

# Five upcoming Home Office changes to UK sponsorship rules

## A crucial immigration update for employers

The Home Office has announced imminent immigration changes that will directly affect employers with sponsorship responsibilities.



### 1 Immigration skills charge increase

Effective 16 December 2025, the Immigration Skills Charge (the amount sponsors must pay per year to sponsor individuals under work routes, including Skilled Workers) will increase by 32%.

Large sponsors will be required to pay £1,320 per year, an increase from the current £1,000 per year, whilst small or charitable sponsors will be required to pay £480 per year, an increase from the current £364 per year.

For large sponsors, for a five-year sponsorship, the total cost will increase to £6,600.

### Recommended actions:

Employers are encouraged to review their upcoming hires and current workforce to identify individuals who may need visa sponsorship. Where feasible, applications should be brought forward to avoid higher costs. In addition, employers should assess how this increase may affect their immigration budgets and consider its potential impact on future recruitment and sponsorship planning.

2

## English language requirement change

From 8 January 2026, the minimum English proficiency will rise from Level B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to B2 CEFR. This change will only apply to individuals making their first applications, with those already holding permission in these routes able to extend without having to evidence this higher level of proficiency.

Other planned changes to English language requirements, including for work route dependants, are being deferred for the time being.

3

## Graduate visa duration to be reduced

The Home Office has announced changes to the Graduate visa route, effective 1 January 2027.

The Graduate visa duration for non-PhD graduates will be reduced from two years to 18 months.

PhD graduates will continue to receive three years of permission under this route.

4

## Expansion of the High Potential Individual route

The High Potential Individual (HPI) route enables recent graduates from selected international universities to live and work in the UK for up to two years.

As of 4 November 2025, the list of eligible universities has doubled in size, significantly widening access to this route. However, the Home Office has also introduced a new annual cap of 8,000 applications, meaning places will be limited each year.

5

## E-visa transition

The UK continues in its transition to a digitalised immigration system, and the Home Office has announced the next phase involving the removal of 90-day vignette passport endorsements for most main applicants on non-work or study routes, as well as dependants of those on work and study routes which transitioned in July. Going forward, applicants will only be granted digital eVisas as opposed to physical immigration documents.

### Recommended actions:

Employers should ensure that sponsored employees complete the following steps to maintain access to their immigration records and prove their right to work:

- **Create a UKVI account:** visit the GOV. UK eVisa portal and set up an online account.
- **Link existing immigration status:** follow the provided instructions to connect the individual's current immigration status to their new account.
- **Keep personal information up to date:** check that passport details and other personal information are accurate, particularly ahead of any travel.
- **Generate and share status codes when needed:** when proof of immigration status is required (e.g., for right-to-work checks or renting), log into the UKVI account to create a share code for the relevant third party to verify.

## How we can help

Forsters' Immigration team provide tailored advice and practical solutions to support employers manage their sponsorship responsibilities. We help clients to navigate the ever changing landscape of UK sponsorship rules, ensuring both compliance and strategic alignment with your skills requirements. Get in touch with one of our team to discuss how these changes may impact your organisation and to receive bespoke support for your immigration needs.

## Contact us



**Tracy Evlogidis**  
Partner  
Immigration  
T +44 20 7399 4850  
E [tracy.evlogidis@forsters.co.uk](mailto:tracy.evlogidis@forsters.co.uk)



**Amy Sarraff**  
Senior Associate  
Immigration  
T +44 20 7399 4851  
E [amy.sarraff@forsters.co.uk](mailto:amy.sarraff@forsters.co.uk)



**Ana Nicorici**  
Senior Associate  
Immigration  
T +44 20 7399 4849  
E [ana.nicorici@forsters.co.uk](mailto:ana.nicorici@forsters.co.uk)



**Eunice Agus**  
Associate  
Immigration  
T +44 20 7399 4852  
E [eunice.agus@forsters.co.uk](mailto:eunice.agus@forsters.co.uk)

Last updated: November 2025



@forstersllp



forstersllp



Facebook.com/ForstersLLP

[forsters.co.uk](https://forsters.co.uk)