



Home Office

Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors

Sponsor a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker

Version 04/25

This document forms part of the collection 'Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors'. It provides information for religious organisations on how to sponsor a worker on the T2 Minister of Religion route or the Temporary Work – Religious Worker route.

This version of the guidance is valid from 9 April 2025.

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About this guidance

This document provides information for religious organisations on how to sponsor a worker on the following immigration routes.

- T2 Minister of Religion (referred to in the rest of this guidance as the ‘Minister of Religion route’)
- Temporary Work – Religious Worker (referred to in the rest of this guidance as the ‘Religious Worker route’)

The Minister of Religion route is for the recruitment of a person who has a key leading role within their faith-based organisation or religious order in the UK.

The Religious Worker route is for people who want to support the activities of religious institutions in the UK by conducting religious work, such as working in a religious order or filling non-pastoral placements, for up to 2 years.

For convenience, this document refers to the two routes collectively as the “religious work routes”.

Other guidance you must read

To make sure you meet all of the relevant requirements and fulfil your sponsorship duties, you must read the following parts of the sponsor guidance, in addition to this document:

- [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#) – this contains detailed information on how to apply for a sponsor licence and how we assess applications
- [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) – this contains detailed information on how to sponsor Workers and Temporary Workers, including how to request and assign Certificates of Sponsorship, immigration requirements, and conditions of stay
- [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#) – this contains detailed information about your duties as a licensed sponsor and the action we can take if you fail to meet these duties
- any relevant annexes or appendices referred to in the above documents

You can access all of these documents, and other information on sponsorship, on the [Sponsorship: guidance for employers and educators](#) page on GOV.UK.

This guidance is subject to change. If you have printed or downloaded a copy of this guidance, check the version number and date on GOV.UK to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version.

Glossary

There is a glossary of terms used throughout the sponsor guidance (including this document) at the beginning of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).

For a definition of ‘occupation code’, ‘SOC 2020 occupation code’ and ‘SOC 2010 occupation code’, see the glossary in [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

Terms used in this document:

Religious Worker

A person who is applying for, or has been granted, entry clearance or permission to stay on the Religious Worker route; or who you are sponsoring, or intend to sponsor, on that route.

Religious Worker route

The route in [Appendix Temporary Work – Religious Worker](#) to the Immigration Rules. Where the context requires it, it can also refer to:

- the route in Appendix T5 (Temporary Worker) Religious Worker in place between 1 December 2020 and 10 October 2021 inclusive
- the Religious Workers sub-category of the Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) route in Part 6A of the Immigration Rules in place before 1 December 2020

See the [Immigration Rules Archive](#) on GOV.UK for previous versions of the Rules.

Religious work routes

Collectively, the Minister of Religion route and the Religious Worker route.

Minister of Religion

A person who is applying for, or who has been granted, entry clearance or permission to stay on the Minister of Religion route; or who you are sponsoring, or intend to sponsor, on that route.

Minister of Religion route

The route in [Appendix T2 Minister of Religion to the Immigration Rules](#). Where the context requires it, it can also refer to the Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) route in Part 6A of the Immigration Rules in place before 1 December 2020.

Contacts

If you think this guidance has factual errors or broken links, you can email the [Business Helpdesk](#).

If you have read this guidance, and the guidance referred to above, and you still have any queries, you can call us on 0300 123 4699 or email the [Business Helpdesk](#).

Version number and publication

Below is information on the version number of this guidance and when it was published:

- version 04/25
- published on 9 April 2025

You can view [previous versions of the guidance](#) on the National Archives website.

Changes to this guidance

This version replaces version 12/24 (published on 17 December 2024). The guidance has been updated to:

- give effect to a commitment in the [Written Ministerial Statement of 28 November 2024](#) to prohibit sponsors from passing on sponsorship fees and associated administrative costs to their sponsored workers
- make some other minor amendments and clarifications

Details of the changes are set out below. Paragraph numbers in brackets refer to the previous version of this guidance where the number was different:

- MRW2.4: new paragraph inserted prohibiting sponsors from seeking to recoup the sponsor licence fee and associated administrative costs from their sponsored workers from 9 April 2025; subsequent paragraphs in this section renumbered accordingly
- MRW2.8 to MRW2.10 (MRW2.7 to MRW2.14): paragraphs redrafted and simplified as guidance on how to prove charitable status and eligibility for these routes is contained in the revised version of Appendix A to the sponsor guidance being published at the same time; subsequent paragraphs in this section renumbered accordingly
- MRW2.11 (MRW2.15): cross-reference to Appendix A updated
- MRW4.30: minor drafting amendment
- MRW7.7: new paragraph inserted prohibiting Minister of Religion sponsors from seeking to recoup any part of the Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) fee, or associated administrative costs, from a sponsored worker where the CoS is assigned on or after 9 April 2025; subsequent paragraphs in this section renumbered accordingly
- other minor housekeeping changes

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MRW1. Sponsoring a person on the religious work routes: overview

This section provides an overview of the Minister of Religion and Religious Worker routes, the sponsorship requirements you must meet, and other ways religious workers can come to the UK.

What are the religious work routes?

MRW1.1. There are two main routes on which you can sponsor people to work in religious occupations:

- [Minister of Religion](#): this route is for the recruitment of a person who has a key leading role within their religious establishment or organisation in the UK, such as a minister of religion, missionary, member of a religious order, or other religious workers in mainly pastoral roles
- [Religious Worker](#): this route is for people who want to support the activities of religious institutions in the UK by conducting religious work, such as working in a religious order or filling non-pastoral placements, for no more than 2 years

MRW1.2. See [section MRW3](#) for further information on the types of role you can sponsor on these routes and a summary of the differences between the two routes.

MRW1.3. Both routes allow the worker to bring their dependants (partner and dependent children) with them, if they meet the requirements for dependants on the relevant route.

MRW1.4. Ministers of Religion can apply to settle in the UK after 5 years' continuous residence. The Religious Worker route is not a route to settlement.

Who needs to be sponsored on the religious work routes?

MRW1.5. You will need to sponsor any overseas national you wish to employ if they are not a 'settled worker' or do not otherwise have immigration permission to work for you in the UK. This includes most [EU, EEA](#) and Swiss nationals who arrived in the UK after 31 December 2020.

MRW1.6. You do not have to sponsor certain categories of worker, including

- Irish citizens (with very limited exceptions)
- people who have been granted status under the [EU Settlement Scheme](#)

- people with indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK (also known as 'settlement')

MRW1.7. This is not a complete list. For further information on who does, and does not, need sponsorship, see section S1 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

What are the sponsorship requirements for the religious work routes?

MRW1.8. If you wish to sponsor a person on the Minister of Religion route or the Religious Worker route, you must:

- hold a [valid sponsor licence](#) for the Minister of Religion route and/or the Religious Worker route
- understand the general requirements for sponsoring workers – see [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#)
- understand what the [religious work routes](#) are and [who you can sponsor](#) on these routes
- if sponsoring a Religious Worker, carry out a [resident labour consideration](#) (where required)
- offer [pay and conditions](#) that are at least equal to those given to settled workers in a similar role
- satisfy yourself the worker you wish to sponsor can meet the relevant [immigration requirements](#) for the route
- assign a [valid Certificate of Sponsorship \(CoS\)](#) to the worker you wish to sponsor and pay the [relevant CoS fee](#)
- have eligible Key Personnel in place to manage your licence and assign CoS – see section L4 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#) for guidance on Key Personnel
- keep records for each worker you sponsor, including information on how you recruited them – see [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance
- understand and comply with all of your sponsor duties – see [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#)

Other routes available to religious workers

MRW1.9. Religious organisations can also sponsor workers to fill temporary positions on the [Charity Worker route](#), provided the work is unpaid and comes within the definition of voluntary fieldwork which applies on that route – this includes a requirement that the work is directly related to the organisation's charitable aims.

MRW1.10. Religious workers can come to the UK to preach or do pastoral work for up to 6 months, without being sponsored, on the [Visitor route](#), provided they:

- will not take employment, or work which amounts to them filling a role or providing short-term cover for a role within a UK-based organisation; and

- will not receive payment, except reasonable expenses to cover the cost of their travel and subsistence

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MRW2. How to get a sponsor licence for the religious work routes

This section tells you about the requirements you must meet to be eligible for a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker sponsor licence.

General requirements

- MRW2.1. If you wish to sponsor a worker in a religious role, you must hold a valid sponsor licence for the Minister of Religion route and/or the Religious Worker route. If you do not already hold such a licence, you must apply for one by completing the [online application form](#), paying the relevant [application fee](#), and submitting the supporting evidence specified in [Appendix A](#) to the sponsor guidance.
- MRW2.2. Before applying for your licence, you should read:
- [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#) for detailed information on the general requirements and the application process
 - this section for guidance [specific to the religious work routes](#)
- MRW2.3. If you already hold a valid licence to sponsor workers, but it does not include either of the religious work routes, you can apply to add one or both routes to your existing licence. You may have to pay a fee for this. For further information on adding routes to your licence, see section L10 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).
- MRW2.4. You are responsible for paying the sponsor licence fee and any associated administrative costs. If you are granted a licence, we will normally revoke your licence if we find you have recouped, or attempted to recoup, any part of the sponsor licence fee or associated administrative costs, by any means, from a worker you are sponsoring on or after 9 April 2025. For further information, see 'Sponsorship fees' in section L6 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).

Specific requirements for the religious work routes

- MRW2.5. In addition to the general requirements for a sponsor licence set out in [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#), to be eligible for a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker sponsor licence, you must be a bona fide religious organisation which:
- has [charitable status](#)
 - is the structure for a faith-based community with a common system of belief and spiritual goals, codes of behaviour and religious practice, which exists to support and/or propagate common beliefs and practices and where beliefs:

- include any religious belief or similar philosophical belief in something transcendental, metaphysical or ultimate
- exclude any philosophical or political belief concerned with man, unless that belief is similar to religious belief
- does not exclude anyone from your community on the basis of gender, nationality or ethnicity
- receives financial and material support for your core religious ministry from your congregation or community on a voluntary basis, without promise or coercion
- does not breach, or encourage others to breach, any UK legislation
- does not work against the public interest, or have a detrimental effect on personal or family life as commonly understood in the UK

Exception: Ministry of Defence

MRW2.6. The only exception to the requirement to be a bona fide religious organisation with charitable status applies to the Ministry of Defence, which can apply to be a sponsor on the Minister of Religion route, provided they will be employing religious personnel (for example, an army chaplain).

Meaning of ‘charitable status’

MRW2.7. With the exception of the Ministry of Defence (see above), your organisation must be:

- a registered, an excepted or an exempt UK charity in line with the relevant charity legislation in force in your part of the UK; or
- an ecclesiastical corporation, either corporation sole or body corporate, which has been established for charitable purposes

MRW2.8. You can find the relevant legislation for your part of the UK at the following links:

- [Charities Act 2011 - England and Wales](#)
- [Charities and Trustee Investment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- [Charities Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2008](#)

MRW2.9. For guidance on how to prove your charitable status, see section 2 of [Appendix A to the sponsor guidance](#).

Evidence you’re an eligible religious organisation

MRW2.10. You must provide the information and evidence specified in section 3 of [Appendix A](#) to show you’re an eligible religious organisation.

Minister of Religion: additional evidence

MRW2.11. If you are applying for a Minister of Religion licence, you must tell us why you are applying for a licence and provide information about your

organisation and the jobs you wish to fill – see section 3 of [Appendix A](#) for further information.

How to keep your licence

MRW2.12. If you are granted a licence, you must comply with all of your sponsor duties to keep it. If you do not, we may take action against you, including:

- downgrading your licence
- suspending your licence
- revoking your licence
- reporting you to the police or other relevant authorities

MRW2.13. For details, see [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#).

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MRW3. Eligible employment on the religious work routes

This section provides information on the types of roles that are eligible for sponsorship on the Minister of Religion and Religious Worker routes.

Minister of Religion

- MRW3.1. This route is for those coming to fill mainly pastoral roles in bona fide religious organisations, or the Ministry of Defence. It includes anyone doing preaching and [pastoral work](#), such as [ministers of religion](#). It is also for those coming to the UK as [missionaries](#) or [members of religious orders](#).
- MRW3.2. You must not use this route to sponsor people who will undertake mainly non-pastoral duties, such as school teaching, media production, domestic work, or administrative and clerical work, unless the role is a senior position within your organisation (such as a financial controller). Other roles, including those which are mainly administrative, should be sponsored on another suitable route. For example, schools that are maintained by a religious organisation and wish to sponsor a teacher must do so on the [Skilled Worker](#) route.

Definition of a ‘minister of religion’

- MRW3.3. A minister of religion is a religious functionary whose main regular duties include leading a congregation in performing the rites and rituals of the faith and in preaching the essentials of the creed.

Definition of ‘pastoral duties’

- MRW3.4. Pastoral duties include:
- leading worship regularly and on special occasions
 - providing religious education for children and adults by preaching or teaching; however, you must not use this route to recruit teachers in schools or colleges, even if the school or college is maintained by a religious order –teachers should normally be sponsored on the [Skilled Worker](#) route
 - leading marriages, funerals and other special services
 - offering counselling and welfare support to members of the organisation
 - recruiting, training and co-ordinating work of local volunteers and lay preachers

Missionaries

- MRW3.5. The duties of a missionary may include the organisation of missionary activity, but should not be mainly administrative or clerical, unless the

individual will be filling a senior post. A senior post may be one which does not involve the individual doing fieldwork themselves, but where they will be supervising staff and/or co-ordinating the organisation of missionary work. They may also be in charge of activities such as accounts, finance, personnel management or IT. Working full-time as a teacher in a school run by a church or missionary organisation does not count as missionary work, but translating religious texts does.

Members of a religious order

- MRW3.6. A religious order is defined for our purposes as a lineage of communities or of people who live in some way set apart from society in accordance with their specific religious devotion, and which must be part of [a bona fide religious organisation](#). This includes, for example, a monastic community of monks or nuns, or a similar religious community involving a permanent commitment.
- MRW3.7. The work must be within the order itself, or outside work directed by the order. Teachers working in schools, whether or not maintained by their order, must be sponsored on the [Skilled Worker](#) route. Novices whose training takes place in the daily community life of their order can be sponsored on this route, but anyone studying for a qualification on a formal full-time course or training in an academic institution not maintained by the order should be sponsored on the [Student route](#). Similarly, people who are not members of a religious order, but who are working or studying within such a community, are not eligible on this route and must be sponsored on the Student route.

Religious Worker

- MRW3.8. The Religious Worker route is for people coming to the UK for a temporary period to support the activities of religious institutions. The role must involve performing religious duties within, or directed by, the sponsor, including:
- non-pastoral placements within a religious organisation
 - as a [member of a religious order](#) – note that members of a religious order can also be sponsored under the Minister of Religion route
- MRW3.9. You must not use the Religious Worker route to fill the role of a [minister of religion](#). If you wish to sponsor a minister of religion, you must do so on the Minister of Religion route.

Summary of differences between the religious work routes

MRW3.10. The table below summarises the key differences between the two religious work routes:

Requirement	Minister of Religion	Religious Worker
Eligible employment	Work must be of a mainly pastoral nature , such as leading a congregation in performing rites and rituals, and preaching the essentials of the creed. This includes, but is not limited to, religious leaders such as priests, imams, rabbis, and other ministers of religion .	Work can involve performing religious duties to support the activities of religious institutions and can be either pastoral or non-pastoral. It can include working in a religious order. You cannot use this route to sponsor ministers of religion .
Resident labour consideration	Not required.	Unless an exemption applies, you must check whether the role could be carried out by a suitably qualified 'settled worker' before you can offer it to a sponsored worker.
English language	Applicants must meet an English language requirement .	Not required.
Switching (changing) immigration category	Applicants in the UK on another immigration route can switch to Minister of Religion (with certain exceptions).	In-country switching not permitted.
Maximum stay	Can be sponsored for up to 6 years and may be eligible to apply for settlement (indefinite leave to remain) after 5 years on this route.	Maximum stay of 2 years with no option to apply for settlement.
Cooling-off period	None.	Applicants applying for entry clearance will be subject to a 12-month cooling-off period if they've had been in the UK as a Religious Worker or Charity Worker within the last 12 months.
Officially-sponsored former students	If the applicant has in the last 12 months received an award from a Government or international scholarship agency covering both fees and living costs for study in the UK, they must provide written consent to the	Restriction does not apply.

Requirement	Minister of Religion	Religious Worker
	application from that Government or agency.	

MRW3.11. It is your responsibility to ensure you apply for a sponsor licence, and sponsor the worker, on the correct route.

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MRW4. Immigration requirements for the religious work routes

This section tells you about the immigration requirements applicants must meet to qualify on the religious work routes, and where you can find further information.

Overview

MRW4.1. People who wish to come to the UK on these routes must meet the relevant requirements of the Immigration Rules. These are set out at:

- [Appendix T2 Minister of Religion](#)
- [Appendix Temporary Work - Religious Worker](#)

MRW4.2. In case of a Minister of Religion, these include, but are not limited to, the requirement that the applicant scores 70 'points' for the following criteria:

Points type	Description	Points available
Sponsorship	The applicant must have a valid Certificate of Sponsorship from an approved sponsor for eligible employment .	50
English language	The applicant must have English language skills at level B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for language in all 4 components (speaking, listening, reading, writing). See Appendix English Language to the Immigration Rules for further information.	10
Financial requirement	See below .	10

MRW4.3. The Religious Worker route is not a points-based route but applicants must also have a valid [Certificate of Sponsorship](#) for [eligible employment](#) and meet the [financial](#) requirement. There is no English language requirement on the Religious Worker route.

MRW4.4. Applicants on both routes must also:

- be aged 18 or over on the date they apply – see [Age requirement](#) for further information
- genuinely intend and be able to undertake the role for which they are being sponsored; and
- not intend to undertake employment other than in the role for which they are being sponsored, or as otherwise permitted by their

conditions of stay – see section S8 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for further information on conditions of stay

- be being sponsored in a role that meets the [pay and conditions requirements](#) of these routes (including compliance with National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Regulations)

Financial requirement

MRW4.5. If the applicant is applying for entry clearance from outside the UK, or has been in the UK for less than one year at the date of application, they must show they have enough funds to support themselves and any family members in the UK.

MRW4.6. If you are an A-rated sponsor, you can certify this requirement is met when you assign a CoS to them (also known as ‘certifying maintenance’). Otherwise, the applicant must provide evidence of funds as specified in [Appendix Finance](#) to the Immigration Rules.

MRW4.7. For further information, see ‘Financial requirement’ in section S7 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

Age requirement

MRW4.8. Applicants on both routes must be aged at least 18 on the date of application, unless the following transitional arrangements apply:

- for applicants applying on the Minister of Religion route before 6 October 2021, the minimum age requirement was 16
- there was no minimum age requirement for applicants who applied on the T5 (Temporary Worker) Religious Worker route before 9 a.m. on 11 October 2021

MRW4.9. If you are sponsoring a worker aged under 18 (where this was permitted under previous versions of the Rules), you must have regard to your safeguarding children duty – see ‘Safeguarding children’ in section L2 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#) for information on this requirement.

Entry requirement

MRW4.10. Applicants must apply for entry clearance (a visa) to be able to come to the UK on these routes. If they arrive in the UK without the relevant visa, they will be refused entry, even if they otherwise meet the requirements.

MRW4.11. If you are sponsoring a Religious Worker who needs to apply for entry clearance, you should check they are not subject to the [cooling-off period](#).

Extension of permission

MRW4.12. Those already in the UK with permission as a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker can apply to extend their stay on the relevant route, up

to the [maximum permitted period](#), if they meet the requirements. This could be to continue in the same employment or change employer or employment. See section S9 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for further information on extension and change of employment applications.

‘Switching’ to the religious work routes

MRW4.13. People in the UK on another immigration route can ‘switch’ (change route) to the Minister of Religion route if they meet all the relevant immigration requirements and were not last granted permission:

- as a Visitor
- as a Student, unless they meet the additional rules for people [switching from the Student route](#) (as set out below)
- as a Short-term student
- as a Parent of a Child Student
- as a Seasonal Worker
- as a Domestic Worker in a Private Household
- outside the Immigration Rules

MRW4.14. Switching into the Religious Worker route is not permitted.

MRW4.15. If you wish to sponsor a person who is in the UK but they are not eligible to switch to either the Minister of Religion route or Religious Worker route (as relevant), they must leave the UK and apply for the relevant entry clearance from overseas.

Switching from the Student route

MRW4.16. If a person you wish to sponsor as a Minister of Religion will be applying for permission to stay (from within the UK) and they have, or last had, permission as a Student (including as a Tier 4 (General) Migrant), they must meet one of the following conditions on the date they make their application to be allowed to switch:

- they must have completed the course of study for which they were being sponsored as a Student
- they must be studying a full-time course of study at degree level or above with a higher education provider which has a track record of compliance, and the start date on their CoS must be no earlier than the course completion date
- they must be studying a full-time course of study leading to the award of a PhD with a higher education provider which has a track record of compliance, and the start date on their CoS must be no earlier than 24 months after the start date of their PhD

MRW4.17. A ‘higher education provider with a track record of compliance’ will be shown on the [Register of student sponsors](#) with the type ‘Higher Education Institution (HEI)’ and with the status ‘Student Sponsor – Track Record’.

MRW4.18. If you wish to sponsor a Minister of Religion who has, or last had, permission as a Student, you must carefully check they can meet one of the above conditions before you assign a CoS to them. If they do not meet one of these conditions, they will not be permitted to switch to the Minister of Religion route.

How long a Minister of Religion can stay

MRW4.19. If the applicant makes a successful application for entry clearance on the Minister of Religion route, they will be granted entry clearance for whichever is the shorter of:

- up to 14 days after the period of employment stated on their CoS
- 3 years and 1 month

MRW4.20. If the applicant makes a successful application for permission to stay on the Minister of Religion route, they will be granted permission for whichever is the shorter of:

- up to 14 days after the period of employment stated on their CoS
- 3 years
- the difference between 6 years and the period they have already been granted permission as a Minister of Religion, International Sportsperson, or Skilled Worker (or any combination of these routes, including their predecessor routes)

MRW4.21. Six years is the maximum period a person can stay in the UK on the Minister of Religion route. Time spent in the UK on its predecessor route, Tier 2 (Minister of Religion), counts towards the 6-year maximum, as does time spent in the UK on the following routes:

- International Sportsperson, or its predecessor routes:
 - T2 Sportsperson
 - Tier 2 (Sportsperson)
 - the sporting provisions of T5 (Temporary Worker) Creative or Sporting Worker
 - the sporting provisions of Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) Creative and Sporting
- Skilled Worker, or its predecessor route, Tier 2 (General)

MRW4.22. Although 6 years is the maximum period that can be granted on this route, a Minister of Religion can apply for [settlement \(indefinite leave to remain\)](#) after 5 years' continuous residence in the UK on this route (or other eligible route), if they meet the relevant requirements.

How long a Religious Worker can stay

MRW4.23. If the applicant makes a successful application for entry clearance on the Religious Worker route, they will be granted entry clearance for

whichever is the shorter of:

- the period of the role on the CoS plus 14 days before and after
- 24 months

MRW4.24. If the applicant makes a successful application for permission to stay on the Religious Worker route, they will be granted permission for whichever is the shorter of:

- the period of the role on the CoS plus 14 days after
- the difference between the period the applicant has already spent in the UK since their last grant of permission as a Religious Worker and 24 months

MRW4.25. 24 months is the maximum period a person can be sponsored on this route. After this period, the worker must leave the UK (unless they qualify on another route). If they wish to come back to the UK as a Religious Worker (or a Charity Worker), they will be subject to the [‘cooling-off period’](#).

Maximum period of permission

MRW4.26. When you sponsor a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker, you should carefully check how long the worker has spent in the UK on the relevant route to ensure they will not exceed the maximum period for the route referred to above. If you assign a CoS beyond the maximum period, we will either:

- limit the amount of permission we grant to the worker – for example, if a Minister of Religion has already spent 5 years and 6 months in the UK on that or another relevant route, 6 months is the maximum period we can grant, even if you wish to sponsor them for longer than this; or
- refuse the application if they’ve already had the maximum period in the UK on a relevant route

Cooling-off period for Religious Workers

MRW4.27. Before you sponsor a Religious Worker who is applying for entry clearance (not permission to stay), you should check they are not subject to the ‘cooling-off’ period. If they are, we will refuse their application.

MRW4.28. The cooling-off period applies if, during the 12 months immediately before their application for entry clearance, the applicant was in the UK with permission on either the [Charity Worker route](#) or [Religious Worker route](#) (including their predecessor routes).

MRW4.29. If the cooling-off period applies, the worker will not be eligible for a further grant of entry clearance on either route until 12 months have passed since either:

- the date their last permission on either the Charity Worker or Religious Worker route expired
- the date they last left the UK, if they can show this was earlier than the date their permission on the Charity Worker or Religious Worker route expired

Further information

MRW4.30. You can find more information on the requirements for these routes on the GOV.UK website:

- [Minister of Religion visa \(T2\)](#)
- [Religious Worker visa \(Temporary Work\)](#)

MRW4.31. You should also read sections S7 to S9 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for further information on immigration requirements, conditions of stay, extension applications and change of employment applications.

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MRW5. Resident labour consideration

This section tells you about the ‘resident labour consideration’ (formerly known as the ‘resident labour market test’) for Religious Workers, how to carry out the consideration, and information you must include on the Certificate of Sponsorship.

Note: although this section is aimed mainly at sponsors on the Religious Worker route, there is important information for Minister of Religion sponsors in the ‘Overview’ subsection below.

Overview

If you’re a Religious Worker sponsor

- MRW5.1. If you wish to sponsor a person on the Religious Worker route, you may need to carry out a resident labour consideration first.
- MRW5.2. The resident labour consideration (formerly known as the ‘resident labour market test’) is there to protect the settled workforce. Unless the job is exempt from the resident labour consideration, you must advertise the job you want to recruit for, or conduct a search of national records you hold, to give settled workers a chance to apply.
- MRW5.3. Although not all religious occupations are ‘jobs’ in the traditional sense, this does not mean that the consideration does not apply. Any overseas worker you sponsor must not displace a suitable settled worker. For a definition of ‘settled worker’, see the glossary in [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).
- MRW5.4. The rules governing the resident labour consideration for Religious Workers are set out in paragraph RW 4.2 of [Appendix Temporary Work - Religious Worker](#) and in this section of the guidance.
- MRW5.5. We will revoke your sponsor licence if we find out that you have sponsored a Religious Worker without first carrying out a resident labour consideration (where required) in accordance with the Immigration Rules and this guidance.

If you’re a Minister of Religion sponsor

- MRW5.6. There is no longer a resident labour consideration (or equivalent) for the Minister of Religion route. However, if you sponsored a worker under the Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) route in place before 1 December 2020, you must be able to show that you carried out a resident labour market test as required by the Rules then in force. If you recruited a Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) without carrying out a resident labour market test (where required), we will revoke your sponsor licence.
- MRW5.7. Even though there is no resident labour consideration requirement on the Minister of Religion route, you must still retain information on how you

recruited the worker – see [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance for details.

When a resident labour consideration is not required

MRW5.8. You do not have to undertake a resident labour consideration to sponsor a Religious Worker in the following circumstances:

- the role is [supernumerary](#)
- the worker will mainly live within and be a [member of a religious order](#) – for example, an order of nuns or monks
- the worker is applying for permission to stay from within the UK and you:
 - assigned the [Certificate of Sponsorship \(CoS\)](#) which resulted in their last grant of permission; and
 - will continue to sponsor them in their current application

Meaning of ‘supernumerary’

MRW5.9. A role is supernumerary if it is over and above your normal staffing requirements. This means that if the person filling the role were not there, it wouldn’t be filled by anyone else – for example, where the worker offers pastoral support to members of a church community as part of their own development, but the work would stop if they were not there and you wouldn’t replace them

MRW5.10. A position that is not supernumerary is one that is vital to the normal work of your organisation. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a pastor or clergyman responsible for leading regular worship or for the pastoral needs of their own congregation or the wider community – if that person left, but those duties still existed and you had to find someone to replace them, the role is not supernumerary
- a translator of religious texts working for a missionary organisation – if that person left, but there was still a need for a translator, the role is not supernumerary

Role exempt from resident labour consideration: information you must include on the CoS

MRW5.11. When [you assign a CoS](#) for a role that is exempt from the resident labour consideration, you must fully explain why it is exempt by adding a sponsor note. Simply stating, for example, that ‘the role is supernumerary’ is not enough – you must explain why. If the worker mainly lives within a [religious order](#), you must say this to justify why a resident labour consideration is not applicable.

MRW5.12. If there is no explanation or we are not sure about any explanation you have given, we may ask you for more information. However, we reserve the right to refuse the worker’s application for entry clearance or

permission to stay without asking for more information if it is clear from the information you have given that the role is not supernumerary or otherwise exempt from the resident labour consideration. We will also revoke your licence if you gave false or misleading information on the worker's CoS or if you have not carried out a resident labour consideration where one was required.

When a resident labour consideration is required

- MRW5.13. Where a role is not supernumerary or does not otherwise fall within the exemptions [listed above](#), a national recruitment search must always be undertaken. We call this a resident labour consideration. You must carry out a resident labour consideration that meets the requirements of the Immigration Rules and this guidance to make sure you are not denying or displacing a [settled worker](#) by filling the role with an overseas worker.
- MRW5.14. To satisfy the resident labour consideration, you must do one of the following:
- where you hold national records of all available individuals, provide details of those records and confirm they show that no suitable settled worker is available to fill the role; or
 - [advertise the role](#), as set out below
- MRW5.15. If a suitable settled worker applies for, or is available for the job, you must offer them the job before you can appoint a migrant worker. A suitable settled worker means any settled worker who has the skills and experience you are seeking. If you find that you have more than one candidate with all the necessary skills and experience you advertised for, where one is a settled worker and the other is a migrant worker, you must appoint the settled worker, even if the migrant worker is more skilled or experienced.
- MRW5.16. If no suitable settled worker applies or is available, or if they do not take up the job offer with you, you can appoint a suitably qualified migrant worker to the role.
- MRW5.17. You must retain evidence that you have carried out a resident labour market test – see [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance for further information.

Advertising the role

- MRW5.18. If you are required to advertise the role, you must advertise it for a minimum of 28 days during the 6-month period before you assign a CoS to a worker.
- MRW5.19. Where possible, you must advertise in a national medium appropriate to your religion or denomination – for example, a magazine, or newspaper such as:

- the Church Times
- The Catholic Herald
- The Jewish Chronicle

MRW5.20. Any publication must be available throughout the whole of the UK, or at least throughout the devolved nation in which the role is situated. For example, for a role in Glasgow, the publication used must be available throughout Scotland. Media only available in a local area – such as a local or county-wide evening newspaper – are not acceptable.

MRW5.21. If there is no suitable national form of media for your religion, you must advertise through:

- the Jobcentre Plus '[Find a job](#)' service, if the job is in England, Wales or Scotland
- [JobCentre Online](#), if the job is Northern Ireland; or
- the employment section of a national newspaper

MRW5.22. A national newspaper is one published at least once a week and is marketed throughout the whole of the UK or at least throughout the devolved nation in which the job is located. Examples of acceptable publications in the devolved nations include:

- The Scotsman or The Herald for jobs in Scotland
- The Western Mail for jobs in Wales
- the Belfast Telegraph for jobs in Northern Ireland

MRW5.23. You can also advertise on your own website if this is how you usually reach out to your community on a national scale and is where you normally advertise vacant positions. If you do advertise on your own website, the pages containing the advertisement must be free to view. If your website requires people to pay a fee or make a donation to be able to view an advertisement for a vacant role, this does not meet our requirements. In this case, you must also advertise in some other form of national media as described above.

Resident labour consideration required: information you must include on the CoS

MRW5.24. When [you assign a CoS](#), you must explain how you met the resident labour consideration by adding a sponsor note. You may also provide this evidence in a covering letter to be sent by the applicant when they apply for entry clearance or permission to stay. We may make checks to verify the information.

MRW5.25. You must include in your sponsor note (and in the covering letter you give to the worker):

- if you undertook a search of your national records details of those records and an explanation of why there are no suitable settled workers available to fill the role
- if you advertised the role, all of the following:
 - confirmation of where the role was advertised
 - any vacancy reference numbers (if applicable)
 - the period the role was advertised for
 - that there are suitable settled workers available to fill the role

MRW5.26. If these details are missing or unclear, we may ask for more information. However, we reserve the right to refuse the worker's application for entry clearance or permission to stay without asking for more information if it is clear that you have not carried out the resident labour consideration in accordance with the Immigration Rules or this guidance. We will also revoke your sponsor licence if we find that you gave false or misleading information on the worker's CoS, or you otherwise sponsored the worker without carrying out a resident labour consideration.

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MRW6. Pay and conditions for the religious work routes

This section explains how to ensure that workers you sponsor on the religious work routes receive appropriate pay and conditions.

- MRW6.1. You must ensure any worker you sponsor on the religious work routes will receive pay and conditions that are no less favourable than those given to settled workers doing the same role.
- MRW6.2. In all cases, the role must comply with both the [National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015](#) and the [Working Time Regulations 1998](#). We will refuse any application for entry clearance or permission to stay where we have reasonable grounds to believe the role does not comply with these regulations, and we will also consider revoking your sponsor licence. For further information, see section S4 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).
- MRW6.3. If you will not be paying the worker National Minimum Wage because of an exemption in the National Minimum Wage Regulations, you must include an explanation of this on the CoS. You can include this information:
- in the 'Gross salary' box when you are assigning the CoS; or
 - by adding a 'sponsor note' after you have assigned the CoS
- MRW6.4. If an exemption does not apply, you must ensure the worker receives at least National Minimum Wage. You cannot refuse to pay National Minimum Wage just because (for example) the worker can support themselves out of their own funds or from donations.
- MRW6.5. You must include details on the CoS of any payments the worker will receive (whether this is a traditional salary, stipend, board and lodgings or other allowances and payments). The gross salary figure must be what you will pay to the worker, gross of any tax paid (whether paid in the UK or overseas) and must include any guaranteed allowances and guaranteed bonuses. The total of all guaranteed allowances and guaranteed bonuses paid, and included in that figure, should be entered in the 'gross allowances' box on the CoS, then broken down and detailed in the free text box that follows.
- MRW6.6. For further information on salary requirements and what to do if the worker takes unpaid leave or you reduce their salary, see section S4 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

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MRW7. Certificate of Sponsorship for the religious work routes

This section tells you how to assign a valid Certificate of Sponsorship to a worker on the Minister of Religion and Religious Worker routes.

Overview

- MRW7.1. If you have followed all the rules in this guidance and you wish to sponsor a worker on the Minister of Religion route or Religious Worker route, you must assign them a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS), using your [sponsorship management system \(SMS\)](#) account.
- MRW7.2. Before assigning a CoS, you should satisfy yourself that the worker can meet the relevant [immigration requirements](#).
- MRW7.3. You cannot assign a CoS if you're a B-rated sponsor, unless you sponsored the application which led to the worker's last grant of permission as a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker and they are applying for permission to stay on the same route to continue working for you. In all other cases, you must have an A-rating. For information on sponsor ratings, see section L8 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).
- MRW7.4. For detailed information on what a CoS is, and how many you can assign, see section S2 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).
- MRW7.5. You can find detailed technical guidance on how to assign a CoS on GOV.UK: [User manuals: sponsorship management system \(SMS\)](#) – see in particular manual 8.

Fees

- MRW7.6. You must pay a fee for each CoS you assign. The amount you pay will depend on which route you are sponsoring the worker – see the '[UK visa fees](#)' page on GOV.UK for information on current fee levels.
- MRW7.7. For CoS assigned on the Minister of Religion route on or after 9 April 2025, you must not recoup, or attempt to recoup, by any means, any part of the CoS fee, or associated administrative costs, from any workers you sponsor. If we find you have done this, we will normally revoke your licence.

Use of the CoS

- MRW7.8. Once you have assigned a CoS, the worker must use it within 3 months to apply for:
- entry clearance (a visa) if they are outside the UK

- permission to stay if they are in the UK and eligible to extend their stay on the Minister of Religion or Religious Worker route or switch (change) from another route to the Minister of Religion route

MRW7.9. If the CoS was issued more than 3 months before the date of application, we may reject their application and not consider it.

MRW7.10. The worker must not apply for a visa or permission to stay more than 3 months before the start date recorded on their CoS. If they do, we will refuse their application.

MRW7.11. We will also refuse the application if the CoS:

- has been withdrawn by you or cancelled by the Home Office – see section S6 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for information on when a CoS can be withdrawn or cancelled
- was used in a previous application that was refused

What the CoS must confirm

MRW7.12. For a CoS to be valid on these routes, it must meet the requirements of the relevant Immigration Rules:

- Minister of Religion: paragraphs MOR 5.1 to MOR 5.4 of [Appendix T2 Minister of Religion](#)
- Religious Worker: paragraphs RW 4.1 to RW 4.6 of [Appendix Temporary Work - Religious Worker](#)

MRW7.13. By assigning a CoS on these routes, you are guaranteeing that:

- the role is eligible to be sponsored on the [Minister of Religion](#) or [Religious Worker](#) route (as appropriate)
- the worker is qualified to do the job in question
- the worker will receive [pay and conditions](#) at least equal to those given to settled workers in the same role, and the role will comply with both the National Minimum Wage Regulations and the Working Time Regulations
- the worker will comply with their conditions of stay – see section S8 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for more information

MRW7.14. In addition, by assigning a CoS to a Minister of Religion, you guarantee that:

- the worker will perform religious duties within your organisation or as directed by your organisation in the UK (which may include preaching, [pastoral](#) and non-pastoral work); and
- the worker's role will not involve mainly non-pastoral duties, such as school teaching, media production, domestic work or administrative and clerical work, unless the role is a senior position within the sponsor's organisation

MRW7.15. The CoS must confirm all of the following:

- that you are sponsoring the worker on the Minister of Religion or Religious Worker route, as appropriate
- the worker's personal information (such as name, date of birth, nationality), passport details and contact details
- the start and end date of their employment – see section S3 of [Part 2: sponsor a worker](#) for information on start and end dates
- where the worker will carry out their employment – this should include their main work address and any other regular work addresses, if relevant
- whether you used an agent (such as a recruitment agency, employment business or other intermediary) to find the worker and, if so, details of that agent
- the job title
- the relevant SOC 2020 occupation code (select from the drop-down list under 'Job type') – for those sponsored on the Minister of Religion route, this will normally be 2463 (clergy) – see section S3 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for further information on occupation codes
- the main duties of the role for which the worker is being sponsored
- the worker's gross salary (including any guaranteed allowances and bonuses)
- the worker's religion
- whether you wish to [certify maintenance](#) for the worker (and, if relevant, their dependants) – you can only do this if you're an A-rated sponsor

MRW7.16. If your organisation is a [religious order](#), you must confirm that the worker is a member of that order. You can do this in either job description field or by adding a sponsor note.

MRW7.17. After you have assigned a CoS to a Religious Worker, you must return to it to add a sponsor note to explain how you have met the [resident labour consideration](#) for the role. You must including the following information (whichever is relevant):

- where the role was advertised, including any reference numbers and the period for which it was advertised
- details of any national records you hold and an explanation of why there is no suitable settled worker available to fill the role
- a full explanation of why you believe that the role is [supernumerary](#)
- that the worker is a [member of a religious order](#)
- that no resident labour market test is required because the worker is applying for permission to stay and you sponsored the application which led to their last grant of permission on the Religious Worker route

MRW7.18. If you do not give all of this information, the worker's application may be

delayed or refused.

Reporting duties and record keeping

- MRW7.19. Once you have assigned a CoS to a worker, you must tell us if they fail to start their employment, are absent without permission, or there are any significant changes to the nature of their work or salary, or to your organisation. For full details of your reporting and other duties, see: [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#).
- MRW7.20. You must also keep records for each worker you sponsor as specified in [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance.
- MRW7.21. If you fail to meet these duties, we may revoke your sponsor licence.

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