



Home Office

# Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors

## **Sponsor an International Agreement worker**

**Version 03/26**

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# About this guidance

This document forms part of the collection '[Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors](#)'. It provides guidance on how to sponsor a worker on the International Agreement immigration route.

The International Agreement route allows you to sponsor a person to come to the UK to provide a service covered under international law, such as a private servant in a diplomatic household or an employee of an overseas government or international organisation.

## 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
- the appendices to this guidance (Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix D)
- the glossary – this contains definitions of terms used through the sponsor guidance (including this document)

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 [separate glossary of terms](#) used throughout the sponsor guidance (including this document).

The following additional terms are used in this document:

### International Agreement route

This means the route in [Appendix Temporary Work – International Agreement](#) to the Immigration Rules. Where the context requires it, it can also refer to:

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

You can find previous versions of the Immigration Rules in the [Immigration Rules Archive](#) on GOV.UK.

## **International Agreement worker**

This means a person who is applying for, or has been granted, entry clearance or permission to stay on the International Agreement route; or who you are sponsoring, or intend to sponsor, on that route.

## **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 03/26
- published on 06 March 2026

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

## **Changes to this guidance**

This version replaces version 04/25 (published on 9 April 2025). The following changes have been made:

- About this guidance, IAW5.16: minor drafting amendments
- IAW3.12: updated to reflect that the digital record of exemption has replaced the exempt vignette for people exempt from immigration control from 25 February 2026
- other minor housekeeping changes

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# IAW1. Sponsoring International Agreement workers: overview

This section provides an overview of the International Agreement route and the sponsorship requirements you must meet.

## What is the International Agreement route?

- IAW1.1. The International Agreement route allows a person to come to the UK to provide a service covered under international law, such as private servants in diplomatic households, or employees of overseas governments or international organisations.
- IAW1.2. International Agreement workers can come to the UK for up to 24 months. A private servant in a diplomatic household can extend their stay in the UK by up to 24 months at a time (up to an overall maximum stay of 5 years). See [‘How long International Agreement workers can stay’](#) for further information.
- IAW1.3. Workers must be aged at least 18 on the date of application for entry clearance or permission to stay to qualify on this route.
- IAW1.4. Any worker sponsored on this route must be paid at least [National Minimum Wage](#) and the role the worker is being sponsored for must comply with the [Working Time Regulations](#).
- IAW1.5. International Agreement workers can bring their family members (dependent partner and dependent children) to the UK, if they meet the relevant immigration requirements for dependants.
- IAW1.6. The International Agreement route is not a route to settlement in the UK.

## Who needs to be sponsored on the International Agreement route?

- IAW1.7. You will need to sponsor any overseas national you wish to employ on the International Agreement route 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.
- IAW1.8. 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’)

IAW1.9. 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 International Agreement route?

IAW1.10. If you wish to sponsor an International Agreement worker, you must:

- hold a valid [sponsor licence](#) for the International Agreement route
- understand [what the International Agreement route is](#) and [who you can sponsor](#) on this route
- understand the general requirements for sponsoring workers – see [Part 2: Sponsor a worker – general information](#)
- satisfy yourself the worker you wish to sponsor can meet the [immigration requirements](#) for this route
- assign a [valid Certificate of Sponsorship \(CoS\)](#) to the worker you wish to sponsor and pay the [relevant CoS fee](#)
- keep records for each worker you sponsor, including information on how you recruited them – see [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance
- 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
- understand and comply with all of your sponsor duties – see [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#)

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# IAW2. How to get an International Agreement sponsor licence

This section tells you about the requirements you must meet to be eligible for an International Agreement sponsor licence.

## General requirements

- IAW2.1. If you wish to sponsor an International Agreement worker, you must hold a valid sponsor licence for the International Agreement route. If you do not already hold such a licence, you must apply for one by completing the [online application form](#) and paying the relevant [application fee](#).
- IAW2.2. 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 International Agreement route
- IAW2.3. If you already hold a valid licence to sponsor workers, but it does not include the International Agreement route, you can apply to add this route to your existing licence. For further information on adding routes to your licence, see section L10 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).
- IAW2.4. You are responsible for paying the sponsor licence fee and 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 an International Agreement sponsor licence

- IAW2.5. In addition to the general requirements for a sponsor licence set out in [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#), to be eligible for an International Agreement sponsor licence, you must:
- be an [eligible organisation](#)
  - be able and intend to sponsor workers in [eligible employment](#), that is as either:
    - a private servant in a diplomatic household
    - an employee of an overseas government or a recognised international organisation
  - submit the [specified supporting evidence](#)
  - understand what applying for an International Agreement sponsor licence [means for your organisation](#)

## Eligible organisations

IAW2.6. You must be either:

- a diplomatic mission or consular post of a country or territory recognised by the UK
- a recognised international organisation, as defined below

IAW2.7. A recognised international organisation is one that is established by an international treaty signed by the UK. You must be included on the [exempt organisations list](#) on GOV.UK. This is a list of international organisations recognised by the UK, some of whose employees or officials (usually senior employees or officials) may be [exempt from immigration control](#). Employees or officials who are not exempt from immigration control can be sponsored on the International Agreement route.

## What you need to send with your application

IAW2.8. When you apply for your sponsor licence, you must include with your application a signed letter from your Head of Mission, or Head of Organisation, confirming all of the following:

- they agree to the application for a sponsor licence being made
- they wish to sponsor workers on the International Agreement route
- they accept the duties of sponsorship, as set out in [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#)

## What applying for an International Agreement sponsor licence means for you

IAW2.9. Your application for an International Agreement sponsor licence is deemed to include an acknowledgement from you that we may seek, from your Head of Mission or Head of Organisation, a limited waiver of inviolability and of immunity to enter your residence or premises to undertake compliance activity while your sponsor licence application is being considered or after your licence has been granted.

## How to keep your licence

IAW2.10. If you are granted a licence, you must comply with all of your sponsor duties. If you do not, we may take action against you, including:

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

IAW2.11. For details, see [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#).

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# IAW3. Eligible employment on the International Agreement route

This section tells you which categories of workers are eligible for sponsorship on the International Agreement route.

## Overview

- IAW3.1. There are two categories of worker you can sponsor on the International Agreement route:
- private servants in diplomatic households
  - employees of overseas governments and recognised international organisations
- IAW3.2. These categories are described in detail below. The worker must fully meet the requirements of the relevant category.
- IAW3.3. In all cases, the role you are sponsoring the worker for must comply with the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015 and the Working Time Regulations 1998. These regulations apply even where the worker lives in the same household as their employer.
- IAW3.4. We will refuse any application for entry clearance or permission where we have reasonable grounds to believe the role does not comply with these Regulations. We will also consider revoking your sponsor licence if we find you are breaching these Regulations.
- IAW3.5. For further information, see 'Compliance with National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Regulations' in section S4 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

## Private servants in diplomatic households

- IAW3.6. To be eligible to be sponsored as a private servant in a diplomatic household, the worker must meet all of the following:
- be employed full time as a private servant by, and in the household of, either:
    - a named member of staff of a diplomatic mission or consular post who has diplomatic privileges and immunity as defined by the [Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations](#)
    - a named official employed by a [recognised international organisation](#) with diplomatic privileges or immunities under UK or international law
  - not intend to undertake any other role for the sponsor other than as a private servant in the specified household
  - intend to work full time in the role they are being sponsored for
  - not be related, either by blood or marriage, to the employer, or to the employer's spouse – this includes, but is not limited to, the spouse or

unmarried partner, child, parent, grandparent or sibling of either the employer or the employer's spouse

- be paid at least [National Minimum Wage](#) throughout their stay in the UK
- provide the evidence of employment terms and conditions as set out in [Appendix Domestic Worker Statement](#)
- provide a signed statement from you (their sponsor) confirming that the role will not constitute work done in relation to the employer's family household within the meaning of [regulation 57 of the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015](#)

IAW3.7. If the worker is applying for entry clearance (a visa from outside the UK), they must also meet the [English language requirement](#).

IAW3.8. If the worker applies for permission to stay (from within the UK), they must provide evidence of payment of their salary for at least 3 months before the date of their application. The most recent piece of financial evidence must be dated within 31 days before the date of application. The evidence should include payslips and must show the transfer of each payment into the worker's bank account or on to their pre-paid card, for example a FOREX card. The evidence must comply with [Appendix Finance](#).

IAW3.9. You must therefore ensure that the worker's payment arrangements comply with these requirements so the worker can show they have been paid when they apply for permission to stay. You must also keep suitable records of payments, as required by [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance. For further information on acceptable ways of paying a sponsored worker, see 'Payment of salary' in section S4 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

IAW3.10. A private servant in a diplomatic household can be sponsored for up to 24 months initially. They can extend their permission by up to a further a further 24 months (up to an [overall maximum of 5 years](#)).

## Employees of overseas governments and international organisations

IAW3.11. This category is for employees of overseas governments or [recognised international organisations](#) who are not exempt from immigration control.

IAW3.12. You should first check whether the worker is [exempt from immigration control](#) and eligible for a [digital record of exemption](#) (which has replaced the exempt vignette from 25 February 2026). If they are, you do not need to sponsor them. If they are not exempt, they can be sponsored on the International Agreement route.

IAW3.13. The worker must be under a contract of employment with a diplomatic mission, consular post or recognised international organisation. You cannot sponsor a worker under this provision to work as a private servant in a diplomatic household or private household.

- IAW3.14. If the worker will be working on a contract basis (being supplied by you as labour to another organisation, or being supplied by another organisation to you), the worker must not be filling a permanent position, including on a temporary basis. For further information on the requirements for contract working, see section S1 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).
- IAW3.15. Workers sponsored as an employee of an overseas government or international organisation must not intend to take any other form of role other than the one for which you assigned their [Certificate of Sponsorship](#). They can, however, take 'supplementary employment' additional to their sponsored role – see section S8 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for guidance on supplementary employment.
- IAW3.16. An employee of an overseas government or international organisation can be sponsored for a maximum of 24 months on the International Agreement route.

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# IAW4. Immigration requirements for International Agreement workers

This section tells you about the immigration requirements applicants must meet to qualify on the International Agreement route and where you can find further information.

## Overview

- IAW4.1. People who wish to come to the UK on the International Agreement route must meet the requirements in [Appendix Temporary Work - International Agreement](#) to the Immigration Rules.
- IAW4.2. These requirements include that the applicant ('worker'):
- has a valid [Certificate of Sponsorship](#) (CoS) from an [approved sponsor](#) for [eligible employment](#)
  - genuinely intends, and is able, to do the role for which they are being sponsored
  - does 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 in [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for guidance on conditions of stay
  - if the worker is a private servant in a diplomatic household applying for entry clearance, meets the English language requirement
  - where relevant, meets the financial requirement
  - where relevant, meets the ATAS requirement
  - is aged at least 18 on the date of application
  - meets the relevant requirements for entry, extension and switching
- IAW4.3. This is not a complete list of requirements – you must refer to the relevant [Immigration Rules](#) for these.

## English language requirement for private servants

- IAW4.4. If the worker is applying for entry clearance (a visa from outside the UK) as a private servant in a diplomatic household, they must show English language ability on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in all 4 components (reading, writing, speaking and listening) of at least B1 (intermediate) level. (This requirement applies to applications for entry clearance submitted on or after 16 May 2024.)
- IAW4.5. The evidence must comply with the requirement of [Appendix English language](#). There is [guidance on how to meet the requirement](#) on GOV.UK.

## Financial requirement

- IAW4.6. If the worker 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.
- IAW4.7. If you are an A-rated sponsor, you can certify this requirement is met when you assign a CoS to the worker (also known as ‘certifying maintenance’). Otherwise, the worker must provide evidence of funds as specified in [Appendix Finance](#) to the Immigration Rules.
- IAW4.8. For further information, see ‘Financial requirement’ in section S7 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

## ATAS requirement

- IAW4.9. When you assign a CoS on the International Agreement route, you must check and confirm whether the worker needs to apply for an [Academic Approval Technology Scheme \(ATAS\) certificate](#) from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office before they can start (or continue) working for you.

- IAW4.10. An International Agreement worker will need an ATAS certificate if all of the following are true:

- you are also licensed as a Student sponsor
- the worker is not an [exempt national](#)
- you are sponsoring the worker in a [relevant occupation code](#)
- the work involves research at PhD level or above in [relevant subject area](#)

See Annex S1 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for a definition of the terms ‘exempt national’, ‘relevant occupation code’ and ‘relevant subject area’.

- IAW4.11. If the worker needs an ATAS certificate, you should encourage them to apply for one as soon as possible, as they will need to include a copy of the certificate with their application for entry clearance or permission to stay. If they fail to do so, we will refuse their application and you may lose your sponsor licence (or licences).
- IAW4.12. For further information on the ATAS requirement, and your responsibilities in relation to it, see under ‘ATAS requirement’ in section S7 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

## Age requirement

- IAW4.13. All applicants applying on the International Agreement route from 11 October 2021 must be aged at least 18 on the date of application.
- IAW4.14. There was no minimum age requirement for workers (other than private

servants in diplomatic households) applying before 9 a.m. on 11 October 2021. If you are sponsoring a worker aged under 18 (where this was permitted when they applied for permission), 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

IAW4.15. Workers must apply for entry clearance (a visa) to be able to come to the UK on this route. If they arrive in the UK without the relevant visa, they will be refused entry, even if they otherwise meet the requirements.

## Extension of permission

IAW4.16. Workers already in the UK with permission on the International Agreement route can apply to extend their stay, up to the [maximum permitted period](#), to continue in the same employment, if they meet the requirements.

## ‘Switching’ to the International Agreement route

IAW4.17. People in the UK on another immigration route are not normally permitted to switch (change immigration category) to the International Agreement route. If you wish to sponsor a worker on the International Agreement route but they are in the UK on another route, they must leave the UK and apply for entry clearance from overseas.

## How long International Agreement workers can stay

IAW4.18. If the worker makes a successful application for entry clearance on the International Agreement route, they will be granted for whichever is the shorter of:

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

IAW4.19. If the worker is an employee of an overseas government or a recognised international organisation and their application is for permission to stay, they will be granted permission for whichever is the shorter of:

- the period of the role on the CoS plus 14 days after that period
- the difference between 24 months and the period they have already been granted permission on the International Agreement route

IAW4.20. If the worker is a private servant in a diplomatic household and their application is for permission to stay, they will be granted permission for whichever is the shortest of:

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

- the difference between 5 years and the period they have already been granted permission on the International Agreement route

IAW4.21. You must take care not to assign a CoS to a worker on the International Agreement route beyond the maximum periods referred to above. If you do we will either:

- limit the amount of permission we grant to the worker – for example, if an employee of an overseas government or international organisation has already spent 18 months in the UK on that basis, 6 months' permission to stay is the maximum period we can grant
- refuse the application if the worker has already had the maximum permitted period in the UK

## Further information

IAW4.22. You can find more information about the [International Agreement visa](#) on GOV.UK.

IAW4.23. You should also refer to 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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# IAW5. Certificate of Sponsorship for International Agreement workers

This section tells you how to assign a valid Certificate of Sponsorship to a worker on the International Agreement route.

## Overview

- IAW5.1. If you have followed all the rules in this guidance and you wish to sponsor a worker on the International Agreement route, you must assign them a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS), using your [sponsorship management system \(SMS\)](#) account.
- IAW5.2. Before assigning a CoS, you should satisfy yourself that the worker can meet the relevant [immigration requirements](#).
- IAW5.3. 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 and you're continuing to sponsor them in the same role. 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](#).
- IAW5.4. For detailed information on what a CoS is, and how many you can assign, see section S2 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).
- IAW5.5. You can find detailed technical guidance on how to assign a CoS in [User manuals: sponsorship management system \(SMS\)](#) – see in particular Manual 8.

## Fees

- IAW5.6. You must pay a fee for each CoS you assign – see the [UK visa fees](#) page on GOV.UK for information on current fee levels.

## Use of the CoS

- IAW5.7. 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 permission on the International Agreement route
- IAW5.8. If the CoS was assigned more than 3 months before the date of application, we may reject the worker's application and not consider it.
- IAW5.9. The worker must not apply for entry clearance or permission to stay more

than 3 months before the start date recorded on their CoS. If they do, we will refuse their application.

IAW5.10. 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

IAW5.11. For a CoS to be valid, it must meet the relevant requirements of the Immigration Rules in paragraphs IA 4.1 to IA 4.4 of [Appendix Temporary Work – International Agreement](#).

IAW5.12. By assigning a CoS on the International Agreement route, you guarantee that the worker:

- fully meets the [eligibility criteria](#) for the specific type of employment they will be doing
- genuinely intends and is able to do the work for which they are being sponsored
- will not take employment other than that for which their CoS is assigned and will otherwise comply with their conditions of stay (note that employees of an overseas government or international organisation can also take 'supplementary employment') – see section S8 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for more information
- will leave the UK when their permission expires, unless they qualify for an extension of stay or permission on another immigration route

IAW5.13. You also guarantee that the role will comply with [relevant UK employment legislation](#), including National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Regulations. This applies even where the worker is living in the same household as their employer. We will take action against you, and are likely to revoke your licence, if it does not. For further information, see section S4 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

IAW5.14. The CoS must confirm all of the following:

- that you are sponsoring the worker on the International Agreement route
- 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 guidance on entering start and end dates
- total weekly hours of work
- 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 occupation code for the role (choose from the drop-down list under 'Job type') – 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
- details of the worker's salary (including any allowances and guaranteed bonuses)
- 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
- that the role is covered by an [eligible international agreement](#)
- whether the worker requires [an Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\)](#) certificate

## Confirming the role is 'an eligible international agreement'

IAW5.15. When you assign a CoS to an International Agreement worker, you must tick the box where it says 'Tick to confirm this is an international agreement'.

IAW5.16. In the free text box beneath the tick box, you must provide details of how the role is covered by an eligible international agreement. To do this, you should:

- state whether the worker is one of the following (by entering the appropriate phrase):
  - a private servant in a diplomatic household
  - an employee of an overseas government
  - an employee of a recognised international organisation
- if the worker is, or will be, a private servant in a diplomatic household, confirm the name of the diplomat or official the private servant will be working for

## Reporting duties and record keeping

IAW5.17. 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](#).

IAW5.18. You must also keep records for each worker you sponsor as specified in [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance.

IAW5.19. If you fail to meet these duties, we may [revoke your sponsor licence](#).

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