



Dame Karen Bradley
Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London,
SW1A 0AA

5 March 2026

Dear Karen,

IMMIGRATION RULES CHANGES

I am writing to inform you of changes to the Immigration Rules which are being laid today.

My Rt Hon Friend the Home Secretary is today laying before the House a Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules.

Introduction of the Visa Brake

The number of asylum claims from people who arrived in the UK on a visa or other leave have tripled since the year ending June 2022. Nationals of Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan present some of the highest proportions of asylum claims to visas issued. In total, as of September 2025, 15,906 of these nationals are in receipt of Home Office support, including 6,412 individuals in hotels.

To protect UK border security, we are introducing a visa brake for Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar, and Sudan. This will come into force on 26 March 2026. This means we will refuse Student visa applications from main applicants who are nationals of Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar, and Sudan. Additionally, we will refuse Skilled Worker visa applications from main applicants who are nationals of Afghanistan. The brake will not apply to applications made before 26 March. We are publicising the changes so travellers can plan accordingly.

The brake will meet the intent of the Immigration White Paper and the Asylum Policy Statement. Its key aim is to reduce the strain on the asylum system. It will also strengthen public confidence in the immigration system.

The decision to introduce a visa brake has been taken solely for migration and border security reasons. The brake is not intended to be permanent and will be regularly reviewed, with the aim that it can be released as soon as it is considered appropriate to do so.

Reducing the duration of refugee and humanitarian protection, permission to stay

We are amending the existing rule to reduce the duration of permission to stay from 5 years to 30 months for those recognised as refugees or in need of humanitarian protection. Renewal of protection will not be equivalent to making an initial asylum claim. The rules will come into force from 26 March and will apply to adults and families, including accompanied asylum-seeking children, who claim asylum on and after 2 March 2026.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children will be exempt from this change and will continue to receive 5 years permission to stay. This will remain Home Office policy while the pathway for this cohort is developed.

Procedure and Rights of Appeal changes for Failed Asylum Seekers

As part of the Restoring Order and Control package, I am making changes to the Further Submissions process which enables individuals to present evidence following the refusal or withdrawal of their asylum claim, once all appeal rights have been exhausted.

Under these reforms, individuals will be required to meet all validity requirements at the point they make further submissions. This includes, being in the UK when further submissions are made, being a failed asylum seeker, meaning their initial asylum claim has been refused or withdrawn, and having no outstanding appeal rights or other ongoing protection claims or appeals. Where these requirements are not met, the further submissions may be rejected as invalid without consideration.

In addition, I am also introducing a new provision for implicit withdrawal, similar to the arrangements already in place for initial asylum claims. This will allow the Home Office to treat further submissions as withdrawn where an individual fails to comply with process requirements including maintaining contact with the Home Office, attending reporting events and responding to requests for information.

Disclosure of information relating to asylum claims when cases are subject to public interest

This minor addition to the existing rule about the disclosure of information relating to an individual's asylum claim, clarifies that the rule does not prevent the Home Office from confirming, in certain cases, that an asylum claim has been made by an individual claimant. However, the change also states that the Home Office must ensure that the release of such information is in the public interest.

Introduction of a visit visa requirement for nationals of Nicaragua and St Lucia

I am introducing a visa requirement for all visitors from Nicaragua and St Lucia. This will come into force at 15:00 GMT today. Nationals of Nicaragua and St Lucia will also need a Direct Airside Transit Visa when transiting through the UK. They will no longer be eligible to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for travel to the UK.

A six-week, visa-free transition period will apply for those who already hold an ETA and confirmed UK travel booked on or before 15:00 GMT on 5 March 2025, where arrival in the UK is no later than 15:00 BST on 16 April 2025. We are publicising these changes to support traveller awareness and planning.

This action follows significant numbers of Nicaraguan and St Lucian nationals travelling to the UK for purposes not permitted under visitor rules, including to claim asylum, creating unsustainable pressure at the border and on the asylum system. Concerns also remain about St Lucia's Citizenship By Investment programme. While the UK welcomes ongoing programme reforms, the inherent risk of Citizenship by Investment and issues linked to the programme's past operation and legacy cases further increases the need for a visit visa requirement at this time.

This decision has been taken solely for migration and border security reasons. We keep the border and immigration system under regular review to ensure it continues to work in the UK national interest.

Further extension of the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) Scheme

The Government remains steadfast in its support for the people of Ukraine in the face of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion. From the outset of the conflict, the Government has acted decisively and compassionately, offering sanctuary to over 310,000 Ukrainians through the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and Ukraine Extension Scheme (the "Ukraine Schemes").

Changes to Appendix Ukraine are being introduced to ensure that the Ukraine Schemes continue to provide stable and secure protection for those displaced by the ongoing conflict, while giving individuals and families greater certainty about their status in the UK. Extending Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) leave by a further 24 months reflects the Government's commitment to maintaining temporary sanctuary for Ukrainians. Increasing the application window from 28 to 90 days is designed to make the process more accessible and reduce unnecessary pressure on applicants. This extension will remain fee-free and those granted permission to remain under UPE will continue to be able to access work, benefits, healthcare, and education.

In addition, the changes ensure that no one loses any existing permission they currently hold: any extant leave will be preserved and added to their new grant. This package of amendments is intended to improve clarity, support continuity for families, and provide reassurance while the future situation in Ukraine remains uncertain.

English language requirements for settlement applications

The White Paper "Restoring Control over the Immigration System" published in May 2025 set out the government's plans to introduce new English language requirements across a broader range of immigration routes, including arrangements for settlement routes. Reformed English language requirements will help to ensure that those who come here to build their lives in the UK can integrate into life in this country. We are commencing implementation of those plans in relation to settlement applications through these rules changes, which increase the English language requirement for settlement to B2 level under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for a number of routes where the existing requirement is at B1 level.

The changes to the English language requirements for settlement applications will come into force on 26 March 2027, providing those subject to the new requirements with sufficient opportunity to take any steps necessary to meet them. Further changes to English language requirements in relation to settlement applications will be considered in the light of the government's assessment of responses to the recent consultation on proposals for earned settlement.

For the changes that introduce a visit visa requirement for nationals of Nicaragua and Saint Lucia, due to safeguarding the operation of the UK's immigration system, those changes will come into effect at 1500 on 5 March 2026. The changes relating to the introduction of the Visa Brake, disclosure of information relating to asylum claims, and reducing the duration of refugee and humanitarian protection, permission to stay will come into force on 26 March 2026. The changes to the Procedure and Rights of Appeal changes for Failed Asylum Seekers, Global Business Mobility and Scale-up routes, and the further extension of the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) Scheme will come into force on 8 April 2026.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Tapp', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Mike Tapp MP
Minister for Migration & Citizenship