

## **Becoming a UK visa sponsoring practice (May 2021)**

Gaining the right to be a UK visa sponsoring practice has many advantages and could form an important part of your general practice workforce planning. You need a sponsorship licence to employ someone to work for you from outside the UK. As the number of international medical graduates undertaking GP training in England continues to increase, with around 700 due to qualify in 2021 alone and a growing number in years to come, there is a greater chance that you will need a sponsorship licence to give you the broadest choice of UK trained GP candidates.

All of the international medical graduates qualifying as GPs in 2021 have been trained by Health Education England and have spent at least three years working in the NHS. They have excellent English language skills and knowledge of the NHS ways of working, but most of them will need visa sponsorship if they are to continue working in England's practices after they qualify.

If your practice has GP vacancies, or is likely to have vacancies in the future, obtaining a sponsorship licence will help ensure that you maximise your opportunities to recruit into these roles.

Sponsorship will also allow you to employ one of the growing number of GPs from countries such as Australia and South Africa who are relocating to the UK via the [Streamlined CEGPR route](#), and European GPs that have applied to join the [International Induction Programme \(IIP\)](#).

Applying for visa sponsorship is straightforward. You apply online and will need to supply supporting documents and pay a fee. GPs are on the shortage occupations list and this makes the process of obtaining a sponsorship licence under the UK's new points-based immigration system more straightforward.

As a sponsoring practice your responsibilities include:

- Checking workers have the necessary skills, qualifications or professional accreditation to do their job and retaining documents on file demonstrating this.



- Telling UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) if your sponsored workers are not complying with their visa conditions.

Your licence will be valid for four years. You may lose your licence if you do not meet your responsibilities as a sponsor.

The application process can take up to 16 weeks but most applications from practices are currently being approved in around four to six weeks, so now is the time to start the process to be ready for the next cohort of newly qualified GPs.

More information and support for practices:

- [UK visa sponsorship guide for employers on GOV.UK](#)
- Email for dedicated and prioritised visa support and advice for NHS organisations including GP practices: [UKVINHSTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:UKVINHSTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk)
- The British Medical Association (BMA) also provides an immigration advice service to its members via [support@bma.org.uk](mailto:support@bma.org.uk).