

Immigration News

Issue 6 2025

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Veristat specialises in providing immigration advice, support and other compliance services to employers and education providers. We also support individuals applying for leave to enter/remain in the UK.



Please contact us for further information about our training sessions, which will also cover the changes announced recently by the UK government.

Introduction

2025 appears to be bringing in yet more changes in immigration and the radical reforms announced by the UK Government in the recent immigration white paper will most likely impact many organisations and institutions. Changes have already been announced in relation to the skill level / salary thresholds for the Skilled Worker route and care workers, as well as the introduction of the Temporary Shortage List.

We are here to support you with any immigration matters and remove some of those challenges associated with Immigration compliance. Should you need any advice or support with anything, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Working in the UK

Record numbers of visa sponsor licences revoked for rule breaking

The Home Office (UKVI) have announced that record numbers of employers have had their licence revoked and banned from sponsoring foreign workers under a crackdown on abuse of the immigration system. The full UKVI news story can be viewed [here](#).

Between July 2024 and June 2025, 1,948 sponsor licences were revoked, which is more than double the same number revoked in the previous 12 months (937).

The Home Office (UKVI) confirmed that many of the employers had been using work visas to help migrants circumvent immigration rules, as well as undercutting domestic workers by underpaying and exploiting migrant staff reliant on their jobs to stay in the UK.

Adult social care, hospitality, retail and constructions were among the sectors found to have the highest levels of abuse.

Licences have been revoked for companies for a wide range of rule breaking, including:

- Underpayment of workers
- Facilitating the entry of individuals to circumvent the immigration rules
- Failing to provide the promised work

If trends continue, sponsor revocations for this year are expected to increase still further

The government continues to clamp down on exploitation of the border system and increased levels of migration, and measures to tackle this include, expanding sanctions on rogue employers to include financial penalty notices, business closure orders and potential prosecution.

Illegal working arrests have also surged by 51% compared to the previous year. The ability to work in the UK is believed to be one of the fake promises sold to migrants making dangerous journeys to the UK in small boats.

There has also been a significant increase in removals of those with no right to be in the UK, with 35K people removed, 13% more than the same period 12 months prior.

It is imperative that sponsors are complying with all their duties and responsibilities under the Skilled Worker route. Veristat provides training on sponsorship and mock UKVI-audits to help employers identify any areas of non-compliance. Please contact us at enquiries@veristat.co.uk for further information and a quote.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-numbers-of-visa-sponsor-licences-revoked-for-rule-breaking>

Quarterly report on illegal working civil penalties

The Home Office (UKVI) have published their quarterly report of the fines (civil penalties) given to employers.

This includes fines given to:

- employers who have not paid or are not making regular payments towards a penalty 28 days after they have exhausted all their objection and/or appeal rights
- employers who have been served with a second or further penalty once they have exhausted all their objection and/or appeal rights regardless of whether any payment has been made

This report includes data for the period 1 January to 31 March 2025.

The quarterly report can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-working-penalties-uk-report>

Current Visa Processing Times – Work visas

The Home Office (UKVI) have published their current decision waiting times for those applying from inside or outside the UK.

Those applying to switch or extend their work visa from within the UK, should receive a decision within **8 weeks** of attending their biometric appointment or the date the application / documents were received by the UKVI (if no appointment is required). Applications made under the Health and Care Visa normally receive a decision within **3 weeks** if applied for from inside the UK. The latest processing times for those applying from inside the UK can be viewed [here](#).

Those applying for a work visa from outside the UK, should get a decision within **3 weeks** once they have either attended their appointment at the visa application centre (VAC) or used the ID Check app and submitted their application/supporting documents. The latest processing times for those applying from outside the UK can be viewed [here](#).

Applicants may be able to pay an additional fee to expedite their applications for a quicker decision.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-processing-times-applications-outside-the-uk>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-processing-times-applications-inside-the-uk>

Studying in the UK

Government campaign to stop international students overstaying their visa

The government has launched a new campaign in response to a spike in the number of international students arriving legally on student visas then claiming asylum when they expire.

According to the latest Home Office data, 13% of asylum applications in the year to June (approx. 14,800) were from people in the UK on a study visa.

The Home Office has already contacted ten thousand international students whose visas were due to expire directly by text and email warning them that they will be removed from the UK if they overstay their visas. According to the report, the Home Office will continue to send tens of thousands more messages in the next few months to try and reduce the number of students overstaying their visas and applying for asylum.

Further information can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn858lx34vvo>

Agent Quality Framework (AQF)

As reported in our previous updates, we anticipate that the UKVI will shortly be updating the Student sponsor guidance to reflect the new requirement for Student licence holders to sign up to the **Agent Quality Framework (AQF)**.

The Agent Quality Framework (AQF) was introduced by the British Council, BUILA, UKCISA, and UUKi and provides best practice standards and tools to ensure the ethical recruitment of international students and help prevent visa abuse.

Starting in September 2025, Student sponsors are required to sign up to and demonstrate compliance with the AQF, with agent details also to be included on the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS).

We understand that the UKVI recognises that the AQF may not fully apply to all Student sponsors, particularly Independent schools, and have confirmed that when conducting their compliance checks, they will only require evidence that the sponsor has signed up to the AQF.

The Student sponsor guidance will most likely be updated shortly and we will continue to update you on this matter via our newsletter.

Further information about the AQF can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/agents-counsellors/uk-quality-agent-framework>

Current Visa Processing Times – Study visas

The Home Office (UKVI) have published their current decision waiting times for those applying from inside or outside the UK for a study visa.

Those applying to switch or extend their study visa from within the UK, should receive a decision within **8 weeks** of attending their biometric appointment or the date the application / documents were received by the UKVI (if no appointment is required). The latest processing times for those applying from inside the UK can be viewed [here](#).

Those applying for a Student/Child Student visa or Short-term study visa from outside the UK, should get a decision within **3 weeks** once they have either attended their appointment at the visa application centre (VAC) or used the ID Check app and submitted their application/supporting documents. The latest processing times for those applying from outside the UK can be viewed [here](#).

Applicants may be able to pay an additional fee to expedite their applications for a quicker decision.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/visa-processing-times>

Sponsorship – please note...

Applying for a Worker or Temporary Worker sponsor licence – cooling-off period

The Home Office (UKVI) have updated their guidance for those applying for a Worker or Temporary Worker sponsor licence to implement a commitment in the Written Ministerial Statement of 28 November 2024 to increase the 'cooling-off period' for organisations which repeatedly breach sponsorship rules.

This is the first phase of the implementation of this policy and, in this update, specifically targets organisations which have had their licence revoked on more than one occasion, or key personnel who have been associated with more than one revoked licence.

It has also been updated to reflect the ongoing rollout of eVisas and the phasing out of physical immigration documents.

The updated guidance can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence>

Immigration Skills Charge – Sponsorship less than 12 months

Where a sponsor is assigning a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) for longer than 6 months but less than a year, you pay for a full year of the Immigration Skills Charge (OSC). Further information can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/immigration-skills-charge>

Other Immigration News

Updated information from the Home Office (UKVI) on the move to eVisas

The Home Office (UKVI) have published updated information on the move from physical immigration documents to eVisas.

From 1 September 2025, the Home Office (UKVI) have made additional funding of up to £400,000 available to 25 national and community-based organisations until 31 March 2026 to provide free support to vulnerable and at-risk people who need help with creating their UKVI account and getting access to their eVisa. The updated information can be viewed [here](#). Further information about the community support for vulnerable people for creating UKVI accounts and accessing eVisas can be viewed [here](#).

Additionally, the Home Office (UKVI) have published their latest operational statistics, which shows that as of 31 July 2025, a total of 4,501,235 people have created an account to access an eVisa. The latest operational statistics can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/updates-on-the-move-to-evisas>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evisa-community-support-for-vulnerable-people>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-immigration-status-evisa-ukvi-account-creation-data/online-immigration-status-evisa-ukvi-account-creation-data>

Applying for Naturalisation as a British citizen

The Home Office (UKVI) have updated their guidance to applicants on applying for naturalisation as a British citizen. The updated Form AN guidance can be viewed [here](#).

The guidance has been updated to tell applicants that they do not need to request Home Office records for entry and exit from the UK before making an application.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/form-an-guidance>

Prove your English Language abilities with a secure English Language test (SELT)

The Home Office (UKVI) have updated the list of approved test centres inside and outside of the UK that applicants applying for a visa or citizenship application can use to take a secure English language test (SELT) to prove their knowledge of English.

The updated list of test centres for inside and outside the UK can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt>

Temporary suspension of Appendix Family Reunion (Sponsors with Protection)

On 4 September 2025, the Home Office (UKVI) laid a Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, which included a temporary pause to Appendix Family Reunion (Sponsors with Protection), as they conduct a full review and reform of the current family rules to ensure they have a fair and properly balanced system.

Extant applications will continue to be considered under the Appendix Family Reunion (Sponsors with Protection) rules in place prior to the commencement of the suspension.

The caseworker guidance for considering applications under Appendix Family Reunion have also been updated. The updated caseworker guidance can be viewed [here](#).

Appendix FM will also be amended to allow applications from a partner and dependent child of a person with protection status in the UK. A person will need to pay the fee or obtain a fee waiver and meet the core requirements of the route (e.g. English language and financial requirements).

The Appendix FM rules also require the parent of a dependent child to have a sole responsibility where the child is not accompanying or joining both parents in the UK, which is a different approach under Appendix Family Reunion. Where an applicant is unable to demonstrate the sole responsibility under Appendix FM, the child will still be granted permission if there are serious and compelling family circumstances that make exclusion of the child undesirable.

The Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statement-of-changes-to-the-immigration-rules-cp-1373-5-august-2025>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-reunion-instruction>

Temporary pilot to prevent small boat crossings

On 4 September 2025, the Home Office (UKVI) laid a Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, which includes adding the Appendix UK/European Applicant Transfer Scheme, which is a pilot scheme which aims to prevent small board crossings. This is a time-limited scheme, and the UK and France will jointly monitor the effectiveness of the pilot and adapt processes in response throughout the duration to respond to changes in migrant behaviour and to test effectiveness.

The Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules can be viewed [here](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statement-of-changes-to-the-immigration-rules-cp-1373-5-august-2025>

Veristat Services

Training on IDSPS, the Skilled Worker or Student routes/Right to Work/Forgery

We provide comprehensive training on all aspects of immigration, including IDSPs, the Student route, the Skilled Worker route, Right to Work and the identification of fraudulent documents. Our sessions include the recent changes being brought about by the 2021 points-based immigration system and how employers and education providers can be prepared moving forwards.

All training can be provided in person at the client's site or remotely via Microsoft teams/Zoom.

If you think your organisation would benefit from training in any of these areas, please contact us for a quote by emailing us at enquiries@veristat.co.uk. If you would like to discuss the contents of our training packages or require a bespoke training package to be delivered, please call us on 01344 624016 or email us as above.

Sponsor licence applications

Employers or education providers wishing to employ EEA/EU nationals or non-EEA nationals who do not have right to work need to apply for a Sponsorship licence.

We provide a comprehensive advice and support package to employers and education providers applying for a licence. This can include preparation for a Home Office (UKVI) visit and training on the new Skilled Worker or Student routes and the SMS system, as well as assistance with applying for Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS) or Confirmation for Acceptance for Studies (CAS) and a step-by-step guide for completing the application itself.

Please email us at enquiries@veristat.co.uk or by telephone on 01344 624016 for further details and/or a quote for helping you with your application.

Audits and Inspections

Veristat is hugely experienced in providing compliance audits across all immigration routes. We have worked with hundreds of employers, ranging from small family businesses to multi-nationals, high street retailers and professional sports/football clubs. In the education sector, we have worked with over 30 universities and a significant number of colleges and schools.

Our audit/inspection service is fully flexible and can be tailored to individual requirements. It is based on sound practical experience of UKVI's policies, culture and approach.

- For employers, we offer on-site Skilled Worker or ICT compliance inspections (with staff aware or unaware to simulate an announced or unannounced UKVI visit). We also offer right to work compliance visits.
- For education providers, our service ranges from a "lite" health-check to a comprehensive review of student route activities, assessing compliance with UKVI requirements and sharing best practice. We also offer targeted inspections covering specific issues, such as BCA, Skilled Worker compliance, policies, student unions, relationships with partner institutions, etc.

On completion, we can provide a comprehensive, evidence-based report, together with an assessment of how compliant the business or institution is with UKVI's requirements. We will support the introduction of change if required and offer a 'spot check' follow up service at a later date if beneficial to reassure management that recommendations have been implemented.

If you are interested in booking an audit/inspection, please call us on 01344 624016 or email us at enquiries@veristat.co.uk.

Please note we are also now offering remote audits and inspections- please contact us for more details.

File Inspection Days

If you're unsure whether you require a full compliance audit or specific training but would like an independent check of your files to ensure they are fully compliant with Home Office requirements, we can provide a UKVI file compliance inspection of either your staff or student files.

Depending on the number of employees/students you have, we would either check all files or an agreed sample. After the inspection has taken place, we would provide a written report outlining any risks, feedback and recommendations.

For further information or a quote for our file inspection days, please call us on 01344 624016 or email us at enquiries@veristat.co.uk.

Advice/Support packages

We offer advice/support packages on either a fixed rate monthly retainer basis or on a fixed-hourly basis, which can include a number of our services, such as: acting as your Level 1 user, issuing of CoS/CAS, immigration audit, etc. If you do not require ongoing retainer advice/support, we offer either 5- or 10-hour annual support packages at reduced rates.

If you are interested in discussing our retainer or hourly advice/support packages further, then please contact us on 01344 624016 or email us at enquiries@veristat.co.uk

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