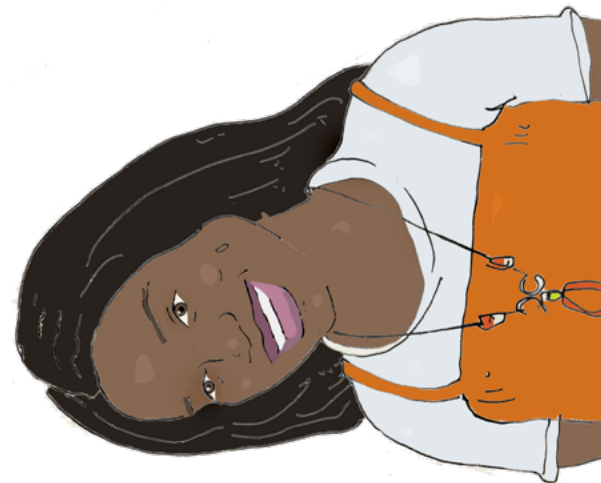




# 'Normality is a luxury'

How 'limited leave to remain' is  
blighting young lives.



A report by young migrants about life on the Home  
Office's 10-year route to British citizenship.

Interviews by Dami Makinde and Zeno Akaka  
Analysis, report and commentary by Fiona Bawdon  
Let us Learn/Just for Kids Law  
July 2019



Standing up for kids

JUST FOR KIDS LAW



YOUNG MIGRANTS STANDING UP

WE BELONG

**“You feel like you are on probation. All our money is tied into keeping ourselves legal. Normality at the moment is a luxury.”**

*Joy, 21 (arrived in UK age 5)*

## Welcome to Let us Learn’s ‘Normality is a Luxury’ report

‘Normality is a Luxury’ (NIAL) was a true team effort, and reflects Let us Learn’s driving ethos of collaboration, positivity and engagement, to bring out the best in ourselves as young migrants, and (we hope) in those around us. We believe the stories in NIAL are a rallying cry to our government of the need for urgent reform of a broken immigration system, to make it fairer and more humane for young people who have lived most of their lives in the UK (see Let us Learn’s recommendations for reform, page 26). We are grateful to everyone who helped make this report happen, but especially to the NIAL interviewees: Agnes, Andrew, Arkam, Cordelia, Ijeoma, Joy\*, Lizzie, Mary, Misan, Sarah Jane\*, Tosin, Wasim\* and Zeno. Thank you for sharing your stories with us, so we can share them with everyone else.

**Chrisann Jarrett**, founder and co-lead, Let us Learn; co-director, We Belong – Young Migrants Standing Up  
**Dami Makinde**, co-lead, Let us Learn; co-director, We Belong – Young Migrants Standing Up

\* Joy, Sarah Jane, and Wasim are pseudonyms.

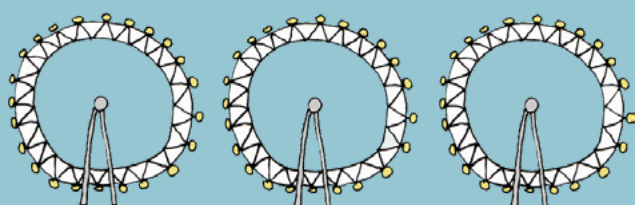
## About Let us Learn and Just for Kids Law

Let us Learn was founded in 2014 and is part of the youth justice and children’s rights charity Just for Kids Law. It was set up by Chrisann Jarrett, then age 19, following introduction of the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011, which meant many young migrants like her, who call the UK home, were effectively barred from a university education. Chrisann had excelled at school and was accepted to study law at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). It was only after applying for a student loan that she discovered the changes brought in by the 2011 Regulations meant she was now classified as an ‘international student’, because of her immigration status. Along with thousands of others who had grown up in the UK, she was no longer eligible for student finance and could be charged university tuition fees several times higher than those paid by home students.

Initially, Let us Learn’s energies were focused on campaigning for equal access to education, but its aims now encompass wider issues affecting young migrants, including calling for a fairer and affordable immigration system, and challenging damaging Home Office practices.

Let us Learn holds monthly meetings, and since its launch has worked with around 1,200 young migrants to provide information and practical and emotional support.

In August 2019, Let us Learn is due to spin off from Just for Kids Law into a separate and autonomous organisation, We Belong – Young Migrants Standing Up. This will make it the first UK-wide campaigning organisation run by and for young migrants.



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Interviews by Dami Makinde, Let us Learn co-lead; and Zeno Akaka, Let us Learn project worker  
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support and expert assistance with this report  
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Subediting/proofreading by Marc Bloomfield

# 1. Interviewees overview

This report is mainly based on interviews conducted in early 2019 with 14 young migrants: Agnes, Andrew, Arkam, Chrisann, Cordelia, Ijeoma, Joy, Lizzie, Mary, Misan, Sarah Jane, Tosin, Wasim and Zeno. Joy, Sarah Jane and Wasim are pseudonyms; all the other interviewees are referred to by their real names.

The youngest interviewee is 19; the oldest 24. Their average age is 22.2 years.

Between them, the interviewees have been in the UK for 198 years: an average of 14.1 years. The youngest was 2 years old when she came to live in the UK; the oldest was 11. The average age on arrival was just under 8.

All the interviewees have lived here at least half their lives; five have been here for longer than three-quarters of their lives. The most recent arrival, Misan (now age 20), came a decade ago. Ijeoma (now age 24) has been here the longest, 19 years. Sarah Jane (also age 24) has been here nearly as long, 18 years.

All interviewees had limited leave to remain (LLR) (see box, page 13), or had held it up until very recently: Misan had recently been granted indefinite leave to remain, which had had a transformative effect on him. He was now looking forward

to living 'like a normal British citizen', and spoke of the 'liberation and peace' that came with being off the LLR treadmill. 'There's now so much clarity and certainty about my future.'

Interviewees named five different countries of origin: over half came from Nigeria; one from Jamaica; two from Pakistan; one from Guyana; one from Gambia; and one preferred not to say.

All but one have clear plans about what they want to do with their lives, and most are hoping to have professional careers. (Joy is currently unsure where her ambitions lie.) Two aim to be lawyers; four want to be psychotherapists or child psychologists (in separate conversations, two interviewees previously said it was the distress they went through as children, because of their immigration status, that makes them want to support other children in emotional difficulties); two want to be scientific researchers; two want to work in banking or finance; and one wants to work at the UN. Two of the interviewees want to run their own businesses: Tosin's ambition is to own an events and marketing company (driven by his passion for bringing people together); Sarah Jane aims 'to run a clothing company and set up a charity to support young women'. She also hopes to qualify as an accountant. •



*\*\* Indicates comments are taken from case studies in the Let us Learn/Coram Children's Legal Centre 2018 submissions<sup>1</sup> to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's report into Home Office fees.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w7YiOJ-gpNtapCwp7vppEonpmlIZODAk/view>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/inspection-report-published-an-inspection-of-the-policies-and-practices-of-the-home-offices-borders-immigration-and-citizenship-systems-relating-to>

## 2. Commentary

The findings of Let us Learn's 'Normality is a Luxury' (NIAL) research are the clearest evidence yet of how the lives and prospects of lawful young migrants are being blighted by soaring Home Office fees, and the length and precariousness of the 10-year limited leave to remain (LLR) process.

The 14 young people interviewed for this report describe their experiences of a harsh, unforgiving immigration system that sows division and fear, damages mental health, limits life chances, and condemns even the hardest-working families to at least a decade of intense financial strain. Let us Learn's experience of working with hundreds and hundreds of young migrants since its launch in 2014, shows that the stories these 14 young people tell of lives distorted and damaged by LLR are being repeated across the country.

### **The 14 young people interviewed describe an unforgiving immigration system that sows division, damages mental health and limits life chances.**

The interviewees – Agnes, Andrew, Arkam, Chrisann, Cordelia, Ijeoma, Joy, Lizzie, Mary, Misan, Sarah Jane, Tosin, Wasim, and Zeno – all grew up in the UK and have lived here at least half their lives. Their ages range from 19 to 24; between them, they have lived in the UK for a total of 198 years. Some arrived as toddlers. They all attended primary school, secondary school and sixth form in this country.

All of the interviewees are (or were until recently) going through the 10-year LLR process. The route to citizenship for young people with LLR is long and fraught with difficulty.

LLR has to be reapplied for every 30 months, for at least 10 years. The cost of an LLR application has increased by 238% in five years, and is now £2,033 (up from £601 in 2014). If the fees charged for any other government service had been increased by this amount, it would have sparked a public and political outcry. Yet our politicians vote through

increase after increase in Home Office fees while displaying little curiosity about the impact these rises have on young migrants who have grown up in the UK, and scant interest in the LLR process more generally. In 2018, Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes attempted to justify plans to double the health levy imposed on LLR applicants by saying it was only fair that 'temporary migrants' pay more to use the health service 'during their stay'. Let us Learn later wrote to the Home Office, pointing out that the health surcharge is also payable by young migrants who have lived here most of their lives, and that many of them (and their families) are already contributing to the NHS through taxation.<sup>3</sup>

The current fee of £2,033 equates to a monthly cost of nearly £70 for anyone on the LLR path. Often, more than one family member will be going through the process at the same time, so there are multiple fees to pay. This means that in many families, for at least a decade, earnings which could otherwise go towards securing a decent home, or be invested in a child's education, instead have to be funnelled out of the family and paid to the Home Office. Working families who would otherwise be financially stable and secure are being driven into debt, and even homelessness, by the relentless pressure of having to pay ever-increasing Home Office fees.

Andrew, 24, who has lived in the UK since age 11, said his mum faced an impossible dilemma when trying to save for his and his brother's LLR fees. 'We were forced to not pay rent, which therefore caused us to be evicted from our home. After saving money towards the [Home Office] fees, my mother was never able to become financially stable again, which led to various evictions later.'\*\* Other young migrants reported that their parents have had to choose which child to keep 'lawful', because they can't afford the fees for more than one LLR application. >> 6

*See Let us Learn's recommendations for how the 10-year limited leave to remain process should be reformed to make it fairer and more affordable, page 26*



# Commentary

>> *from 5* Despite being ineligible for student loans because of their LLR status, nearly half of the interviewees are at, or previously attended, UK universities (often at great financial and emotional cost to themselves and their families). However, what is clear from the findings is that even if they do make it to university, their LLR status means they still face an uneven playing field, however hard-working or gifted they may be. A number of the interviewees were going to extraordinary lengths to follow their career and educational dreams, despite the burden of LLR. Cynthia, 22, was working 40-hour weeks alongside her full-time university studies.\*\* Agnes is holding down two part-time jobs while studying physics at Manchester University. She acknowledges that, despite her best efforts, her grades have suffered because she has such limited time available to study. Her parents contribute what they can, and her aunt is running a crowdfunding campaign to pay her university fees, but Agnes was forced to borrow money last year to pay for her LLR application. A high-flyer all the way through school, Agnes entered her second year of university weighed down with worry and anxiety about paying off these loans in time to allow her to start saving for her next LLR fees.

For all our government's rhetoric about the importance of social integration, it continues to preside over an immigration system that isolates and stigmatises migrants who have no other home but the UK. One of the great ironies of LLR is that, while it is granted to people on the basis that they have strong ties to the UK, the demands of obtaining and maintaining LLR force many applicants to question their place in this country, often for the first time in their lives.

Arkam, 23, who arrived in the UK age 10 and has ambitions to work at the UN, said: 'We're constantly made to feel different. Although we feel British in every matter, we're reminded that we're outsiders.'\*\*\* LLR has had a similar impact on Cynthia (mentioned above), who has lived in the UK for 13 years. She said: 'Despite living in the UK since I was 9 years old and feeling British in every way, I am constantly reminded the government does not believe I belong here.'\*\*

One of the most striking findings is how deeply affected these lawful young migrants have been by the 2018 Windrush scandal. Tosin, 22, who arrived in the UK age 10, said the revelations had left him feeling 'scared and shocked'. He added: 'I'm really scared it could happen to me in the future. If it happened to people who have every reason to think they are completely British, why can't it happen to me?'

Many believed the Home Office's treatment of Windrush generation migrants was driven by racism. Their own experiences at its hands had only strengthened that belief. Cordelia described the Home Office as 'aggressive and extremely hostile towards migrants'.

Ijeoma, 24, who arrived here age 5, said: 'Even though I am a legal resident, it feels like they can take it away any time. I'll wake up one morning, and suddenly they're like: "We don't want her any more!"' When Ijeoma was 15, she was held unlawfully in immigration detention, so for her, stories of elderly Caribbean migrants being detained and removed from the UK had a particular resonance.

A number of interviewees mentioned that Brexit had heightened their fears, leaving them feeling unsafe and unwelcome in their own country. Joy, 21, who arrived age 5, said: 'It doesn't matter what people say, Brexit also affects people of colour. The government are changing the whole immigration process and Brexit has made the UK even more toxic.'

Between them, the interviewees have lived in the UK for a total of 198 years; unsurprisingly, then, they all feel they belong in and to the UK. Yet these young people, who are now in their late teens and early 20s, will be 30-somethings before they are officially recognised as permanently settled in the country they call home. As the interviews reveal, many fear they may never make it, either because they finally buckle under the weight of escalating Home Office fees, or because the ground is cut from under them by changes in immigration legislation (as they have seen happen to EU migrants).

>>from 6 If their worst fears aren't realised and they do manage to clock up 10 years of unbroken LLR, there are still financial and other hurdles to overcome before they can apply for British citizenship. Their next step after LLR will be to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR), which will recognise them as permanent residents of this country. This will entail not only paying a substantial fee (ILR currently costs £2,389), but also passing the Home Office's Knowledge of Language and Life in the UK test. (Applicants from a handful of English-speaking countries, including Jamaica, are exempted from the language element of the test, as are those with degrees from UK universities.)

## **Working families who would otherwise be financially secure are being driven into debt by the relentless pressure of having to pay Home Office fees.**

By the time they can apply for ILR, these young people will have been living in the UK for over two decades. It is safe to say, this is where they will have had nearly all their formative experiences. However, that may not be enough to secure ILR and official recognition that they do indeed belong in the UK. Decades of lived experience can be trumped by poor performance during the Home Office's mandatory 45-minute, 24-question, multiple-choice Life in the UK test. Sample questions online range from the whimsically obscure ('Where did the first farmers come from?') to the banal (identifying that Yorkshire pudding is 'batter cooked in the oven'). Assuming they can successfully answer such questions and are granted ILR, they can apply for citizenship a year later (at a current cost of £1,206).

On any measure, the young migrants interviewed for NIAL – and thousands like them – face a long, uncertain, and emotionally and financially demanding journey before their futures in the country they call home are secure. A mistake on an application form or a financial miscalculation could see them lose their lawful status and become subject to the

government's hostile environment. Perhaps the greatest indicator of the constant stress they are under is the 'liberation and peace' that Misan felt when he was granted ILR last year. Now 20, he has lived in the UK half his life and has ambitions to be a financial adviser.

Misan said: 'Not going through the LLR route now just gives me security. I don't worry I'm going to get deported. I don't stress about it the way I used to. There is now so much clarity and certainty about my future. I know where I am, where I need to go. I'm looking forward to just living my life like a normal British citizen, which I will be in a few months' time.'

We hope that this report will allow the voices of those with first-hand experience of the demands and constraints of LLR to be heard, and that the government will take up Let us Learn's recommendations for ways to make the process fairer and less punitive.

**Fiona Bawdon**  
**July 2019**



### 3. Interviewees close up

#### Agnes

Age: 20

Age on arrival: 4

Years in UK: 16

Country of origin: Gambia

Ambition: scientific researcher and astronaut

% life lived in UK: 80

"We always had to move because of our situation and I always worried that my parents wouldn't come home one day."

#### Arkam

Age: 23

Age on arrival: 10

Years in UK: 12

Country of origin: Pakistan

Ambition: work for United Nations

% life lived in UK: 52

"We've lived in a one-bedroom house for 10 years because the rent is so low and it has to be low because the [Home Office] fees are so high...our quality of life was non-existent."

#### Andrew

Age: 24

Age on arrival: 11

Years in UK: 12

Country of origin: Guyana

Ambition: lawyer

% life lived in UK: 50

"Having limited leave to remain doesn't mean you're safe. It can be taken away from you at any time."

#### Chrisann

Age: 24

Age on arrival: 8

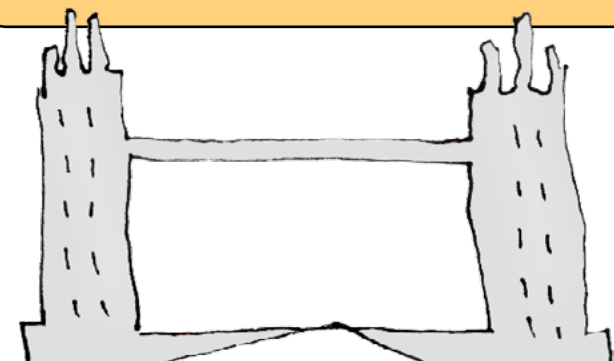
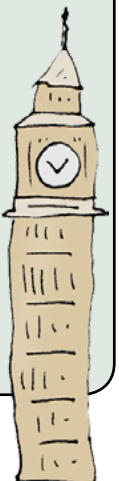
Years in UK: 16

Country of origin: Jamaica

Ambition: lawyer

% life lived in UK: 67

"Even though I know my mum has been here for 23 years and meets the rules, I'm still worried that the Home Office might come back and say 'no'."





# Interviewees close up

## Cordelia

Age: 19

Age on arrival: 2

Years in UK: 16

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: research analyst investment banking

% life lived in UK: 84

“The Home Office is aggressive and extremely hostile towards migrants.”

## Joy\*

Age: 21

Age on arrival: 5

Years in UK: 16

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: not given

% life lived in UK: 76

“All our money is tied into keeping ourselves legal. You feel like you are on probation and count down the days until you will finally be known as a British citizen. Normality at the moment is a luxury.”

>> 10

## Ijeoma

Age: 24

Age on arrival: 5

Years in UK: 19

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: child psychologist

% life lived in UK: 79

“Even though I am a legal resident, it feels like they can take it away any time. I’ll wake up one morning and suddenly, they’re like: ‘We don’t want her any more!’”



Ages and other details correct at time of interview in February and March 2019.

\* Indicates pseudonym

# Interviewees close up

>>from 9

## Lizzie

Age: 24

Age on arrival: 11

Years in UK: 13

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: child psychologist

% life lived in UK: 54

"I've had to put emotions aside and grow up quicker than I should have."

## Wasim\*

Age: 21

Age on arrival: 9

Years in UK: 12

Country of origin: Pakistan

Ambition: physics researcher and academic

% life lived in UK: 57

"This has affected my mental wellbeing and my ability to live a normal life. I feel trapped."

## Mary

Age: 23

Age on arrival: 10

Years in UK: 13

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: psychotherapist

% life lived in UK: 57

"The system is inherently racist and the Home Office is doing everything it can to make people like me feel we are not welcome here."

## Sarah Jane\*

Age: 24

Age on arrival: 6

Years in UK: 18

Country of origin: not given

Ambition: accountant; set up a clothing business and a charity to support young women

% life lived in UK: 54

"It's depressing to know that even if you have spent the majority of your life in the UK, it means nothing."



# Interviewees close up



## Tosin

Age: 22

Age on arrival: 9

Years in UK: 12

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: own events and marketing business

% life lived in UK: 55

“We can’t be financially stable because of the fees.”

## Misan

Age: 20

Age on arrival: 10

Years in UK: 10

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: financial adviser

% life lived in UK: 50

“My mum ended up in lots of financial debt, which prolonged everything.”

## Zeno

Age: 23

Age on arrival: 8

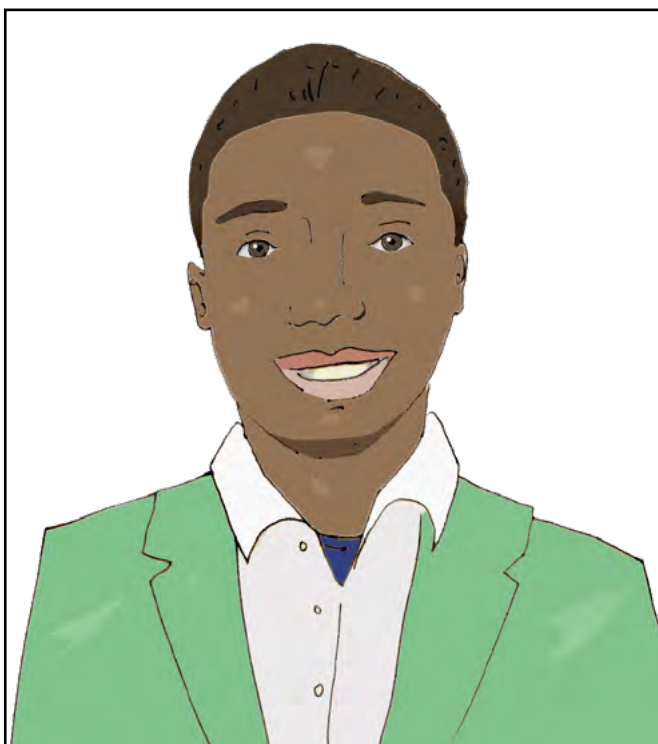
Years in UK: 14

Country of origin: Nigeria

Ambition: psychotherapist

% life lived in UK: 61

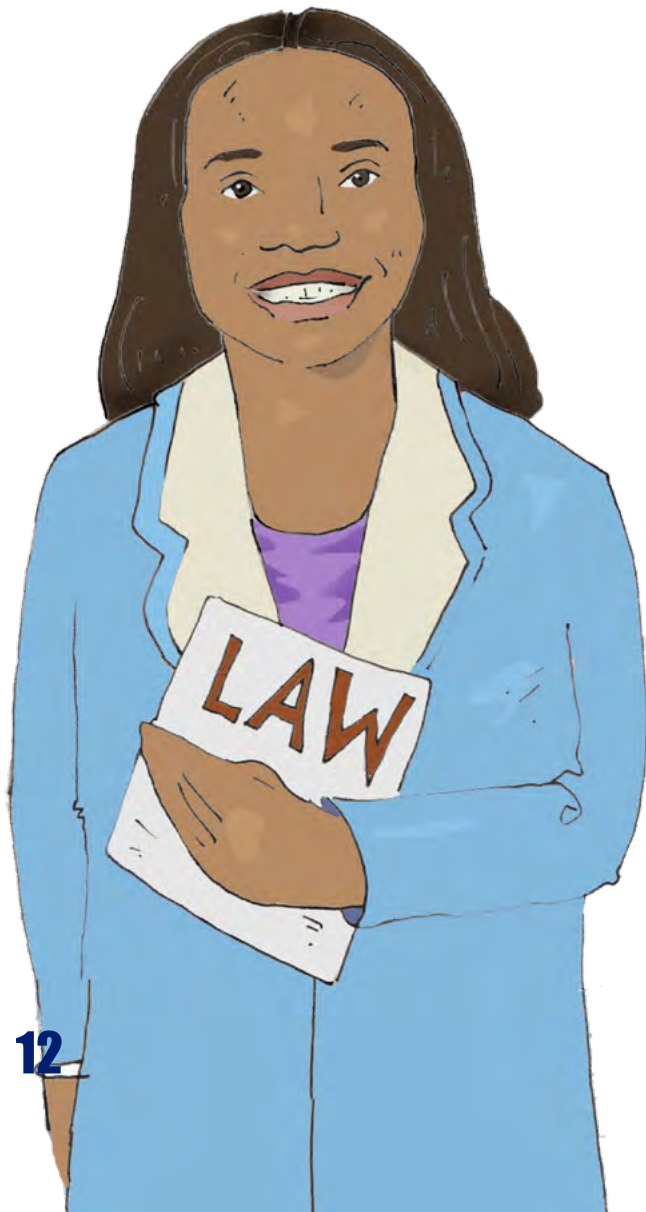
“I’m scared that it’s only going to get worse, especially as Brexit puts more of a strain on the Home Office.”



## 4. Limited leave to remain

**L**imited leave to remain (LLR) is a form of immigration status awarded by the Home Office to people on the basis of their strong ties to the UK. It is granted for periods of 30 months, after which a new application has to be made. It is only after 10 years and four successive, precisely timed LLR applications that people can apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR), also known as 'settlement', and be finally recognised as permanent UK residents. A year after that, they can apply for British citizenship.

Each LLR application entails answering complex questions and supplying highly detailed evidence of their links to the UK, plus paying Home Office fees and the immigration health surcharge (which was introduced in 2015). Until recently, applying for LLR involved a 61-page form. The process was recently moved online in an attempt to make it more streamlined, but immigration lawyers report that the new system is riddled with problems.



In January 2019, the total cost of an LLR application increased to £2,033 (£1,033 in Home Office fees; £1,000 immigration health surcharge), a sum that has risen 238% in five years (see table, next page). Anyone wanting expert legal advice to help with their application would likely have to pay several hundred pounds to solicitors, on top of Home Office fees (legal aid is not available). The current cost of an ILR application is £2,389 and the fee for British citizenship for an adult is £1,206. Legal fees for these applications would also be on top.

**In January 2019, the total cost of an LLR application increased to £2,033... a sum that has risen 238% in five years.**

At current costs, therefore, a Let us Learner being granted LLR today would need to pay a minimum of £11,727 in fees over an 11-year period (10 years with LLR, plus a year of ILR, plus the citizenship fee), before becoming a citizen of the country where they have grown up. There would be other costs, too, such as a biometric residence permit (current cost £19.20), and the Home Office's Knowledge of Language and Life in the UK test (current cost £50). If they used the services of a lawyer, that would likely be another several hundred pounds to pay. Many families will have several members going through the same process together, so the total cost to them will be multiples of those amounts.

Aside from the cost, another obstacle is that the LLR system is designed to be rigid and unforgiving. The Home Office grants leave for a period of two-and-a-half-years, and each subsequent application has to be made within a one-month window. Grace periods are minimal; the consequences for inadvertently falling outside them are harsh. Discretion is rarely exercised in an applicant's favour. A missed deadline, or an application refused because, say, a question on the form was misunderstood, means the Home Office can stop the 10-year clock, and the applicant will have to start the decade-long process again from the beginning.

# Limited leave to remain

The government operates a system of fee waivers for LLR applications, which cover Home Office fees and the immigration health surcharge, and it often points to these when the impact of escalating fees is raised. However, the experience of immigration lawyers is that fee waivers are extremely difficult to get, as the criteria are narrowly drawn and inflexibly interpreted, requiring extensive evidence that an applicant is destitute, or would become so if they had to pay the fee. A Freedom of Information request by Coram Children's Legal Centre revealed in February 2018 that the Home Office was granting just 8% of fee waiver applications from 18- to 24-year-olds. Children under 18 fare even worse, with just 7% of applicants being successful. In any case, there are serious disincentives to applying for a fee waiver. If a waiver application is made and refused, the applicant has 10 days to pay the fee before their LLR application is rejected as invalid and they lose their lawful status. They

would then be left having to make a new application, with the 10-year LLR clock being reset.

Applying for LLR is not just prohibitively expensive, but slow. The Home Office advises that it can take six months to process applications, but delays of three times this length (or more) are not uncommon. These delays are a source of intense emotional stress and practical difficulty. Several interviewees said that the period between submitting an application and receiving a reply is the most stressful time of all. Delays put entire families under strain. Chrisann said that her mum had been waiting nearly two years for a decision on her LLR renewal, despite having lived in the UK for 23 years and appearing to easily meet all the Home Office's criteria. Ijeoma's mum was uncertain if her renewal would come through in time for her to attend her youngest brother's funeral in Nigeria.



## The rising cost of limited leave to remain

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Home Office fees	£601	£649	£811	£993	£1033	£1033
Immigration Health Surcharge*	-	£500	£500	£500	£500	£1000
Total cost of LLR	£601	£1149	£1311	£1493	£1533	£2033
Year on year increase	-	91%	14%	14%	3%	33%

\* IHS introduced in 2015



# 5. Background to 'Normality is a Luxury'

'Normality is a Luxury' (NIAL) is based on in-depth interviews with 14 young migrants who've grown up in the UK and have been granted limited leave to remain (LLR) by the UK Home Office.

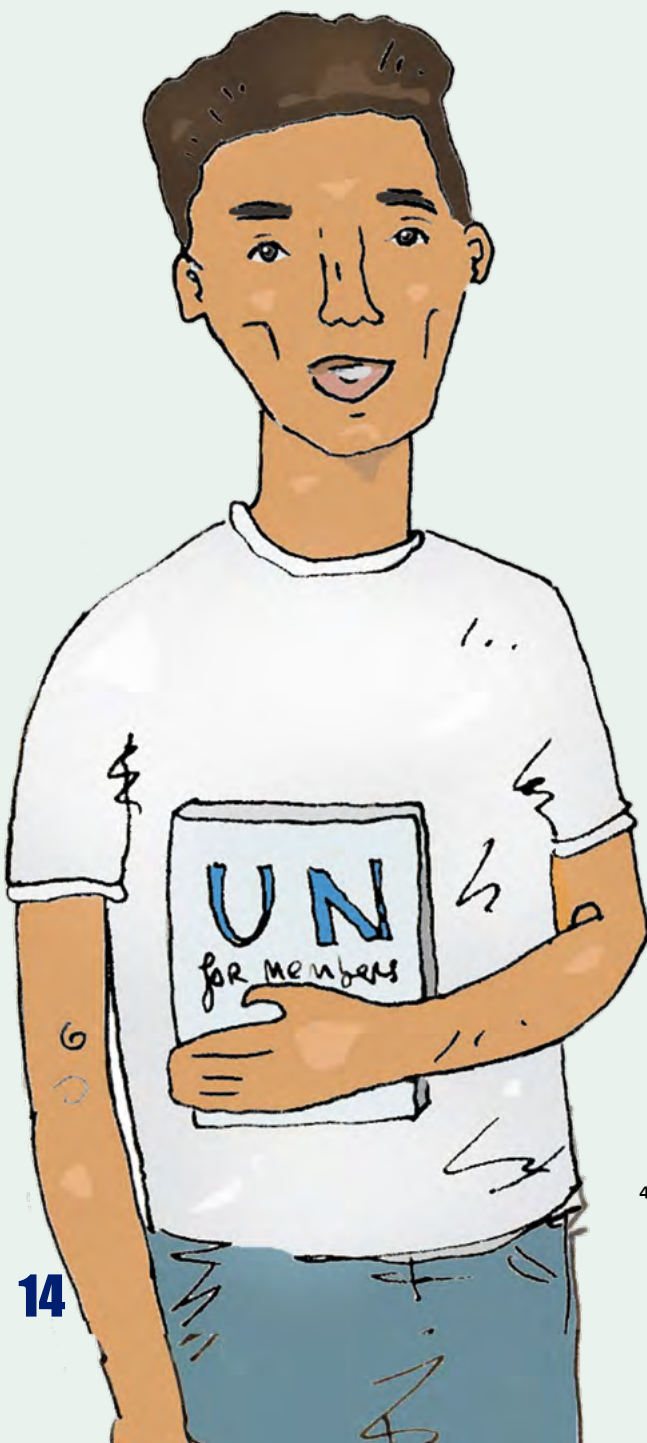
The research was conducted as part of Let us Learn's 'Affordable fees; Fair treatment' campaign. Launched in 2018, the campaign is pushing for urgent reform of the lengthy, expensive and unforgiving LLR process that is distorting the lives of so many young people who came here as small children and call this country home.

Interviewees were asked about the practical, financial and emotional costs to them and their families of the 10-year LLR route they have to go through before they can be officially recognised as living in the UK permanently. After 10 years of LLR, the next step is to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR); a year after that, they can apply to become British citizens. Interviewees were also asked about the 2018 Windrush scandal; and what message they would like to deliver to the Immigration Minister.

The interviews were conducted during February and March 2019, online, in person or over the phone, by Let us Learn staff Dami Makinde (co-lead) and Zeno Akaka (project worker). Both Dami and Zeno are themselves young migrants with LLR, and are in the same position as the interviewees. Like them, Dami's and Zeno's futures and wellbeing are dependent on making regular, expensive applications to the Home Office in order to maintain their lawful status. (Zeno is also included as an interviewee.)

The analysis and commentary is by Fiona Bawdon, a journalist and campaigner who has worked with Let us Learn since its inception. Fiona is author of *Chasing Status: If not British, then what am I?* (2014),<sup>4</sup> the report which first highlighted the Home Office policies that would culminate, four years later, in the 2018 Windrush scandal. She contributed a chapter ('Remember when Windrush was just the name of a ship?') to *Citizenship in Times of Turmoil: Theory, Practice and Policy* (edited by Devyani Prabhat), which is to be published in August 2019 (Edward Elgar Publishing).

As well as the 14 interviews, where indicated (\*\*), NIAL also draws on the written case studies that were included in Let us Learn's 2018 submission (made jointly with Coram Children's Legal Centre) to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's review of Home Office fees (the report of which was published in April 2019). •



<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lag.org.uk/about-us/policy/campaigns/chasing-status>

## 6. The findings

### i Windrush shockwaves

The Windrush scandal, which broke in the UK media in 2018, has had a profound and unsettling effect on the Let us Learners. Tosin said he had felt 'scared and shocked' at hearing stories of elderly Caribbean migrants being wrongly told they were in the UK illegally and being subjected to the full force of the government's hostile environment, including detention and removal to countries that some had last seen as young children.

Ijeoma described it as a 'betrayal of trust' by the government, and feared 'Let us Learn would be next'. A number were shocked that a group of migrants who are part of the fabric of British society had been labelled 'illegal' and so badly mistreated. Mary said: 'I've always seen it differently with the Windrush generation because they were invited to come here and were promised citizenship.' Joy said: 'Of all the migrants they should have treated respectfully, it should have been the Windrush generation.' Zeno would 'never have thought the previous generation would have to suffer that way, especially after their service to the UK, and that of their elders'.

Seeing the mistreatment of people whose Britishness should have been beyond question made the interviewees fearful about whether having LLR really meant they were safe from being targeted by the Home Office. Mary said Windrush was 'like a foreshadowing of what can happen to me'. Andrew asked: 'If they could do that to a British citizen, what could they do to me?' Tosin had similar fears: 'If it happened to people who have every reason to think they are completely British, why can't it happen to me?'

Andrew had felt especially vulnerable when the Windrush scandal broke, because he was waiting to hear back from the Home Office having submitted his LLR application. 'It made me feel like I could be deported at any time and didn't have the right to be here.' (His application was subsequently granted.)

Ijeoma was also left 'more scared' and less willing to speak openly about her own situation as a migrant. For Zeno, it showed that Commonwealth migrants are 'disposable'. She said: 'Every time I

think I'm used to it, it gets slightly worse and I'm forced to analyse my place or existence in the UK.' Chrisann said: 'It showed me you can't be too secure.'

**'If they could do that to a British citizen, what could they do to me?' - Andrew**

Based on their own experiences and what they knew of its treatment of the Windrush descendants, the Let us Learners saw the Home Office as 'incompetent', 'aggressive' and 'extremely hostile towards migrants'. Mary said: 'The system is inherently racist and the Home Office is doing all it can to make people like me feel we are not welcome here.' Others agreed that racism had been a factor in Windrush and in their own treatment by the Home Office. Wasim said: 'Our lives are being played with and the UK is becoming very hostile to migrants.' Chrisann believed that if the Windrush migrants been white, they would not have faced such extreme treatment, because 'the Home Office would have listened to reason'. >> 16



# Findings

## i Windrush Shockwaves

>>from 15 Brexit was also making interviewees feel increasingly insecure. Some of their concerns were straightforward and practical: how would an already inefficient department like the Home Office cope with a flood of EU applications? Other fears, when combined with the Windrush revelations, were more fundamental and existential. The Let us Learners were aware that many Windrush victims had been caught out by changes in immigration law (sometimes from decades earlier): either they hadn't known about the changes or they'd assumed they didn't apply to them. Similarly, the status of EU citizens had once seemed immutable, but they are now losing the automatic right to live in the UK post-Brexit. The combination of Windrush and Brexit meant that some Let us Learners were appreciating for the first time that they, too, could be affected by unexpected legislative changes: the limited leave to remain (LLR) path to citizenship, which was already long and steep, might be cut from under them all together. This realisation had left many feeling that LLR put them in a highly precarious position.

Ijeoma said: 'Even though I'm a legal resident, it feels like they can take it away any time. I'll wake up one morning, and suddenly, they're like: "We don't want her any more."' Mary said: 'I see that the effort and money I am putting into the [LLR] application and showing that I'm of good character could amount to nothing if policies and laws change.' She added that, despite battling to keep 'on this very narrow legal path', with a change in legislation 'it can all crumble and I have to be prepared for that.'

Others feared they might never be free of the Home Office or ever fully recognised as British. Tosin said: 'When you finish the path you're on, do you actually get citizenship, or does it depend? It's not guaranteed that you won't have to deal with the Home Office ever again.' Lizzie said although she had previously had 'a clear goal of

citizenship', 'with the scandal, it wasn't so clear any more.'

Although none of the interviewees had originated from EU countries, Brexit left them feeling their situation was now more fragile. Sarah Jane said: 'I'm more worried now because of the Brexit talks and the negative attitudes towards immigration. There's no certainty regarding rules and laws.' Joy said: 'It doesn't matter what people say, Brexit also affects people of colour. The government are changing the whole immigration process and Brexit has made the UK even more toxic.' •

**'Even though I'm a legal resident, it feels as if they can take it away any time' - Ijeoma**





## Findings

### ii Impact on family life and finances

Let us Learners described how the uncertainty and high cost of LLR is having a damaging effect on their lives and those of their families. For some, their entire family was going through the LLR process, which meant paying thousands and thousands of pounds in Home Office fees, and making multiple renewal applications for family members every two-and-a-half years. Andrella said the Home Office treats LLR applicants as 'cash cows'. 'They are charging people who are already vulnerable and have little money an extortionate amount.'\*\*

Agnes said that in her family 'every 30 months, there is a sudden surge of pressure'. Cordelia also described the financial stress of having to meet escalating Home Office fees: 'I saw a lot of sacrifices that had to be made in my family. My mum worked really hard and she worked a lot of nights so she was never really at home. My sisters worked really hard, too. I'm the youngest of five. I felt they tried to shelter me from a lot of what was happening but I could still see it.'

For some, the high cost of Home Office fees meant being stuck in unsuitable accommodation; for others, it meant instability and constant moves. Arkam's family has lived in a one-bedroom house for 10 years: 'Because the rent is so low and it has to be low because the [Home Office] fees are so high... our quality of life was non-existent.' Tosin's family has stayed in 'a situation that we shouldn't be comfortable with because that's all we can afford'. For Agnes, the strain of LLR on family finances meant repeated moves during her childhood. For Andrew, it had been the trigger for a string of evictions. 'After being scammed by bad lawyers who had no intention of submitting a valid application,' his family were left without enough money to pay their rent and lost their home.\*\*

Home Office fees are pushing families into debt and leaving them unable to save for anything other than their LLR renewals, sometimes despite parents working multiple jobs and long hours. Earnings that could have gone to provide stability and a better quality of life are instead funnelled out of the family and into the Home Office. Joy said: 'Right now, all our money is tied into keeping ourselves legal.' Ijeoma said: 'My mum works so many hours just to

make ends meet.' Arkam: 'We want to buy a house but cannot afford it, nor to save for it, because we have to fork out £6–7,000 every two-and-a-half years for our legal documents.'

**'They are charging people who are already vulnerable and have little money an extortionate amount' - Andrella**

The LLR process is lengthy enough, but for many Let us Learners the prohibitively high fees meant long delays before they could even begin to start the 10-year clock ticking by making their first LLR application. Agnes' family was stuck in a Catch-22 situation: without LLR they weren't able to work; while unable to work, it was inordinately difficult to save up for their LLR fees. 'For so long, we weren't able to get on the 10-year path because of the cost, and that affected us financially, especially not being able to work.' Andrew had been similarly stuck, because the high cost of LLR had 'made it almost impossible for me to make an application'. He adds: 'My mother was forced to save up for several years to actually be able to pay both the application fee and lawyer fee for my brother and me.'\*\* >>18



# Findings

## ii Impact on family life and finances

>> *from 17* For some families, their fear of the Home Office was so acute that obtaining and maintaining their immigration status took priority over all other expenditure, even on other essentials. Agnes said that growing up, 'I couldn't do a lot of things other children did. It was the little things that really added up. Not having new shoes. Going to bed hungry. I was always anxious things would go wrong.' Andrew's mum was left unable to pay their rent: 'After saving money towards the fees, my mother was never able to become financially stable again, which led to various other evictions later.'\*\* Arkam, who is studying at King's College London on a scholarship, said: 'I have so much to pay for: the NHS surcharge, the application, a lawyer. All my savings, gone. I can't save for anything else because my main focus is on having legal status.'

The high cost of LLR means missing out on many of the experiences that people in their 20s often have once they have entered the world of work – socialising, travelling, learning to drive, saving to rent a flat or for a mortgage. Joy, 21, said: 'I've never been on holiday. We can't be spending money on a fancy holiday when you have four people's [Home Office] applications to pay for.'

Many spoke about how different their lives would have been without the burden of the LLR process.

For Zeno, the sky would, almost literally, be the limit: 'The simplest way to describe it is I'd feel like a bird. Finally able to fly, without having my feet tied down.' On a practical level: 'The amount of money I spend towards the 10-year route could easily help me buy a house. I could travel the world.' Ijeoma said: 'I would have had a degree, be working hard on a job related to my degree, and giving back to my mum. Helping her out and, of course, travelling, like any other young person. Seeing the world. Having my own car. My own money. Give to charity without worrying about my own money because right now I feel like a charity case.' Lizzie said: 'I would have graduated with my undergrad and masters by now. I would have been able to open a bank account, gotten a stable job, saved for my future. I would have been saving for a mortgage, because that was my plan.' Joy said: 'Had this not been hanging over me, we could save up for other things, like a house.' Tosin, who wants to run an events company, said: 'I would be invested in my future, buying a car, a house, starting a business.'

Mary's response to the question of what her life would otherwise have been like was among the most telling. After a deep sigh, she said: 'I wouldn't even know how to act, if I didn't have the 10-year route hanging over me. I'll be healed from the mindset of feeling trapped, give my time and money to causes I care about, and not just be trying to get jobs that will help me raise money for the next application.' She would have been able to fulfil her ambitions to travel and complete a master's degree.

**'I couldn't do a lot of things other children did. It was the little things... Not having new shoes. Going to bed hungry. I was always anxious things would go wrong' - Agnes**

The LLR process has an emotional, as well as financial, impact on families. Cordelia said her four older sisters 'spent most of their 20s fighting the immigration system, and it's just tiring'. Lizzie said: 'A lot of emotional clashes we've had as a family have come from a place of hurt and frustration because of our immigration status.' Most distressing for some was that the financial and other constraints put on them by LLR created a breach with extended family members back in their country of origin. Arkam said: 'Not being able to go and bury family members in Pakistan hurt all of us.' Lizzie hadn't seen her grandparents in 14 years, which caused her mum great anguish. When her grandparents were ill, she and her mum felt 'stuck and useless because we are unable to help them'. Ijeoma's mum hadn't seen her own mother for 10 years: 'And then her mum ended up dying on my mum's birthday, and we weren't even able to go to the funeral because we couldn't afford it.' It was another three years before Ijeoma and her mum were able to afford a visit to Nigeria. More upset was to come, sadly. Shortly after Ijeoma's interview for this report, her uncle in Nigeria died. Her family's financial situation is now more stable, but with her mum's passport and papers at the Home Office for her LLR renewal, it was unlikely they would be able to travel to the funeral. The prospect of missing the burial of another close family member, once again for reasons to do with their immigration status, was a source of great hurt and sadness for both Ijeoma and her mum.



# Findings

## ii Impact on family life and finances

The Home Office warns that LLR applications can take six months, but the interviewees' experiences were that the process often takes far longer. In his recent report on Home Office fees, the Independent Chief Inspector of Immigration and Borders addressed exactly this issue. He called for shorter timescales to grant or refuse applications (recommendation 9) and for the Home Office to issue a 'clear statement of the level of service the "customer" can expect in return for payment, including when they will receive a response and/or decision, effective communication about the application and the decision, and the means to complain and seek redress where the level falls short of the expected standards (recommendation 6).'

These are certainly reforms Let us Learn and the NIAL interviewees would welcome.

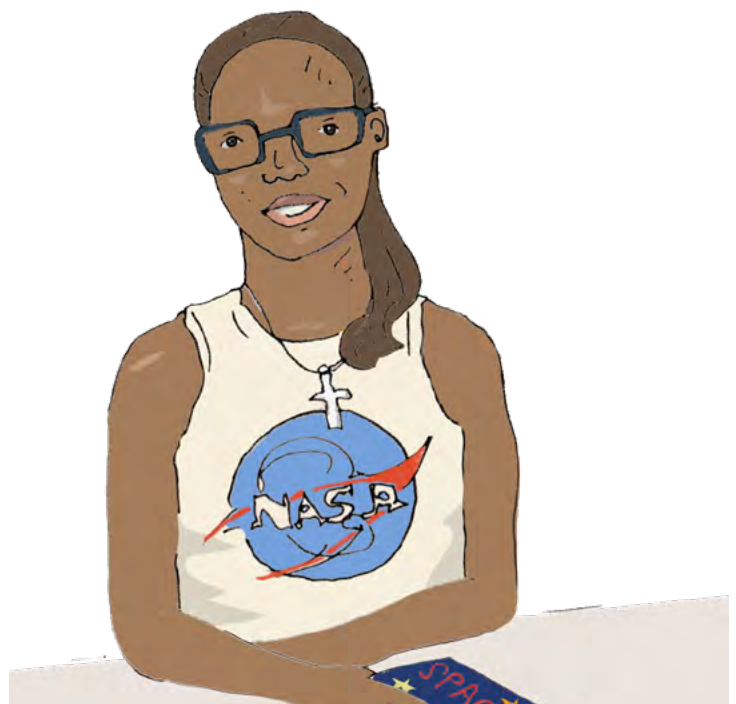
Chrisann's mum was still waiting to hear back from the Home Office nearly two years after submitting her LLR renewal application, which left them both jittery. Chrisann said: 'Even though my mum has been here 23 years and she qualifies and meets the rules, I'm still worried that the Home Office might come back and say, "no".'

Her own application was nine months away at the time of NIAL interview, but Chrisann was already anxious about it. 'Even though I know all I need to know to be prepared and send my application, I'm always thinking about missing something, and what ifs. I feel a level of heightened anxiety because I don't want anything to go wrong that would mean they query my status.' To avoid the kind of agonised delay her mother is facing, Chrisann plans to use the Home Office's 'super priority service' where, for an additional £800 on top of the £2,033 fee, applications are turned around in a day. This takes the cost of an LLR application to £2,833, which is a crippling sum for Chrisann to find from her earnings, but better than the cost to her mental wellbeing that comes with waiting for a standard application to be returned. 'I don't want to do fast-track, because I need to save money, but I don't really have a choice.' She added: 'I don't want renewing to put anything else in my life on hold.'

Agnes said: 'They can take as long as they want, but if you're late to hand something in, then for you it's over. How do they justify the constant increase in fees, when the service doesn't get any better? Where does all that extra money go?'

Even when an application isn't delayed, with so much riding on the outcome, the waiting period is still a time of acute daily anxiety for Let us Learners. Once leave is granted, any relief is short-lived, as they know they face going through the same uncertain process in just 30 months' time and need to start saving again immediately.

For many, Home Office delays cause not just anxiety but practical difficulties that set Let us Learners apart from their peers. When she was 17, Agnes been unable to apply to work with the UK government-funded National Citizen Service, because all her documents were with the Home Office. Mary had recently applied for a new job but, while she waited for the Home Office to return her papers, had no way of proving her lawful residence to her potential new employer. 'So this is very much up in the air, which is making me more stressed in comparison to a year ago, when I was stressed about raising money for the application. I was stressed then. I'm more stressed now.' Misan's dad lost his job and couldn't apply for a new one for the same reason: all his paperwork was with the Home Office. As a result, Misan's family was left with only his mum's earnings to live on. 'We had one income for a family of four. We had to pay rent, our application to remain lawful, lawyers' fees, and all the other costs for four people. My mum ended up in financial debt, which prolonged everything.' •



## Findings

### iii Impact on education and prospects

The spark for Let us Learn's formation was the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011, which came into effect in 2012. These meant people with LLR were no longer eligible for student loans. Many young people who'd grown up here and thought of the UK as home suddenly found themselves being treated less favourably than their friends and classmates. While their peers went off to university, they were left behind. No student finance meant no chance of taking up often hard-won university places. Under the new regulations – which were introduced with relatively little debate – anyone with LLR was no longer recognised as a 'home student', regardless of how long they had lived in the UK. Losing student finance was only half the problem, though: being denied home student status also meant their university fees were no longer capped at £9,250 a year. Instead, they faced the prospect of having to pay the same fees as international students, which could be many times higher. (Let us Learn members include one who was charged fees of over £26,000 a year to study chemistry at Imperial College.) For many, the double whammy of no student loan and higher fees seemed set to put an end to their education ambitions.

Unsurprisingly, the 2011 legislation was subject to legal challenge. In 2015, the Supreme Court (*Tigere v Department for Business, Innovation & Skills*) ruled that a blanket exclusion of all students with LLR from student finance, regardless of the strength of their ties to the UK, was unlawfully discriminatory. Let us Learn was one of the intervenors in the

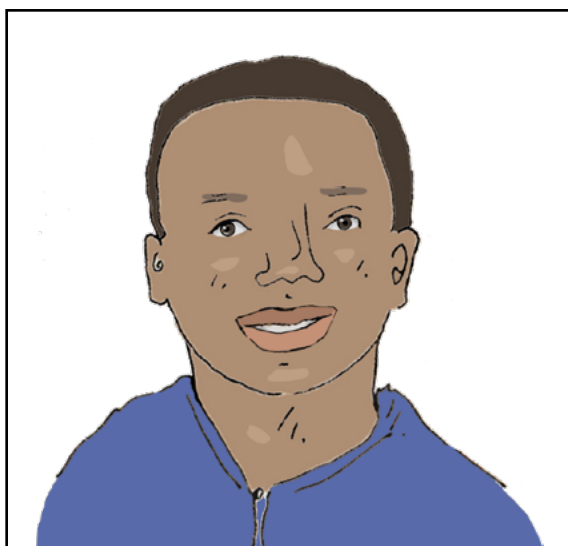
case. Following the judges' ruling, changes were made. Under the system introduced following *Tigere*, some young people with LLR have regained their right to a student loan, provided they can meet two additional criteria: they have held their immigration status for at least three years; and they have lived in the UK for at least half their lives.

These changes went some way to mitigate the situation, but large numbers of young migrants are still excluded from being able to study for a degree, which means most professional careers are effectively closed to them.

What is striking about the NIAL findings is that even when those with LLR do manage to take up university places – because they can obtain a student loan; thanks to a scholarship (Arkam); or through a combination of crowdfunding and loans (Agnes) – the demands and constraints of the 10-year process continue to take a toll. However determined and academically gifted they may be, young people with LLR are at a disadvantage compared with other students.

Many are only able to start university after one or more enforced 'gap years'. Agnes achieved three A grades at A-level, but had to delay taking up her Manchester University place while she puzzled out how to try to fund her studies (a conundrum that, in her second year of university, she has yet to fully resolve). Rather than being full of excitement and anticipation, for this able and ambitious student, the period after A-levels was 'a dark time'. Misan said: 'Had I not gone the LLR route, I would have gone to university earlier. This journey prolonged everything for me.'

Sometimes, the additional hurdles interviewees face at university may appear relatively minor, but they still mean they are excluded from competing with their peers on an equal footing. Joy, Tosin and Agnes would all like to study abroad for a year during their degrees but they can't for fear of jeopardising their LLR status. Tosin said: 'I've lost out on opportunities with my uni because I can't be out of the country for more than six months.'



# Findings

## iii Impact on education and prospects

For Arkam, his looming Home Office renewal is casting a shadow over his final year at university. 'I'm doing my third year at King's [College London], which I should be concentrating on, but instead I am going around collecting documents for myself and my family. I would just like to be a normal student and be left alone.' The financial pressure of LLR sets him apart from his university peers in other ways, too: 'You can't celebrate like a normal student when people are planning graduation trips.'

Arkam receives a scholarship and lives at home, which puts him in a relatively stable position financially, compared with other interviewees. Cynthia\*\* won a scholarship that covers her university fees, but she still has to fund the £6,500 cost of her accommodation while also saving for her Home Office fees. She has been attempting to do this by working 40 hours a week, spread over three days, alongside her studies. Unsurprisingly, she describes her regimen as 'physically and mentally draining'.

She said: 'During my first year at university, I haven't been able to focus as much as I should have done because I am constantly worrying about paying for my accommodation and my upcoming immigration renewal.' What drives her to keep working such punishing hours is the knowledge that if she loses her LLR, she could be 'removed from the

UK to a place I no longer know'.

She added: 'Unfortunately, I haven't been given the same opportunities as most of my university peers, as I am in a constant state of worrying regarding money. This has taken a heavy toll on me and I will battle for the next eight years to raise the money I need to become settled in the UK.'

### **'I would just like to be a normal student and be left alone' - Arkam**

Tosin, who is at university in Hertfordshire, is planning to move back home to Hackney, east London, next year and commute. He hopes this will make it possible to save for his next LLR application, due in 2020, but is already worrying how he will juggle everything. 'It will be hard to find a job that pays enough for me to save up for my renewal and travel to university, all within the hours I'm legally able to work as a student.'

Agnes,\*\* who is now in her second year of a physics degree at Manchester, is under even more intense pressure. After a delay of a year, she was able to take up her university place only after her aunt launched a crowdfunding campaign, which raised enough to cover her first two years' tuition fees. That still left her living and accommodation costs to cover, as well as her LLR fees, and it has been a constant battle for Agnes stay afloat financially. She combines her studies with two part-time jobs, often working all weekend, and every holiday. She has two younger brothers, and her mum and dad contribute what they can from their earnings as, respectively, a carer and a builder, but it still hasn't always been enough. (Her parents also have their own LLR applications to pay for, although both her brothers are now British citizens.) There have been times when Agnes has faced having to choose between paying her Home Office fees and for her next term's accommodation. When her most recent LLR renewal was due, in 2018, her only option was to borrow the money, and she is now 'praying' she can pay her loans off quickly enough to start saving for her next Home Office fees. She is also still trying to crowdfund for her third year's tuition fees. 'I worry daily about paying off my debts,' she said. •



## Findings

### iv Impact on mental health and wellbeing

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the interviews is the toll the 10-year LLR process is taking on the mental health of the young migrants who are coming to adulthood under its shadow.

Each interviewee spoke about the impact on their wellbeing. Andrew said: 'Emotionally, this process can be damaging. My thoughts make me stressful all the time. My family are always worried about everything. You never feel relieved.' Joy said: 'Emotionally, this process really weighs on you.'

For some, their situation was a source of shame and embarrassment. Many of them, like Arkam quoted above, spoke of not feeling 'normal', and of being set apart from and treated less equally than their peers. For Joy, normality was a luxury that she couldn't afford, because of LLR.

Arkam\*\* said that, despite feeling 'British in every matter, we're reminded that we are outsiders'. LLR 'makes it difficult to integrate, because we're constantly made to feel different,' he added. Wasim said: 'It has made me feel unwelcome in this country, despite being here 12 years and contributing towards the economy.'

Sarah Jane said it was 'humiliating' to be questioned about her LLR at every job interview. For Andrew, LLR made even routine encounters feel fraught with danger: 'Even though I have my status, I still have the same emotional fear I had from when I didn't have status. I'm still scared to go to bank. I think, what would happen to me? When I had an interview for my current job, my heart was still racing, not for your typical reasons, but because I'm afraid. I don't know what would happen to me. I'm scared to give any legal documents. It's like I've been conditioned to be like this. It's like PTSD. It doesn't go away overnight. It takes time.'

The impact on Ijeoma was equally long lasting. 'I was in a state of depression for three years. I didn't get my LLR status and suddenly become healthy. It took a long time to recover.'

The fear of losing their lawful status was ever present. For those who had previously been undocumented for a period, because of the prohibitive cost of LLR, this seemed to be an especially acute concern. Being granted LLR had not brought Andrew peace of mind. 'I am just as worried now as I was a year ago, when I didn't have status. Having status doesn't mean you're safe. It can be taken from you at any time. Nothing has changed.'

**'Emotionally, this process can be damaging. My thoughts make me stressful all the time. My family are always worried about everything' - Andrew**





# Findings

## iv Impact on mental health and wellbeing

Many spoke of not feeling free. Wasim described feeling 'trapped and imprisoned'. Three Let us Learners said they felt as if they were 'on probation'. Andrella\*\* likened LLR to having 'somehow inherited some sort of crime' when she came to the UK.



For Mary, the stress and uncertainty had left her numb. 'It's always hard for me to comment on how it's impacted me emotionally because I just have to keep trudging through things and keep it moving, no matter how hard it is. Over time, I've become disconnected from my emotions.' Lizzie described a similar reaction: 'I've had to put my emotions aside and grow up quicker than I should have. It made my mental development rushed in a sense. It's been very unhealthy.'

**'I feel hopeless about the whole situation. No matter how much good work we put in, it's like they are not listening' - Ijeoma**

For Zeno, it seemed to have the opposite effect, particularly post-Windrush: 'I'm a lot more on edge now and definitely hyper aware of the impact the Home Office has on me.' She described feeling overwhelmed by the burden of LLR, despite her best efforts to keep her emotions under control. 'It creeps up on me at the most random times. When I'm reading, talking, walking, whatever it may be. I'm suddenly reminded I have this massive deadline hovering over me.'

The LLR process left Zeno and Ijeoma feeling powerless and unheard. Zeno said: 'There is a lack of control that I have over my life for the next 10 years that makes me want to cry and scream.' Ijeoma said: 'I feel hopeless about the whole situation. No matter how much good work we put in at Let us Learn, it's like they are not listening or taking into consideration the reality of our situation.' •



# 7. Young migrants' messages for the Home Office

Interviewees were asked what they would say to the Immigration Minister, if they had the chance.

## Agnes

'There are so many words I want to say, I don't know where to begin. The cost of limited leave to remain is such a big thing. If that was less of a barrier, it would eradicate a lot of other difficulties.'

## Zeno

'Will you have a conversation with us? Are you indifferent to the thousands of lives your rules affect? Where is your humanity in a job that requires you to work with humans?'

## Andrew

'What would you do if you woke up one day and were told you're not a British citizen, and you were asked to pay a huge sum of money you cannot afford, or face removal? How would you feel?'

## Arkam

'What is the justification for paying the NHS immigration health surcharge when we work and pay taxes, and the NHS is covered in that? How can we survive with having to pump out so much money every two-and-a-half years? Where is the justice?'

## Chrisann

**'I've been here since I was eight. I am now 24. Would you see me as temporary?'**

## Cordelia

'Michelle Obama said, "It's hard to hate close up." Sometimes we have perceptions and don't take a closer look at other people's lives and how difficult life can be. Progress can only be made if you take the time out to listen to the stories of young people in this difficult situation.'



### **Tosin**

'Why can't people on the 10-year route go on a year abroad with their universities? It is part of their education. Why are you comfortable with us missing out on opportunities?'

### **Joy**

'Please review this 10-year route and the price we are paying to stay lawful. Do you think it's humane or necessary?'

### **Sarah Jane**

'Is it fair for young people who can barely afford to pay rent or bills to have to pay thousands of pounds in application fees every two-and-a-half years? Can you consider implementing a fairer, more affordable route for young people?'

### **Wasim**

'Can the UK retain its position as a global leader if it's hostile towards migrants? Why are you continuing this approach?'

### **Ijeoma**

'To be considerate. If you cannot freeze the fees, can you make the route shorter? How does it make sense for us to be on a 10-year route, considering we have lived here for the majority of our lives. Can you see us as human?'

### **Misan**

'When making decisions about people's status, please can it be a reasonable timeframe? Some people wait over a year, and that's not right.'

### **Lizzie**

'To give me citizenship. Can you make the route easier? It just doesn't make sense. It feels as if we are being targeted.'

### **Mary**

'I don't know what to say to you, other than to express my pain.'

## 8. Let us Learn's recommendations

Let us Learn campaigns on behalf of all young migrants and has a specific interest in those whose lives are affected by the limited leave to remain (LLR) process. Many of the young people we work with are on the 10-year path to settlement (and then citizenship). Others have now been granted settled status but have family members who are still on the LLR treadmill. We also know of too many young people who have grown up in the UK but can't regularise their immigration status because LLR fees are so high and they have no access to expert help with the application process, as there is no legal aid for these cases.

Below are our recommendations for reforming LLR, which are based on our direct experience of working with young adult migrants. We also strongly support wider calls for reform of the immigration process to make it fairer and humane, and in

### 1. A five-year path to settlement (permanent status) for those who have lived in the UK for half their lives or more.

The current 10-year LLR route is overlong, punitive, and limits the life chances of young people who have grown up in the UK. The financial and other constraints that the 10-year process imposes means many young migrants reaching early adulthood are denied the opportunity to realise their talents and ambitions, and are unable to fully contribute to society. Ten years of multiple applications and multiple fees only increases the likelihood that young people who know no other home than the UK will inadvertently fall out of status and have their lives ruined as a result. A five-year LLR path to settlement would be fair and put us on an equal footing with EU migrants.

### 2. An end to the profit element of the leave to remain fee for children and young people under 25.

We believe it benefits no one for young migrants who have grown up in the UK to enter adulthood weighed down by such a heavy financial burden, because of the need to pay escalating and unpredictable Home Office fees. We believe that limiting

particular the campaigns by the Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens, Coram Children's Legal Centre, Citizens UK and others, for a reduction in the cost of children's citizenship applications.

### The 10-year LLR route is overlong, punitive and limits the life chances of those who have grown up in the UK.

Britain prides itself on being a fair, just and inclusive society, and it is these values that make us so proud to call this country our home. Let us Learn wants to work with our government and others to create an immigration system that truly embodies these principles and works for everyone.

the fee to the actual cost of processing each application would automatically lead to tapering of the cost of second and subsequent LLR applications (as endorsed by the Independent Chief Inspector's report, recommendation 9).

### 3. LLR fee increases to match inflation.

The cost of LLR has leapt by 238% since 2014, a rate of increase that has caught out many young people and left them struggling to afford their next application. Limiting annual LLR fee increases to inflation would be fair and, importantly, give young migrants more certainty over how much they need to save for each subsequent application.

### 4. A fairer, more comprehensive fee waiver system.

We support calls by other campaign groups and the Independent Chief Inspector that the means-tested fee waiver system should be overhauled. We agree that the burden of evidence of destitution should the fee waivers should be extended to all child LLR, ILR, and citizenship applicants. In addition, we call for removal of disincentives which deter many who might be eligible for a fee waiver from even applying, for fear of losing their immigration status all together (see page 12).

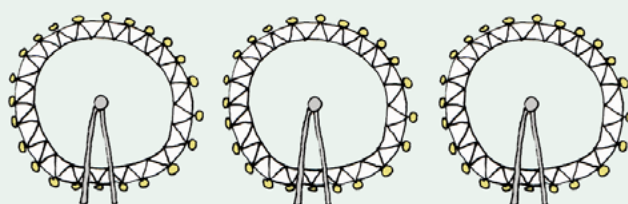
# Let us Learn's recommendations

## **5. Dropping Home Office 'Knowledge of Language and Life in the UK' tests for those who have lived in the UK for at least half their lives.**

We believe that these tests (which are compulsory before being granted indefinite leave to remain or citizenship), are inappropriate and unnecessary for those who have grown up in the UK. They are an additional financial burden and source of stress, and feel insulting to people who have lived in the UK most of their lives.

## **6. A review of the immigration health surcharge.**

The immigration health surcharge, introduced in 2015, is intended to ensure people who are in the UK temporarily pay towards the cost of the health service. We believe there should be an urgent review to consider introducing an exemption for migrants who have lived in the UK half their lives; and/or making the health levy payable only when LLR is first granted, dropping it for subsequent applications. Reforms of this kind would end the 'double tax' paid by many people with LLR because they (or their families) are working and already paying towards the cost of the NHS through taxation.





Standing up for kids  
**JUST FOR KIDS**

