

HOW TO GET A SPONSOR LICENCE

Following the introduction of the [Points-Based Immigration System](#), foreign workers must generally have a visa sponsored by an employer in order to work in the UK. This does **not** include '[settled workers](#)', including Irish citizens, who can work in the UK without restrictions.

Businesses wishing to employ workers that require a visa must have a sponsor licence in order to be able to provide each worker with a unique certificate of sponsorship so that they can apply for the visa. There are two types of sponsor licence and a business must have the correct one for the types of workers it is looking to employ. Once a business has a sponsor licence, it can employ as many eligible foreign workers as it requires.

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.

1 Check that the business is [eligible](#) for a sponsor licence

There must not be any unspent criminal convictions for [immigration offences](#) or [certain other crimes](#) (such as fraud or money laundering) against any directors of the business and the business must not have had its sponsor licence revoked in the last 12 months.

2 Identify what [type of sponsor licence](#) is required

There are two types of sponsor licence: 'Worker' licence and 'Temporary Worker' licence. Depending on the types of workers that a business is looking to employ, it can apply for one or both types of licence, and each one is split into a number of routes as follows:

Worker Licence	Temporary Worker Licence
Intra-Company Transfer	Charity Worker
Intra-Company Graduate Trainee	Creative or Sporting Worker
Minister of Religion	Government Authorised Exchange Worker
Skilled Worker	International Agreement Worker
Sportsperson	Religious Worker
	Seasonal Worker

A business can select as many routes as required under each licence and there is [detailed information](#) available on each route.

In construction, the majority of foreign workers will be 'skilled workers' so a business will need to apply for a **'Worker' licence** and select the ['Skilled Worker' route](#). If the business is also planning to transfer foreign workers to a UK branch, they will need to select the ['Intra-Company Transfer' route](#) as well.

3 Ensure that there are appropriate systems in place to [monitor any sponsored employees](#)

The business will need to do the following for each sponsored employee:

- Monitor their immigration status
- Keep copies of [relevant documents](#), including passport and right to work information
- Track and record their attendance
- Keep their contact details up to date
- Report if there is a problem, for example the employee stops coming to work.

4 Appoint people within the business to [manage the application process for a licence and the Sponsor Management System \(SMS\)](#) upon receipt of the licence

The key roles that must be filled, either by the same person or different people, are:

- **Authorising Officer** – A senior and competent person within in the business responsible for the actions of staff and representatives who use the SMS
- **Key Contact** – Main point of contact with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), which issues and administers sponsor licences
- **Level 1 User** – Responsible for all day-to-day management of the business's licence using the SMS.

Anyone undertaking these roles must be based in the UK most of the time, not be a contractor or consultant for a specific project, and not have a history of non-compliance with sponsor requirements.

5 Collate the [supporting documentation](#) needed as part of the application

A business must generally provide **at least four documents** when applying for a licence, unless they are a company listed on the London Stock Exchange Main Market or a public body recognised by the Government (such as a local authority).

The documents required vary depending on the company type and size as well as the type of licence being applied for, and it may take some time to check and collate the correct documentation. It is advisable to scan or take photos of the documents and save them in PDF, JPEG or PNG formats.

For a Worker licence, the business must also provide the following information:

- An explanation of why it is applying for a licence
- What sector it operates in
- What its opening/operating hours are
- What jobs it wishes to fill and is intending to assign a certificate of sponsorship for
- An up-to-date hierarchy chart detailing any owners, directors and board members
- If the business has 50 employees or fewer, a list of all employees including names and job titles.

6 Ensure the necessary funds are available to pay the [sponsor licence fee](#)

The amount of the fee is dependent on the company type and size as well as the type of licence being applied for as follows:

Type of Licence	Fee for small or charitable sponsors	Fee for medium or large sponsors
Worker	£536	£1,476
Temporary Worker	£536	£536
Worker and Temporary Worker	£536	£ 1,476

A business is considered ‘**small**’ if two or more of the following apply:

- Annual turnover is £10.2 million or less
- Total assets are worth £5.1 million or less
- There are 50 employees or fewer.

7 Complete and [submit](#) the application to UKVI

Once the online application has been completed and the correct fee paid, the business must email the submission sheet at the end of the application together with the supporting documents to the email address on the submission sheet.

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.

8 Receive a decision on the application

If approved, a business will be given an A-rated licence, which is valid for four years and will allow it to assign [certificates of sponsorship](#). The business will also be listed in the [register of sponsors](#).

If refused, a business can [request a review](#) of its application if it believes it was refused due to a mistake by the caseworker processing the application or its supporting documents were not considered. It cannot request a review solely on the basis that it disagrees with the decision.

9 Begin employing eligible foreign workers

Once a business has a sponsor licence, it can employ eligible foreign workers by providing them with a [certificate of sponsorship](#) which they need to apply for a visa in order to work in the UK. Depending on the citizenship of the worker, there may be a fee for the certificate of sponsorship, which is variable depending on the [type of certificate of sponsorship](#).

A business may also need to pay an [‘immigration skills charge’](#) when assigning a certificate of sponsorship to a worker applying for a Skilled Worker Visa or Intra-company Transfer Visa. This will depend on a number of factors including the worker’s occupation and where they are applying for the visa from.

Further information on the process of employing a foreign worker can found in Build UK’s [Employing a Foreign Worker flowchart](#).

10 Comply with the [conditions of the sponsor licence](#)

If a business does sponsor a foreign worker, it must continue to monitor them to ensure that they are complying with the conditions of their visa.

The business must inform UKVI if any details change, such as its address or allocated roles. It must also notify UKVI within 20 days if it either stops trading or becomes insolvent, substantially changes the nature of the business, or is involved in a merger or take-over.

Further Information

- [Employing a Foreign Worker flowchart](#)
- [Points-Based Immigration System](#)
- [UK Visa Sponsorship for Employers](#)
- [Sponsor Licence Application Guide 2021](#)

This publication is issued by Build UK Group Limited (“Build UK”) to give general guidance only on how to get a sponsor licence. If you require guidance on a specific issue, you should contact UK Visas and Immigration or seek your own independent professional advice.