

WORK IMMIGRATION • APPLICATION GUIDE

Skilled Worker visa applications

Sponsorship, salary thresholds, occupation codes and changes of employer, updated for the rules in force in 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

The route in outline

A Skilled Worker visa allows you to come to, or stay in, the UK to do an eligible job for an employer approved by the Home Office. The application depends on three things being aligned: a valid certificate of sponsorship, a role at the required skill level, and a salary that meets both the general threshold and the going rate for the occupation code.

- You must work for a UK employer holding a Worker sponsor licence
- You must hold a certificate of sponsorship (CoS) assigned for the role
- The occupation code must be eligible for the route
- You must be paid at least the applicable minimum salary
- You must meet the English language requirement at CEFR level B1 or above
- A visa can be granted for up to five years before it must be extended

SECTION 02

Salary requirements in 2026

You must usually be paid whichever is the higher of the general threshold and the going rate for your occupation code.

SKILLED WORKER SALARY THRESHOLDS

APPLICANT TYPE	GENERAL THRESHOLD
Standard applicant	£41,700 a year, or the going rate if higher
New entrant (under 26, recent graduate, professional training)	£33,400 a year, or the reduced going rate
Job on the immigration salary list	£33,400 a year, or the going rate
PhD-level occupation code (relevant to the job)	£37,500 a year, or the going rate
Prison officer switching or extending (time limited)	£31,300 a year, or the lower going rate
Health and care and certain education roles	National pay scale rates apply

Salary is assessed on guaranteed basic gross pay. Allowances, bonuses, overtime, shift premiums and benefits in kind are generally excluded, and the salary must also comply with the National Minimum Wage and working time rules.

SECTION 03

Skill level and occupation codes

Each job has a four-digit occupation code. Codes are classified in the eligible occupations table as higher skilled or medium skilled. Higher skilled codes are eligible for the route. Medium skilled codes are eligible only where the job is on the immigration salary list, on the temporary shortage list, or where a specific transitional provision applies — including for applicants extending who obtained their first certificate of sponsorship before 22 July 2025.

- Ask the employer for the occupation code assigned on the CoS
- Check that the code genuinely matches the duties to be performed
- Check the going rate published for that code, and how it is pro-rated for hours worked
- Check whether transitional provisions apply because of the date of the first CoS

SECTION 04

Costs and the financial requirement

APPLICANT COSTS

ITEM	AMOUNT
Application fee, outside the UK, up to 3 years	£819 per person
Application fee, outside the UK, more than 3 years	£1,618 per person
Application fee, inside the UK, up to 3 years	£943 per person
Application fee, inside the UK, more than 3 years	£1,865 per person
Immigration salary list job, up to 3 years	£628 per person
Immigration salary list job, more than 3 years	£1,235 per person
Immigration health surcharge	£1,035 per year of leave
Maintenance funds (unless certified by the sponsor)	£1,270 held for 28 days

Dependants must show additional maintenance funds — currently £285 for a partner, £315 for a first child and £200 for each further child — unless the sponsor certifies maintenance.

Sponsor-side costs

The sponsor pays the licence fee (£611 for small or charitable sponsors and £1,682 for medium and large sponsors), the certificate of sponsorship fee, and, where it applies, the immigration skills charge of £480 per year for small or charitable sponsors and £1,320 per year for medium and large sponsors.

SECTION 05

Before the application is filed

- Check the CoS details against the application: name, job title, occupation code, salary, hours and start date
- Check the start date is not more than three months after the date of application
- Check that the English language requirement is met and evidenced
- Check that the applicant's TB certificate, where required by their country of residence, is in date
- Check maintenance funds have been held for the full 28-day period ending no more than 31 days before the application
- Keep a record of the evidence relied on; discrepancies between the CoS and the application are a frequent cause of difficulty

SECTION 06

Changes during the visa

Changing employer, changing to a different occupation code, a significant change in salary, or the end of sponsored employment each have consequences for immigration status, and several require a new application before the change takes effect.

- New employer: a new certificate of sponsorship and a new application are normally required before starting
- Promotion or change of role within the same occupation code: may only require the sponsor to report the change
- Change of occupation code: normally requires a new application
- Reduction in salary below the applicable threshold: requires review before it takes effect
- Sponsorship withdrawn: the Home Office will normally curtail leave, and there is limited time to make alternative arrangements
- Supplementary employment is permitted within defined limits, alongside the sponsored role

SECTION 07

Extensions, settlement and refusals

There is no limit on the number of times the visa can be extended, provided the requirements continue to be met. After five years' continuous residence the applicant may be eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain, subject to the settlement requirements in force at that time, including the absence rules, the salary requirement for settlement, and the knowledge of language and life requirement.

Where an application is delayed and a start date is approaching, the priority and super priority services may be available, and the employer should be kept informed in writing. Where an application is refused, the decision letter will identify whether administrative review is available and the deadline that applies. Take advice quickly, particularly where existing leave has expired.

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.

- Skilled Worker applications, extensions and switching applications
- Certificate of sponsorship and occupation code reviews before assignment
- Change of employer and change of role advice
- Sponsor-side advice on assigning certificates and meeting sponsor duties
- Advice where an application is delayed, curtailed or refused

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 — Skilled Worker visa (checked 8 August 2026)
- Immigration Rules Appendix Skilled Worker and Appendix Skilled Occupations
- Home Office sponsor guidance: Workers and Temporary Workers
- 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
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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.