# UK crackdown on rogue employers doubles migrant sponsor cancellations amid sector sustainability fears



The number of companies prohibited from hiring migrant workers due to concerns about undercutting wages and exploiting staff has doubled over the past year, according to recent Home Office figures. In the year leading to June 2025, 1,948 sponsors responsible for skilled and temporary migrant workers had their licences cancelled, nearly doubling from 937 in the previous 12-month period. This surge reflects the government’s intensified crackdown on rogue employers who underpay migrant workers and simultaneously undermine fair wages for British workers.

Sectors such as adult social care, hospitality, retail, and construction are among the hardest hit by these abuses. Many of these companies have been found guilty of breaching rules including underpaying workers, failing to deliver the promised employment, and facilitating people’s entry into the UK through immigration loopholes. Migration Minister Mike Tapp emphasised the government’s stance by stating, "Those who abuse our immigration system must face the strongest possible consequences."

However, concerns have been raised about the oversight of the licensing system itself. An investigation revealed that hundreds of newly established care providers have been granted visas to sponsor workers despite lacking a credible track record in the UK. Some of these companies have never been inspected by the Care Quality Commission and display warning signs such as generic websites and unverified reviews, which experts fear indicate potential fraudulence and exploitation of migrant workers. This points to a systemic vulnerability in monitoring sponsors, particularly in the care sector.

Reinforcing governmental enforcement, data also show a dramatic rise in the suspension and revocation of skilled worker licences. In the second quarter of 2024 alone, over 1,000 licences were suspended or revoked, a steep hike from just 117 in the same period in 2023. This illustrates the UK government's intention to bolster border security and clamp down on employers who hire illegal workers or breach sponsor conditions.

Additionally, new Home Office guidance for employers has introduced tighter controls on financial practices linked to sponsorship. Employers are now prohibited from passing on certain fees, such as the Skilled Worker sponsor licence fee and Certificate of Sponsorship costs, to their migrant employees. Violations of this policy can lead to revocation of the sponsor licence. The guidance also specifies that employment agencies supplying sponsored staff to third parties cannot hold a sponsor licence, aiming to prevent abuses linked to labour supply chains.

Despite stronger enforcement measures, the sustainability of sectors heavily reliant on migrant workers, such as adult social care, remains a critical issue. Data reveals a staggering 93% drop in Health and Care visas issued to care professionals in the third quarter of 2024 compared to the previous year. This steep decline is attributed to tougher Home Office actions against sponsors. However, advocacy groups like the Work Rights Centre argue that these measures fall short of adequately protecting migrant workers from exploitation and call for further reforms to address workers’ rights and the sector’s long-term viability.

The ripple effects on migrant workers themselves are severe. Thousands of migrant care workers face the threat of deportation, often through no fault of their own, as a consequence of their employers losing their licence to sponsor them. Investigations show that over 3,000 care workers had their certificates of sponsorship cancelled in 2022 and 2023, with 94% linked to the revocation of their employer’s sponsorship rights. Many of these workers had invested considerable sums securing their jobs in the UK and now face deep uncertainty and potential loss of livelihood.

Overall, while the government is clearly intensifying its efforts to weed out unscrupulous employers exploiting migrant labour, significant challenges remain in protecting vulnerable workers and ensuring that sectors dependent on migrant employees remain sustainable. Greater scrutiny of the sponsorship system, tighter financial regulations, and enhanced worker protections will be crucial as the UK navigates these complex issues.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2107060/Migrants-firms-companies-wages-workers), [[3]](https://www.chambers.com/articles/record-number-of-employers-have-sponsor-licences-suspended-or-revoked)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2107060/Migrants-firms-companies-wages-workers), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/03/alarm-over-suspect-care-agencies-granted-home-office-licence-to-act-as-visa-sponsors)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.chambers.com/articles/record-number-of-employers-have-sponsor-licences-suspended-or-revoked)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.littler.com/news-analysis/asap/uk-government-issues-new-guidance-employers-sponsoring-migrant-workers), [[5]](https://www.chambers.com/articles/home-office-guidance-changes-affecting-uk-employers-sponsoring-migrant-workers)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.workrightscentre.org/publications/2024/drop-in-visas-for-carers-indicates-tougher-home-office-action-on-sponsors-but-insufficient-protection-for-migrants-and-the-care-sector/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/may/11/migrant-care-workers-told-to-leave-uk)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2107060/Migrants-firms-companies-wages-workers), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/03/alarm-over-suspect-care-agencies-granted-home-office-licence-to-act-as-visa-sponsors), [[6]](https://www.workrightscentre.org/publications/2024/drop-in-visas-for-carers-indicates-tougher-home-office-action-on-sponsors-but-insufficient-protection-for-migrants-and-the-care-sector/), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/may/11/migrant-care-workers-told-to-leave-uk)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2107060/Migrants-firms-companies-wages-workers> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/mar/03/alarm-over-suspect-care-agencies-granted-home-office-licence-to-act-as-visa-sponsors> - An investigation reveals that hundreds of newly established care providers have been granted licences by the Home Office to sponsor workers from abroad, despite lacking a track record in Britain. Some of these companies have never been inspected by the Care Quality Commission and exhibit signs of being potentially fraudulent, such as generic websites and unverified reviews. Experts express concern over the lax oversight of the sponsor licence system, leading to potential exploitation of migrant workers.
3. <https://www.chambers.com/articles/record-number-of-employers-have-sponsor-licences-suspended-or-revoked> - Recent Home Office statistics indicate a significant increase in the suspension and revocation of sponsor licences for employers of migrant workers. In the second quarter of 2024, over 1,000 Skilled Worker licences were suspended or revoked, a substantial rise from 117 in the same period the previous year. This surge in enforcement actions aligns with the government's efforts to enhance border security and impose stricter sanctions on employers hiring illegal workers.
4. <https://www.littler.com/news-analysis/asap/uk-government-issues-new-guidance-employers-sponsoring-migrant-workers> - The UK Home Office has updated its guidance for employers sponsoring migrant workers, prohibiting sponsors from recouping certain fees from employees. Specifically, sponsors are now barred from recovering the Skilled Worker sponsor licence fee, associated administrative costs, and the Certificate of Sponsorship fee from workers. Violations of this policy may result in the revocation of the sponsor licence. The guidance also clarifies that employment agencies supplying sponsored staff to work elsewhere are ineligible to hold a sponsor licence.
5. <https://www.chambers.com/articles/home-office-guidance-changes-affecting-uk-employers-sponsoring-migrant-workers> - The Home Office has introduced stricter guidelines for UK employers sponsoring migrant workers, particularly concerning the recoupment of fees. Sponsors are now prohibited from recovering the Skilled Worker sponsor licence fee, associated administrative costs, and the Certificate of Sponsorship fee from employees. Non-compliance with this directive may lead to the revocation of the sponsor licence. The guidance also specifies that employment agencies supplying sponsored staff to work elsewhere are ineligible to hold a sponsor licence.
6. <https://www.workrightscentre.org/publications/2024/drop-in-visas-for-carers-indicates-tougher-home-office-action-on-sponsors-but-insufficient-protection-for-migrants-and-the-care-sector/> - Data analysis reveals a 93% decline in Health and Care visas issued to care professionals in Q3 2024 compared to the previous year, indicating stricter Home Office actions against sponsors. While this suggests enhanced enforcement, the Work Rights Centre argues that these measures are insufficient to protect migrant workers from exploitation. They call for additional reforms to safeguard workers and address the sustainability of the adult social care sector, which heavily relies on migrant labour.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/may/11/migrant-care-workers-told-to-leave-uk> - Thousands of migrant care workers face deportation despite no wrongdoing, as the Home Office revokes sponsor licences of their employers. An investigation found that 3,081 care workers had their certificates of sponsorship cancelled in 2022 and 2023, with 94% of these cases linked to the revocation of their employer's right to sponsor workers. Affected workers, who had often invested significant sums to secure employment in the UK, now face uncertainty and potential deportation.