

HOME OFFICE

New English language requirement for migrant spouses intending to settle in the UK.

Secretary of State for the Home Department (Theresa May): I wish to inform the House that I am today announcing the introduction of a new English language requirement for migrants applying to come to or stay in the UK as a spouse. Changes to the Immigration Rules will be laid before Parliament to bring this policy into effect in the Autumn.

Non-European migrants joining a British citizen or non-European national settled in the UK will have to demonstrate a basic command of English in order to be considered for a visa. The rules will apply to spouses, civil partners, unmarried partners, same sex partners, fiancés and proposed civil partners, and will be compulsory for people applying from within the UK, as well as visa applicants overseas.

The Government believes that speaking English should be a pre-requisite for those wishing to settle here. This new English requirement for spouses will help promote the economic well-being of the UK, for example by encouraging integration and protecting public services. It will assist in removing cultural barriers, broaden opportunities for migrants and help to ensure that they are equipped to play a full part in British life.

This is only the first step. We are reviewing English language requirements across the immigration system with a view to tightening the rules further in the future. We will inform the House of our conclusions in due course.

Today's announcement is one of a range of new measures the Government will be taking to ensure that immigration is properly controlled for the benefit of the UK. These include an annual limit on non-EEA migrants coming to the UK to live and work and measures to minimise abuse of the immigration system, for example via student routes.