ILR Guide for IMG Doctors

For doctors on a Health and Care Worker / Skilled Worker visa | Information checked on GOV.UK: 2nd August 2026

ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain) is permission to settle in the UK. Once granted, you can live and work in the UK without a time limit.

When can I apply?

Under the current GOV.UK rules, doctors on a qualifying Skilled Worker or Health and Care Worker route can usually apply after **5 years**. The earliest you can apply is **28 days before** you complete the qualifying 5 years. Applying earlier may lead to refusal.

What do I need to check?

Your 5 years	Make sure the visas you have held count towards the 5 year qualifying period.
Time outside the UK	You normally must not have spent more than 180 days outside the UK in any 12 month period. There are some exceptions, so check the official guidance if you have had long absences.
Your current job	Your sponsor must still be approved and must confirm that you are still needed in your job after you get ILR.
Your pay	For eligible jobs on Skilled worker visa where the going rate is based on national pay scales, you must be paid at least £25,000 a year OR the Full national going rate for your type of job, whichever is higher. Check the current rate for your exact role.
Life in the UK Test	If you are aged 18 to 64, you normally need to pass it. It costs £50. The test has 24 questions, lasts 45 minutes, and you need 75% to pass.
English	The current GOV.UK ILR page says you do not need to prove English again for this route because it was already proved for your work visa. Immigration rules can change, so check the live GOV.UK rules if you are applying later.

How do I apply?

1. Check your visa history and absences.

2. Pass the Life in the UK Test.

3. Check the salary requirement for your doctor role.

4. Ask your employer/sponsor for the required confirmation that you are still needed in your job.

5. Apply online from inside the UK through GOV.UK.

6. Provide the documents and biometric information requested.

How much does it cost?

ILR application fee: £3,226 per person. There is no separate biometric fee. A standard decision is usually made within **6 months** after you provide your fingerprints and photo. If available, priority costs **£500 extra** and aims for a decision within 5 working days. Super priority costs **£1,000 extra**; GOV.UK says the decision is normally by the end of the next working day after weekday biometrics, or 2 working days after weekend biometrics.

While you are waiting: do not travel outside the UK, Ireland, Channel Islands or Isle of Man. GOV.UK says your application will be withdrawn if you do.

What about the proposed ILR changes?

There has been discussion about possible changes to settlement rules. Do not assume that a proposed longer route is already the rule for doctors. The current GOV.UK Skilled Worker / Health and Care Worker ILR guidance still gives a 5 year qualifying period. Immigration rules can change, so always check GOV.UK again when you are getting close to applying.

Useful GOV.UK links :

- ILR: Skilled Worker / Health and Care Worker
- How to apply for ILR
- Life in the UK Test
- Healthcare / education salary rules
- Continuous residence rules

Please check GOV.UK before applying. Fees and immigration rules can change. This sheet is intended as a quick guide for IMG doctors and does not replace individual immigration advice.

Tips : Ensure to get a letter from your HR in every placement before it ends, stating all your leaves are authorised.