



**West  
Northamptonshire  
Council**

# International Sponsorship Scheme

April 2024

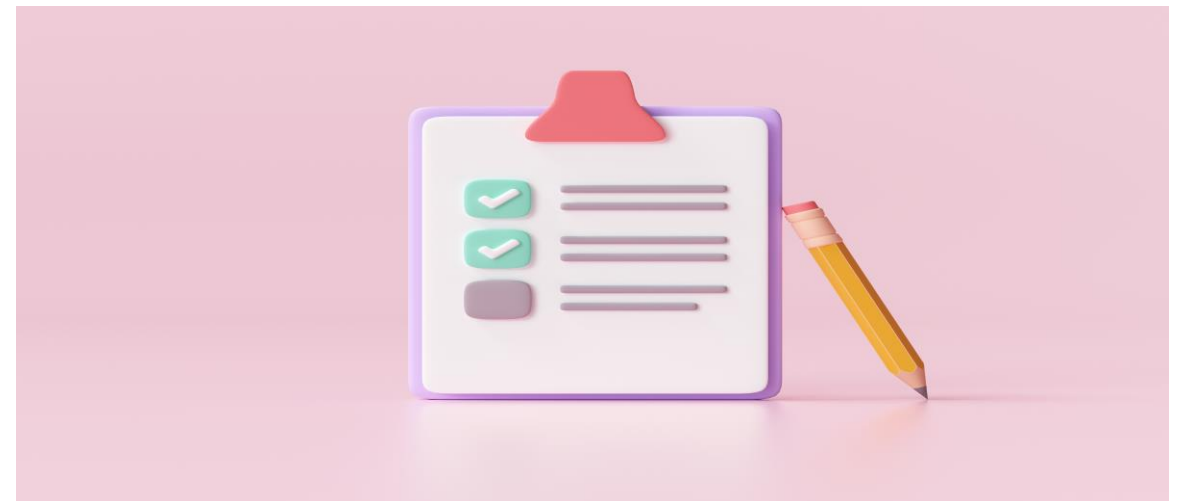


## Criteria for Care Workers:

- Must be a qualified Doctor, Nurse or Social Care Professional.
- Must be employed by an employer who is approved by the Home Office.
- Must be paid the minimum wage or going rate for the type of work, currently set at £23,200 per year.
- Must apply for a sponsorship VISA
- Must be able to prove ability to read, write and speak English to level B1 for most Countries, but English speaking countries do not need to prove this.
- Must pay an application fee (from £284)
- Must have at least £1,270 available to support yourself when you first arrive unless your employer will cover your costs.
- Must have a valid passport and criminal records certificate.

## Criteria for Social Care Employers:

- Must be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as a social care provider.
- Must apply for a sponsorship licence.
- Must pay a minimum of £23,200 per year.
- Must offer a minimum of 37 hours per week of work.
- Option to support employees financially via a certificate of maintenance.



# ISS in West Northamptonshire

Survey sent out to all 241 CQC Regulated Care Providers in WNC.

All providers:

Number of Responses	Number with Sponsorship Licence	Current International Recruits
75	46	655

Domiciliary Care:

Number of Responses	Number with Sponsorship Licence	Current International Recruits
41	23	335

Care Homes:

Number of Responses	Number with Sponsorship Licence	Current International Recruits
34	23	320



# What our market says



# Challenges

## Licence Suspension / Revoking

- WNC has received 14 licence suspensions.
- 1 Licence has been revoked following investigation.
- Home office have report 1,766 VISAs to be affected.
- WNC investigation highlights significantly lower international recruits employed at 121 confirmed.
- Only 2 of the providers are delivering any direct support services.

## Main Reasons for suspension:

- Not CQC regulated care provider
- Acting as recruitment agency
- Lack of evidence of sufficient hours
- Modern Slavery concerns

## For WNC:

- Concerns over the stability of the care workforce as licence revoking could lead to increased staffing vacancies.
- There are large volumes of concerns arriving to be supported but no funding for this has been provided from Government.
- Only one concern is a WNC Contracted provider, meaning our powers to resolve are limited.
- Where licences are revoked, WNC could be asked to support with housing etc for those who have a certificate of maintenance and Children.
- It is very difficult to contact Internation Recruits, or to know where they are currently located.

# What is our role?

Home Office – responsible for processing licence and VISA applications. Investigate concerns raised around misuse of ISS.

International Sponsorship Regional Lead – responsible for promoting the scheme with providers. Maintain oversight of current investigations and support LAs to resolve.

WNC Quality Team – responsible for managing the impact of licence suspensions and supporting ISS Staff to find alternative employment.

## Example Case

Home Office alert received via regional lead advising that a care provider, based in WNC, had their licence suspended as a result of concerns they are acting as a recruitment agency. 830 VISAs had been awarded via this licence. Passed to WNC to support the investigation. Unannounced visit undertaken where it was discovered that only 5 people were receiving support from the provider, but they were delivering services in many other areas of the Country.

MDT group formed involving ICB, CQC, EM Care, Police and Devon County Council to manage the impact. Wellbeing checks completed on people being supported and eventually, alternative care provider sourced. CQC investigation completed and registration removed. Licence was then fully revoked. Staff supported to move to alternative care provider but only 20 staff identified.

# Conclusion

Since the International Sponsorship Scheme was created in 2022, WNC has seen a more stable care workforce, reduced capacity issues and an improved ability for our care market to respond to the needs of our population particularly in home care. Our market largely feels that it has been a good scheme, with some challenges but the overwhelming response is that it has made a positive impact to their businesses. However, our concern is not with the CQC regulated care market but with those organisations that are acting as recruitment agencies. This area poses the biggest risk to our people at WNC as this can destabilise the care market.

Government has asked key partners for feedback and the following changes have been implemented from 11th March 2024:

- Home Office will ensure licence applicants are CQC Registered before awarding a licence – this will alleviate most concerns and suspensions that we are receiving.
- Home Office have also stopped allowing partners and children to accompany care workers who are recruited via the International Sponsorship Scheme. This applies to care workers and senior care workers only.