



Yorkshire and Humber International Recruitment Project

Updates for Care Providers and Partners October 2025

Across 2024-25, the UK Government has invested £16 million nationally to support displaced international care workers to find new sponsored employment. The Yorkshire and Humber International Recruitment Project is funded through this commitment and has a core focus on matching displaced migrant workers with new, sustainable and ethical sponsored work in our care sector. We recognise the vital skills and experience these workers bring to adult social care, and the important role they have in helping to ensure the right capacity to meet the growing demand the sector faces.

1. Changes to Sponsorship in the Care Sector

In June the Government published their [Restoring control over the immigration system white paper](#); followed by a further update in July 2025, [Major immigration reforms delivered to restore order and control - GOV.UK](#) and on the **14th October 2025** amendments to the immigration rules were confirmed ([Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 1333, 14 October 2025 - GOV.UK](#)).

Below we outline the **6 key changes** to the immigration rules and the impact we believe they will have.

1. Immigration Skills Charge	The Immigration Skills Charge will increase by 32% from 16th Dec' 25. Impact: The current fees will increase from £1000 per year, to £1320 per year for medium or large sponsors. For small or charitable organisations, this will increase from £364 per year, to £480. Employers can help mitigate the impact by sponsoring for a longer duration, if possible, before the fees increase. (See Section 3)
2. Graduate Visa Reform	The duration of the Graduate Visa will reduce from two years to 18 months for all graduates except PhD graduates who will retain the three-year term. This applies to applications from 1 January 2027- those who apply before that date are unaffected. Impact: Whilst it will be over 14 months before employers see the impact of this, it will reduce the length of time employers can employ graduates, without the need for sponsorship, therefore potentially affecting the available workforce. To apply to sponsor a graduate/student they must have worked for you directly for at least 3 months prior.

3. Settlement consultation	The Earned Settlement and Citizenship consultation is expected to launch later this year. Impact: The consultation and its findings will be useful to understand the prospects for current sponsored workers, and to be able to help them and you plan for the future. Notably, the government have confirmed that those workers sponsored prior to July 2028 can continue to be sponsored after that date- workers who hold a valid sponsorship at July 2028 will not have to return home.
4. Preventing Illegal Working	The home Office will launch a six-week public consultation on extending 'right to work' checks to cover a wider range of working arrangements. Impact: We will need to understand in due course, ensuring adherence to the latest employer guidance and legislation. It is hoped that this will improve compliance and legal working in the UK an encourage engagement in the consultation to influence the outcome.
5. English Language Requirements	From 8th January 2026, all <i>new</i> applicants to the Skilled Worker route will need to meet the increased English language requirement of level B2, where they will need to demonstrate a higher level of English proficiency (equivalent to A Level) than at the current B1 (basic level, equivalent to GCSE). Those who have already obtained sponsorship at B1 will continue to be subject to a B1 level requirement if they seek an extension on the same route. Impact: This will be applicable to those new to the Skilled Worker route. We anticipate that this will most likely affect those on a dependent visa looking to switch into the Skilled Worker route. Those already on the Skilled Worker route (with B1 level English), who wish to switch employer, will not be affected by the change.
6. eVisa transition	In July, the 90-day Entry Clearance vignettes for most main applicants on work and study routes was removed. The next phase, starting in the coming weeks, will extend this to most main applicants on non-work/study routes and their dependants, as well as dependants of those included in the first phase. Impact: You will be familiar with seeing the 90-day entry clearance vignettes in passports and these have been key when checking a worker has entered the UK in the period of validity. If the worker applied for entry clearance on or after 15 July 2025, they will normally be issued with an eVisa (a digital version of their identity and immigration permission) only and will not receive a vignette. In this case, the entry stamp will be endorsed on a blank page of their passport or travel document. Employers must make and retain a copy of the page with the entry stamp. Note: This is only required where you have sponsored someone from outside the UK for entry clearance, this is not required where someone is applying or been granted permission to stay (leave to remain) from within the UK. This will not affect those sponsored as care workers / senior care workers as these routes are closed to overseas workers but would be applicable to other sponsored workers in different SOC codes.

Table 1: 6 Key changes to the immigration rules, October 2025

2. A reminder of existing issues

Long-Term Sustainability: Whilst the option to recruit new care workers from abroad is no longer available, in-country switching is. Care providers are strongly encouraged to embrace the skills of international workers who are legally already here in the UK, between now and 22nd July 2028 with the knowledge that the Home Office have confirmed that workers sponsored prior to July 2028 can continue to be sponsored after this date. Sponsorship is a long-term staffing solution.

Students and Graduates: Individuals who hold a student or graduate visa can legally work in the care sector on those visas (students have restrictions on the hours they can work during term-time) without needing sponsorship. Care providers can offer sponsorship to those on student and graduate and dependent visas, who are seeking full time sponsored employment in the care sector (providing the individual has been an existing employee for 3 or more months prior to switching route). These individuals have played a vital role in workforce capacity in recent years.

Additional Hours: Additional hours are permitted for those workers who have secure sponsorship with a Home Office Approved Sponsor. They are *not* permitted for international care workers with either expired or revoked sponsorship. We strongly encourage you to consider sponsorship as the most secure way to employ international workers.

Right to Work: We recommend that you are alert to a worker's right to work in the UK expiring. Care workers were added to the shortage occupation list in February 2022, and many of the workers from earlier in this period will be seeing their visas reaching expiration. Once a visa has expired, the worker no longer has a right to working in the UK so please do check this before taking them on.

3. Sponsorship and fees briefly explained

All UK employers who wish to sponsor workers, will need to [apply](#) for a sponsorship licence. The fee for Small or Charitable Sponsors is £574, and for medium or large Sponsors is £1,579. Once you have been awarded a licence, if you chose to sponsor a worker under the Health and Social Care Visa scheme, you will incur the following costs:

- Immigration Skills Charge £1000 (now) or £1320 (from Dec 2025) peryear for the duration of the agreed Certificate of Sponsorship (COS)
- Admin fee £525 per Certificate of Sponsorship (COS). If you only purchase the COS for a year and proceed to extend it for another year, you will incur the admin charge again. Hence purchasing a COS for a duration beyond 1 year is more cost effective.

You **must not** recoup, or attempt to recoup, by any means, any part of the COS fee, or associated administrative costs, from any workers you sponsor. If UKVI find you have done this, they will normally automatically revoke your licence.

If you choose to hire legal representatives to administer the issuing of COS or employee contracts, you **must not** pass any of these fees to workers. NB. **You do not have to hire legal representatives** to manage your sponsorships – if you receive advice to suggest so, please do contact us to share concerns or questions.

The worker has to pay for their own Visa (although it is permitted for the employer to pay if they wish). You must **never** require workers to take legal advice nor force them to pay for legal services. Note: workers on the Health and Social Care Visa route do not have to pay the Health Surcharge.

4. Top tips: How to make sponsorship financially efficient.

In relation to the Immigration Skills Charges (ISC), we would recommend that you consider:

- applying for new COS and/or extend an existing COS prior to the increase in the ISC on 16th December 2025 (for a potential saving of £320 per year per COS)
- apply for longer COS periods to protect you from future ISC increases and avoids multiple administration charges (for a potential saving of £320 ISC & £525 admin fee per year per COS)

In relation to the International Sponsorship Minimum Wage, we would recommend that you consider:

The International Sponsorship Minimum Wage (ISMW, currently £12.82) is always higher than the National Minimum Wage (NMW, currently £12.21), due to the workers themselves have no recourse to benefits through public funds and the impact that has upon their cost of living. Both rise each year in April.

Typically, the NMW increases to a rate that is higher than the previous year's ISMW (i.e. ISMW in 24/25 was £11.90 compared to NMW 25/26 of £12.82). The ISMW is retained at the rate it was when issuing, for the whole period of sponsorship, and therefore when the NMW increases above the ISMW on the COS the least amount that the worker must be paid is the NMW. For those employers that pay at the NMW or below the ISMW as their standard contract can benefit for the remaining period on the COS.

Illustrative example

Joe is sponsored in January 2025, at the ISMW rate of £11.90 for 12 months. After 6 April 2025, Joe's employer needed to increase his wage in line with national minimum wage uplifts, but as per the description above, the employer could only be asked to uplift to the NMW rather than the new ISMW. Joe's rate therefore uplifted to the NMW rate £12.21 (rather than the ISMW rate £12.82), creating a saving/cost avoidance of £0.61ph for the remaining 9mths of his contract. With oncosts, this equated to a saving of £1,251 for Joe's employer.

Working out: 80p x 40 hrs x 52.14 weeks = £1,668.48 per annum/12 x 9 (or £139.04 per month)

Using this as an indicator the cost avoidance would present the following savings:

1 st year	£139 per month on COS after April (max of £1,529 saving i.e. 11ths)
2 nd year	£1,668
3 rd year	£1,668
4 th year	£1,668

Please note that the cost avoidance savings are more than the annual Immigration Skills Charge. This, together with the Bursaries available, and the savings that can be achieved in avoided advertising, recruitment and induction costs means that International Sponsorship makes real business sense when securing a long-term sustainable workforce.

5. Bursary Support

Our project wants to maximise the support on offer for both Care Providers and eligible displaced workers. We have matching services covering all 15 places that make up Yorkshire and Humber, and in addition to this, we offer bursaries and support.

Owing to the recent immigration rule changes, the programme is reviewing the Bursaries and support available, and we will update you of any changes. Here is a reminder of what is immediately available:

Care Providers Home Office Approved Sponsor (HOAS) Bursary: This bursary is for Care Providers who do **not** currently hold a sponsorship licence, but who wish to apply to the Home Office to become an approved sponsor.

We have developed a comprehensive support package to help Providers understand their responsibilities and the commitment of being a sponsor, prior to applying. As part of our support, we will communicate with the Home Office once you have submitted your application to request that the processing is expedited. Upon approval of becoming a Home Office Approved Sponsor (HOAS), the project will reimburse the cost of the application which will either be **£574** (small employer < 50 staff) or **£1579** (large > 50 staff).

Care Providers Sponsorship Bursary: To support HOAS sponsors who make an offer of employment to a displaced worker (introduced via this project), there is a bursary of **£1750**, which can be offered subject to eligibility criteria. The project will provide support to Providers to confirm eligibility, and the bursary will be released once the worker starts employment.

Unclaimed bursaries: If you have employed a worker through the YHIR project since August 2024, you are entitled to the £1750 bursary available per worker. You only need to complete a straightforward bursary claim form (which captures your organisational contact and bank details) and email this to the relevant team (see below) with a copy of the COS for the worker employed.

How to apply for a Bursary: please contact the hub in your relevant subregion, using the email address below:	
Humber East Riding, Hull, North Lincs, & North-East Lincs	international.recruitment@adassyh.org.uk
North Yorkshire York and North Yorkshire	Makecarematter@northyorks.gov.uk
South Yorkshire Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, & Sheffield	yhirsouthyorkshire@sheffield.gov.uk
West Yorkshire Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, & Wakefield	yhirwestyorkshire@bradford.gov.uk
For those operating across areas, please contact the area where you have the most provision of care.	

Workers Bursary Visa cost: It is recognised that many displaced international workers do not have a balance of cash available to make more than small purchases, hence the cost of applying for a new Visa once an offer of sponsored employment is secured, can be challenging. The bursary for eligible workers provides a cash bursary of **£304** – the cost of a Visa, upon written receipt of a conditional offer of new employment. To be eligible for this, you must be a confirmed displaced worker, receiving support from the regional project. You will be supported by one of the project's case workers, who is connected to the local area. Funds will be provided upfront to enable you to pay for your Visa. Eligibility and proof of employment offer will apply.

6. Latest national data on international recruitment

Skills for Care's recently published [annual report](#) demonstrates that sponsoring skilled international workers has improved recruitment and retention in the Care Sector at a time when the domestic workforce has continued to significantly decrease.

Trends show that the total number of posts, and the total number of filled posts in adult social care increased last year (by 2.2 and 3.4% respectively), and the vacancy rate returned to similar levels to pre-pandemic (at 7%).

An estimated 50,000 people arrived in the UK in 2024/25 for care worker roles. This was a decrease of 55,000 from the previous year, when an estimated 105,000 people arrived on a care worker visa. In 2024/25, the number of people employed from outside the UK on the Health and Care Worker visa was an estimated 10,000. Other routes for people joining the sector from outside the UK include dependent, family and student visas.

The number of posts filled by people with a British nationality decreased by 30,000 in 2024/25 (a decrease of 3%). The decrease in posts filled by people with a British nationality since 2020/21 was 85,000 (7%).

Contacts and Information: This newsletter is produced by the Yorkshire and Humber International Recruitment project team. For further advice and resources from the project, please visit our dedicated website: [Yorkshire and Humber Regional International Recruitment Hub > NY Resourcing](#)