## **Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them**

Applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) is complex, and even small errors can cause delays or refusals. Common mistakes include misunderstanding which visas count toward ILR, miscalculating absences or qualifying periods, failing to meet financial or salary requirements, and submitting incorrect or incomplete documents. Other pitfalls include gaps in lawful residence, failing the Life in the UK Test or English language requirement, criminal convictions, outstanding government debts, and relying on outdated or unofficial advice. Careful planning, accurate records, and professional guidance are essential to avoid these issues and ensure a smooth ILR application.

# About us

*"We are a fast-growing SME in the utilities and property tech sector, and we've been delighted to work with Migrate UK to support members of our team transitioning from graduate visas into longer-term roles. From the very beginning, they have been professional, transparent, and an absolute pleasure to work with. Communication has been clear and supportive throughout, which made what could have been a complex process feel seamless."*

Skilled Worker Sponsor

We are very proud of our heritage and our successes. Here are some of our headlines:

22

Years of providing immigration advice, making us one of the longest serving specialist immigration law firms in the UK

9000+

Applications processed

50+

Years of combined immigration experience in our team

5

Star rating on [Google](#) and [Trustist](#)

Read more about us online via our [website](#), [LinkedIn](#), and via [HR Ninjas](#)