

Movement of People – What Should You Know?

Published 7 August 2025

This guidance provides advice and information on the following topics related to the movement of people into the UK.

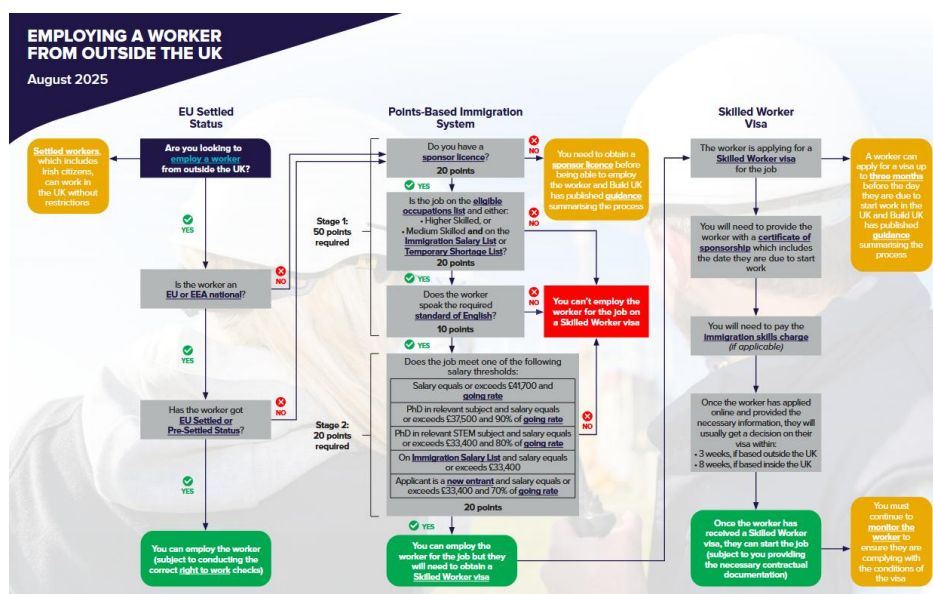
- Points-Based Immigration System (PBIS)
- Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain: The Common Travel Area (CTA)
- Skilled Worker Route
- Becoming a Licensed Sponsor
- Immigration Salary List (ISL)
- Temporary Shortage List (TSL)
- EU, EEA and Swiss Migrants
- UK workers in the EU
- Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications
- Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) and Sub-Contractors
- Useful Resources

POINTS-BASED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM (PBIS)

Since 1 January 2021, the UK has operated a points-based immigration system (PBIS) which treats EU and non-EU citizens equally. Anyone coming to the UK to work, excluding Irish citizens, needs to apply for permission in advance.

The PBIS means that anyone from outside the UK coming to work in the UK must meet a specific set of requirements for which they will score points. Visas are then awarded to those who gain enough points. For employers, they must hold a sponsor licence in order to hire most eligible workers from outside the UK.

Build UK has produced a flowchart which provides an overview of employing a worker on a Skilled Worker visa, which most workers from outside the UK in construction are likely to require to work in an eligible occupation. [click to access]:



This flowchart is regularly reviewed
[Click here for the latest version](#)

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IRELAND, NORTHERN IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN: THE COMMON TRAVEL AREA (CTA)

In the case of Ireland specifically, the [Common Travel Area](#) (CTA) allows the free-flowing movement of people. British and Irish citizens can move freely and reside in either jurisdiction, enjoying associated reciprocal rights and privileges, including the right to work and access to social welfare benefits and health services.

The CTA existed before either the UK or Ireland became members of the EU, which means that reciprocal rights for Irish and UK citizens operate separately from those rights afforded by EU membership. Both the UK and Irish governments have committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that the long-standing CTA rights and privileges are protected, including entering into a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU) on 8 May 2019, reaffirming this joint commitment.

The UK's withdrawal from the EU has not affected the rights of Irish citizens and UK citizens within the CTA. The right to live, work and access public services in the CTA is protected. CTA rights do not extend to a citizen's family, therefore if a spouse or partner, or other relative, is not an Irish or UK citizen, they may have to apply for residence in the UK or Ireland.

The [Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union \(Consequential Provisions\) Act 2019](#) placed many of the CTA rights in legislation for the first time and empowers relevant Ministers to legislate in the areas of providing equal access to healthcare and social welfare.

The withdrawal agreement between the UK and the European Union recognises the CTA in its Protocol, which deals with Ireland and Northern Ireland. Article 2 provides for the continued operation of the CTA.

ACTIONS

- Review the rules regarding the Common Travel Area (CTA)

SKILLED WORKER ROUTE

Following the introduction of the PBIS, workers joining the workforce from outside the UK will require a visa, sponsored by an employer, in order to work in the UK. For the vast majority of new workers joining the UK construction and built environment sector from outside the UK, this will mean applying for a Skilled Worker visa to work in an [eligible occupation](#) which meets the relevant [skills and salary thresholds](#).

Normally, only occupations which have been classified as 'Higher Skilled' are eligible for a Skilled Worker visa. However, an individual can still apply for a Skilled Worker visa if the occupation they are applying for is classified as 'Medium Skilled' and is either on the [Immigration Salary List](#) or the [Temporary Shortage List](#).

Applying for a Skilled Worker visa can be a complex process and Build UK has [summarised the key steps](#) to help individuals understand what is involved. Individuals should ensure they set aside sufficient time to review all the information before submitting an application.

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ACTIONS

- Determine whether you intend to employ workers from outside the UK
- If so, understand the process of getting a Skilled Worker Visa

BECOMING A LICENSED SPONSOR

Businesses wishing to employ workers from outside the UK must have a sponsor licence in order to be able to provide each worker with a unique certificate of sponsorship to allow the worker to apply for the visa. There are [two types](#) of sponsor licence - 'Worker' licence and 'Temporary Worker' licence - and a business must have the correct one for the type(s) of workers it is looking to employ. Once a business has a sponsor licence, it can employ as many eligible workers from outside the UK as it requires.

There are ten steps to this process:

1. Check the business is eligible for a sponsor licence
2. Identify what type of sponsor licence is required
3. Ensure the business has the appropriate systems in place to monitor any sponsored employees
4. Appoint people within the business to manage the application process for a licence and the Sponsor Management System upon receipt of the licence
5. Collate the supporting documentation needed as part of the application
6. Ensure the necessary funds are available to pay the sponsor licence fee
7. Complete and submit the application to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)
8. Receive a decision on the application
9. Begin employing eligible workers
10. Comply with the conditions of the sponsor licence.

Getting a sponsor licence can be a complex process and Build UK has [summarised the key steps](#) to help businesses in the construction industry understand what is involved. Businesses should ensure they set aside sufficient time to review all the information before submitting an application. Most applications are dealt with in less than eight weeks, although UKVI may need to visit a business to make sure it is trustworthy and capable of carrying out its duties. If a quicker decision is required, a business may be able to pay £500 to get a decision within 10 working days and this will be confirmed after the application has been received.

ACTIONS

- Determine whether you need to employ workers from outside the UK
- If so, review all the information about getting a sponsor licence before gathering the necessary information and applying.

IMMIGRATION SALARY LIST (ISL)

Certain occupations across all industries have been placed on the [Immigration Salary List \(ISL\)](#) which lists the job roles where a worker can be paid less than the Skilled Worker visa route's usual minimum rate, to a minimum of £33,400, whilst still qualifying for a Skilled Worker visa.

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The Government has confirmed in the [Immigration White Paper](#), which was published in May 2025, that it will eventually abolish the ISL and [remove all occupations on it](#) by 31 December 2026, with the exception of care workers and senior care workers which will remain on it until 22 July 2028.

ACTIONS

- Check whether any roles you are recruiting for are part of the ISL

TEMPORARY SHORTAGE LIST (TSL)

As part of the [Immigration White Paper](#), the Government has established the [Temporary Shortage List \(TSL\)](#) which allows occupations classified as 'Medium Skilled' (RQF Level 3 – 5) to access the Skilled Worker visa route on a time-limited basis.

In order to be on the TSL, the occupation must have had long term shortages, and the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) has advised Government it is justified because there is a workforce strategy in place and employers seeking to recruit from abroad are committed to playing their part in increasing recruitment from the domestic workforce. The MAC provides independent, evidence-based advice on migration issues to the Government. Employers are encouraged to work through their relevant trade association or professional institution and the Construction Leadership Council to advise which construction occupations classified as 'Medium Skilled' they believe to be in shortage and where skilled immigration is the only way to solve the issue.

ACTIONS

- Check whether any roles you are recruiting for are part of the TSL

EU, EEA AND SWISS MIGRANTS

EU, EEA and Swiss citizens who lived in the UK before 31 December 2020 can continue to work in the UK in the same way if they applied for [settled status](#) by 30 June 2021. If they failed to apply by that deadline, they can still apply for this status but must also either meet [one of the criteria](#) for a later deadline to apply or have '[reasonable grounds](#)' for not applying by 30 June 2021.

However, EU, EEA and Swiss citizens now entering the UK for work will need to apply in advance for a visa and be sponsored by a licenced sponsor, and are not eligible for settled status.

If an employee has pre-settled or settled status from the EU Settlement Scheme, they will need to get a [share code](#) online to prove their right to work to their employer.

ACTIONS

- Check whether your existing EU, EEA and Swiss employees have either settled or pre-settled status and a right to work in the UK

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UK WORKERS IN THE EU

If you employ UK workers based in [EU and EEA](#) countries, there may be some [additional checks](#) to ensure that they can work in that country:

- They may be required to meet local requirements in the country where they reside
- Their UK qualifications may not be mutually recognised
- If the end date on the [UK-issued A1/E101](#) certificate goes beyond the day the UK left the EU, you will need to contact the [relevant EU / EEA or Swiss authority](#) to confirm whether or not your employee needs to start paying social security contributions in that country from that date. Employees may be required to make social security contributions in more than one country at a time
- Individuals can find out what actions they need to take if they wish to continue [working, or start working, in the EU](#) if they are a UK citizen

ACTIONS

- Check whether there are any national requirements in EU countries where workers are based
- Check whether their UK qualifications will be recognised
- Check whether any social security contributions are required in the relevant country

MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Following the UK's exit from the EU, Directive 2005/36/EC (whose purpose is to facilitate a fair, transparent and consistent regime for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications across EU member states) no longer applies. UK professionals seeking to work in EU or EEA nations are now considered to be 'third country' nationals and will be subject to the requirements of individual EU or EEA nations.

EU/EEA nationals seeking to work in the UK in professions covered by UK law will be subject to the [Professional Qualifications Act 2022](#). Aside from architects and building inspectors, those in the UK built environment/construction professions are not regulated in law and there is no legislative requirement to be registered with a regulatory body in order to carry out certain activities. As such, there is no restriction to the profession and access to professional titles cannot be considered to be a barrier to practice.

However, to attain professional qualifications, and to use some titles including Chartered or professional titles or designatory letters in a field linked to your profession, you may need to be qualified or registered with a specific body, some of which may hold a Royal Charter. These bodies will consider your qualifications and practical experience against their requirements, before awarding the relevant professional title, designation or qualification.

The [Regulated Professions Register](#) is a digital tool that enables professionals to check whether a profession is regulated in the UK or part of the UK, and to access information related to that profession (e.g. who the relevant regulator or chartered

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body is, and qualification requirements, if any, for entering a profession). This helps people to navigate the UK regulatory landscape and facilitate easy communication between professionals and regulators.

Those wishing to work in the UK from outside the UK should seek guidance from the appropriate UK professional body and consider the merits of following, at a minimum, the continuing professional development guidelines set for their particular profession. Professional bodies will be very supportive in providing guidance on appropriate UK safety standards and will rightly encourage those coming to the UK to register and work towards an appropriate grade of professional membership.

ACTION

- Seek guidance from the appropriate professional body – see [here](#) [CIC] for a comprehensive list of professional bodies

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY SCHEME (CIS) AND SUB-CONTRACTORS

People arriving into the UK are still able to work under the CIS scheme and there are no additional forms to complete. Having the right to work in the UK is the foremost test.

The HMRC website contains information about registering for CIS and includes a section on how to apply if you're [based abroad](#).

ACTIONS

- Check to see whether CIS applies to you
- If it does, then register on the HMRC website accordingly.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

- Employer Partnering Pack - [here](#)
- Employing a Worker from Outside the UK Flowchart - [here](#) [PDF download]
- Sponsor Licence – How to Apply – [here](#) [PDF download]
- Guide to becoming a Licenced Sponsor – [here](#) [PDF download]
- Skilled Worker Visa – How to Apply – [here](#) [PDF download]
- UK Points-based system - [here](#)
- Immigration Salary List (ISL) – [here](#)
- Temporary Shortage List (TSL) – [here](#)
- Recognition of professional qualifications in EU Directive 2005/36/EC - [here](#)
- CIS and sub-contractors – [here](#)

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Information correct as at 7 August 2025. This publication is for general information only and does not seek to give legal advice or to be an exhaustive statement of the law. Specific advice should always be sought for individual cases.

The Construction Leadership Council would like to expressly thank David Bishop (Build UK) lead author of this edition as well as Graham Watts (CIC) who co-ordinated the original edition of this guidance.

The Construction Leadership Council would like to thank the following organisations for their participation in the Movement of People Workstream of the CLC's BREXIT Working Group: Builders Merchants Federation (BMF), Build UK, Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA), Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT), Construction Industry Council (CIC), Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA), Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS), Federation of Master Builders (FMB), Home Builders Federation (HBF), Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE), Jacobs, National Federation of Builders (NFB), Morrisroe, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Vemury Consultancy.

Version history: Originally published 19 October 2020, revised 05 November 2020, revised 14 March 2023, revised 4 April 2024.