IMMIGRATION POLICY

In the National Interest

INTRODUCTION

The Social Democratic Party, the party of the patriotic state, stands for a Britain that is independent and democratic, a nation brought together through its enduring bonds.

Our patriotism as social democrats sees the common good being served best when the state acts decisively in the national interest, free from vested elites or supranational constraints. For too long, Britain has been weakened by policies that prioritise short-term fixes, global abstractions and narrow interests over the welfare of its own people. Mass immigration over several decades has been one of the clearest symptoms of that failure: strained public services, depressed wages, eroded social cohesion; all of these serve to undermine the very self-reliance that should characterise a strong, sovereign nation

Our approach to immigration flows directly from the principles set out in our New Declaration. We seek independence in the fullest sense – the right of the British people, through their elected Parliament, to control who enters and remains in these islands without external fetter. We are committed to democracy that respects the expressed will of ordinary citizens, many of whom have felt ignored or

disparaged when voicing legitimate concerns about the scale, pace and character of recent inflows. We view the nation not as an abstract economic zone or a charity but as a living community whose shared life, culture and security must be protected and renewed. True internationalism means helping those in genuine need abroad where it is most effective, while putting our own vulnerable first. Above all, we believe in solidarity – requiring trust, mutual responsibility and a shared sense of belonging which mass, unselective immigration has weakened by stealth for too long.

Our policies flow as the practical application of our convictions. Furthermore, immigration policy must be based on three core foundations – democratic consent, empirical evidence and pursuit of the national interest. They aim to end the era of uncontrolled borders, rebuild domestic capability, reverse recent immigration excesses and restore a migration system that serves the British people rather than burdens them.

William Clouston
Party Leader
Social Democratic Party

Preamble

We will invest in the future of British citizens and rebuild the social trust and unity lost after decades of unprecedented demographic change. This requires a new immigration and border control system – one which is evidence-based, under democratic control and in the national interest.

Recent waves of large-scale inward migration have caused division and economic harm. They have depressed British workers' wages, dis-incentivised investment in productivity and skills training and have put pressure on housing, public services, criminal justice and the welfare system. While some highly skilled migration is necessary and welcome, plugging labour market gaps with the short-term fix of imported labour is a harmful addiction. It must end.

The outdated post-WW2 asylum system is being misused as a vehicle for mass economic migration. It must be replaced with programmes focused on in-region humanitarian aid. For far too long unprecedented population change has been forced on the United Kingdom without democratic consent – denying voters the cultural sovereignty and security they deserve. Our new settlement is essential to bring about a strong, united and prosperous Britain.

IMMIGRATION POLICY IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

- We will end mass immigration to Britain. Our citizens will be trained and incentivized in sufficient numbers in every sector such that large-scale labour migration is not required.

- We will establish and maintain a 'Red List' of countries whose migrants to Britain are proven to be disproportionately criminal, welfare dependent or economically inactive. Immigration from such states will cease in all but exceptional circumstances.

- Britain will withdraw from the 1951 Refugee Convention, the ECHR and all other international instruments which deny UK border sovereignty and revoke any British law which has the same effect.

- People who breach the British border without immigration clearance will be deported immediately or detained offshore for up to two years on Ascension Island and then repatriated. All those living in Britain illegally will be deported.

- Britain will support humanitarian and refugee projects region-by-region throughout the world. A limited number will be offered temporary sanctuary in Britain but will return home once their country is safe. Those who visit their home country without permission will have their sanctuary status revoked.

- Workforce immigration will be controlled via temporary visas for high-skilled people who come for work only. Visa workers in Britain and their dependants will be economically self-sustaining and will have no recourse to welfare, state housing, unemployment funding or healthcare without suitable insurance.

- Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) will be overhauled. Existing holders of ILR will retain their right to stay in Britain but access to public funds will depend on past contribution. In future, the granting of ILR or British citizenship will require 10 years' residence, a clean criminal record, standard English and evidence of net positive fiscal contribution. British citizenship criteria will be strengthened, with migrants required to hold ILR for five years and still meet ILR requirements to apply for citizenship. British citizens living abroad will be encouraged to return with tax breaks and other incentives.

- The post-pandemic immigration surge will be reversed. Those who came to the UK during this period will not be granted ILR and will be required to leave Britain when their visa expires unless they meet strict tests for rare and required skills.

- The use of marriage and family visas for 'chain migration' will end. Family visas will be restricted to those with British relatives or for marriage to a British citizen, granted only to those with good quality spoken and written English and never where marriage was entered into primarily to settle in Britain.

- Study visas will be limited to students attending accredited universities with good quality English. Undergraduates will not bring dependents. Only those who have critically needed skills will be permitted to stay beyond graduation.

- Exit checks at all UK points of departure will be reinstated and matched with visa entry data to ensure that overstay is tracked and prevented. Foreign criminals will be deported and dual nationals who commit serious crime will be deported and have their citizenship revoked.

- The right to vote or to hold public office will be reserved for British citizens. Dual nationals will be barred from holding either ministerial office or senior roles in the civil service, police and military.

End mass immigration to Britain

We will end mass immigration to Britain. Our citizens will be trained and incentivized in sufficient numbers in every sector such that large-scale labour migration is not required.

For too long Britain has allowed employers to treat cheap overseas labour as a substitute for proper investment in its own workforce. This has depressed wages, reduced training opportunities for young Britons and left many communities feeling that their children's futures have been traded away along with the coherence, social trust and cultural goods previous generations had taken for granted. We reject this short-sighted approach.

We will launch a sustained national programme of apprenticeships, technical education, adult retraining and sector-specific skills academies. Large-scale investment in reindustrialisation will help transform productivity. Employers who continue to rely heavily on overseas recruitment without demonstrating serious efforts to train British workers will face stronger financial and regulatory pressure to change course. Our goal is clear: rebuild domestic capability so that routine mass importation of labour becomes unnecessary. With the equipping of Britons to fill the roles our economy needs, large-scale labour migration can and must end.

A Red List policy

We will establish and maintain a 'Red List' of countries whose migrants to Britain are proven to be disproportionately criminal, welfare dependent or economically inactive. Immigration from such states will cease in all but exceptional circumstances.

Migration policy must be guided by evidence of outcomes rather than ideology. Official statistics and independent research already show wide variations in economic contribution, welfare usage and crime rates that vary radically by country of origin.

A periodically updated Red List will be compiled using robust, transparent data on these indicators. Once a country is designated, all new visa routes from that state – work, study, family, visitor – will be suspended or subjected to prohibitive conditions. This is a necessary and pragmatic safeguard to protect public safety, public services and the social fabric of the nation.

Secure the border

People who breach the British border without immigration clearance will be deported immediately or detained offshore for up to two years on Ascension Island and then repatriated. All those living in Britain illegally will be deported.

Unauthorised entry and illegal residence must carry certain and swift consequences. Immediate deportation for new arrivals caught crossing without clearance, or offshore detention pending removal where immediate return is not feasible, will end the incentive to attempt the journey. Ascension Island provides a secure, remote British territory suitable for this purpose.

For the estimated large population already living here illegally, a systematic enforcement programme will be established. Voluntary departure schemes will be offered, but persistent non-compliance will lead to detention and forced removal. The era of de facto amnesty must end.

Overhaul of Indefinite Leave to Remain

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) will be overhauled. Existing holders of ILR will retain their right to stay in Britain but access to public funds will depend on past contribution. In future, the granting of ILR or British citizenship will require 10 years' residence, a clean criminal record, standard English and evidence of net positive fiscal contribution.

The post-pandemic immigration surge will be reversed. Those who came to the UK during this period will not be granted ILR and will be required to leave Britain when their visa expires unless they meet strict tests for rare and required skills.

Existing ILR holders will continue to enjoy the right to reside permanently in the United Kingdom, recognising the legitimate expectations created under previous rules. However, entitlement to means-tested public funds and certain benefits will be recalibrated according to the individual's historical fiscal contribution, ensuring that long-term access to the welfare state reflects genuine net benefit to the nation rather than automatic entitlement.

For all future applicants, the path to ILR (and subsequently to citizenship) will be significantly more demanding and merit-based. A minimum of ten years' continuous lawful residence will be required, alongside an unblemished criminal record, demonstrably strong command of the English language (at a level sufficient

for full participation in civic and economic life) and a verifiable record of net positive fiscal contribution over the qualifying period. These criteria ensure that permanent settlement is earned through sustained contribution and alignment with national life, rather than granted by default after a short period of residence.

The exceptional post-2020 surge – sometimes called the Boriswave – produced unsustainable numbers and low overall contribution. Those who arrived in that period will depart on visa expiry or qualify for extension only if meeting the need for rare and required skills. This reversal is essential to relieve rising societal pressures and to restore balance.

Granting of British citizenship

British citizenship criteria will be strengthened, with migrants required to hold ILR for five years and still meet ILR requirements to apply for citizenship.

The right to vote or hold public office will be reserved for British citizens. Dual nationals will be barred from either ministerial office or senior roles in the civil service, police and military.

British citizens living abroad will be encouraged to return with tax breaks and other incentives.

The granting of British citizenship is a privilege earned through sustained contribution and honoured through responsible conduct, not a right automatically conferred or easily abused. The tightened conditions for the conferring of ILR remain in force once granted: continuous lawful residence, unblemished criminal record and verifiable record of net positive fiscal contribution over the qualifying period.

Democratic rights, including voting in UK elections and holding public office, will belong exclusively to British citizens, reinforcing the principle that full participation in our national life requires unwavering commitment to its values. These measures protect public safety and uphold the special nature of citizenship. There must be no ambiguity through dual citizenship over fundamental loyalty to the British national interest on

the part of anyone holding high office or in positions of leadership in government administration or the security and defence of our nation.

Britain has lost many skilled and enterprising citizens to emigration in recent decades. We will actively encourage their return through selected financial relief and streamlined recognition of overseas qualifications.

Limit workforce immigration

Workforce immigration will be controlled via temporary visas for high-skilled people who come for work only. Visa workers in Britain and their dependants will be economically self-sustaining and will have no recourse to welfare state, housing, unemployment funding or healthcare without suitable insurance.

Only genuinely high-skilled roles that cannot be filled domestically will qualify for temporary work visas, and these will be time-limited with no automatic path to settlement. Visa workers and their dependants must be self-supporting and able to secure their own housing; no access to benefits or free NHS healthcare will be permitted without suitable insurance.

Restore border sovereignty

Britain will withdraw from the 1951 Refugee Convention, the ECHR and all other international instruments which deny UK border sovereignty, and revoke any British law which has the same effect.

Control of who enters and remains in our country is a core requirement of national independence. Yet Britain has progressively surrendered such control through layers of international treaty obligations and domestic legislation that give foreign courts and conventions precedence over Parliament.

Withdrawal from these instruments, together with repeal of enabling domestic law, will restore Parliament's ability to decide immigration rules without external fetters. The process will be carried out swiftly after an SDP government takes office, accompanied by clear public explanation of why sovereignty must be reclaimed. No serious border policy can succeed while external authorities retain the final word.

Reform the outdated asylum system

Britain will support humanitarian and refugee projects region-by-region throughout the world. A limited number will be offered temporary sanctuary in Britain but will return home once their country is safe. Those who visit their home country without permission will have their sanctuary status revoked.

Mass asylum flows are neither sustainable nor the most effective form of humanitarian help. Multilateral co-operation in regions of origin allows far greater numbers to be assisted at a fraction of the domestic cost.

In exceptional cases of conflict, Britain will accept strictly limited, vetted numbers for sanctuary on a temporary basis only. All such grants will carry a clear expectation of return when conditions improve, backed by periodic safety reviews. Unauthorised return visits to the home country will trigger automatic revocation and removal. This policy balances compassion with realism and prioritises British citizens' needs.

Family migration

The use of marriage and family visas for 'chain migration' will end. Family visas will be restricted to those with British relatives or for marriage to a British citizen, granted only to those with good quality spoken and written English and never where marriage was entered into primarily to settle in Britain.

Genuine family life deserves respect, but the system has been widely abused to circumvent other controls. We will limit family routes to immediate British relatives or marriages that are demonstrably genuine, where the spouse already speaks good English and has no primary motive of settlement.

These changes close the chain-migration loophole while preserving the principle that British citizens should be able to form families with partners who can integrate and contribute.

Manage student visas

Study visas will be limited to students attending accredited universities with good quality English. Undergraduates will not bring dependants. Only those who have critically needed skills will be permitted to stay beyond graduation.

The student route has become a major channel for long-term low-skilled migration. Tighter control through accredited institutions will restore its original purpose: temporary, high-quality education that benefits Britain's universities without creating permanent settlement pressures. No dependants will be allowed to accompany undergraduates with study visas.

Post-study stay will be restricted to those who secure high-skilled roles in shortage occupations with rigorous salary and skill criteria. This ensures the route serves national needs rather than acting as a backdoor to indefinite residence.

Exit checks and criminal deportations

Exit checks at all UK points of departure will be reinstated and matched with visa entry data to ensure that overstay is tracked and prevented. Foreign criminals will be deported and dual nationals who commit serious crimes will be deported and have their citizenship revoked.

Overstays will be minimised through mandatory exit recording and data-matching, enabling real-time tracking and swift intervention by authorities. This foundational measure restores the integrity of the visa system and prevents the buildup of illegal populations over time.

Foreign nationals convicted of any imprisonable offence will face automatic deportation after sentence, or earlier where legally possible, to protect public safety and reduce the burden on the prison system. Dual nationals convicted of serious crimes will lose British citizenship and be removed, serving as a strong deterrent and reaffirming that grave violations forfeit the right to remain in our society.

The policies we outline in this publication are based on the SDP's core principles. They reconnect immigration policy to the necessity of democratic consent, to empirical evidence and the duty to protect the national interest. Together they form a coherent, principled programme to end the era of mass immigration, restore control, rebuild from within, and secure a cohesive, prosperous Britain that works first and foremost for its own people.

By reclaiming sovereignty, enforcing the law and investing in our own British workforce, we can create the conditions for a more united, prosperous and self-confident nation – one that cherishes its inheritance and secures it for generations yet to come.

www.sdp.org.uk

SDP
Social Democratic Party