



Home Office

# Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors

## **Sponsor a Charity Worker**

Version 04/26

This version of the guidance is valid from 8 April 2026.

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# About this guidance

This document forms part of the collection 'Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors'. It provides guidance for charitable organisations on how to sponsor an overseas national to come to the UK for up to 12 months on the Charity Worker immigration route.

## 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 in this document).

The following additional terms are used in this document:

### **Charity Worker**

This means a person who is applying for, or has been granted, entry clearance or permission to stay on the [Charity Worker route](#); or who you are sponsoring, or intend to sponsor, on the Charity Worker route.

### **Charity Worker route**

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

- the route in Appendix T5 (Temporary Worker) Charity Worker in place between 1 December 2020 and 10 October 2021 (inclusive)
- the Charity 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.

## 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 04/26
- published on 8 April 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: minor drafting amendments to align with changes made to other sponsor guidance documents
- CHW1.7: new bullet point added requiring sponsors to ensure they only sponsor for 'eligible roles', as defined in the separate glossary
- other minor housekeeping changes

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# CHW1. Sponsoring a Charity Worker: overview

This section provides an overview of the Charity Worker route, the sponsorship requirements you must meet, and other ways voluntary workers can come to the UK.

## What is the Charity Worker route?

- CHW1.1. The Charity Worker route is for voluntary workers aged 18 or over who wish to come to the UK to do temporary unpaid charity work for a recognised charitable organisation. It does not include those doing paid work.
- CHW1.2. Charity Workers can bring their family members (dependent partner and dependent children) to the UK, if they meet the relevant immigration requirements for dependants.
- CHW1.3. 12 months is the maximum permitted period in the UK on this route. It is not a route to settlement.

## Who needs to be sponsored on the Charity Worker route?

- CHW1.4. You will need to sponsor any foreign national to do voluntary work for you 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.
- CHW1.5. You do not have to sponsor certain categories of people, 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')
- CHW1.6. 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 Charity Workers?

- CHW1.7. If you wish to sponsor a Charity Worker, you must:
- hold a [valid sponsor licence](#) for the Charity Worker route
  - understand [what the Charity Worker route is](#) and [who you can sponsor](#) on this route

- otherwise only sponsor workers for eligible roles, as defined [in the separate glossary](#)
- understand the general requirements for sponsoring workers – see [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#)
- satisfy yourself the worker will be able to meet the [immigration requirements](#) for this route
- assign a [valid Certificate of Sponsorship \(CoS\)](#) to the person you wish to sponsor and pay the [relevant CoS fee](#)
- keep records for each person you sponsor – see [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance
- have eligible ‘key personnel’ in place to manage your licence and assign CoS to workers – 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](#)

## Other ways voluntary workers can come to the UK

- CHW1.8. People in the UK as [Standard Visitors](#) can do volunteering while visiting the UK, provided it lasts no more than 30 days in total and is for a charity that is registered with the [Charity Commission for England and Wales](#), the [Charity Commission for Northern Ireland](#), or the [Scottish Charity Regulator](#).
- CHW1.9. You should note that people who enter the UK as Visitors cannot [‘switch’ to the Charity Worker route](#) while they are in the UK. If you decide you wish to sponsor such a person on the Charity Worker route, they will need to leave the UK and [apply for entry clearance](#).

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# CHW2. How to get a Charity Worker sponsor licence

This section tells you about the requirements you must meet to be eligible for a Charity Worker sponsor licence.

## General requirements

- CHW2.1. If you wish to sponsor a Charity Worker, you must hold a valid sponsor licence for the Charity 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.
- CHW2.2. 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 Charity Worker route
- CHW2.3. If you already hold a valid licence to sponsor workers, but it does not include the Charity Worker 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](#).
- CHW2.4. 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 criteria for a Charity Worker licence

- CHW2.5. In addition to the general requirements for a sponsor licence set out in [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#), to be eligible for a Charity Worker sponsor licence you must be either:
- 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
- CHW2.6. You can find the relevant charity 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](#)

CHW2.7. For guidance on how to prove your charitable status, and other evidence you must send with your application, see [Appendix A to the sponsor guidance](#).

## How to keep your licence

CHW2.8. 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
- suspending your licence
- revoking your licence
- reporting you to the police or other relevant authorities

CHW2.9. For details, see [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#).

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# CHW3. Immigration requirements for Charity Workers

This section tells you the immigration requirements Charity Workers must meet and where you can find further information.

## Overview

CHW3.1. People who wish to come to the UK on the Charity Worker route must meet the requirements in [Appendix Temporary Work - Charity Worker](#) to the Immigration Rules.

CHW3.2. These requirements include that the applicant:

- has a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) issued by an approved sponsor to do eligible charity work
- meets the financial requirement
- genuinely intends, and is able, to undertake the role for which they are being sponsored
- does not intend to undertake employment other than the charity work for which they are being sponsored, and additional voluntary work that meets the requirements set out in this section
- is aged at least 18 on the date of application
- meets the relevant requirements for entry to the UK, extensions and 'switching'
- is not subject to the ['cooling-off period'](#)

CHW3.3. This is not a full list of requirements – you must refer to the relevant [Immigration Rules](#) for these.

## Eligible charity work

CHW3.4. You can only sponsor people on this route to do voluntary fieldwork directly related to the purpose of your charity. This means activities which meet all of the following:

- are not paid or otherwise remunerated, except as set out under 'Payment and expenses' below
- contribute directly to the achievement or advancement of your charitable purpose
- where relevant, comply with National Minimum Wage the Working Time Regulations

CHW3.5. You must not use the Charity Worker route to sponsor workers who will be doing mainly routine activities, such as:

- back-office administrative work
- retail or other sales roles

- fundraising
- maintenance of your offices and other assets

CHW3.6. You must not use this route to sponsor workers to fill a permanent vacancy. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes sponsoring individuals on a temporary basis to fill a vacancy for which there is a permanent, ongoing need.

## Payment and expenses

CHW3.7. You must not offer the worker any pay or remuneration, including benefits in kind, other than reasonable expenses and accommodation as is reasonable in the circumstances, and as defined by [section 44 of the National Minimum Wage Act 1998](#).

CHW3.8. If we find out that you are paying or remunerating the worker otherwise than in accordance with section 44 of the National Minimum Wage Act, we will revoke your sponsor licence.

## Compliance with National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Regulations

CHW3.9. The role you are sponsoring the worker for must comply with both the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015 and the Working Time Regulations 1998 (to the extent either of those Regulations apply). We will refuse any application for entry clearance or permission where we have reasonable grounds to believe it does not. We will also consider revoking your sponsor licence if we find you are breaching these Regulations.

CHW3.10. For further information, see 'Compliance with National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Regulations' in section S4 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

## Financial requirement

CHW3.11. The applicant must show they have enough funds to support themselves and any family members in the UK.

CHW3.12. 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.

CHW3.13. For further information, see section S7 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

## Entry requirement

CHW3.14. Applicants 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.

CHW3.15. If the applicant is applying for entry clearance, you should check they are not subject to the [‘cooling-off period’](#).

## Extension of permission

CHW3.16. Those already in the UK with permission on the Charity Worker route can apply to extend their stay, up to the maximum permitted period of 12 months, if they meet the relevant requirements. See section S9 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for further information on extension applications.

## ‘Switching’ to the Charity Worker route

CHW3.17. Individuals in the UK on another immigration route are not permitted to switch (change immigration category) to the Charity Worker route. If you wish to sponsor a person on the Charity Worker route but they are in the UK on another route, they must leave the UK and apply for entry clearance from overseas.

## How long Charity Workers can stay

CHW3.18. If the applicant makes a successful application for entry clearance on the Charity Worker route, they will be granted for whichever is the shortest of:

- the period of charity work stated on the CoS, plus up to 14 days before and 14 days after that period; or
- 12 months

CHW3.19. If the applicant makes a successful application for permission to stay on the Charity Worker route, they will be granted for whichever is the shorter of:

- the period of charity work stated on the CoS, plus 14 days; or
- 12 months (including time already spent in the UK on this route)

CHW3.20. 12 months is the maximum period that a person can stay in the UK on the Charity Worker route. Once a person has completed the maximum period, they must leave the UK, unless they qualify to stay in the UK on another basis. If you wish to sponsor the person again as a Charity Worker, they will need to complete a ‘cooling-off period’ before they can return to the UK.

## Conditions of stay: additional charity work

CHW3.21. A person granted permission as a Charity Worker is not permitted to take employment, other than:

- the charity work for which they are being sponsored
- additional charity work for another charitable organisation, provided it’s in the same role for which they’re being sponsored and meets the definition of [eligible charity work](#)

CHW3.22. For further information on conditions of stay, see section S8 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

## Cooling-off period for Charity Workers

CHW3.23. Before you sponsor a Charity 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.

CHW3.24. 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).

CHW3.25. If the cooling-off period applies, the applicant will not be eligible for a further grant of entry clearance in 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

CHW3.26. You can find more information about the [Charity Worker visa](#) on GOV.UK.

CHW3.27. 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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# CHW4. Certificate of Sponsorship for Charity Workers

This section tells you how to assign a valid Certificate of Sponsorship on the Charity Worker route.

## Overview

- CHW4.1. If you have followed all the rules in this guidance and you wish to sponsor a person on the Charity Worker route, you must assign them a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS), using your [sponsorship management system \(SMS\)](#) account.
- CHW4.2. Before assigning a CoS, you should satisfy yourself that the worker can meet the relevant [immigration requirements](#).
- CHW4.3. 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 all other cases, you must have an A-rating. For information on sponsor ratings, see section L8 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).
- CHW4.4. For detailed information on what a CoS is, and how many you can assign, see section S2 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).
- CHW4.5. 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

- CHW4.6. You must pay a fee for each CoS you assign – see [UK visa fees](#) on GOV.UK for information on current fee levels.

## Use of the CoS

- CHW4.7. 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 Charity Worker route
- CHW4.8. If the CoS was issued more than 3 months before the date of application, we may reject their application and not consider it.

CHW4.9. 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.

CHW4.10. 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

CHW4.11. For a CoS to be valid, it must meet the requirements of paragraphs CW 4.1 to CW 4.5 in [Appendix Temporary Work - Charity Worker](#).

CHW4.12. By assigning a CoS to a Charity Worker, you guarantee that the worker:

- will be doing [eligible charity work](#) which complies with National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Regulations
- genuinely intends, and is able, to undertake the role for which they are being sponsored
- does not intend to take employment other than:
  - the charity work for which they are being sponsored
  - [additional voluntary work](#) for another organisation, provided it is in the same role for which they are being sponsored and meets the [definition of eligible charity work](#) in this guidance
- will otherwise comply with the conditions of their permission to enter or stay – see section S8 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#) for further information
- will leave the UK when their permission ends unless they qualify for an extension of stay or permission on another immigration route

CHW4.13. The CoS must confirm all of the following:

- that you are sponsoring the worker on the Charity Worker route
- the worker's personal information (such as name, date of birth, nationality), passport details and contact details
- the start and end date of the charity work – see section S3 of [Part 2: sponsor a worker](#) for information on start and end dates
- where the worker will carry out their charity work – 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 information on occupation codes
- the main duties of the role for which the worker is being sponsored
- 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 there is no pay for the voluntary work (except reasonable expenses and accommodation as defined in [section 44 of the National Minimum Wage Act 1998](#))

## Reporting duties and record keeping

- CHW4.14. 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 to your organisation. For full details of your reporting and other duties, see: [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#).
- CHW4.15. You must also keep records for each worker you sponsor as specified in [Appendix D](#) to the sponsor guidance.
- CHW4.16. If you fail to meet these duties, we may revoke your sponsor licence.

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