



Home Office

# Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors

## Glossary

Version 05/26

This version of the guidance is valid from 20 May 2026.

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# About this guidance

This guidance is for employers and other organisations who are applying for, or already hold, a sponsor licence on the Worker or Temporary Worker routes. It contains definitions of terms and phrases commonly used throughout the collection '[Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors](#)'.

## Contacts

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

If you have any queries about this guidance, 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 05/26
- published on 20 May 2026

## Changes to this guidance

This version replaces version 03/26 (published on 6 March 2026). The guidance has been updated to introduce a new definition of 'operating or trading'.

## [Contents](#)

# Interpretation

“**This guidance**” or “**sponsor guidance**” means all constituent parts of the collection ‘Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors’, as set out under the heading ‘Structure of this guidance’ in [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#), including this glossary. Where the context requires, it also means the specific constituent part.

In this guidance:

- references to primary and secondary legislation refers to that legislation as amended from time to time; and
- unless the contrary intention appears, the definitions set out below apply whenever used in any part of the sponsor guidance.

## Associated administrative costs

Any costs incurred by you to obtain, use or maintain your sponsor licence, including, but not limited to:

- fees for priority services for sponsor licence applications, change of circumstances requests, or assigning, requesting or applying for a Certificate of Sponsorship
- any fees you paid for the [premium customer service scheme](#) when this service was in operation
- fees for sponsorship action plans (see section C8 of [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#) for more information on action plans)
- fees for legal advice related to applying for, using or maintaining your sponsor licence, or assigning, requesting or applying for a Certificate of Sponsorship
- immigration advice or immigration services provided by a third party to a sponsored worker where the worker did not have a genuine choice in whether, or how, to obtain such advice or services

## Authorising Officer

A senior person within your organisation who has overall responsibility for your activity as a licensed sponsor.

## Branch

Any UK-based:

- office, site, location or campus, including your head office; or
- subsidiary or other related entity, such as a parent or sister company

which, in either case, is linked to your organisation by common ownership or control.

See section L5 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#) for further information on branches.

## Cancellation of permission (and derived terms)

This is when the Home Office cancels or shortens a person's entry clearance or permission so that they have a shorter period of permission, or no permission at all, remaining. This was previously called 'curtailment of leave'.

This could happen, for example, if the person breaches their conditions of stay, is convicted of a criminal offence, or your licence is revoked. See the collection [General grounds for refusal: immigration staff guidance](#) for further information.

## Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)

An electronic document with a unique reference number issued by you (the sponsor) to a worker via the Sponsorship Management System, which confirms the details of the job you will be sponsoring the worker for. The worker must have a valid CoS before they can make a successful application for entry clearance, permission to enter or permission to stay.

If you are a Government Authorised Exchange sponsor who took part in the trial of the 'Sponsor UK' service (also known as a 'PB1 sponsor'), any reference to a CoS should be read to include the process of sponsoring a worker via Sponsor UK before this service was withdrawn.

The acronym 'CoS' can be singular (referring to a single Certificate of Sponsorship) or plural (referring to 2 or more Certificates of Sponsorship), as required by the context.

## Common ownership or control

Has the meaning given in section GBM2 of [Sponsor a Global Business Mobility worker](#), except that where the link is between UK entities only, any reference to an overseas entity should be read as a reference to a UK entity.

## Common Travel Area

This means, collectively, the UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands (Bailiwick of Guernsey and Bailiwick of Jersey), and the Isle of Man.

## Compliance check

A check to satisfy us that you are complying with, or if you are not yet licensed are capable of complying with, your sponsor duties as detailed in [Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance](#). A compliance check can include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- a compliance visit
- a digital compliance check
- a review of evidence or information from our own records, evidence or information you have previously submitted to us, and any evidence or information we request from you as part of a check

## Compliance visit

Where we visit you to perform a compliance check. This includes visiting any branches or sites under your control, or any relevant client site or third party where your sponsored workers will be working.

## Digital compliance check

Where we carry out a compliance check by verifying your operating or trading presence digitally, and conducting interviews with you using remote video conferencing facilities. This includes interviewing anyone coming under the general definition of 'you', or any of your sponsored workers, and may involve you having to present evidence prior to, during or after the video conference interview.

## Eligible role

A vacancy or role which we are satisfied meets all of the following requirements:

- exists at the point you assign the relevant Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) to the worker (or which you can reasonably anticipate will exist by the time you assign the relevant CoS) within either:
  - your organisation (the sponsor organisation)
  - another organisation in circumstances where you are permitted by this guidance to sponsor a worker to work for an organisation other than the sponsor organisation
- requires the jobholder to perform the specific duties and responsibilities, including the number of hours worked each week, for the job as set out on the CoS (or in an application or request for that CoS)
- meets all of the requirements of the route the worker is being sponsored on, including skill level and salary in accordance with the Immigration Rules, and complies at all times with the National Minimum Wage Act (and any regulations made under that Act) and the Working Time Regulations
- is appropriate to the business or organisation in light of its business model, business plan and scale

and we are satisfied will meet these requirements throughout the duration, or proposed duration, of sponsorship.

## Entry clearance

The process by which a person applies for permission to enter the UK from outside the UK or Islands before they travel to the UK, or evidence of that person's eligibility to enter the UK following a successful application.

Entry clearance issued to a successful applicant takes the form of either a visa (when issued to a visa national) or an entry certificate (when issued to a non-visa national); and can be issued either in digital format (an 'eVisa') or as a vignette sticker in the holder's passport or travel document. For further information, see [paragraphs 24 to 30C of the Immigration Rules](#).

An entry clearance is often commonly referred to simply as a 'visa'.

## eVisa

A digital record of a person's identity and immigration permission, including the duration and conditions of their permission to enter or stay in the UK. See '[eVisas: access and use your online immigration status](#)' on GOV.UK for further information

## Global Business Mobility routes

Any of the following routes:

- Senior or Specialist Worker
- Graduate Trainee
- UK Expansion Worker
- Service Supplier
- Secondment Worker

For further information about the individual routes, see [Sponsor a Global Business Mobility worker](#).

## Key Contact

Your main point of contact with UKVI.

## Key Personnel

Your:

- Authorising Officer
- Key Contact
- Level 1 User
- Level 2 User

See section L4 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#) for further information.

## Level 1 User

A person within your organisation who is responsible for your day-to-day activity as a licensed sponsor, including assigning and requesting Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS) and reporting worker activity or changes to your organisation in accordance with this guidance.

## Level 2 User

Similar to a Level 1 User, but a role which has fewer account permissions within the Sponsorship Management System.

## Non-visa national

Means a person who does not need a visa to visit the UK. People who need a visa ('visa nationals') are defined in [Appendix Visitor: Visa national list](#).

## Occupation code

Unless the context indicates otherwise, this means the relevant SOC 2020 occupation code.

## Operating or trading

Operating or trading is not defined in law and, unless otherwise stated in any part of this guidance, has a plain meaning.

Broadly, 'trading' can be taken to refer to operations of a commercial kind by which the trader provides to customers for reward some kind of goods or services.

'Operating' includes the activities of both:

- charities and other not-for-profit organisations where they are providing a service to clients, customers or service users
- businesses who are engaged in pre-trade activities with a view to commencing commercial trading activity (as defined above) in the foreseeable future

For further information, including examples of when we are unlikely to consider your organisation to be operating or trading, see section L8 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).

See also the definition of 'actively trading' for the purposes of the UK Expansion Worker route at paragraphs GBM3.7 to GBM3.8 of [Sponsor a Global Business Mobility worker](#).

## Partner or close relative

Someone who is a person's:

- spouse or civil partner
- unmarried or same-sex partner
- parent or step-parent
- son or step-son
- daughter or step-daughter
- brother, step-brother or half-brother
- sister, step-sister or half-sister
- nephew, niece, or cousin
- aunt or uncle
- father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law or daughter-in-law

## Permission

Means either permission to enter or permission to stay. In everyday usage, this is often referred to as a 'visa' but that term has a more technical meaning (see 'Entry clearance' above).

## Permission to enter

Has the same meaning as 'leave to enter' under the [Immigration Act 1971](#), and means permission given to a person to enter the UK. This could be via a valid entry clearance, a grant of permission given by an immigration officer, or a grant of permission via an automated ePassport Gate (where the passenger is eligible to use that facility).

## Permission to stay

Has the same meaning as 'leave to remain' under the [Immigration Act 1971](#) and means permission given by an official acting on behalf of the Secretary of State to someone already in the UK. It includes a variation of leave to enter or remain and an extension of leave to enter or remain.

## Relevant offence

Any offence listed in Annex L4 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).

## Settled worker

Has the meaning given in section S1 of [Part 2: Sponsor a worker](#).

## Settlement

Has the same meaning as 'indefinite leave to enter' or 'indefinite leave to remain'. Permission given to a person to enter or stay in the UK on a permanent basis.

## SOC 2010 occupation code

This means the relevant 4-digit code in the [Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\) 2010 system](#), published by the Office for National Statistics. The SOC 2010 system was replaced by the SOC 2020 system for Certificates of Sponsorship assigned on or after 4 April 2024.

## SOC 2020 occupation code

This means the relevant 4-digit code in the [Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\) 2020 system](#), published by the Office for National Statistics. Certificates of Sponsorship assigned on or after 4 April 2024 must use the SOC 2020 system.

## Sponsored work routes

This means any of the Worker or Temporary Worker routes.

## Sponsorship Management System (SMS)

An online function which allows you to manage your sponsor licence and carry out any sponsorship related activities. See section L10 of [Part 1: Apply for a licence](#) and the [SMS User Manuals](#) for further information.

## Temporary Worker routes

Any of the following routes:

- Charity Worker
- Creative Worker
- the following Global Business Mobility (GBM) routes:
  - Graduate Trainee
  - UK Expansion Worker
  - Service Supplier
  - Secondment Worker
- Government Authorised Exchange
- International Agreement
- Religious Worker
- Scale-up
- Seasonal Worker

Where the context requires, references to these routes include their predecessor routes. See the relevant route-specific guidance for further information predecessor routes and the [archived Immigration Rules](#) for previous versions of the relevant Rules.

## UKVI

[UK Visas and Immigration](#), an operational command of the Home Office.

## Visa national

A person specified in [Appendix Visitor: Visa National list](#) as needing an entry clearance (a visa) in advance of travel to the UK for any purpose or duration.

## We or us

The Home Office, including any operational command of the Home Office, such as UKVI.

## Worker

Means a person who is applying for, or has been granted, entry clearance or permission, or someone you are sponsoring or intend to sponsor, on one of the Worker or Temporary Worker routes.

## Worker routes

Any of the following routes:

- Skilled Worker
- Global Business Mobility – Senior or Specialist Worker
- T2 Minister of Religion
- International Sportsperson

Where the context requires, references to these routes include their predecessor routes. See the relevant route-specific guidance for further information predecessor routes and the [archived Immigration Rules](#) for previous versions of the relevant Rules.

## Working days

Any day other than a:

- Saturday
- Sunday
- [UK bank holiday](#)

## You or your

The sponsor organisation or prospective sponsor organisation, including any:

- owner
- director
- Authorising Officer
- Key Contact
- Level 1 User
- person recorded on your Companies House listing as a Person with Significant Control
- person involved in your day-to-day running

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