

# IM IMPACT

GUIDE TO SPONSORSHIP -  
SKILLED WORK VISA

**The Skilled Worker route** allows UK employers with a valid sponsor licence to recruit and sponsor overseas nationals to work in eligible roles in the UK. It is one of the most commonly used work routes and can lead to **settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain)** after five years.

This route is suitable for individuals who already have a **job offer from a UK sponsor** or employers looking to hire skilled talent from overseas.

At Migrate UK, we provide end-to-end support for both **employers and applicants**, ensuring compliance with Home Office requirements and reducing the risk of delays or refusals.



# HOW THE SKILLED WORKER ROUTE WORKS

**The Skilled Worker route involves two key stages:**

## **1. SPONSOR LICENCE & CERTIFICATE OF SPONSORSHIP (CoS)**

The UK employer must hold a valid sponsor licence and assign a Certificate of Sponsorship to the worker.

## **2. SKILLED WORKER VISA APPLICATION**

The worker applies for the Skilled Worker visa using the CoS details.

## **KEY BENEFITS OF THE SKILLED WORKER ROUTE**

- Work legally in the UK for an approved sponsor
- Pathway to settlement
- Ability to change employers (subject to a new application)
- Dependents (partner and children) can join you in the UK provided certain requirements are met
- Ability to study alongside work
- No cap on the number of Skilled Worker visas
- Time spent on this route counts towards British citizenship

# REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBILITY

## EMPLOYER (SPONSOR)

The sponsoring organisation must:

- Hold a valid Skilled Worker sponsor licence.
- Offer a genuine vacancy at the required skill level.
- Pay at least the minimum salary required for the role.
- Have appropriate HR & reporting systems in place.
- Assign a valid Certificate of Sponsorship.
- Keep accurate records and report key information to the Home Office (compliance).

## ROLE & SALARY

### The role must be:

- An occupation code eligible for sponsorship
- Genuine & necessary for the business
- Meet the minimum skill level:
  - RQF level 3 if the CoS was assigned prior to 22 July 2025 & the worker has held continuous Skilled Worker permission since or if the role is on the Immigration Salary List or Temporary Shortage List – RQF level 6 in all other cases.

### Salary requirements:

- Depend on the occupation code
- Must meet the general salary threshold and the going rate (whichever is higher)
- Reduced thresholds may apply for new entrants, roles on the Immigration Salary List, or applicants claiming PhD points.

## APPLICANT (WORKER)

Main applicants must:

- Have a valid Certificate of Sponsorship.
- Meet the English language requirement.
- Have no serious criminal convictions, a clear immigration history & not pose any concerns to public interest or safety.
- Show they can maintain themselves in the UK (unless certified by sponsor or have been in the UK with a valid visa for 12+ months)

## FAMILY

Family can accompany the worker to the UK depending on the skill level of the job or the date the CoS was issued.

- Can be a spouse, civil partner or unmarried partner or children under 18 (and over 18 in limited circumstances).
- Must not have any serious criminal convictions, a clear immigration history & not pose any concerns to public interest or safety.
- Show they can maintain themselves in the UK.

# TIPS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR SKILLED WORKER APPLICATION

We understand that the Skilled Worker route can be complex for both employers and applicants. Our experienced immigration lawyers provide clear, practical, and compliant guidance at every stage.

## GATHER KEY DOCUMENTATION

### For the employer:

Check if a sponsor licence is held. If not, a fresh application can take between 3-12 weeks on average to process

### Sponsor Licence Application:

- At least 4 documents confirming the organisation is legally operating in the UK
- Have suitable HR and operational systems
- Show full details of the vacancy & any recruitment efforts
- Provide a cover letter detailing additional relevant information as per the guidance.

## MEET MANDATORY TEST REQUIREMENTS

### For the employee:

#### English Language Proficiency:

Applicants aged 18 or over must prove B2 level skills in all 4 components unless they already evidenced B1 level skills in a prior visa application.

#### Exemptions:

- Nationals of majority English-speaking countries
- Under 18, 65 & over, or hold certain academic qualifications
- Granted humanitarian protection or similar exemptions

#### Tuberculosis (TB) Testing:

Applicants from countries listed in Appendix T of the Immigration Rules must provide a TB clearance certificate from an approved centre before submitting their visa application to enter the UK.

#### Criminal record certificate:

For certain roles in education, healthcare, therapy or social services.

## VISA APPLICATION

### For the employee, you'll need:

#### Proof of ID & lawful status:

- A valid passport or travel document
- If you are resident in the UK, your eVisa details or visa vignette.

#### Role justification:

- Certificate of Sponsorship reference number
- Relevant qualifications or experience for the role.

#### Mandatory test evidence:

- English language, TB testing and criminal record certificates as required.

#### If applying with dependants:

- Their ID documents
- Proof of your relationship with your partner and children.
- Additional funds to support your family.

The exact documentation may vary depending on your circumstances, therefore expert advice should always be sought first.

# FAQ's

## **Q: Can a newly established company that hasn't filed a tax return apply for a sponsor licence?**

A: Yes. Start-ups trading for less than 18 months are eligible, though additional supporting evidence may be needed.

## **Q: Does a company need a physical office to get a sponsor licence?**

A: No, a physical office isn't required. However, if the business uses a virtual address or operates from home, the Home Office will assess where the sponsored worker will carry out their duties. This may trigger a pre-licence compliance visit to verify the business and role are genuine.

## **Q: Do I need a job offer to apply?**

A: Yes, you must have a confirmed job offer from a UK employer that holds a Skilled Worker sponsor licence and has the ability to issue a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS).

## **Q: What skill level must the role meet?**

A: Roles must normally be at Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) level 6 or above. In practical terms, meeting RQF level 6 means the job will typically be one where a person would be expected to have at least an undergraduate degree or equivalent qualification/experience relevant to the role.

Under the current rules, there are limited exceptions where roles below RQF level 6 (for example at RQF levels 3-5) may still be eligible — such as where the occupation is listed on the Immigration Salary List or the Temporary Shortage List, or where transitional provisions apply for workers already in the route before 22 July 2025.

## **Q: What do I need to be paid as a Skilled Worker?**

A: Skilled Worker roles have minimum salary thresholds, which vary depending on the job and your circumstances. Typical salaries range from £26,200 to £41,000+ per year, depending on the occupation. "Going rates" are set for each role and can be reduced by 10–30% for certain categories, such as "new entrants (under 26, a student, recent graduate, or in professional training)" or PhD holders.

## **Q: What is the Temporary Shortage List?**

A: The Temporary Shortage List (TSL) identifies jobs that are currently in short supply in the UK. Jobs on the list do not benefit from a lower "going rate" salary discount, but they may still qualify for a Skilled Worker visa by meeting other points-based requirements.

Key points to note:

- Only roles included in the TSL and assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) before 31 December 2026 are eligible.
- If a job is removed from the TSL, or the CoS is assigned after the expiry date, a Skilled Worker application cannot be made under this route.
- Each eligible role is linked to a SOC 2020 occupation code, and some codes include only certain specific job types.

## **Q: What if my job is on the Immigration Salary List?**

A: If your role is on the Immigration Salary List (ISL), you must be paid at least £25,000 per year or the full going rate for the role, whichever is higher.

# FAQ's

## Q: Can I change employers on a Skilled Worker visa?

A: Yes, but you must receive a new CoS and submit a change of employment application.

## Q: Can my dependants join me in the UK?

A: The answer is yes provided:

- You are sponsored in an RQF level 6 role, or
- In an RQF level 3 role only if you held a Skilled Worker visa before 22 July 2025, you continuously held a Skilled Worker visa since then and you are extending your visa, changing employers or applying for a dependant visa for a child born in the UK.

## Q: Can I access public funds?

A: No. Skilled Workers cannot claim most public benefits, including maternity expenses payment, winter fuel payment and child benefits.

## Q: Does this visa lead to settlement?

Yes, you can usually apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain after 5 years of continuous residence if you have been employed in an RQF level 6 role and have earned at least the minimum published threshold for three years immediately prior to applying.

## Q: Can I take on additional work while on a Skilled Worker visa?

A: Yes, but the rules depend on the type and amount of additional work.

- Overtime in your sponsored role is permitted with no limit, and you do not need to update your visa.
- You may work up to 20 hours per week in another job or for your own business, provided you continue in your sponsored role and the additional work:
  - Is in an eligible higher-skilled occupation,
  - Is on the Immigration Salary List, or
  - Is in the same sector and at the same level as your main job.
- Work in a medium-skilled role is only permitted if you received your first CoS before 22 July 2025 and have held continuous Skilled Worker permission since then.
- If you wish to work more than 20 hours per week in another role, you must update your visa, obtain a new Certificate of Sponsorship from the second employer, and submit a new application.
- You may also undertake voluntary work, provided it is unpaid (aside from reasonable expenses) and carried out for a registered charity, voluntary organisation, fundraising body, or statutory body.

Any business activities, including administration such as invoicing, count towards the 20-hour weekly limit.

## Q: What happens if my employment ends?

A: Your sponsor must report the change to the Home Office. The Home Office will then normally curtail (shorten) your visa and issue you a notice giving you up to 60 calendar days to either secure a new sponsor and submit a new application or leave the UK.

# SKILLED WORKER VISA APPLICATION PROCESS



## Preparing the application form

Once a sponsor licence has been obtained, the organisation can apply for and issue a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). The company must pay the CoS fee and any Skills Charge applicable.



## Signing and declaring application form

Once the CoS has been issued, prepare the visa application. At the time of submission online, fees will need to be paid. This could include an Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) fee of £1,035/year for the duration of your sponsorship and the application fee of £769-£1,751 depending on location & duration of sponsorship. There are also fees for dependants.



## Book an appointment

to enrol your biometric data, where you will have your fingerprints and photo taken.



## Upload supporting documents

Such as passport, qualifications, TB testing and proof of relationship with dependants to the application portal before your appointment.

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# PROCESS TIMES

POST BIOMETRIC APPOINTMENT, IT WILL TYPICALLY TAKE THE FOLLOWING TIME TO RECEIVE A DECISION ON YOUR APPLICATION:

## VISA APPLICATION STANDARD SERVICE

= 3 Weeks from Overseas  
= 8 Weeks within the UK

## VISA APPLICATION PRIORITY SERVICE

= 5 Working Days **£500 Additional Charge**

## VISA APPLICATION SUPER PRIORITY SERVICE

= 1-2 Working Days **£1000 Additional Charge**

## ONCE YOUR APPLICATION IS SUCCESSFUL

If you applied from overseas after 30th October 2025, your decision email or letter will tell you how to access your [eVisa](#) to see the permission you have been granted before you travel to the UK and whether you will get a vignette (visa sticker in your passport).

# WHAT HAPPENS AFTER GAINING A SKILLED WORKER VISA

## YOU CAN:

- Work for your business and take on additional work in certain circumstances
- Study
- Do unpaid voluntary work for certain organisations
- Settle in the UK after 5 years of continuous residence

## YOU CANNOT:

- Apply for most benefits (public funds)
- Change jobs or employer unless you apply to update your visa



# HOW CAN MIGRATE UK HELP?

At Migrate UK, we understand that the application process can be confusing and overwhelming. Our team of experienced immigration lawyers are on hand to provide tailored guidance and support throughout your Skilled Worker application journey.

Depending on the level of service you require, we offer the following services.



## CONSULTATION £300 +VAT

- ✓ Phone / video call where we discuss your suitability and eligibility for Skilled Worker sponsorship
- ✓ Outline of the application process
- ✓ Written summary post call

## CHECK & ADVISE FROM £500 +VAT

- ✓ Check your supporting documents and offer recommendations, if applicable
- ✓ Check your completed application form and offer revisions, where needed
- ✓ Instructions for submission of application

## FULL REPRESENTATION FROM £1950 +VAT

- ✓ Preparation of CoS on behalf of employer
- ✓ Preparation of visa application and review of supporting documents
- ✓ Submission of visa application and uploading all documents to UKVI on your behalf
- ✓ Upon approval, we can offer services where we provide compliance advice to ensure you are on track for settlement & a British passport.

For a full description for each service, please refer to our guide attached.



# IM IMPACT



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By entrusting your visa application to our legal partner Migrate UK, you can ensure that your case is handled professionally, reducing the risk of delays or refusals

## THANK YOU

Contact us for an assessment or a quote on [info@migrate-uk.com](mailto:info@migrate-uk.com) or 01235 645800.