

FOR EMPLOYERS AND SPONSORS · APPLICATION GUIDE

Business immigration for UK employers

Sponsor licences, sponsorship duties, certificates of sponsorship and Home Office compliance, updated for 2026.

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Please read first. This guide is general information about UK immigration law as at 8 August 2026. It is not legal advice, no outcome is guaranteed, and the Immigration Rules and Home Office fees change frequently. Always check the current position on GOV.UK or take advice.

How we work

- Enquiry — you contact the firm by telephone, email or the enquiry form, and we confirm whether we are able to help.
- Advice appointment — a solicitor reviews your circumstances and explains the position, the route options and the requirements that apply on those facts.
- Scope and fees agreed in writing — no application work begins before this is confirmed.
- Evidence preparation — we set out what is needed, review what you provide and identify gaps before submission.
- Submission — the application and the written submissions are checked and approved by a solicitor before they are filed.
- After submission — we deal with Home Office correspondence and keep you updated until the matter concludes.

SECTION 01

Sponsorship in outline

An employer that wants to recruit most non-UK nationals needs a sponsor licence. The licence carries continuing legal duties, and the Home Office can suspend, downgrade or revoke it where those duties are not met. Sponsorship is a compliance obligation on the employer, not simply an administrative step in recruitment.

- Apply for a Worker licence to sponsor Skilled Workers and certain other routes
- Apply for a Temporary Worker licence for the temporary routes
- Nominate an authorising officer, key contact and at least one level 1 user
- Have HR systems capable of meeting the record-keeping and reporting duties
- Expect a pre-licence or post-licence compliance visit

SECTION 02

Licence and sponsorship costs

SPONSOR COSTS

ITEM	SMALL OR CHARITABLE	MEDIUM OR LARGE
Worker licence application	£611	£1,682
Temporary Worker licence application	£611	£611
Add a Worker licence to a Temporary Worker licence	No fee	£1,071
Certificate of sponsorship (Worker routes)	£525	£525
Immigration skills charge, first 12 months	£480	£1,320
Immigration skills charge, each further 6 months	£240	£660
Priority licence application service	£750	£750
Action plan issued after compliance action	£1,579	£1,579

You are usually a small or charitable sponsor if your annual turnover is £15 million or less and your total assets are worth £7.5 million or less, or you have 50 employees or fewer, or you are a registered charity.

SECTION 03

Sponsorship duties

The duties fall into four broad areas. They apply from the date the licence is granted, not from the date the first worker starts.

- Record keeping — right to work checks, contact details, absence records, contracts and recruitment records, kept in the format the sponsor guidance specifies
- Reporting — changes to a sponsored worker's employment, salary, work location or start date, and unauthorised absence of ten or more consecutive working days, normally reported within ten working days
- Complying with the law — including immigration, employment and equality law, and the National Minimum Wage
- Not behaving in a manner not conducive to the public good — including cooperating with Home Office requests and compliance visits

Sponsorship duties sit with the sponsor. Our role is to advise on what those duties require, help you record and evidence what you have done, and represent you if the Home Office raises concerns. Home Office decisions and enforcement action remain matters for the Home Office.

SECTION 04

Assigning certificates of sponsorship

A certificate of sponsorship is an electronic record, not a document. It must accurately state the job, the occupation code, the salary, the hours and the start date, and the employer must be able to justify each entry if asked.

- Confirm the occupation code genuinely reflects the duties of the role
- Confirm the salary meets both the general threshold and the going rate, pro-rated correctly for the hours
- Keep the recruitment and job description evidence that supports the assignment
- Assign the certificate within the validity period and make sure the worker applies before it expires
- Report any change to the details after assignment

SECTION 05

Compliance visits and enforcement

The Home Office may visit before a licence is granted and at any time afterwards, sometimes without notice. Visits typically test the HR file, right to work checks, the genuineness of the role, and whether reporting has been done on time.

- Prepare a licence file: policies, HR records, right to work checks and reporting evidence
- Brief the authorising officer, key contact and level 1 users on the questions likely to be asked
- Respond to information requests within the deadline stated
- Where an action plan is issued, treat the deadlines as strict and evidence each step taken
- Where a licence is suspended, take advice immediately; representations are normally due within 20 working days

Revocation has immediate consequences for sponsored workers, whose leave is normally curtailed. Planning for that risk is part of managing the licence.

SECTION 06

Right to work checks

A correct right to work check, carried out before employment begins and repeated where leave is time limited, provides a statutory excuse against a civil penalty. Checks are now largely digital, using an online share code and the UKVI checking service, with manual checks retained for a limited group of document holders.

- Carry out the check before the first day of employment
- Use the online service where the individual holds an eVisa or digital status
- Record the check, retain evidence securely, and diarise follow-up checks
- Apply the same process to every worker to avoid discrimination
- Review the position where a worker's status changes or an application is pending

WORKING WITH US

How we can help

Andrew Williams Solicitors is a regulated immigration law practice. Our solicitors advise on and prepare applications in this area, and every submission is checked and approved by a solicitor before it is filed.

- Sponsor licence applications and pre-application readiness reviews
- Advice on sponsorship duties, record-keeping and reporting obligations
- Certificate of sponsorship and Skilled Worker application advice
- Support with Home Office compliance visits and information requests
- Advice on licence suspension, downgrade and revocation
- Right to work check reviews and staff briefings

Professional indemnity and scope of service

We use internal working methods to support our solicitors in delivering an efficient, evidence-led service. The following applies without exception:

- We are a regulated law firm providing legal services. We are not a technology or software provider.
- Any internal working methods we use support our solicitors. They are not products, and they are not supplied, licensed or made available to clients.
- Clients receive legal advice from a solicitor. Clients do not receive access to any internal system.
- No internal working method makes, replaces or influences a legal judgment. Every piece of advice and every submission is prepared and approved by a solicitor.
- We do not control Home Office decisions, processing times, eligibility or policy, and we make no representation that we do.
- Nothing in this guide is a guarantee of any outcome, timescale or eligibility.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Disclaimer and terms of use

- This guide is general information about UK immigration law and Home Office practice as at 8 August 2026. It is not legal advice and must not be relied on as advice about your own circumstances.
- The Immigration Rules, Home Office fees, published service standards and policy guidance change regularly and often at short notice. Figures and requirements stated here were checked against GOV.UK on the date shown and may have changed since. Always check the current position on GOV.UK, or take advice, before you make an application.
- No solicitor can guarantee the outcome of an immigration application or appeal. Every case is decided by the Home Office, or by the tribunal, on its own facts and on the evidence submitted.
- Andrew Williams Solicitors accepts no liability for any loss arising from reliance on this guide. Downloading or reading this guide does not create a solicitor and client relationship. A relationship begins only once we have issued, and you have accepted, a written engagement letter.
- We strongly recommend that you take advice from a regulated immigration solicitor before making or responding to any immigration application.

Sources checked

- GOV.UK — UK visa sponsorship for employers (checked 8 August 2026)
- Home Office sponsor guidance: Workers and Temporary Workers, parts 1 to 3
- GOV.UK — An employer's guide to right to work checks
- Home Office immigration and nationality fees table

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Andrew Nathaniel Williams is the principal solicitor and founder of Andrew Williams Solicitors, an immigration practice based in Leeds. He holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB Hons) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice, and began working in immigration law in 2001 as a caseworker at the Refugee Legal Centre in Leeds.

Andrew qualified as a solicitor in 2004 and established the practice that trades today as Andrew Williams Solicitors in 2007. He has held supervisory roles in immigration practices in Leeds, Hull and Manchester, and has acted in family, work, settlement, fee waiver and appeal matters at every level from initial application to the Upper Tribunal.

Andrew practises through the firm, which is authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. The firm holds professional indemnity insurance as required by the SRA Indemnity Insurance Rules.

FIRM AND REGULATORY DETAILS

DETAIL	INFORMATION
Practice name	Andrew Williams Solicitors
Legal entity	Leeds Legal Solutions Ltd, also known as Andrew Williams Solicitors
Regulator	Solicitors Regulation Authority
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To arrange an advice appointment, call 0113 244 1911, email clients@awsolicitors.co.uk, or use the enquiry form at www.awsolicitors.co.uk/contact/. We confirm the scope of work and our fees in writing before any application work begins.