

Sponsor Licence Readiness & Cost Checklist 2026

If your business wants to hire skilled workers from outside the UK — or retain existing employees who need sponsorship — you will usually need a Sponsor Licence. This guide gives you a practical overview of the key points employers should check before applying.

What Is a Sponsor Licence?

A Sponsor Licence is permission granted by the UK Home Office that allows UK businesses to employ workers who require visa sponsorship.

Sponsor Eligible Workers

Hire skilled workers from overseas who meet Home Office requirements.

Issue Certificates of Sponsorship

Issue CoS documents to eligible workers as part of their visa application.

Hire From Overseas

Recruit internationally to fill roles that cannot be filled domestically.

Sponsor Workers in the UK

Retain and sponsor certain workers already inside the UK on eligible visas.

Why Do Businesses Apply?

Businesses usually apply for practical recruitment reasons. Understanding the motivation helps ensure the application is well-prepared and aligned with genuine business need.



Fill Skills Shortages

Access talent for roles that are difficult to fill from the domestic labour market.



Retain Existing Employees

Keep valued team members already working in the UK who require visa sponsorship.



Access International Talent

Broaden your recruitment pool to attract skilled professionals from around the world.



Support Business Growth

Build a workforce capable of supporting long-term strategic and commercial goals.

Which Businesses Can Apply?

Most genuine UK organisations can apply. There is **no minimum turnover requirement**.

Eligible Business Types

- Limited companies
- SMEs
- Start-ups
- Partnerships
- Large corporations
- Sole traders
- Charities

Businesses Must Prove They Are:

→ **Actively Trading in the UK**

Demonstrable commercial activity within the UK is required.

→ **Genuine and Lawful**

The business must be operating legitimately and in compliance with UK law.

→ **Capable of Meeting Sponsorship Duties**

Employers must have HR systems and processes in place to fulfil ongoing obligations.

Who Can You Sponsor?

You can sponsor workers in eligible skilled roles that meet Home Office skill and salary requirements. However, **not every role qualifies for sponsorship** and immigration rules change regularly.

What the Home Office Assesses

- The actual job duties
- The occupation code (SOC code)
- The salary level
- The skill level
- Whether the role meets current immigration rules

Don't Assume Based on Job Title

Some sectors and roles have seen significant rule changes and restrictions in recent years. Employers should not assume a role is sponsorable based only on the job title.

How an Immigration Lawyer Can Help

- Confirm which occupation code the role falls under
- Assess whether the role is currently sponsorable
- Confirm the minimum salary required
- Verify whether the recruitment plan is compliant



Immigration rules change regularly. Always verify role eligibility before proceeding with a Sponsor Licence application.

Minimum Salary Requirements

To sponsor a worker, employers must usually pay at least the minimum salary required under the Skilled Worker rules. Salary thresholds depend on several factors.



Occupation Code

The SOC code assigned to the role determines the applicable salary threshold.



Worker's Age

Age can affect whether new entrant rates apply to the sponsored worker.



New Entrant Status

Workers qualifying as "new entrants" may be eligible for a lower salary threshold.



Working Hours

The number of contracted working hours affects how the salary threshold is calculated.



Immigration Salary List

Roles on the Immigration Salary List may have different threshold requirements.



Employers should always verify the latest salary thresholds before proceeding with any sponsorship application.

Documents Commonly Required

The Home Office requires a range of supporting documents to verify that your business is genuine, lawful, and capable of meeting its sponsorship duties.

Corporate Documents

- Certificate of Incorporation
- Companies House records
- VAT registration certificate
- PAYE registration confirmation
- Business bank statements

Operational Documents

- Employer's liability insurance
- Lease agreement or proof of premises
- Utility bills
- Corporate accounts

HR & Employment Documents

- Employment contracts
- HR procedures
- Organisational chart
- Evidence of recruitment activity, where relevant

📄 Document requirements can vary depending on your business type and circumstances. An immigration adviser can confirm exactly what is needed for your application.

Sponsor Licence Costs

There are several government fees associated with sponsoring a worker. Understanding the full cost picture before applying is essential for budgeting and planning.

Sponsor Licence Application Fee

Business Type	Fee
Small business or charity	£611
Medium or large business	£1,682

Certificate of Sponsorship Fee

Item	Fee
Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)	£525 per worker

Immigration Skills Charge

Business Type	3-Year Sponsorship Example
Small business or charity	£1,440
Medium or large business	£3,960



The Immigration Skills Charge is paid by the employer and is calculated based on the length of sponsorship and business size.

Example: Sponsoring One Worker for 3 Years

The tables below illustrate the total employer cost of sponsoring a single Skilled Worker for a 3-year period, depending on business size.

Small Business Example

Cost Item	Amount
Sponsor Licence fee	£611
Certificate of Sponsorship	£525
Immigration Skills Charge	£1,440
Total Employer Cost	£2,576

Medium or Large Business Example

Cost Item	Amount
Sponsor Licence fee	£1,682
Certificate of Sponsorship	£525
Immigration Skills Charge	£3,960
Total Employer Cost	£6,167



Please note that the fees listed above are Home Office fees only and are payable directly to the Home Office. Our legal fees are charged separately. Please get in touch with us for further information regarding our legal fees.

Worker Visa Costs


In addition to employer costs, workers applying for a Skilled Worker visa face their own fees. Some employers choose to cover these costs as part of the employment package.

Applying From Outside the UK

Cost Item	Amount
Skilled Worker visa fee (up to 3 years)	From £819
Immigration Health Surcharge	£1,035 per year

Example for 3 Years

Cost Item	Amount
Visa application fee	Approx. £819
Immigration Health Surcharge	£3,105
Total Worker Cost	Approx. £3,924

 Some employers choose to cover worker visa costs as part of the employment package to attract top international talent. This should be factored into your overall recruitment budget.

Quick Checklist Before Applying

Before applying for a Sponsor Licence, employers should work through the following checklist to ensure they are fully prepared.

Business Eligibility Confirmed

Verify that your business qualifies to hold a Sponsor Licence under Home Office criteria.

Role Sponsorability Assessed

Confirm whether the specific role can actually be sponsored, including the correct SOC code.

Documents Identified

Establish which documents are needed and ensure they are available and up to date.

Costs Budgeted

Calculate the full cost of sponsorship including licence fee, CoS, and Immigration Skills Charge.

Salary Thresholds Verified

Check the latest minimum salary requirements for the relevant occupation code.

Recruitment Plan Reviewed

Ensure the recruitment plan is compliant with Home Office expectations and immigration rules.

About WestBridge

WestBridge Business Immigration supports UK businesses with all aspects of their immigration needs — from initial applications through to ongoing compliance and global mobility strategy.



Sponsor Licence Applications

End-to-end support preparing and submitting your Sponsor Licence application.



Skilled Worker Visas

Guidance on visa applications for sponsored workers, from overseas and within the UK.



Immigration Audits

Compliance reviews to ensure your sponsorship duties are being met correctly.



Global Mobility Support

Assistance with international workforce movement and cross-border employment.



Ongoing Immigration Strategy

Long-term planning and advisory support for businesses with evolving immigration needs.

We work with SMEs, growing businesses and multinational organisations across a wide range of industries.

Speak to WestBridge Business Immigration

For advice specific to your business, recruitment plans or immigration circumstances, please contact WestBridge Business Immigration for tailored guidance.

Tailored Advice

Every business is different. We provide guidance specific to your organisation, sector, and recruitment plans.

Expert UK Immigration Team

Our team has deep expertise in UK business immigration, Sponsor Licences, and Skilled Worker visas.


Book a Consultation

Book a Sponsor Licence consultation with our UK immigration team to get started today.

[Get a 15 Minute Complimentary Consultation](#)

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Disclaimer

 This guide is for general informational purposes only and provides a practical overview of the UK Sponsor Licence process, costs, and common document requirements as of May 2026.

Sponsor Licence requirements, supporting documents, government fees, and immigration rules may vary depending on each business's circumstances and can change over time.

For advice specific to your business, recruitment plans or immigration circumstances, please contact WestBridge Business Immigration for tailored guidance.

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