# New DWP pay rules threaten hundreds of skilled workers' UK residency



A significant issue is unfolding within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), where a peculiar anomaly in the department's pay policy threatens the employment status and residency of hundreds of staff members. Currently, the PCS union has raised alarms that around 500 employees may face the untenable situation of having to leave their roles, with 35 already departing due to this policy quirk. This precarious situation arises from the shift from skilled-worker visas to graduate visas, compounded by a new income threshold set by the Conservative Party, which has risen to £38,700.

The implications of this threshold are profound, particularly as the DWP grapples with a staffing crisis amidst increasing demand for its services. Many of the affected staff members are described as highly qualified, university-educated individuals dedicated to supporting some of the most vulnerable populations in the UK. Affected individuals have expressed their dismay, stating things like, “I’ve built a life here. I made friends who became family,” highlighting the emotional and financial devastation they face without employment. One individual, speaking from Nigeria, noted the burden of being unable to support their family or meet financial obligations without a position.

The government has acknowledged the situation, with a DWP spokesperson asserting a commitment to the welfare of staff on time-limited visas. The spokesperson also mentioned ongoing support for those affected by the new income threshold due next spring, which aims to provide some measure of relief in light of the employment disruption.

This predicament isn't isolated to the DWP; it is reflective of broader trends in the UK's immigration policy. In December 2024, a minister issued an apology after individuals mistakenly received letters indicating that their benefits entitlements were set to be terminated due to an error in the DWP's eVisa system, where biometric residence permits (BRPs) were mismanaged. Such systemic flaws ignite concerns regarding the security and rights of individuals navigating the UK’s increasingly complex immigration landscape.

Moreover, significant changes have taken place recently regarding immigration rules impacting vulnerable groups, particularly Ukrainian nationals. Following ongoing conflict in Ukraine, new arrangements allowing for an 18-month extension of stay were introduced, but these measures came alongside the closure of several existing schemes. Critics argue that the narrowing of options could further restrict access to safety for those fleeing perilous situations.

Additionally, recent adjustments to the Skilled Worker route have altered the landscape for care workers, with new restrictions impacting their ability to bring dependents. A parliamentary debate highlighted the decline in the number of dependents accompanying skilled workers—a stark contrast to previous years when the ratio was six to one. The government has defended these measures as necessary to prevent exploitation of the system, although concerns persist regarding their broader consequences.

As the DWP grapples with internal policy issues that could force hundreds out of their jobs, the anecdotal experiences of individuals affected spotlight the urgent need for reform. The complexities and ramifications of these immigration policies reveal a pressing challenge for the government as it seeks to balance economic, humanitarian, and administrative priorities amidst a landscape fraught with uncertainty.

The DWP's current struggle not only highlights systemic flaws within its structure but also raises serious questions about the UK’s immigration approach and its implications for those who contribute to its workforce. As these individuals navigate a labyrinth of regulations affecting their livelihoods and legal status, the imperative for a more coherent and compassionate immigration strategy becomes increasingly clear.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 5
2. Paragraphs 4, 6
3. Paragraph 3
4. Paragraph 3
5. Paragraphs 4, 6
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/cost-of-living/warning-quirk-dwp-system-means-31663961> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/dec/18/minister-apologises-for-letters-wrongly-saying-benefits-being-axed> - In December 2024, a UK government minister apologized after individuals entitled to benefits received erroneous letters stating their support would be terminated. The mistake was attributed to flaws in the eVisa system, where the expiration of biometric residence permits (BRPs) on 31 December 2024 led the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to incorrectly assume that beneficiaries' entitlements were also ending. The DWP acknowledged the error and assured that affected individuals would continue to receive their entitled benefits. The incident highlighted concerns about the eVisa rollout and its potential impact on migrants' rights to reside in the UK.
3. <https://www.workrightscentre.org/news/new-changes-to-ukraine-schemes-offer-18-month-extension-but-prematurely-close-routes-to-safety> - In November 2024, the UK government announced changes to its immigration rules affecting Ukrainian nationals. A new Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme was introduced, allowing Ukrainians to apply for an additional 18 months' stay in the UK. However, the government also decided to close two of the three existing Ukraine schemes and heavily restrict eligibility under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. These changes were criticized for potentially narrowing safe and legal routes for Ukrainians seeking refuge in the UK, especially amid ongoing conflict in Ukraine.
4. <https://www.ein.org.uk/news/new-statement-changes-immigration-rules-makes-changes-ukraine-schemes-and-care-worker-visas> - In February 2024, the UK government published a statement of changes to the Immigration Rules, introducing significant amendments to the Ukraine humanitarian visa schemes and the Skilled Worker route for care workers. Visas already issued under the Ukraine schemes were extended by 18 months, and a new Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme was established. Additionally, the Ukraine Family Scheme was closed, and the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme was amended. The changes also impacted care workers, who were no longer permitted to bring dependants from 11 March 2024.
5. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-11-13/debates/F2B19B7D-A54D-488F-841D-746E1D908CC9/FamilyAndWorkVisas> - In November 2024, during a UK parliamentary debate, concerns were raised about the significant reduction in the number of dependants accompanying skilled workers to the UK. In 2023, there were six dependants for every one worker seeking to come to the UK, but this number had dramatically decreased. The government acknowledged the need to adapt eligibility criteria to prevent misuse of the system and indicated that the policy changes were working, though further assessments were planned.
6. <https://knowledge.dlapiper.com/dlapiperknowledge/globalemploymentlatestdevelopments/2023/immigration-Government-issues-clarifications-on-planned-spring-2024-changes.html> - In December 2023, the UK government issued clarifications regarding planned changes to immigration rules set to take effect in April 2024. Key updates included an increase in the Skilled Worker salary threshold to £38,700, with transitional measures for those previously sponsored at lower thresholds. The Shortage Occupation List was to remain in place until late spring 2024, pending a review by the Migration Advisory Committee. Additionally, care workers and senior care workers already in the UK prior to the rule change would continue to be able to bring dependants.
7. <https://www.mondaq.com/uk/work-visas/1367016/summer-2023-changes-to-uk-immigration-rules> - In July 2023, the UK implemented changes to its immigration rules affecting asylum claims. The differentiated asylum process was abolished, ensuring all refugees and those granted humanitarian protection receive the same five-year period of leave. Additionally, the Home Office was granted increased powers to withdraw asylum claims 'implicitly' for alleged noncompliance, such as failing to report, though the exact scope of this measure remained unclear. These changes aimed to streamline the asylum process but raised concerns about potential legal challenges.