Applying for indefinite leave to remain in North London: what you need to know

The requirements for indefinite leave to remain

Indefinite leave to remain (ILR) is the status that allows a person to live and work in the UK without time limits. It is a significant step for anyone who has been on a temporary visa and wants to settle permanently. The application process is detailed, and missing a single requirement can lead to a refusal. Understanding what you need to prepare before you apply can save time, money, and stress.

The rules for ILR depend on the visa route you are applying under. Most routes require you to have lived in the UK for a continuous period, usually five years, though some categories such as spouse or partner visas require two years. You must also show that you have not broken the conditions of your stay, that you meet the English language requirement, and that you have passed the Life in the UK test. Each of these areas has its own evidence requirements, and the Home Office expects you to provide full documentation.

Continuous residence and permitted absences

A key part of many ILR applications is proving continuous residence. This means you have lived in the UK for the whole qualifying period without any gaps. The Home Office counts days spent outside the UK as absences. For most routes, you cannot have spent more than 180 days outside the UK in any of the qualifying years, and the total absence over the whole period also needs to stay within limits. If you have had absences for work, study, or family reasons, you need to document them clearly. Keeping travel records and entry stamps or digital records from the UK border is essential. Even a single trip that goes over the limit can break your continuity and delay your application by several years.

For those who need clarity on how their travel history affects their case, it is sensible to review the guidance for your specific visa category. The rules differ for Tier 2, family, and other routes. If you have had any gaps in residence, or if you have been outside the UK for long periods, you may need to explain the reasons in a statutory declaration or a covering letter.

View the location on Google Maps

English language and the Life in the UK test

Most ILR applicants must pass two tests: the Life in the UK test and an approved English language test. The Life in the UK test covers British history, culture, and government. It is a computer-based test taken at a registered centre. You need to score at least 75% to pass.

Many applicants find it helpful to study the official handbook. The English language test is usually an approved Secure English Language Test (SELT) at B1 level or above, unless you are exempt because of a degree taught in English or because you are from a majority English-speaking country. It is worth checking the Home Office list of approved test providers before booking, as tests from unapproved providers will not be accepted.



Exemptions exist for those over a certain age or with a long-standing physical or mental condition that prevents them from taking the tests. If you think you may qualify for an

exemption, you will need medical evidence from a qualified professional. The Home Office does not grant exemptions lightly, so the evidence must be detailed and current.

Good character requirement

ILR applicants must also meet the good character requirement. This applies to all routes and covers criminal convictions, cautions, and any history of immigration breaches. Even minor offences, such as a speeding ticket if it led to a conviction, can affect your application if not declared. The Home Office will check your criminal record. If you have any criminal history, you need to declare it and provide full details. Failing to declare a conviction, even an old one, can lead to a refusal on the grounds of deception. It is always better to be upfront and provide context, such as a character reference or evidence of rehabilitation. The rules on spent convictions are complex, and the Home Office does not always follow the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act in the same way as employers do. If you have any doubts, it is wise to get legal advice before applying.

Documentary evidence for the application

The application itself is made online, and you will need to upload supporting documents. The required documents vary by route, but common items include:

- a valid passport and any previous passports covering the qualifying period
- proof of continuous residence, such as bank statements, utility bills, or council tax statements
- evidence of employment or self-employment, including payslips, P60s, and employer letters
- proof of English language ability and the Life in the UK test certificate

Each document must be a clear copy, and any document that is not in English must have a certified translation. The Home Office will not accept scans that are blurry or incomplete. It is also worth keeping a physical folder with originals, as you may need to show them at the biometric appointment.



Biometric appointment and the decision

After you submit the online application, you will be asked to book a biometric appointment. This is where you provide your fingerprints and photograph. The appointment can be at a UK Visas and Immigration service point or at a post office, depending on the route. You need to bring the documents you uploaded, along with your passport. The decision on an ILR application usually takes several weeks, though it can be longer if the Home Office needs more information. You will not get your documents back until a decision is made, so keep copies of everything.

If your application is refused, you may have the right to appeal or to apply for an administrative review, depending on the reason. In some cases, a refusal can also affect your current immigration status, so it is important to get advice quickly if that happens.

Getting support with a settlement application

Given the complexity of the ILR process, many people choose to seek legal advice. A solicitor experienced in immigration law can review your case, check your documents, and help you prepare a strong application. They can also advise on the best route if you have had issues with your residence or criminal history. If you are in North London and need support with a settlement application, it is worth speaking to a local firm that deals with these cases regularly. The right legal advice can make the difference between a smooth application and a lengthy delay.

When choosing a solicitor, look for one who is registered with the Solicitors Regulation Authority and who has a clear track record with ILR cases. Check their website for information about their services and read client reviews if available. Most firms offer an initial consultation where you can discuss your case and decide whether you want to proceed. During that

meeting, ask about their experience with your specific visa category and how they handle document preparation. A good solicitor will be transparent about their fees and what they will do for you.



You can also contact Adamir Immigration Solicitors London for more information. They provide UK immigration, nationality, and human rights legal services from their office at Unit-1, 5 Norman Rd, London N15 4ND, UK. You can reach them by phone at +44 20 3302 0074.

Adamir Immigration Solicitors London is also on YouTube.

No matter where you are in the process, taking the time to understand the requirements and gather the right evidence will give you the best chance of a successful application. The ILR process is not quick, but it is straightforward when you know what to expect. If you ever feel unsure about a step, getting professional advice is a good investment.