



Guidance for Seafood Businesses on how to navigate the **Skilled Worker Visa**

Guide 2:
How to become a sponsor

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Overview of the Guides

There are five guides included in the Skilled Worker Visa Guidance, alongside a glossary which explains the technical terms. We recommend you take the time to read through each of these guides before starting the application process. The five guides are summarised here.

[Follow this link](#) to access the other guides



Guide 1: Introduction to the Skilled Worker Visa - explaining the fundamentals

Guide 1 provides an overview of the sponsorship and recruitment process and explains why it has been structured in this way. It also explains the preparation you should take before you start the application process and the costs involved in sponsoring a person under a Skilled Worker Visa. Make sure you have read and understood the details in Guide 1 before you embark on the sponsorship process.



Guide 2: How to become a sponsor

Guide 2 is a detailed step by step guide through the online application process. It includes screenshots from the application systems and explains how to make a successful application. It also details the information, documents, and systems you will need to have in place before you are ready to submit your application.



Guide 3: How to employ migrant workers under a Skilled Worker Visa

Guide 3 covers the process of sponsoring migrant workers via the Skilled Worker route, once your sponsor license has been approved. This includes important things that both you and your potential employee should know, such as job codes, salary and language requirements, the different types of certificate of sponsorship and how they should be used.



Guide 4: Your ongoing responsibilities as a sponsor of Skilled Workers

Visa sponsorship is a long-term commitment, and Guide 4 will help you understand your ongoing responsibilities and how to ensure you are complying with them. These responsibilities include the need to maintain accurate records, to notify the Home Office of any changes, and managing the relationship with your sponsored worker.



Guide 5: Your wider legal responsibilities

The final guide includes general information on your wider legal responsibilities as a seafood business engaging migrant workers. UK employment law is likely to apply to any person working in the UK and in territorial waters. These duties will be in addition to your sponsorship duties and if you fail to meet these wider obligations it could impact on your ability to remain a sponsor.



Glossary: Provides explanations of key technical and legal terms that relate to the Skilled Worker Visa

The glossary contains definitions of key terms used across the Skilled Worker Visa Guidance – see text in **bold** in each Guide.

Introduction

UK immigration requirements mean that if you wish to employ migrant workers in the seafood industry, either onshore or within 12nm of the shore, you will more than likely need to use a Skilled Worker Visa.

This visa allows for the employment of migrant workers for **certain skilled jobs** in the UK. This includes experienced deckhands on fishing vessels, fish filleters, and seafood processing line operatives, as well as food manufacturing engineers, mechanics, or skippers.

We understand that many seafood businesses will be new to this system and may find it difficult to understand the process involved. This guidance should assist you to:

- Apply to become a sponsor
- Employ overseas workers
- Meet all your responsibilities as a sponsor.

The guidance is specifically tailored to seafood businesses, whether you are a fishing vessel, aquaculture business or a processing company, regardless of where you are based across the UK.

The information contained in these guides is to be used as guidance only. It does not constitute legal advice and if you are unsure about any aspect of the sponsor regime or Skilled Worker Visa requirements you should seek independent legal advice. It is not a substitute for the published official Home Office guidance on the sponsorship regime, or the Immigration Rules. Where possible we have included links to the official guidance.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please email skilledworkervisa@seafish.co.uk

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1. Pre-requisites

Before considering whether to apply for a sponsor licence, it is important to understand the costs involved and your duties and obligations as a sponsor. This is because, when you apply for a licence, you are expected to already have the systems and processes in place to help you manage the duties expected of you. Examples of the kinds of systems you should have are:

- A payroll system to record payments made to sponsored workers and payslips issued
- A holiday, absence and leave monitoring system
- A personnel file to record a sponsored worker's contact details and address history
- A filing system to retain electronic or paper copies of relevant documents, such as **Right to Work** documents



2. Key personnel

Before making a sponsor application you will need to consider who in your business will undertake the Key Personnel roles. The official guidance on Key Personnel is contained at section L4 of [Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors Part 1: Apply for a licence](#).

There are three Key Personnel roles that must be specified when you apply for your licence;

- the **Authorising Officer**: responsible for ensuring the sponsor fulfils all their duties
- the **Key Contact**: the person who is the contact for all correspondence from the Home Office
- the **Level 1 User**: is the person who is granted access to the Home Office sponsorship management system (**SMS**)

You must specify who will undertake these roles when you make the licence application, and provide their personal and contact details. It is possible for one person to perform all three roles or you can have a combination of individuals performing multiple roles. There can only ever be one **Authorising Officer** and **Key Contact**, but it is possible to appoint multiple **Level 1 Users** once the licence is granted. An optional role is the **Level 2 User**, who has a restricted level of access to the **SMS**.

For smaller businesses one person can carry out all three roles. It is common that the **Authorising Officer** is a senior member of the business, and the **Key Contact** and **Level 1 User** roles are performed by someone with responsibility for the day to day running of the business. Key Personnel must normally be either an employee or an officeholder within the business. It is possible to have a representative who is assisting you with the licence to act as **Key Contact** and **Level 1 User**, but you must always have someone from within the business who is **Authorising Officer** and at least one individual from within the business who is a **Level 1 User** (a representative can be an additional **Level 1 User**).

There are a number of restrictions on who can be appointed as Key Personnel, in particular individuals who have a [specified](#) unspent criminal conviction, a civil penalty for immigration law breaches such as illegal working, or have been involved in a business which previously had a licence revoked. These are set out at section L4 of the official guidance entitled [Workers and Temporary Workers - guidance for sponsors part 1: apply for a licence](#) .

All key personnel must have an email account which only they have access to and which is secure.

The Authorising officer

This **Authorising Officer** is responsible for ensuring that the prospective sponsoring business will meet its duties. It is usually the most senior person in the organisation responsible for the recruitment of migrant workers. An **Authorising Officer** does not necessarily have day-to-day access to the **Sponsor Management System** unless they are also appointed as a Level 1 or **Level 2 User**.

When making the licence application, the **Authorising Officer** is responsible for signing the agreement and therefore must commit to the following duties as specified on the online application:

- *I agree to comply with my sponsor duties.*
- *I understand that if I do not comply with the rules of the sponsor licensing system I may lose my licence and be removed from the register of sponsors, which would mean that I could no longer sponsor overseas nationals wanting to come to the UK to work for or study with me. The permission of any existing non-settled workers or students under the Worker, Temporary Worker, or Student routes may also be curtailed.*
- *The information I have given in this online application is complete, accurate and true to the best of my knowledge.*
- *I will inform you without delay if there is a material change in my circumstances or new information relevant to this application becomes available before this application is decided.*
- *I agree to co-operate with Home Office officials when they are carrying out checks on our compliance with our sponsor duties. I also agree to co-operate with any third party which is collecting information on the Home Office's behalf about our compliance with our sponsor duties.*
- *I agree to comply with requests for information from the Home Office in connection with the prevention or detection of crime, the administration of illegal working civil penalties and/or the apprehension or prosecution of immigration offenders.*
- *I understand that if I knowingly make any false representations or submit any false documents, the application will be refused and I may be prosecuted.*
- *I understand that it is an offence under section 25 of the Immigration Act 1971 to do an act which facilitates a breach or attempted breach of immigration law, or have reasonable cause to believe that it may so facilitate.*

- *The information provided from me to you will be treated in confidence but it may be disclosed to other law enforcement agencies, UK government departments, agencies, local authorities, foreign governments and other bodies for immigration or research purposes and to help them to carry out their functions.*
- *I understand you may ask for or check information from other law enforcement agencies, government departments, agencies, local authorities, the police, foreign governments and other bodies for immigration, research or security purposes or to help you carry out your work.*
- *I understand you can use the information given in this application for training and research purposes.*
- *I understand that information I have provided to the Home Office in making this application or during the currency of my sponsor licence may need to be disclosed in response to a Freedom of Information request and/or otherwise in accordance with the law and/or at the request of a court or other tribunal of competent jurisdiction.*
- *If any of the owners, directors, key personnel, financiers or personnel involved in the day-to-day running of the organisation to which this licence application relates have previously been the owner, director, key personnel, financier or personnel involved in the day-to-day running of a sponsor organisation where a licence has been refused, downgraded, suspended or revoked, this information will be provided in a covering letter together with the submission sheet as part of the licence application.*

An **Authorising Officer** must be in place at all times. If your appointed individual is leaving the business, it is very important that you notify the Home Office and appoint a new **Authorising Officer**. The **Authorising Officer** should have a good understanding of the business's activities and use of the licence (the same applies to any other Key Personnel). If the Home Office decide to visit your business it is normally the **Authorising Officer** that they will seek to interview in the first instance.

The Key Contact

The **Key Contact** is the person who will receive correspondence from the Home Office about the licence, including any queries, requests for further information or documents.

It is very important that they have access to a reliable email account, and that any junk or spam settings do not block official correspondence from the Home Office.

The Level 1 User

The **Level 1 User** is provided access to the **SMS** if the licence is granted. The **SMS** allows the sponsor to perform tasks related to the sponsorship of workers, such as issuing **certificates of sponsorship**, and reporting changes to the business or any matters affecting those who are sponsored. When you seek the licence, you can appoint multiple **Level 1 Users** who must be an employee, director or partner within the business, or a representative. It is possible once the licence is granted to appoint more **Level 1 Users**.

You must always have at least one **Level 1 User** who is an employee, director or partner and at least one **Level 1 User** who is a **Settled worker**. It is sensible to only have as many **Level 1 Users** as you need, but it is often a good idea to have at least two users, so that there is cover in the event of sickness or absence.

The Level 2 User

It is not always necessary to have a **Level 2 User**. This is someone with a more restricted level of access to the **SMS**, limited to the issuance and management of **Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS)**. This is normally a role utilised by larger businesses that sponsor a number of migrant workers to help manage the processes.

SMS Access

Any **Level 1** or **Level 2 User** appointed by you will be granted access to the **SMS**, this is provided by way of a password and User ID. When you are first granted the licence, the password for the first **Level 1 User** is emailed directly to them, whilst their User ID is contained in the letter granting the licence. It is very important that any **SMS** user's password details are not shared with anyone else, even others within the business or other Key Personnel. It is also very important that no-one accesses the **SMS** using someone else's credentials.

Once the licence has been granted and your first **Level 1 User** has been given access, that individual can then request additional **Level 1** and **Level 2 Users**.

3. The documents required for a licence application

You are expected to send a minimum of four documents about the business to the Home Office. You must email copies of these documents within five days of the submission of the online application, along with a **submission sheet** that is generated when you complete and pay for the online application. It is also good practice to send a covering letter.

The Home Office specify the documents they will accept in an official guidance document entitled; [Appendix A Supporting Documents for Sponsor Licence Applications](#). In some circumstances there are mandatory documents which you must provide. The circumstances likely relevant to a seafood business are:

- Start-ups (operating or trading in the UK for less than 18 months on the date you make your application) You must send evidence that you have a current, corporate bank account with a bank registered by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority in the UK.
- Subject to mandatory registration or inspection- If you are required to be registered with, or inspected or monitored by, a regulatory body to operate lawfully in the UK, you must send evidence relevant to that. This may be relevant for “food businesses” who may need to be registered with the relevant food standards agency.

In addition to any mandatory documents you can select from a number of alternatives to provide the minimum number of four documents. These documents should match up with your business details. Therefore the names and addresses on the documents should be up to date, and any discrepancy explained. For example, sometimes important business documents, such as the business bank account statement, are sent to the business owner’s home address, which might not be an address given in the sponsor application.

The Home Office accept digital copies of documents although they reserve the right to ask for the original document. Of course, many documents now will only exist in an electronic format.

As noted above a common mandatory document for a business which has been trading for less than 18 months is proof that a UK business bank account has been opened. This is not a mandatory document in cases where the business has been trading for a longer period, however a bank statement is often a straightforward document for a business to provide. If it is not possible to provide a bank statement, the Home Office will instead accept a letter from your bank setting out the nature of the dealings it has had with you and the duration of those dealings.

If you are providing a bank statement this should be the most recent one. The statement should also contain all of the business's information on it, the name of the business and the address; often an electronic or online statement may not be suitable if it does not contain those details. If there are sensitive items of information on the statement, for example salary payments which you would prefer were not disclosed to other members of staff who might be involved in the licence application, it is possible to redact this information or entries on the statement, though this should be explained in your covering letter.

For fish processing businesses a further mandatory document, as a "food business", will be evidence of registration with the appropriate food standards body. There may be other mandatory documents relating to your specific business, and any requirement to be regulated before you can lawfully operate. It is possible, in cases where you are demonstrating appropriate registration, to provide a web link to the official online site that shows your registration.

There are a number of other documents which are not mandatory but which are commonly provided in these types of applications. One of the simplest to provide is your VAT registration number, assuming the business is registered for VAT. It is now possible to simply provide a note of the VAT registration number in your licence application and the Home Office will check this with HMRC.



You could also supply a certificate of employer's liability insurance. For a catching business you may not have employer's liability insurance in place, but rather marine insurance, this is not an accepted document from the list. If you hold employer's liability insurance the certificate is usually provided to you as a PDF document as it is a legal requirement that this must be displayed on your premises. Note that only the single page certificate is required, so long as it confirms you hold £5 million cover from an authorised insurer, and not the schedule, which might be quite a long document.

Additional documents that are commonly provided to make up the total of four are:

- a lease for your business address, all parties must have signed this.
- official correspondence from HMRC registering you for Pay as you Earn (PAYE) which provides your accounts office and employer's reference number.
- your annual business accounts. Note that the guidance document refers to audited annual accounts or a current financial report. Unaudited annual accounts, which are probably most common to smaller seafood businesses, are also acceptable so long as these have been prepared by an accountant with appropriate certification. If your business is required by law to provide audited accounts, this is a mandatory document.
- For a partnership, each partner's unique tax reference code, confirmed in official HMRC correspondence.

The objective of the Home Office is to seek reassurance from other sources, such as HMRC, banks and insurance companies, that your business is legitimate and trading – the four documents provide for this.

The full list of documents is stipulated in [Appendix A](#), though some documents are only relevant to certain types of sponsor or organisations. It is important to provide the documents specified on the list. If you do not provide 4 documents or if some of the documents you provide are not acceptable then your application will be returned and your sponsor licence fee refunded. You may then reapply with the correct documents, however this delays your licence application. It is important to have the correct documents in place before you apply.

4. The covering letter and additional queries for sponsors

As part of a licence application a sponsor must address a number of questions about the business which are specified at [Appendix A](#). You must explain why the licence is sought and provide information about the types of jobs that you will seek to sponsor. It is best to answer these questions in the form of a covering letter. A covering letter is also a good opportunity to explain any areas, such as the queries on the online application form, that might need additional background.

The letter must also provide your opening hours. It is necessary to provide a hierarchy chart detailing “any owner, director and board members”. In practice a hierarchy chart means information on key personnel in your business. For a small business, the hierarchy chart might be quite simple and, in some cases, may be simply a skipper or owner, with crew reporting to them. If you have less than 50 staff you are also expected to include a staff list with the name and titles of each worker listed.

You may be applying because you know you need to try and fill an existing vacancy, or you may have an anticipated future need which is also a viable reason to seek a sponsor licence. You can state that you do not have anticipated hires in mind, but that you are seeking the licence for flexibility. Even if you do not have specific hires in mind, it is helpful to specify the kinds of jobs you will likely seek to fill, providing a job description, **Standard Occupation Code (SOC)** and salary that will be paid. It is best to provide as much information as you can to reassure the Home Office that you have a legitimate business justification for seeking the sponsor licence.

If you have already identified any migrant workers you wish to sponsor, you should provide their details. If they are already employed by you on a different visa, you should include their last 3 months’ payslips. A significant aspect of the decision to grant a sponsor licence is whether you will sponsor workers who will fill a **‘genuine vacancy’**. The information provided in the covering letter partly addresses whether the vacancies which you are seeking to fill are genuine. If you have attempted to recruit from the resident labour market you should provide copies of any advertisements. It is suggested in the guidance that you should provide ‘details of any applicants and why they were not suitable for the role’. In practice it is acceptable to summarise in broad terms the efforts you have taken to try and recruit domestically. You should note that providing the personal details of applicants for jobs, without their specific consent or being warned in advance, might give rise to a data protection breach.

It is no longer mandatory to advertise for a vacancy before you sponsor a skilled worker, however the Home Office considers that advertising for a position is a good indication that the vacancy is genuine.

You must also confirm how you have established that an individual is suitable for the role. These are all questions designed to ensure that the vacancies which you seek to fill are genuine.

There might be a number of ways to answer these questions, for example that you utilised an agent abroad to identify crew, or that a contact in another country recommended a source of processing labour. You might have already been provided with documents, particularly for fishers, to confirm they have passed medical assessments, and mandatory training courses.

The primary recommendation is to be transparent and honest about the background to your business and why the licence is sought. Taking this approach makes it easier to fix any issues which arise. Being dishonest or lacking in transparency can have a lasting effect.

5. How to complete the online application

A licence application begins with the completion of an online form found at this [web address](#). You must register for an account which will provide login details to your e-mail address. It is very important that you take a note of the user ID which is given to you initially. This is a complicated jumble of numbers and letters and so it may be a good idea to copy and paste it into a Word document or something similar. It is case sensitive. You will not be given this login ID again and therefore you should take a note of it before you proceed.

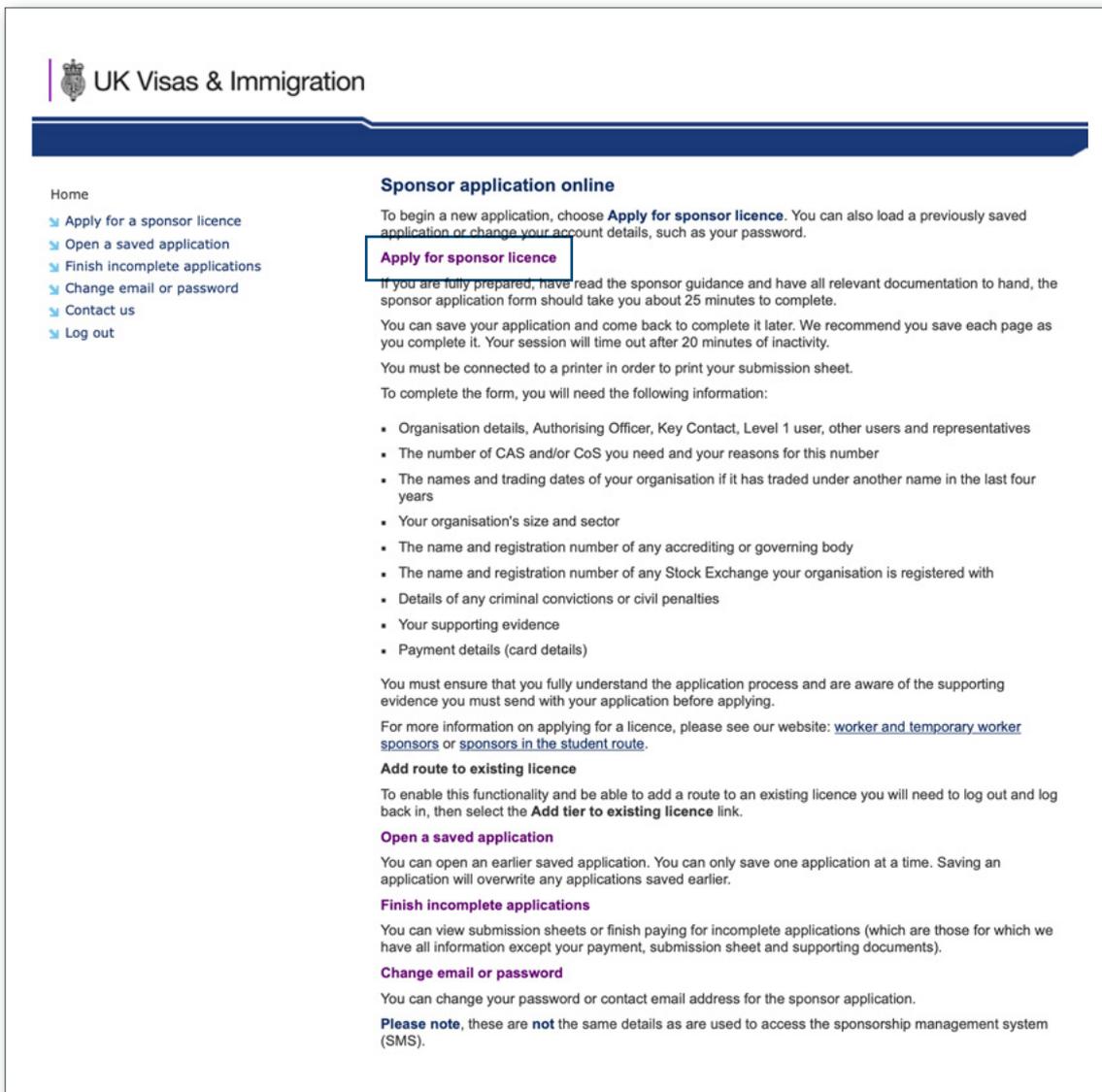
You will then be sent a password to your e-mail account and you can use this along with the user ID to log in to the sponsor application. The first time you log in you will be prompted to change the password which was emailed to you, to something else that you will remember or take a note of. The password requirements are quite strict.

You will need a variety of details to complete the form:

- Organisation details including details of who will be your **Authorising Officer, Key Contact, Level 1 User**, and any other users and representatives that you think it is relevant to include in your application.
- The number of **undefined CoS** you need and the reasons for this number (more on this below).
- The names and trading dates of your organisation if it has traded under another name in the last four years.
- Your organisation's size and sector.
- The name and registration number of any accrediting or governing body
- Details of any criminal convictions or civil penalties for Key Personnel (though having these might adversely affect the licence).
- Your supporting evidence
- Payment details (card details)

It is possible to save the form as you go and come back to complete it at a later stage. It is worth noting that the online form can experience errors. It is quite an old system and is prone to failure, so remember to save whenever you can.

We will take each page in turn.



UK Visas & Immigration

Home

- Apply for a sponsor licence
- Open a saved application
- Finish incomplete applications
- Change email or password
- Contact us
- Log out

Sponsor application online

To begin a new application, choose **Apply for sponsor licence**. You can also load a previously saved application or change your account details, such as your password.

Apply for sponsor licence

If you are fully prepared, have read the sponsor guidance and have all relevant documentation to hand, the sponsor application form should take you about 25 minutes to complete.

You can save your application and come back to complete it later. We recommend you save each page as you complete it. Your session will time out after 20 minutes of inactivity.

You must be connected to a printer in order to print your submission sheet.

To complete the form, you will need the following information:

- Organisation details, Authorising Officer, Key Contact, Level 1 user, other users and representatives
- The number of CAS and/or CoS you need and your reasons for this number
- The names and trading dates of your organisation if it has traded under another name in the last four years
- Your organisation's size and sector
- The name and registration number of any accrediting or governing body
- The name and registration number of any Stock Exchange your organisation is registered with
- Details of any criminal convictions or civil penalties
- Your supporting evidence
- Payment details (card details)

You must ensure that you fully understand the application process and are aware of the supporting evidence you must send with your application before applying.

For more information on applying for a licence, please see our website: [worker and temporary worker sponsors](#) or [sponsors in the student route](#).

Add route to existing licence

To enable this functionality and be able to add a route to an existing licence you will need to log out and log back in, then select the **Add tier to existing licence** link.

Open a saved application

You can open an earlier saved application. You can only save one application at a time. Saving an application will overwrite any applications saved earlier.

Finish incomplete applications

You can view submission sheets or finish paying for incomplete applications (which are those for which we have all information except your payment, submission sheet and supporting documents).

Change email or password

You can change your password or contact email address for the sponsor application.

Please note, these are **not** the same details as are used to access the sponsorship management system (SMS).

This is the first page you will see when you click on the above weblink. When you first login, you should select "Apply for a Sponsor Licence" to begin the application. If you have already started an application, saved it, and are logging back in to finish it, then you can select "Open a saved application" to continue it. The option to "Finish an incomplete application" is used if you need to access the **submission sheet** which is produced at the end of the application (more on that later).

If we select “Apply for a Sponsor licence” we are presented with this screen “Licence Routes Step 1 of 1”:

[Home](#)

Apply for a sponsor licence

1. **Licence routes**
2. Organisation
3. CoS and CAS
4. Supporting documents
5. Contact details
6. Declarations
7. Payment
8. Submission sheet

[Open a saved application](#)

[Finish incomplete applications](#)

[Change email or password](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Log out](#)

Application for a sponsor licence

Licence routes - Step 1 of 1

Before making your application you should read the separate guidance notes for completing this form. These are available by selecting the link from the right hand side of this page.

Who should apply using this form?

Only prospective sponsors based in the UK who want to apply for a sponsor licence under worker, temporary worker, and the student route of the points-based system should complete this application form.

About this form

You must use this online application form to apply for your licence.
You must complete all fields as you proceed through the application, unless stated otherwise.

Under which routes is your organisation applying to become a sponsor?
Choose the routes in which you wish to register (you can choose more than one).

Workers

Skilled Worker

Ministers of Religion

International Sportsperson

GBM: Senior or Specialist Worker

Student Route

Student

Child Student

Temporary Workers

Religious Worker

Government Authorised Exchange

International Agreement

Creative Worker

Charity Worker

Seasonal Worker

GBM: Graduate Trainee

GBM: UK Expansion Worker

GBM: Secondment Worker

GBM: Service Supplier

Scale-up

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Previous application(s)

Are you already on the register of sponsors? Yes No

If 'Yes', provide your sponsor licence number (SLN):

Please note: if you want to add a route to the above licence, you should log out and log back into the online sponsor application, then select the **Add route to existing licence** menu option.

This allows us to select the type of licence we are seeking. In this case it is under “Workers” and “Skilled Worker”. The next screen is “Organisation Step 1 of 4”:

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Application for a sponsor licence" with the sub-heading "Organisation - Step 1 of 4". On the left is a navigation menu with options like "Home", "Apply for a sponsor licence", and "Log out". The main content area is divided into two sections for providing address details.

Provide your organisation's details.

Name of the organisation:

Address:

City or Town:

County or Area or District (optional):

Postcode:

Country: UK

Telephone number:

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Provide your head office details if applicable, or registered/trading name if different from above.

Name of the organisation:

Address:

City or Town:

County or Area or District (optional):

Postcode:

Country:

Telephone number:

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

At the bottom right of the form are buttons for "Save", "Exit", "Back", and "Next".

This requires you to enter the office address for your business. The first section is your main office address. The second section allows you to enter a head office address if this is different or enter a registered or “trading as” name. In practice many businesses have a combination of addresses. For example, you might have an office address where your business is carried out, but have a registered company address on Companies House, where your official documents are sent. A catching business might be a sole trader and the ‘office address’ may be the owner’s home address.

In practice, it is best to give as much information as possible, and you can explain any details about the addresses that are provided in your covering letter. It is also possible to add other locations or branches of the organisation, if you anticipate that migrant workers will work there. This is done on the next page. Many organisations no longer have a landline telephone number. Whilst the form states that a mobile number is not acceptable, if a mobile number is the only contact available it is best to provide it in the telephone number input box.

Application for a sponsor licence
Organisation - Step 2 of 4

If your organisation has traded under any other name in the last four years, provide previous names, starting with the most recent.

You can add your previous trading names to the table by choosing **Add**.

You can edit details that you have entered in the table by choosing **Edit**.

You can delete details by choosing **Select** and then **Delete**.

Trading name	From	To	Select

Delete **Edit** **Add**

Select the region(s) of the UK in which your organisation operates.

UK regions (you can choose more than one):

Wales
 Scotland
 Northern Ireland
 England

Save **Exit** **Back** **Next**

On the next page “Organisation Step 2 of 4”, the form allows you to enter any previous names that your business has traded under and allows you to specify the regions of the UK in which your organisation operates. Again, it is best to provide as much information as possible, so if your business is based in Scotland, but regularly lands catch in England, then both boxes should be ticked.

The next page, “Organisation Step 3 of 4” contains a number of detailed queries. The first section asks for you to provide the current number of employees. For a business in the catching sector, often share fishermen are not technically “employees”. In practice it may help to include them and to explain this in your cover letter. If you already employ someone who is not a **settled worker** in the UK, for example a student who works part time for you, then they should be included here.

Organisation - Step 3 of 4

How many employees do you currently employ in the UK?

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Is your organisation currently employing migrant workers (non-settled workers) or sponsoring overseas students?
 Yes
 No
 If 'Yes', how many?

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Select the sector in which your organisation operates.
 Choose the sector that corresponds to your organisation's main economic activity.

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Is your organisation registering as a head office, a UK branch, a single body or another type of body?

 If you have selected 'Head office and all UK branches', 'Group of Branches' or 'Other', provide details in the box below. If you have answered 'Head office and all UK branches' or 'Group of Branches' you should provide the branch name, first line of address and postcode for each branch you wish to register.

Help on this question (opens in a new window)

Is your organisation a charity, or does it hold charitable status?

Yes
 No

Help on this question (opens in a new window)

Select the option that best describes your type of organisation.

- select -

Select the period for which your organisation has been trading in the UK.

- select -

Is your organisation registered with Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) to pay PAYE, National Insurance, or VAT?

Yes
 No

If 'Yes', provide details of at least one registration.

PAYE reference number:

Accounts office reference number:

VAT registration number:

Help on this question (opens in a new window)

You are also asked to specify the sector in which your business operates.

- For a business in the catching sector, this will be “Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing”.
- For a business in the processing sector this will be “Manufacturing”.
- For a fish sales business this will be “Wholesale and Retail Trade; repair of vehicles and motor vehicles”.

If your business is involved in a number of sectors, then its best to select the area in which migrant workers will be engaged, or your primary area of work. Again, any nuances can be explained in your covering letter.

The next question is important and concerns the structure of your business. As described in the first section, a sponsor can register other locations or sites, along with separate companies or businesses which are linked by common control and/ or ownership. If you had another site at a different address, in addition to the address given in the earlier section, you would include it here if the sponsored worker may be based there. If you want to include another business under your licence, such as a subsidiary of the sponsoring business, then this is known as a ‘branch’ and can be added to the licence.

If you chose to licence multiple connected businesses or sites under the same licence, this may make the management of the licence more straightforward, however you should note that compliance issues with one business or site registered under a single licence will impact the entire licence.

There are a number of ways your business can be categorised:

- Head office or registered/trading name (This is your administrative centre and may be called the headquarters or main office. Select this option to register your head office or registered/trading name but no other branches or offices.)
- UK branch (This is one of the offices of a group that form part of a larger business organisation.)
- Head Office and all UK branches (You can register the head office and all the UK branches together on the same licence.)
- Group of Branches (Two or more UK offices that form part of a larger organisation but which do not constitute all of the offices of that organisation in the UK.)
- Single body (The organisation's sole body.)
- Franchise (The granting of a licence by one person (the franchisor) to another (the franchisee), which gives the franchisee the right to trade under the trade mark or trade name of the franchisor.)
- Subsidiary of a parent company (A company that has voting stock of more than 50% controlled by another company, usually called the parent company.)
- Parent company with subsidiaries (A company (Parent company) that controls the voting stock of more than 50% of another company or companies (Subsidiary companies).
- Other (If the organisation does not fall into one of the categories listed above, please select this option and provide further details in the free text field.)

You can also specify if your business is a charity, and the type of organisation it is from the following list. It is anticipated that most seafood businesses are likely be one of the types noted in bold. Note that despite the inclusion on the list, it is not possible for a private individual to become a sponsor of a Skilled Worker.

- Branch Office of an Overseas Company
- Central/local Gov. Dept; Body; Quango, Agency Public Body
- Charity
- Company limited by Guarantee
- Co Inc under the Industrial & Provident Societies Act 1968
- Hotel and/or Catering Establishment
- Incorporated by Royal Charter

- Limited Liability Partnership
- Limited Partnership
- Overseas Gov. Int. Organisation, Diplomatic Mission
- **Partnership**
- Private Individual
- **Private Limited Company/Limited Liability Company**
- Public Limited Company
- Religious and/or Faith Body
- Representative Office of an Overseas Company
- **Sole Trader**
- Unlimited Company

You can input the period over which your business has been trading, and at least one of the registration numbers specified. The PAYE reference and Accounts Office reference numbers can be found on correspondence from HMRC. You will need the PAYE reference for the next section.

The screenshot shows a web application interface for 'Application for a sponsor licence' at 'Organisation - Step 3 of 4'. On the left is a navigation menu with options like 'Home', 'Apply for a sponsor licence', and 'Log out'. The main content area is titled 'PAYE Reference(s)' and includes a help link, instructions on adding, editing, and deleting references, and a table with columns for 'PAYE Reference' and 'Select'. At the bottom right, there are buttons for 'Delete', 'Edit', 'Add', 'Save', 'Exit', 'Back', and 'Next'.

As you will see, on this page, it is possible to enter multiple PAYE references, which might be the case if you are licensing multiple connected businesses under the same licence and they have different PAYE numbers. The PAYE reference number allows the Home Office to check with HMRC if a migrant worker is being paid appropriately (though there are some circumstances in which a worker would not be paid via PAYE).

The next page concerns whether your business is required to be registered with an official body to operate lawfully, or whether it is registered but can operate without this registration. Consider this question carefully. A seafood processing business, for example, would generally require registration with a food standards agency. These details should therefore be included.

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Application for a sponsor licence

Organisation - Step 4 of 4

Are you registered on the London Stock Exchange or one or more Financial Conduct Authority / Prudential Regulation Authority-approved stock exchanges?

Yes
 No

If 'Yes', provide the name of the stock exchange(s).

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Is your organisation required to be registered with or accredited by a governing body to operate legally in the UK?

Yes
 No

If 'Yes', you must add your accreditation or registration details to the table by choosing **Add**.

Once details have been recorded in the table, you can edit them by choosing **Edit**.

You can delete details by choosing **Select** and then **Delete**.

Name	Number	Expiry date	Select

Delete Edit Add

If your organisation is registered with or accredited by a governing body, even if this is not required to operate legally in the UK, provide details below.

Add your accreditation or registration details to the table by choosing **Add**.

Once you have entered details in the table, you can edit them by choosing **Edit**.

You can delete details by choosing **Select** and then **Delete**.

Name	Number	Expiry date	Select

Delete Edit Add

Save Exit Back Next

The next page relates to the number of **Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS)** that you will require. It is important to note that this question only relates to **'undefined' CoS**. These are certificates that are issued to migrants who are already in the UK. For any potential recruits who will come from abroad, the process is different and you must ask for a **'defined' CoS**. Your **Level 1 User** can apply for any required **'defined' CoS** once the licence is granted.

Therefore, somewhat confusingly, you enter 'zero' in this box if you do not anticipate recruiting any workers from within the UK and intend to bring in workers from abroad. If this changes after the licence is granted, you are able to ask for an allocation of **undefined CoS**. We will explain how to do this in Guide 3: 'How to employ migrant workers under a Skilled Worker Visa'.

If you expect to sponsor some workers from within the UK, it is permissible to enter an anticipated number of **undefined CoS**, and to explain that this is for future flexibility. Whilst the text box asks for detailed information, you can refer the decision maker to your covering letter in which you will explain the details of the roles that you will likely sponsor.

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Application for a sponsor licence

CoS and CAS - Step 1 of 1

Number of undefined certificates of sponsorship for Skilled Worker

Enter the estimated number of CoS required in this route during your first year as a sponsor, providing detailed reasons for this requirement.

Number of CoS:

Reasons required: please provide as much detail as possible about why you need the requested allocation. For example: business expansion; specialist skills required; extension of leave for existing migrant worker(s).

Please note, CoS granted in this allocation can only be used for undefined posts.

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Save **Exit** **Back** **Next**

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Application for a sponsor licence

Supporting documents - Step 1 of 1

To prove your organisation is genuine and has an established trading presence in the UK, you must send your supporting documents and submission sheet, by email where possible, within 5 working days from the date that you submit your application.

The documents you must send are dependent on a number of factors, including your organisation type and the route or routes for which you are applying. You must supply at least 4 document(s) to support your application. We will also conduct online checks to verify your organisation.

You must refer to the [Sponsorship policy guidance](#) before submitting your application; you must also refer to [Appendix A](#) of the guidance for the most up to date list of evidence that you must send.

Choose **Restart** to clear this screen and re-enter your supporting documents.

Mandatory documents

The following documents are mandatory and you must send them with your application.

Documents	To be sent
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

The following documents must be sent if they are applicable to your type of organisation.

Documents	To be sent	Not applicable to this application
Audited Annual Accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governing Body Registration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Franchise Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digitech declaration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Other documents

You may send any of the following documents in support of your application.

Documents	To be sent	Not applicable to this application
Employers Liability Insurance Cert.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HMRC - Self Asses. (SA300 or SA302)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HMRC Reg - VAT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HMRC Reg-PAYE Ref No/Acc Off Ref No	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HMRC - Comp. Tax - CT603 AND CT600	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proof of Bus Prem/Fxd Assets/Lease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corp/Business Bank Statement OR Letter from bank	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Restart **Save** **Exit** **Back** **Next**

This page relates to the supporting documents which you are providing, remembering that this is a minimum of 4 documents, and that in some cases the documents are mandatory. You can choose to provide more than 4 documents. If you click the wrong button, then by clicking 'restart' you can reset this part of the form.

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Application for a sponsor licence

Contact details - Step 1 of 7

You must appoint an Authorising Officer, who should be the most senior person responsible for the recruitment of migrant workers and students as they must ensure that your sponsor duties are fulfilled. Furthermore, the Authorising Officer must be based in the UK.

You must ensure that the email address provided does not block or redirect (e.g. to spam/junk folders) emails from the domain '@homeoffice.gov.uk', as we may write to this address to request more information in support of your sponsor licence application and limited time would be given to you to respond.

Complete all fields for your Authorising Officer.

Title:

If 'Other', provide the title:

First name(s):

Last name:

Previously known as if applicable (optional):

Address where employed:

City or Town:

County or Area or District (optional):

Postcode:

Country:

Telephone number:

Email:

Date of birth:

Country of nationality:

National Insurance number (optional):

Position within the organisation:

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

If the Authorising Officer is a non-settled worker and is under immigration control, provide their details.

Is the Authorising Officer a non-settled worker under immigration control? Yes No

Immigration status:

Home Office Reference:

Date the current leave to enter or leave ends:

Passport number:

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Save Exit Back Next

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Application for a sponsor licence

Contact details - Step 2 of 7

You must tell us if the Authorising Officer in your application has any convictions or penalties.

Has the Authorising Officer been:

- convicted of a relevant offence, as defined in the [Sponsor guidance for employers \(Part 1: Apply for a licence\)](#) or in [Applying for a Student sponsor licence](#); or
- issued with a fixed or civil penalty for any offence listed in [Appendix C](#) of the Sponsorship policy guidance, in the five years period before the date of this application (unless that penalty was withdrawn by us or cancelled on appeal); or
- an un-discharged bankrupt, or are legally prevented from becoming or acting as a company director?

Yes No

If 'Yes', provide details of the conviction or penalty and the date it was given.

Conviction or penalty details:

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Save Exit Back Next

Application for a sponsor licence

Contact details - Step 3 of 7

The Key Contact is the person who is the main point of contact in your organisation. If your organisation has overseas branches you can only appoint a Key Contact who is based in a UK branch of your organisation.

Key Contact

Will the Authorising Officer be the Key Contact?

Yes
 No

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Save Exit Back Next

These next sections allow you to provide the personal details of your chosen **Authorising Officer**. The address provided should be the office address, unless you operate a virtual business without office space, in which case this should be the **Authorising Officer's** home address. You can select whether the **Authorising Officer** will also be the **Key Contact**, or you can nominate another person for this role. You can do the same for the **Level 1 User**. In this case we have simply nominated the **Authorising Officer** for all roles for simplicity.

Application for a sponsor licence

Contact details - Step 5 of 7

You must appoint one Level 1 User who is an employee, a partner, or a director. If you have more than one Level 1 User, any additional Level 1 Users must be one of the following:

- a paid staff member or office holder within your organisation
- an employee of a third-party organisation engaged by you to deliver all or part of your HR function
- a UK-based representative

If your sponsor licence is granted you will be able to nominate further Level 1 users by making a request via the sponsorship management system (SMS).

Please ensure that the email address provided does not block or redirect (e.g. to spam/junk folders) emails from the domain '@homeoffice.gov.uk', as we may write to this address with important information in the future if your application is granted.

Key users

Role	Title	Full name	Date of birth	Email address
Authorising Officer				
Key Contact				

Level 1 users

You can add user by selecting Add. You can edit user by selecting Edit. You can remove user by selecting Delete. You can copy the Authorising Officer by selecting Copy AO. You can copy the Key Contact by selecting Copy KC

Title	Full name	Date of birth	Email address	Select

Delete Edit Add Copy KC Copy AO

Save Exit Back Next

The screen above allows you to allocate different Key Personnel to be appointed as **Level 1 Users**, and to add any additional **Level 1 Users**.

The next page asks if you have used the services of a representative to assist you with the application. If so, the representative should be able to help you with the answers in this section.

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Application for a sponsor licence

Contact details - Step 7 of 7

Has an external representative helped you to complete your application?

Yes

No

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Previous application

Have you helped a sponsor with an application to join the register of sponsors or a migrant to apply under the points-based system before?

Yes

No

If you have, provide your PBS reference number (if known):

Representative details

Only complete this section if you are a third party, for example a legal representative, helping a sponsor with their application.

Complete all details.

Name of your organisation:

Contact name in your organisation:

Address:

City or Town:

County or Area or District (optional):

Postcode:

Country:

Telephone number:

Email:

Is it a UK-based organisation? Yes

No

[Help on this question \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Select how you are qualified to operate under Section 84 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Regulation status:

The final page of the application is to allow the **Authorising Officer** to sign off and to agree to comply with the relevant duties.

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Application for a sponsor licence

Declarations - Step 2 of 2

Complete this section if you are the nominated Authorising Officer.

You must agree with all the statements for the application to be successful.

Read the declaration and tick the box to say you have understood and agree with all the statements.

- I agree to comply with my [sponsor duties](#).
- I understand that if I do not comply with the rules of the sponsor licensing system I may lose my licence and be removed from the register of sponsors, which would mean that I could no longer sponsor overseas nationals wanting to come to the UK to work for or study with me. The permission of any existing non-settled workers or students under the Worker, Temporary Worker, or Student routes may also be curtailed.
- The information I have given in this online application is complete, accurate and true to the best of my knowledge.
- I will inform you without delay if there is a material change in my circumstances or new information relevant to this application becomes available before this application is decided.
- I agree to co-operate with Home Office officials when they are carrying out checks on our compliance with our sponsor duties. I also agree to co-operate with any third party which is collecting information on the Home Office's behalf about our compliance with our sponsor duties.
- I agree to comply with requests for information from the Home Office in connection with the prevention or detection of crime, the administration of illegal working civil penalties and/or the apprehension or prosecution of immigration offenders.
- I understand that if I knowingly make any false representations or submit any false documents, the application will be refused and I may be prosecuted.
- I understand that it is an offence under section 25 of the Immigration Act 1971 to do an act which facilitates a breach or attempted breach of immigration law, or have reasonable cause to believe that it may so facilitate.
- The information provided from me to you will be treated in confidence but it may be disclosed to other law enforcement agencies, UK government departments, agencies, local authorities, foreign governments and other bodies for immigration or research purposes and to help them to carry out their functions.
- I understand you may ask for or check information from other law enforcement agencies, government departments, agencies, local authorities, the police, foreign governments and other bodies for immigration, research or security purposes or to help you carry out your work.
- I understand you can use the information given in this application for training and research purposes.
- I understand that information I have provided to the Home Office in making this application or during the currency of my sponsor licence may need to be disclosed in response to a Freedom of Information request and/or otherwise in accordance with the law and/or at the request of a court or other tribunal of competent jurisdiction.
- If any of the owners, directors, key personnel, financiers or personnel involved in the day-to-day running of the organisation to which this licence application relates have previously been the owner, director, key personnel, financier or personnel involved in the day-to-day running of a sponsor organisation where a licence has been refused, downgraded, suspended or revoked, this information will be provided in a covering letter together with the submission sheet as part of the licence application.

Tick the box if you agree with all the statements.

Tick the box if you agree with all the statements:

Date (dd/mm/yyyy):

Name of Authorising Officer:

Position within organisation:

Choose **Submit & pay** to submit your information and go to the payment screen. You will not be able to make any changes to your information once you have submitted it. Your application is not complete until you have paid and sent us your submission sheet with your supporting documents.

After authorising the form, the next page will be the payment page, which will allow you to pay the fee for the application, with the cost depending on your company size (£536 for a business which is “small” and £1476 for all other businesses), and then to generate the ‘submission sheet’. This document must be printed and signed in wet ink by your **Authorising Officer**. The form then needs to be scanned to be included with your submission to the Home Office, and to accompany your cover letter and supporting evidence.

Once you have lodged the application online, it has been paid for and authorised, you must then send the signed submission sheet, your covering letter, and the supporting documents to the Home Office by email.

The email address to which you send the items is changing and will now be SponsorshipValidations@homeoffice.gov.uk (note that a different email address may be given on the **submission sheet** but the email address listed here is correct).

After the online form is submitted, you will receive an automatic email which includes an attachment reminding you of the documents which must be sent, by email, within 5 working days.

Normally sponsor licence applications can take up to 8 weeks to be resolved. As of July 2023 applications from seafood businesses are prioritised for no additional cost; a decision should be expected in 10 days.

Sometimes the Home Office will require further information or will ask for alternative documents. It is important to check for emails to ensure any correspondence is picked up. On occasion the Home Office will wish to carry out a compliance visit, or conduct an online interview, in advance of granting a licence. This designed to ensure you will be able to comply with your duties, which we discuss in Guide 4: 'Your ongoing responsibilities as a sponsor of Skilled Workers'.

6. The decision

The Home Office will communicate the decision on your licence application, by email, to the Authorising Officer. If the Home Office decide to refuse your licence application, they will provide the reasons in the decision letter.

There is no right of appeal against a decision to refuse a sponsor licence application. If there has been a case working error, or if evidence you sent was not considered, it may be possible to ask for the decision to be reviewed.

It is important to note that if your licence application is refused, whilst you can reapply, this may be subject to a “cooling-off period”. This means that, in some circumstances, you cannot apply again for a licence until 6 months (or longer in some cases) have elapsed. A cooling-off period may also be applied for a variety of other reasons, including if you have previously held a licence that was revoked.

Further details on application outcomes, error correction, and the cooling off period are provided at section L9 of the official guidance entitled: [Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors. Part 1: Apply for a licence.](#)

If the refusal of your sponsor licence application was solely because you did not provide documents or information that were requested, for reasons outside your control, it may be possible to re-apply immediately.

The cooling-off period reinforces that you should not apply for a licence until you are confident you can meet your sponsor duties, and that you are ready to become a sponsor. Applying prematurely could result in further delay if a cooling-off period is applied

If you are unsure whether you are ready to apply, you may consider seeking legal advice.

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