



Immigration Sponsor Licence Overview: Skilled Workers

Step	Activity	Overview
1.	Preparation	<p>Before applying for a sponsor licence, the following key issues must be considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. <u>HR Policies and Procedures</u> – Sponsors must be able to show robust HR practices; this demonstrates future ability to comply with onerous sponsor duties, which take effect the day that the licence is granted (see further below) ii. <u>Personnel</u> – Sponsors must assign specific responsibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorising Officer – a senior member of staff with over responsibility for the licence • Key Contact – an individual who receives Home Office correspondence • Sponsor Management System users – individuals with access to the online Sponsorship Management System, from which the licence is administered <p><u>Annual Usage of Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS)</u> - When applying for a licence, sponsors estimate the number of CoS it expects to issue within a 12-month period. Note that only sponsorship of workers already living in the UK (eg those currently sponsored with another business) can be provided for in this way; new recruits hired from overseas require specific permission for sponsorship known as a Defined CoS. This process is completed only after a licence is granted.</p> <p>Before making a licence application, sponsors must consider recruitment plans fully, and how these will interact with their licence.</p>
2.	Completion of online application	<p>The online application form is straightforward and can be prepared on your behalf by an appointed representative. However, the Authorising Officer must submit the application directly. Fees for the licence are paid at this time (considered further below).</p>
3.	Submission of supporting documents	<p>Following submission of the online application, appropriate supporting documentation must be provided to the Home Office within 5 working days. These documents include basic evidence of a genuine trading</p>

		business (eg bank statement, VAT registration), often submitted alongside more detailed information concerning planned sponsorship
4.	Pre-licence visit	In some cases, more commonly with smaller businesses, a pre-licence visit is conducted by Home Office employees. This allows more detailed assessment of the proposed sponsor and its existing procedures.
5.	Consideration of the application	Sponsor licence applications often take 4 - 8 weeks to be processed, but where expedited consideration is required, there is a priority service available for £500 which aims to reduce processing times to 10 working days.
6.	Following licence approval	Once the Home Office is satisfied that the company is a suitable sponsor, it will approve the application and issue a licence valid for four years. Access to the Sponsorship Management System will also be granted to the appropriate personnel identified on the licence application form.
7.	Managing the licence	Throughout the lifetime of the licence, it will be incumbent on the sponsor to comply with all duties and responsibilities as set out in the detailed Sponsor Guidance . The licence will be managed via the online system; assigning new sponsorship and amending existing licence and sponsorship details.

HR processes essential for sponsors

General management of workers

- Staff Handbook and/or written policies for employees to include absence policy (both planned and unplanned)
- Policy / process for retention of documents and updating of personnel files to maintain accurate contact details
- Policy / process for payroll
- Right to Work checks (and follow-up checks where these are required)
 - This policy should differentiate between workers who do not require repeat checks (eg British nationals) and those whose Right to Work will expire with their immigration status

Recruitment Specific

- Recruitment policy including information on how and where you advertise your roles
- Any standard pre-employment screening documentation
- Interview template

Immigration Specific Processes

- Process for monitoring employee immigration status and record keeping
- Process for reporting via Sponsorship Management System in respect of absences and minor amendments to role (eg annual salary increases)
- Process for reporting cessation of sponsorship and managing change of employment applications
- Record keeping process for sponsored roles, to include:
 - full job description
 - any advertising conducted and applications received
 - compliance with sponsorship requirements for skill and salary levels

Licence Application fees

Licence fees are calculated dependent on the size of the sponsor:

- Small or charitable sponsors pay £536 for a 4-year licence
- Medium or large sponsors pay £1476 for a 4-year licence

The Home Office usually accepts that a company is a small business where annual turnover is £10.2 million or less and the business has 50 employees or fewer.

In addition to the licence fees, all sponsors pay £199 per sponsored worker to assign a CoS to an individual worker. This is paid each time an individual is sponsored.

All sponsors are also required to pay an Immigration Skills Charge (ISC). This is paid per worker for each year of sponsorship, calculated as follows:

Period	Small or charitable sponsors	Medium or large sponsors
First 12 months	£364	£1000
Each additional 6 months	£182	£500

If the worker will be in the UK for longer than 6 months but less than a year, you must pay for at least 12 months. You must pay the full charge at the outset but can apply for a partial refund in the end that sponsorship is cut short. Some categories of worker will be exempted from ISC payments, such as Students switching to become sponsored skilled workers

Categories of licence

Employees can be sponsored as *Skilled Workers*, *Intra-Company Workers*, or *Temporary Workers*. Sponsors require a licence in the specific category to proceed to sponsorship. The categories can be summarised as follows:

- **Skilled Worker:** long-term sponsorship with a view to UK settlement. Sponsored roles must meet minimum skill and salary levels for sponsorship to proceed
- **Intra-Company Worker:** short-term transfer of a worker from an overseas group company to the UK. This might be an experienced skills transfer, or a structured graduate programme. Sponsored roles must meet minimum skill and salary levels to proceed
- **Temporary Worker:** short-term relocation, sometimes sponsored but not always a requirement. Often no skill level requirement, and limited salary requirements

It is essential that sponsors apply for a licence of the type required to meet their recruitment needs. Licences can be expanded where additional needs arise.