

## Information for International Workers in Social Care

This guide provides wide-ranging information and useful links to help international workers in social care to get used to their new country, communities, and work environment. The visa section focusses on those with sponsored visas (eg Health and Care Worker Visa/HCWV), which most care workers, social workers, doctors, and similar professions use to come to the UK.

## About your Community

Wales is a diverse country with people from a range of ethnic, national, religious, and cultural backgrounds. This includes thousands of people from across the world. This section explains important things for you to know about Welsh communities.

## Equality and Human Rights

Our laws state that people must be treated fairly and equally. It is illegal to treat another person less well because of their age, disability, gender or gender identity (where this is different from their gender at birth), whether they are married or not, pregnancy, race, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.

The [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

If you are treated badly, it might be discrimination or a hate crime. Crimes committed against someone because of their disability, transgender-identity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation are hate crimes and [should be reported](#) to the police or [Victim Support Cymru](#). If you've experienced a hate crime or hate incident, you can report it to the police. You can also report it if you saw a hate crime happen to someone else. If you're not sure if what happened was a hate crime, you can [check if something is a hate crime](#). To report it to the police by phone, call 101 (in case of an emergency dial 999). To find your nearest police station, [use the local police force finder on the police's website](#). If you don't want to contact the police, you can ask someone else to report it for you, like a friend or family member. You can also ask an independent organisation to report it to the police for you. These are known as 'third party reporting centres'. Your report will be anonymous and confidential. [Find out more about third party reporting](#).

Wales recognises the rights of children and is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of a child. You can find further information about these rights on the 'Staying safe' page on this [website](#).

## Understanding Welsh culture and society

Moving to a new country can be both exciting and challenging. If you are new in the United Kingdom, understanding cultural norms and values, and how to integrate into our culture is essential for feeling at home, and for enjoying living in Wales.

Participating in community activities and following local customs helps you learn about Welsh culture and language while making friends and connections. Many

communities offer events, workshops, and cultural festivals. You might also find local organisations focused on supporting migrants and refugees.

You will discover that people in Wales are welcoming, and many communities are eager to embrace diversity and share their culture.

This approach will ease your transition and allow you to enjoy all that life in the UK has to offer. By immersing yourself in community life, you not only improve your language skills but also gain confidence in navigating your new environment.

Here are some examples of everyday habits in the UK, following these can help you feel more integrated and appreciated in your new community.

- British society values principles such as respect, tolerance, and fairness. You will notice that politeness is vital in everyday interactions.
- Use 'please' when asking for something or 'thank you' when you have received something. 'Excuse me' is a polite way to get attention.
- Personal space is important for people here; keeping a comfortable distance during conversations is customary.
- Typical British humour often includes sarcasm and irony, which can be confusing at first. Recognising these social cues can help you connect better with others.
- Bad manners could include spitting, or urinating in a public place other than a toilet.
- Making too much noise on the street or late at night may lead to complaints from your neighbours.
- Keeping pets under control and your gardens tidy will prevent complaints.
- Most British people try to recycle as much waste as possible so always put your litter in a bin.

In Wales, people are free to follow any religion or belief, and laws are not made by religious organisations or leaders. The Senedd (the Welsh Parliament) and the UK Parliament make the laws in Wales

Christianity is the largest religion in Wales. Almost a third of people in Wales do not follow any religion at all. Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist followers are increasing in Wales. But celebrating holidays like Christmas and Easter is still common, and traditional food plays a big role in these occasions.

It is illegal to smoke in many public places in Wales. This includes all shops, restaurants, buses, trains and factories. You should also be aware that it is illegal to smoke in a vehicle if a child is present. You could receive a fine of up to £200 for smoking in one of these places. You must be at least 18 years of age to buy cigarettes. It is legal to smoke from the age of 16 in Wales and you can smoke in your own home or places designed for smoking. ['Help Me Quit'](#) can support you to give up smoking.

There are also restrictions on the use of alcohol. You must be at least 18 years of age to buy alcohol. There are [strict limits](#) on how much alcohol you can drink if you are driving. To make sure you do not break these limits it is safest not to drink any alcohol if you are planning to drive a vehicle.

## Language

People like to greet each other by saying 'hello', 'good morning', or 'good afternoon'. Your English doesn't have to be perfect, and it will get better with practice. People will welcome if you try to talk to them. You will find that some words and phrases people use are local or regional, and often not in the dictionary. [Here](#) you can find common English phrases and what they mean, there is also a section on Wales.

Most people speak English but here in Wales, we have our own beautiful and ancient language, called 'Welsh'. Many people like to speak it, and you can find out about courses to learn it [here](#). Even if you don't speak Welsh, you can use Welsh language greetings, such as 'shwmae' (hi there), 'Bore da' (good morning) or 'Prynhawn da' (good afternoon).

## Social Media

Having a mobile phone and an enough data on your phone contract is important in the UK. Social media and social networking sites are great ways for you to be informed, to know what is going on in your community, and to stay connected with family and friends. If you are new to using social media, information to help you to get started is [here](#).

Your employer and colleagues might use messaging or social media platforms to keep in touch, and to provide information about your work. If used responsibly, social media can offer many benefits, including accessing professional and support networks, learning resources and information. Using social media can also create risks and challenges. It has the potential to blur the boundaries between our professional and personal lives. Sharing information inappropriately can be very damaging due to the speed at which it can be shared, the size of the potential audience and the problems removing content once it has been posted. You can find guidance how to use social media for your work in social care [here](#).

But everyone should be cautious when using social media. Not everyone using social media is necessarily who they say they are. Take a moment to check if you know the person, and if the friend/link/follower request is genuine.

Less obviously, you should think about your digital footprint, a term that describes the information about you that is available online. Criminals can use this to steal your identity or make phishing messages more convincing. You should:

- Think carefully about who you choose to connect with on social media. Do you know them in real life? Think about how much information you'd share with a stranger in real life.
- Think about what you're posting, and who has access to it. Have you configured the privacy options so that it's only accessible to the people you want to see it?
- Have an idea about what your friends, colleagues or other contacts say about you online.

- Be cautious with people you've just met online, especially if they ask you to reveal personal information or want to meet you very quickly – they may not be who they say they are. Click [here](#) to find out more about this type of scam.
- Report any abuse to the relevant social network. You can also 'unfriend' and block people on Facebook, or unfollow and block people on Instagram and X.
- Avoid publishing personal information, such as your telephone number, address or date of birth. It's also a good idea to pick a username that doesn't include any personal information. For example, avoid using your first and last name and date of birth, such as 'maiamoon1985'.
- Use a strong password that's different from the passwords you use for other accounts. Click [here](#) to find out more about online password security and how to choose a strong password.
- Look out for misinformation. False claims or fake stories can spread easily online.

## **Registration requirements in the UK**

### Births and deaths

It is compulsory to register a birth or death in the UK. A child's birth must be registered within 42 days in the county where the birth occurred. Appointments are made with the local authority to register a birth. If a member of your family dies, it is your duty to register the death within 5 days. You must report this to the local authority where the death occurred.

### Registering to vote

You must [register to vote](#) if you are asked to do so. If you do not, your local Electoral Registration Office could fine you £80. After registration, your name and address will be on the electoral register, and you will be able to vote. On a Health and care Worker Visa working in Wales you can only vote in the elections for the Senedd, Council and Community Council.

### Professional registration requirements

For many jobs in health and social care in Wales you will need to be registered with an official supervisory and/or professional organisation. These organisations also offer support for you in many ways. Your employer can help you with what is needed.

## **Useful Information**

### Access to services and appointments

For many services in Wales, you need to make an appointment before you can get help. This is because services are often very busy. Appointments may be as short as 10 minutes, so it is important that you are not late for the time slot you have been given. If you are late, the appointment may be cancelled, and you may not get another time slot for weeks. If you know you will not be able to make it to the appointment you should make sure the service knows. They may be able to make changes to help you. It may also be possible to book an interpreter to help the

service understand your needs. You can ask for an interpreter when making your appointment.

Most services operate during the 'working week'. This means Monday to Friday. This also usually means between the hours of 9am and 5pm. 'Shift work' often refers to people working longer or more flexible hours than this.

### Local services

Post offices provide many services. They can help you send mail or check forms for passports or licenses and some basic savings accounts. You can find out more about their services [here](#).

Your local area will have libraries offering a range of services, often including access to computers and Wi-Fi, hosting events and groups, space to study, copying and more. Leisure centres not only offer opportunities to exercise but often have other facilities, too. Find out more by googling where they are in your area.

### Time

In the summer, the clocks in Wales go forward by one hour. This is called 'British Summer Time' or BST. BST starts on the last Sunday in March and ends on the last Sunday in October. In October, the clocks go back by one hour. 'Greenwich Mean Time' or GMT is the period between the end of October and March.

## **Taxes and Utilities**

Most residents in Wales will need to pay for a range of services.

'Council Tax' is payable on nearly all types of accommodation. You are responsible for paying this if you own the property or are named on a lease agreement. If you fail to pay your Council Tax you could be taken to court. You may need to register with the Local Authority to pay Council Tax.

You are liable for paying Council Tax for your property. This is a set amount for the financial year (which runs from 1 April to 31 March), and you can pay this monthly.

You are not entitled to receive support with local council tax if you are in Wales on a Health and Care Worker visa. But you might be entitled to a discount or exemption, for example, if you are living alone. Your local authority will be able to let you know. Advice on the types of discount and reductions is available [here](#).

If you are living in your own property, you are likely to have 'utility bills'. These include bills for water, electricity, gas and telephone or internet access. You can pay these bills monthly, but utility companies often offer a range of payment options.

You must have a 'TV License' if you watch or record live or 'on demand' programmes on a TV, computer or other device. You may receive a fine of up to £1,000 if you watch these programmes without a license. You can find out if you need a [TV license](#) and apply for one at the [TV licensing website](#).

In the UK, your pay from employers is taxed by the government (to pay for services) and national insurance is deducted (to pay for the NHS and state pension). The current levels of tax and national insurance can be found using the following links:

- [Income Tax in Wales](#)
- [National Insurance: introduction](#)

## Driving in Wales

You can drive in Great Britain on a full, valid driving licence from an EU country. If you have a valid EU/EEA licence, you can drive any vehicle covered by the categories shown on your licence. If you have a full, valid and recognised driving licence from a non-EU country, you might only be able to drive in the UK for 12 months. After this time you will need a full UK licence. You can check your driving status [here](#). If you need to exchange your licence for a UK licence you can find more details [here](#).

All drivers in the UK must have valid motor insurance. It is illegal to drive in the UK without insurance or allow others to drive your car without insurance. If you use your own car for your work, you might have to pay a 'business' tariff to your car insurance (ask your insurance company).

Cars over three years old also need to pass a yearly safety check called an 'MOT'. You will have to pay for your car to have the MOT test. Many car garages can perform this check and issue you with the MOT certificate if your car passes the check.

You must also pay car tax. You can check if your car needs vehicle tax (or 'road tax') to be paid [here](#). The organisation in charge of vehicle tax and safety is called the [DVLA](#). The DVLA can check if your car is taxed or has a valid MOT.

You must tell the DVLA if you change your name or address, sell your vehicle or if you have a medical condition. For example, it is important that you notify the DVLA if your eye sight changes and impacts upon your ability to safely drive.

## Groups, organisations and online support

Diaspora groups or associations are communities or networks with people of the same nationality or culture. They might be able to link you up with other international workers from your home country or region to support you.

Religious support groups can provide a safe and supportive space with people who share your experiences and find comfort in faith. Your neighbours, friends, health centre, school, colleagues, union, food shops or employer might have contact information for these local groups. You also can google or look on social media.

Contact details for organisations who can support you with various things:

- Advice in many areas including money, work, housing, immigration, family and more for all people in the UK: [Citizens Advice](#), phone 0800 702 2020
- Councils (also called Local Authorities) deal with housing, schools, supports, care and much more: [Find your local council - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- For free food/food banks: [Help and advice | Trussell](#), phone free on [0808 208 2138](#). Also look on the council websites and community groups on social media.

- On a HCWV you are likely not getting most get public benefits but check if this helps: [No recourse to public funds](#)
- [Living and working in the UK - what you need to know as a health and care worker](#)
- [Advice to help you stay safe when searching for a health or social care job](#)

Contact details for organisations and support groups in Wales and the UK which might be able to help you, dependent on your need and background:

- ['Bawso'](#) supports Black Minority Ethnic people (phone 02920 644633).
- ['Live Fear Free'](#) (phone 08088010800)\_supports victims of abuse, violence, forced marriage and more.
- ['Women Connect First'](#) support Black, Asian and other minoritised women (phone 02920 343154).
- [PAWA](#) supports pan African workers including care workers.
- ['Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel'](#) support people and community including to develop skills and improve wellbeing (phone 02920 028410).

## Education

### Early Years

In Wales, parents can claim up to 30 hours of early education and childcare a week, for up to 48 weeks of the year, from the Welsh Government. To be eligible each parent must:

- live in Wales
- have a child aged 3 or 4 years old
- earn less than £100,000 per year
- be employed and earn at least, on average, the same as working 16 hours a week at the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage, or
- be enrolled on either an undergraduate, postgraduate or further education course that is at least 10 weeks in length

For more information about the benefits and types of childcare available in Wales see [here](#). If you need help finding a childcare provider please visit the [Family Information Service](#).

### Schools

All children can have a place in a school in Wales. If you live in Wales, you must ensure that any of your children between age 5 and 16 receive a full-time education. The school year has 3 school terms. Autumn Term will begin after 31 August. Spring Term will begin after 31 December and Summer Term will begin after 31 March. Each term includes a short half-term break with a longer break between terms. The longest break is about 6 weeks between the end of Summer Term and the start of the next school year. For the latest school term dates see [here](#).

Most children will start 'primary' school in the September after their fourth birthday. They will continue to attend primary school until 11 years of age. Between the ages of 11 and 16 children will attend 'secondary' or 'high' school'. Many secondary schools teach up to the age of 18 years of age. As well as schools, there are sixth form colleges in some areas which teach young people aged 16 to 18.

Your local authority will help you to find suitable education for your child. Education for children can either be:

- in a local authority-maintained school which is free,
- in an independent school which will often charge fees,
- or you can choose to home-educate your child.

Contact your local authority to find schools in your area. You can find your local authority [here](#).

There is a lot of support available in schools in Wales. This includes support for children learning English or Welsh as a second language. School-based counselling is available for children who may be unhappy, worried or confused. Free School meals are available to all primary school children in Wales. But you may need to register with your local authority. Free transport to school is also available if you live a certain distance from your child's school. (At least 2 miles away from your primary school or 3 miles or more away from your secondary school).

### In-year admissions to schools

When you first arrive in Wales, it is likely that you will need to apply for 'in-year' admissions. This means applying for schools outside the normal admission timeframe. An in-year admission is:

- An application for reception year or year 7 after the start of the school year or
- an application for any other year group at any time.

You can get an application form for in-year places on your local authority website. Some schools will have places available throughout the year. Some of the most popular schools will be full when you are applying. The local authority will be able to tell you which schools still have places and how to apply.

### Applying for a place in the normal admissions round

Reception is usually for children who are already aged 4 at the start of the school year (September). Year 7 is usually for children who are already 11 at the start of the school year.

You can express a preference for any school. Usually, the closer to your home a school is, the better chance you have of an offer of a place there. You will get an offer of your highest available preference. But if there are no places at any of your preferred schools you will get an offer of another school which has places.

The local authority will send out offers of places on:

- Secondary – 1 March
- Primary – 16 April



### How places are allocated

Each school only has a finite number of places available. Sometimes there are more applications than the number of places available. If so, the admission authority must apply its published admission arrangements. This will allow them to determine who will get a place.

Here are a couple of examples of an admission policy:

Cardiff School [Admissions Policy](#)

Carmarthenshire School [Admission Policy](#)

Some schools use 'catchment areas' to give priority to children living near to the school. School admission authorities may ask for proof of your address with your application. The distance from home to school is also often used as a first tie-break to determine who will get an offer of a place.

Your local authority will be able to tell you when you must return your application. If you cannot apply by this date, you should speak to the local authority about how you should apply. We recommend that you do so at the earliest opportunity.

Some schools may prioritise children for admission based on the family's religion. You may need to complete a supplementary application form for these schools. This is to find out whether you are a practitioner or member of the relevant faith group. Schools may ask for evidence of your child's date of birth once they offer you a place.

### Choosing a school

There are some resources parents can use to help them choose a school. [My Local School](#) provides information on schools. Most schools will have an inspection report which you can search for at [Estyn](#).

## **Further Education**

If you are in Wales on a Health and Care Worker visa, you will have permission to study in the UK. But you will not be eligible for student finance; This is because as part of your visa conditions, you will not be able to access public funds.

You will likely pay higher 'overseas fees' charged by Higher Education providers. But you will be able to receive grants and/or scholarships. For further information you can contact [Student Finance Wales](#). If you want to study in another UK country, you can contact the relevant student funding body for information on student finance support.

There is no limit to the number of hours that you can study. But it is important to remember that it should not interfere with the job for which you have been sponsored to do, as this may affect your visa.

To study at a higher level in medicine, science, engineering, or technology, you need to get an ATAS certificate. Some countries do not need this. You can find out which ones on the [official website](#).

If you already have a degree from a non-UK university, you can apply to get this recognised by [Ecctis](#). If the degree was taught in English, this recognition can meet the English Language requirements of many UK visa applications.

## Health

This section of the website explains how and where you can receive healthcare.

You will be able to use the NHS in Wales and access NHS services for free if you paid the Immigration Health Surcharge as part of your visa application. If you attend a hospital or General Practice (GP), sometimes referred to as a surgery, you may need to provide proof (in the form of an IHS reference number).

A GP is a family doctor. You must register with a GP to ensure you can access treatment when you are sick. They have to offer immediate necessary treatment for anyone who normally lives outside their area. If you cannot be registered as a permanent resident in the area, you could be treated as a temporary resident for at least 14 days. If you are having trouble being accepted by a GP surgery, your Local Health Board can register you to a surgery. To find a GP surgery near you visit [NHS Direct Wales](#).

You should not need proof of work or payslips to register with the GP, but you may need to show that you live in the area. You should receive an explanation if your registration request is refused. You can find contact details for GPs in your area and the local Health Board on the [NHS website](#).

NHS staff, including doctors, nurses, and interpreters, will keep your health information private. They will only share it with others outside the NHS when you have not given permission, if they believe there is a serious risk to you or others.

You are entitled to be provided with relevant information in a language you understand. It is the responsibility of health services to arrange free interpretation to make sure you can communicate properly.

You do not need to register with a dentist, but free dental treatment will only be available at a dentist which accepts NHS patients. You can find a local NHS dentist by searching in your local area at the NHS Direct website (link above). If you need emergency dental treatment, you can contact the dental help line at NHS Direct Wales.

Some services available regardless of your immigration status:

GP and nurse consultations in primary care (first point of contact), treatment provided by a GP and other primary care services are free of charge to all. This is whether registering with a GP as an NHS patient or accessing NHS services as a temporary patient. A temporary patient is someone who is in the area for more than 24 hours, but less than 3 months.

For secondary care services (=hospital and community care), the UK's healthcare system is residence-based. This means that you must be living legally in the UK on a settled basis to receive free healthcare.

Accident and emergency services, such as those provided at an A&E department, are exempt from charging. If you are admitted as an inpatient, or need a follow-up outpatient appointment, you may have to pay.

If you need an interpreter you can find more information [here](#), and use this link to [Contact the service in other languages](#).

## Your wellbeing and mental health

Mental health affects how you think, feel, and act. It includes your psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing. This impacts your ability to handle stress, make decisions, and form relationships. Wellbeing, however, is the broader state of being healthy, happy, and content in life. It is about how satisfied we are with our lives, our sense that what we do in life is worthwhile, our day-to-day emotional experiences (happiness and anxiety) and our [wider mental wellbeing](#).

It is very important that you take care of yourself and look after your wellbeing and mental health. Evidence suggests there are [5 steps](#) you can take to help improve your mental health and wellbeing.

If you need urgent support with your mental health look [here](#).

It can be hard to work when being not well, so it is important to also look after your [wellbeing in your workplace](#).

## Housing

Finding a suitable place to live will be one of your main concerns upon your arrival in Wales. The cost and availability of housing differs across Wales. The cost of accommodation is likely to be one of the major costs to you each month.

Make sure you have a clear plan for where you will live, who is arranging it and for how long.

Your employer may provide you with accommodation when you arrive (usually for a few weeks or months). You do not have to take up their offer, free to source your own accommodation independently.

If you accept your employer's offer, ask them in advance:

- how long you can stay in the accommodation
- how you will be paying rent. This will either be out of your wages (your payslip should show the deductions for rent) or as a separate payment
- to provide you with a tenancy agreement or occupation contract detailing your rent and the conditions of your tenancy for you to agree and sign.

Check the rent is reasonable compared with other accommodation in the area before you sign an agreement.

Look for alternative accommodation well before your stay comes to an end.

For your first independent accommodation in the UK you will likely have to [rent from a private landlord](#). If you rent a property, you will have a 'landlord'. Landlords have a legal duty to provide you with written details of your rights and responsibilities. This

will include details about rent, when you can be required to leave the property and responsibilities for repairs to the building. This is usually in the terms of your tenancy agreement, - this is a legal agreement between you and the landlord.

For advice on looking for a home through a private landlord or letting agent, see [Shelter](#). Contact [Citizens Advice](#) or your [local council](#) if there are problems with your rented accommodation and your landlord is not helping. The council can make a landlord take action to deal with problems.

You can find out more about renting a property [here](#).

There is no legal obligation for a landlord to check the immigration status of tenants in Wales. Your Certificate of Sponsorship will state if your employer has agreed to cover your accommodation costs. If so, you should be able to claim money from them during your first month in the UK. You should be able to claim at least £1,270 from your employer if they have agreed to your maintenance.

As a condition of your visa, you will not have access to '[public funds](#)'. This means that you will not be able to access government support or funds to support your living costs. If you are struggling to afford rent or living costs, you can seek advice from Citizens Advice.

If you need emergency accommodation and meet certain criteria, you might be able to stay in a [bed and breakfast](#) (B&B) or a [night shelter](#). You will need to pay to stay in a Bed and Breakfast. Night shelters are often free but offer very basic.

If you're a woman experiencing domestic abuse and meet certain criteria, you may be able to be offered a [refuge place](#).

Local authorities might be able to help people who could lose their homes or are homeless, if they are eligible. They work with other support organisations that can help people keep their homes or find a new one. If you are at risk of becoming homeless or are actually homeless [contact your local authority](#).

## Money

### Opening a bank account

There are a range of banks, and you can choose one that suits you best. There are also online-only providers which you can use.

To open a bank account, you will need to show a form of identification. Such as:

- your passport or a driver's licence or a recognised identity card,
- proof of your address (such as your tenancy agreement or a gas, electric or phone bill), and
- evidence of your immigration permission in the UK (such a BRP or online immigration status).

You should ask about any charges when you open a bank account.

Once you open your account, you will usually receive a debit card. Many cards are contactless. Some shops will only accept contactless payment as will some transport providers.

You can also arrange for bills to be paid y from your account using 'direct debit'.

Further information on how to open a bank account is available [here](#).

## **Pay from work**

As a someone on a Health and Care Worker visa you will be on a set level of pay from your sponsor, for completing a set number of hours in work per week. Both figures can be found on your Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). You may be paid a 'salary' which represents the total pay you will receive (before tax) for a year of work.

Some employers will have different hours or days of work but the total amount of hours per week should be fixed. You should ensure that if you work more hours per week than listed on your CoS, you are being paid more as a result.

Pay from your employer (also called 'wages') are paid either weekly, 4-weekly, or monthly. This will usually be by bank transfer. You should receive a payslip which should show how much you have been paid and any deductions.

In the UK, pay from employers is taxed by the government (to pay for services) and national insurance is deducted (to pay for the NHS and state pension). The current levels of tax and national insurance can be found using the following links:

[Income Tax](#)

[National Insurance](#)

If you have any concerns about the amount of tax you are paying, you can speak with HMRC by calling 0300 200 3300 or visit their [website](#) for more information.

You will also likely see pension deductions on your payslips. This is because in the UK most workers are automatically enrolled in a pension scheme. Currently, the government demands at least 5% of your monthly earnings to be paid into a pension scheme. Your employer will have to pay the equal of at least 3% of your monthly earnings as well. Your employer should tell you which pension scheme you are a part of and instructions on how to access your policy.

## **Absences from work**

As part of your work contract, your employer must give you at least 28 days paid annual leave from work each year if you work full time. Some employers will offer more than 28 days per year. The amount of annual leave days you are given will usually include public holidays (also known as 'bank holidays'). It is important to check the details in your contract. There are currently 8 'bank holidays' a year, and you can find more details [here](#).

Annual leave means that you will be able to request days off from work and still get paid. Your employer will have to agree to you taking the time off. Taking these days off will not affect your visa.

If you cannot work for medical reasons your employer should pay your sick pay. Some employers have higher rates of pay but most employers will pay the 'Statutory

Sick Pay'. You can find more information on Statutory Sick pay [here](#). Taking time off work for medical reasons should not affect your visa.

If you are a woman and have a baby, your employer should give you at least 52 weeks off. Some employers have different arrangements about pay during this time. But most employers will pay 'statutory maternity pay'. You can find more information [here](#). Taking these days off will not affect your visa.

## **Social Security**

As part of the conditions of your visa, you are not entitled to access 'public funds'. This means you will not be able to claim any social security payments. There are details to other supports to help you under various themes in this document.

Your employer might have agreed to cover the cost of your accommodation and maintenance as part of your visa sponsorship. You can check if they have done this on your Certificate of Sponsorship. If so, you should be able to claim money from them during your first month in the UK. You should be able to claim at least £1,270 from your employer if they have agreed to certify your maintenance.

As you will be paying national insurance contributions, you will begin recording 'qualifying years' with the Department for Work and Pensions. In most circumstances, once you have obtained at least 10 qualifying years you can receive a UK state pension. You must reach a certain age to claim this, and it will depend on your date of birth. The age you must be to claim is regularly reviewed and may go up before you retire.

## **Visa Costs**

Your employer may ask you to pay some of the costs associated with your visa. Or they may ask you to sign an agreement that you will pay back the costs if you leave their employment within a certain time frame. It is important that you understand what you are agreeing to. You should seek professional advice and/or an interpreter if you do not understand.

If your employer paid for it initially, they, can pass the costs of the visa onto you. You do not need to pay for your 'Certificate of Sponsorship' and 'Immigration Skills Charge'. If your employer attempts to pass these costs onto you, you can refuse to pay and inform the Home Office if you wish.

Your employer should not put you in a position of financial hardship with visa costs or make deductions from your pay without your consent. You may wish to speak with an [employment solicitor](#) if you feel you are being taken advantage of.

## **Work**

### **Visa Conditions**

You can start working for your sponsor as soon as your visa was granted. You can delay the start of your work, by up to 28 days after the start date listed on your

Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). Or the date your visa was granted (whichever is later). But you will need consent from your employer. If you fail to start within 28 days, your visa may be at risk of cancellation.

You can take 'annual leave' each year, in which you will continue to be paid whilst having time out of work. The details of how many days you are can take and the amount of notice you must give will be in your contract of employment. You may also choose to take unpaid absences from work for personal reasons. But these should be authorised by your employer beforehand. If you do take any unpaid absences, you will only be able take a maximum of 4 weeks per year, otherwise, your visa may be at risk of cancellation.

As part of the conditions of your visa, you must work for your sponsor in line with the conditions on your CoS. You should have a copy of this document, and it should set out:

- the number of hours you are to work each week
- your rate of pay/annual salary
- location of employment
- and job description

If you do not have a copy, you can request one from your employer.

You can only work full-time for your sponsor. But you can take up extra work (sometimes called a 'second job') if you choose. You can work up to 20 hours per week in your second job, but it must be:

- in the same [occupation code](#) (SOC) as your current job; or
- in an eligible Health and Care Worker SOC.

If you want to do more than 20 hours per week, or a job which does not fall within the above, then the second employer will have to sponsor you, and you need to update your visa.

Your employer/main sponsor can ask you to work for up to 48 hours per week, but you can choose to do unlimited extra hours (sometimes called 'overtime'). But your employer must pay you properly for this time.

## **Needing to find a new job?**

You might need to find another job if:

- Your sponsor ends your employment early,
- loses their sponsor licence,
- or you decide to leave your employment without having a new job in place.

If you have received a letter from Home Office/UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) telling you that your employer has had their Sponsor Licence revoked, then firstly our sympathies for finding yourself in this difficult and worrying situation. This letter will tell you that your visa is being cancelled if you don't find new sponsored employment, and to submit a new visa application for it, within 60 days from the date on the letter. If you do not submit a new visa application within this time, you will be required to leave the UK.

UKVI will normally wait some weeks after revoking the employer's licence, before they sent the letter to each sponsored worker. Therefore, your 60-day period will start from the date on the UKVI letter informing you that your visa is being cancelled, not from the date your sponsor loses their licence. You can continue to work, as per the conditions attached to your visa, until the 60-day period has expired. If you remain in the UK beyond the 60-days, without finding a new sponsor, or making an application on an alternative route that you may be qualified for, then you risk being detained and removed from the UK, and any visa application made within the next 10 years is unlikely to be approved.

If you want (or have to) to change jobs, your new employer will need to issue you with a new Certificate of Sponsorship. So it is important question to ask when you apply for the position is if they can sponsor you with your visa.

The Welsh Government does not hold information about individual vacancies in the care sector, so we are unable to support you directly with your search for a position in care. However, you will find care positions advertised on '[WeCare Wales](#)' which is dedicated to social care work, or more general platforms such as for example '[Indeed](#)' or '[Job Centre Plus](#)', where you can filter by region. Google can be asked to bring up 'care worker jobs near me'. One could also try a direct approach to care providers, whether locally or further afield, who have a sponsor licence. The [Ethical Recruiters List](#) is another place to look for potential employers in the care and health sector.

Once you have found a job advertisement you are interested in, you can look in the [Register of licensed sponsors](#) to see if a particular employer is holding a licence to sponsor.

If you are a member of a trade union, then they may be able to offer support. Many care workers are members of [UNISON](#), who do offer advice and support to migrant workers, but if you are a member of a different union then they may also be able to help you. Most unions will also provide free legal advice to their members, so if you are a union member it would be worth approaching your union representative.

The [Working Wales](#) service can help. They can support you to plan, prepare, and find a job or training course to suit you. They can also provide personalised expert.

## **Understanding workplace culture**

Understanding the culture of your workplace is vital for your effective integration. In the UK, professionalism and punctuality are key traits valued by employers. British workplaces often promote teamwork, so it's important to collaborate and communicate well with colleagues.

Additionally, direct communication is encouraged. You may need to adapt to a culture where you get feedback from managers and colleagues, which can come across as blunt at times. Understanding social cues and being open to constructive criticism can help you fit in. Embracing these cultural norms will increase your confidence and acceptance in your workplace.



## Your rights and protection at work

When you go to work, you have the **right to be treated fairly and work in a safe environment**. You also have the right to be able to work without fear or harassment from your employer, colleagues or customers.

Every employer in the country must pay their employees a minimum amount per hour. How much this is, depends on how old you are. Check [here](#) for the most up-to-date information.

As part of your visa application, your employer would have stated a salary you were to be paid for a set number of hours per week. This can be found on your Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). You should ensure that you are being paid this amount, and extra pay if you work more hours than stated. If you do not have a copy of your CoS, you can request one from your employer.

In the UK the most working hours per week an employer can ask for is set at 48, but you can choose to do more if you wish. You can find information on the 'Working Time Directive' [here](#). The terms and conditions of your work will be in your contract. Make sure you read this, with an interpreter, if necessary, before you sign. '[Acas](#)' provides free advice on workplace related matters (phone 0300 123 110).

## Equality and discrimination in the workplace

Organisations and businesses have a legal duty to treat everyone fair in the workplace and in the way they recruit people for jobs. It is illegal to discriminate against anyone based on:

- sex and gender reassignment,
- race
- religion
- married or in a civil partnership
- disability age sexual orientation
- or if they are pregnant

Employers must respect the needs of an employee as long as it does not interfere with the work they are employed to do.

If you feel you have been discriminated against, you can get help and advice from the Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS). They offer guidance on equality and human rights issues across England, Scotland, and Wales. You can reach them by phoning 0808 800 0082 or visit their [website](#) for more information.

## Your rights as worker in the UK and trade unions

Employers might not follow the regulations and laws in relation to international workers. This could be intentional or unintentional.

UK law protects your rights as a worker, and you are entitled to:

- get a copy of your terms and conditions
- earn at least the national minimum wage
- receive itemised payslips
- have fair and legal deductions from your wages
- have rest breaks and time off work
- have paid holiday and sick pay
- receive relevant training
- have a safe working environment

**In the UK, it is very common, and encouraged,** for workers to join a trade union. There are unions for health and social care workers who represent thousands of workers, for example at pay negotiations. But they also support you as a worker individually if needed. Speak to a trade union representative in your workplace or consider joining a [trade union](#).

If you are being forced to work or your employer isn't willing to respect your rights, you can call the Modern Slavery Helpline for advice on 0800 0121 700 or report concerns [online](#). More information on modern slavery and labour abuse in social care in Wales you can find [here](#).

## Immigration Law

### Health and Care Worker

It is important to ensure that your visa in the UK does not expire. You must apply to renew (or switch to a different visa) before the expiry date listed on your eVisa.

If you move to a new job, you can combine years from several jobs to make the five years required. If you do move job, you will need a new Certificate of Sponsorship and make a new visa application.

You should receive a notice of curtailment from the Home Office if:

- Your sponsor ends your employment early
- loses their sponsor licence
- or you decide to leave your employment without having a new job in place

This notice should give you up to 60 days to find new sponsored employment and submit a new visa application. If you do not submit a new visa application in this time, you have to leave the UK. If you cannot find a job, you may need help as most visa holders are not eligible for social security support (also known as welfare benefits). Visit the 'Money' and/or the 'Groups, organisations and online support' section of this website for details of support.

### Indefinite Leave to Remain and Settlement

Indefinite leave to remain is how you settle in the UK. It's also called 'settlement'. It gives you the right to live, work and study here for as long as you like and apply for

benefits if you're eligible. You can use it to apply for British citizenship. You must have lived in the UK for five years before you can apply for indefinite leave to remain.

Currently, the Health and Care Worker visa (HCWV) allows you to 'settle' after having five years, in a row, on the visa.

It is important to keep a record of your absences from the UK. For each of the five years required to settle, you can only spend up to a maximum of 180 days outside of the UK. Before you apply to settle, you will need to pass the [Life in the UK test](#); this does not apply if you are under 18 or over 65 years of age. If you have a dependent partner, they will also have to pass this test.

Your employer will also need to support your application to settle by writing a letter to confirm:

- the date your employment began
- your current salary
- your job title and SOC code
- your weekly working hours
- your contract length (for example full-time)
- a list of your absences and the reasons (for example holiday, sickness, unpaid, etc.)
- that you are needed to work for them for the foreseeable future

If you have a dependent partner who have not completed five years as a dependant in the UK, they will be able to apply for a 3-year extension. They can apply to settle at any time during this period, once they have completed the five years required.

If you have spent some of your time in the UK on a different visa, this will not automatically count towards the five years required to settle. The Home Office does allow time on some different visa categories to be combined. You can combine time from different Tier 2/Skilled Worker/HCW visas to reach the five years required to settle. For example, if you initially had a visa valid for three years, you would only need to apply for a 2-year visa before being eligible to settle. See [here](#) for more information.

Before applying to renew or switch your visa, or apply to settle, seek professional advice from a reputable immigration lawyer. Many things can affect your eligibility, including, criminal convictions, excessive absences from the UK, and even debts to the NHS. A list of reputable providers can be found [here](#).

## **EVisa and proving your status**

The UK Government is replacing physical documents (such as BRP cards) with an online record of your immigration status called eVisa, which will take over as evidence of your visa. Anyone with a UK visa who is already in the UK should look [here](#) to find out what they need to do to create their eVisa account if they haven't done so yet. **Updating from a physical document to an eVisa does not affect your status or conditions to enter or stay in the UK.**

BRP cards will expire on 31 December 2024 at the latest (being replaced by the eVisa), and the cards will no longer be valid. Please note, this is only a new way to record your visa, not when your visa will end. If you lose your BRP, it is important to [report](#) this to your local police force and to the Home Office.

Once you begin work, your employer should ask you for a 'Share Code', so they can confirm that you have the right to work. You can access a share code [here](#).

## Dependants

Since spring 2024 it depends on your work if your partner and/or children can apply to join you or stay in the UK as your 'dependants' if they're eligible, or not.

If you're a **care worker or senior care worker**, your partner and children **cannot** apply to join you or stay in the UK as your dependants, unless you were employed as a care worker or senior care worker in the UK and on a Health and Care Worker visa before 11 March 2024 and one of the following is true:

- you're currently still on a Health and Care Worker visa
- you're extending your Health and Care Worker visa with your current employer
- you're changing to a new job within the same [occupation code](#) while on a Health and Care Worker visa

If you are any other worker eligible for the HCWV (for example a doctor, nurse, social worker), your partner and/or children can apply to join you or stay in the UK as your 'dependants' if they're eligible.

If your partner or child's application is successful, their visa will usually end on the same date as yours. If a child's parents have visas with different expiry dates, the child's visa will end on the earlier date.

A dependant partner or child is any of the following:

- your husband, wife, civil partner or unmarried partner
- your child under 18 - including if they were born in the UK during your stay
- your child over 18 if they're currently in the UK as your dependant

You'll need to provide evidence of your relationship to your dependant when you apply.

If you're the first person in your family to apply, you can get a 'family linking code' to connect your applications together. Your family members can enter the same code when they apply.

If you have a baby while you are in the UK with a HCWV, it will not become automatically a British citizen (unless the other parent is British). Your baby also will

not get a visa by themselves. After your baby is born, you have 6 weeks to register the birth, and you should apply for a visa for your baby as soon as possible. If you do not, you could be fined up to £1000. Your baby can get free healthcare from the NHS for three months. After that, you will need to pay for any NHS treatment they get.

[Citizens Advice](#) can help with certain immigration/visa questions, but you also can contact:

- [Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants](#)
- [Contact - Justice and Care](#)

## Modern slavery and exploitation (abuse)

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for someone else's personal or commercial gain. People experiencing exploitation can be any age, gender, nationality, or ethnicity. And as international worker, you might be extra vulnerable to modern slavery practices.

People can be manipulated, tricked or forced as part of their exploitation. They may feel unable to leave or report the crime through fear or intimidation. They may not recognise themselves as a victim.

There have been recent cases of modern slavery in the social care sector in Wales, and it is important to be aware of the signs.

More information on modern slavery and what to do can be found here:

- [Modern slavery and labour abuse in social care guidance](#)
- [Care Inspectorate Wales guidance on modern slavery and recruitment checks](#)
- [Wales Safer Communities Network page on modern slavery and exploitation](#)

### Being aware of exploitation and what to do about it

Be aware of the signs of exploitation. These include being forced to work under poor conditions, without reasonable time off and for little or no payment.

You can find examples and helpful contacts in the chapter on exploitation in this [guidance](#).

If you have concerns about labour abuse and exploitation (for yourself or others), please [report this to the Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority \(GLAA\)](#)

The [Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline](#) operates 365 days a year. It is free to use, available in more than 200 languages, and confidential. Helpline Advisers are there for you with support and advice, not only for victims of modern slavery, but for the public. If you need help, have concerns, or need advice, please call **08000 121 700**

If your employer wants to know more about their responsibilities, advice is available from [Acas](#). The Welsh Government promotes fair work and has produced a [Code of Practice on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains](#).

