

Mobility: Immigration alert

December 2023

United Kingdom

UK announces five-point plan to curb abuse of the immigration system

Executive summary

On 4 December 2023, the UK government announced a five-point plan to curb migration and make its immigration policy “fair, legal and sustainable.” The changes are set to go into effect in spring 2024.

Key developments

The five-point plan proposes the following changes:

- ▶ **Skilled Workers:** The minimum salary requirement will increase from GBP 26,200 to GBP 38,700. Health and Care Workers will continue to be subject to the current threshold of GBP 26,200.
- ▶ **Shortage Occupation List:** The authorities will reform the Shortage Occupation List, which is expected to lead to a reduction in the number of applicants eligible for shortage occupations. In addition, employers will no longer be able to pay workers 20% less than the going rate for jobs on the Shortage Occupation List.
- ▶ **Family Visas:** The minimum income requirement for the spouse of a British national will increase from GBP 18,600 to GBP 38,700, in line with the increase in the minimum salary requirement for Skilled Workers.
- ▶ **Student and Graduate Visas:** The government will ask the Migration Advisory Committee to review the Graduate Route to “prevent abuse and to protect the integrity and quality of UK Higher Education.”
- ▶ **Health and Care Visas:** Overseas care workers will not be able to bring in dependents to the UK. Firms that seek to sponsor care workers to come to the UK will need to be regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

Impact on employers

Employers are likely to face challenges in relocating foreign nationals and their dependents to the UK. The upcoming changes are also likely to impact businesses that have faced difficulties in recruiting workers in recent years given the UK’s persistently tight labor market. Employers may consider a costing exercise in connection with their mobility programs from 2024 onwards.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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