

New Immigration Rules Come Into Force on the 22 July 2025: A huge setback for the social care sector as overseas care worker route closes

The Home Office has announced major reform of the Immigration Rules and the changes come into effect from 22 July 2025.

New rules were laid in Parliament on the 1st July 2025, which will see skills and salary thresholds rise to the previously set RQF level 6, overseas recruitment for care workers to end, and between 100 and 180 occupations no longer eligible under the skilled worker visa route.

The new Immigration Rules are scheduled to come into force on 22 July 2025, pending Parliament's approval.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said:

"We are delivering a complete reset of our immigration system to restore proper control and order, after the previous government allowed net migration to quadruple in four years....."

The key measures include:

- Raising the skills threshold for skilled worker visas to RQF level 6
- Raising the salary thresholds for skilled worker visa holders
- Closing the social care worker visa route to overseas recruitment in response to widespread abuse and exploitation of the route and workers
- Only allowing time-limited access below degree level through a targeted immigration salary list and temporary shortage list, for critical roles only, with strict requirements for sectors to grow domestic skills
- Commissioning the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to conduct a review of the temporary shortage list including occupations, salaries and benefits
- Workers employed through the temporary shortage list will not be able to bring dependents
- Salary threshold and visa fee discounts will be removed from visas offered to workers on the temporary shortage list.

There is no doubt that the UK's social care system will suffer from the UK government plans to tighten immigration rules. The Care Sector has collectively condemned the changes which were aired on the announcement of the Immigration White Paper in May 2025.

Professor Martin Green OBE, Chief Executive of Care England, said: *"This is a crushing blow to an already fragile sector. The Government is kicking us while we're already down."*

One of the major changes which will directly affect the social care sector is the Skilled Worker entry clearance applications for care workers (SOC code 6135) and senior care workers (SOC code 6136) being closed on 22 July 2025.

The government's position is that care providers can recruit from the regional care partnerships which have a significant pool of displaced care workers. Furthermore, the government believe that resident workers can be trained to carry out these roles.

In a recent BBC interview, Laura Kuenssberg asked where care homes would recruit staff from. The Home Secretary said companies should recruit from a pool of people who came as care workers in good faith but had been "exploited" by unscrupulous employers.

She added:

"Care companies should be recruiting from those workers. They can also extend existing visas. They could recruit as well from people who are on other visas, who are already here. But we do think it's time to end that care worker recruitment from abroad,"

However, both of these approaches are flawed.

The displaced workers pool will eventually diminish and there is no real plan to identify where the social care sector will recruit for the carer and senior carer roles.

Moreover, the resident labour market has historically not taken up these roles as they can get paid more money stacking shelves in supermarkets. This is not the first time that this approach has been proposed. Previous political parties have argued this point but it has always failed.

In contrast, in-country skilled worker visa applications will remain open for a transitional period until 22 July 2028. This does come with a caveat which is that it applies to migrants who are already working for the sponsor for at least three months.

The rules will also allow existing skilled worker visa holders to continue to extend their visas, bring their dependants, change employment and take supplementary employment in occupations below RQF level 6. However, after July 2028, the roles will completely disappear from all shortage lists.

Key Takeaways: What Steps Should Care Providers Take Now

Providers holding a sponsor licence should carry out a full audit of their HR processes and the five areas of compliance under the sponsor guidance. Take advantage of the Aston Brooke Solicitors UKVI mock audit service. Please contact Mr Kashif Majeed and email km@astonbrooke.co.uk to book an appointment.

In addition to the above, the following action must be undertaken as a matter of urgency:

1. Sponsored Migrants Salary Audit

As there are no transitional arrangements for the new salary thresholds, employers must review the salaries of all sponsored workers. If you are assigning CoSs on or after the 22 July 2025, you must meet the new salary thresholds to ensure compliance of the rules.

1. Compliance of the Skill Level Threshold

Please ensure compliance of any roles filled which fall below RQF level 6 and that they also appear on the Temporary Shortage List and the Immigration Salary List.

1. Adult Social Care

Please ensure that any roles sponsored under SOC code 6135 and 6136 are for existing staff who have been employed in the business for at least three months.

There are more changes to come later this year which include:

1. Increasing the immigration skills charge
2. Increasing the English language requirements across the immigration system.

For clear and comprehensive advice on the new rules, its implementation and how it affects your business, please contact Mr Kashif Majeed, Director at Aston Brooke Solicitors. Email: km@astonbrooke.co.uk