

International Recruitment

Bulletin 39
28th November 2025



Erica Lockhart MBE, Chair

Background

SESCA, in partnership with Southeast ADASS, is leading the 2024/26 International Recruitment project in the southeast, funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), to support ASC providers, with two main goals:

- **Assist Displaced Migrant Care Workers** affected by sponsor licence revocation to secure new roles with approved providers.
- **Support Providers:** Enable access to displaced workers and provide financial support and guidance around best practice.

Current Situation

Since 22nd July 2025, care providers can no longer sponsor new recruits from overseas for Care or Senior Care Worker roles. However, **in-country sponsorship remains allowed**, including through SESCO's Displaced Worker Support Scheme, which will remain in place until the **end of March 2026**.

Further Guidance:

[SESCA International Recruitment Hub >>>](https://sesca.org.uk/international-recruitment/)

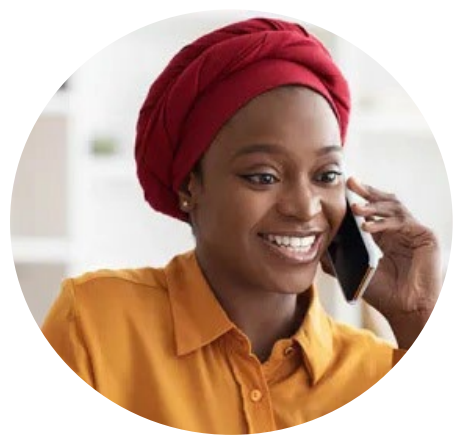
<https://sesca.org.uk/international-recruitment/>

[The Immigration Rules – GOV.UK >>>](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules>

Displaced Worker Recruitment Scheme

Supporting Providers to Recruit In-Country Migrant Care Workers



Over 300 Displaced Care Workers Placed into New Employment Already!

Receive £6,000 Funding per Care Worker

Act now – scheme closes March 2026!

How it Works...

We have a large pool of experienced and committed migrant care staff across the South-East – **including car drivers** – who are available immediately.

We'll introduce you to pre-vetted candidates for interview. For every successful hire, you'll receive **up to £6,000 in funding** to support your recruitment costs.



Don't Miss Out – Apply Now!

For instructions on how to apply, including our grant funding terms:

[**APPLY HERE**](#)

Government Proposes Major Overhaul of Immigration Rules – Consultation Open!



Home secretary, Shabana Mahmood outlines plans to introduce “Earned Settlement”

The biggest development affecting international recruitment in adult social care is the Government’s announcement last week regarding plans to introduce the “**Earned Settlement**” Model — hailed the most significant overhaul of the UK migration system in 50 years. The plans build on earlier measures, including the closure of the Health and Care Worker Visa route in May 2025, signalling a continued tightening of long-term settlement opportunities for overseas care staff.

A **formal consultation is now open** until **12 February 2026**. The Government has indicated that legislation will follow, with implementation from **Spring 2026**.

If enacted, the reforms will **dramatically extend** how long migrant workers must live in the UK before becoming eligible for settlement. Adult social care roles would move from the current **5-year to a 15-year route**, and anyone who has not secured indefinite leave to remain before the new rules take effect could be moved onto these longer pathways.

The proposals also indicate that even after reaching settlement, individuals may still face a **“no recourse to public funds” (NRPF)** restriction — meaning access to benefits would only become available once they obtain British citizenship. This marks a major shift from the current system, where ILR typically lifts the NRPF condition.

Care Sector Outcry

Sector leaders warn that the proposals could intensify workforce shortages, limit worker mobility, and increase sponsorship and compliance costs.

Professor Martin Green OBE, a leading national voice in adult social care, said:

“Placing care workers on a 15-year settlement route is a grave injustice to the very people who keep our care system standing. These are the people who care for our parents, our partners, our children.... To tell them they must wait a decade and a half before they can build any sense of security in this country is indefensible.”

SESCA urges providers and individuals to respond to the consultation and make the case for protecting current visa holders from new settlement requirements.

[Full SESCO article >>](#)

[Respond to the consultation \(closes 12 Feb 2026\) >>](#)

[Government announcement >>](#)

NMW Increase - Impact on Sponsored Carer Salaries



Following this week's announcement that the **National Minimum Wage (NMW) for over-21s will increase from £12.21 to £12.71 per hour from 1 April 2026**, providers should begin considering how this may affect minimum salary requirements for sponsored care workers. The Home Office is not expected to confirm the updated minimum salary for Health and Care Worker Visa holders until **March 2026**.

It is worth noting that the new NMW remains **below** the current minimum salary for sponsored care staff, which is **£25,000 per annum** or **£12.82 per hour** (as of 9 April 2025). Historically, the minimum hourly rate for sponsored care workers has been set above the NMW. If the same approach continues, we estimate a possible new sponsored-care minimum of around **£13.46 per hour**, equivalent to an annual salary of **£26,247**.

Assuming the rules remain unchanged, this uplift would apply **only to care workers sponsored from 1 April 2026 onwards**. Existing sponsored staff would remain on the current minimum of **£25,000 (£12.82 per hour)**. Providers should also be mindful that paying newly sponsored workers more than existing sponsored — or non-sponsored — staff may increase the risk of **pay-related discrimination claims**.

Key Considerations for Providers

- **Financial planning:** Budget now for higher salary costs for new sponsorships from April 2026, with an estimated uplift of £1,200+ per worker.
- **Pay alignment risks:** Different pay levels for existing sponsored staff, newly sponsored staff, and non-sponsored workers may be lawful, but could create fairness concerns and potential discrimination risks if not managed carefully.

FREE International Recruitment Webinar Homecare Provider Special Presented by UKVI



10:00 – 11:00am, Thursday 4th December

Join us for an exclusive webinar **in partnership with UKVI**, designed specifically for **Home Care Providers** across the southeast!

This session will explore:

- best practice in compliance
- understand from UKVI most common reasons for revocations
- address key challenges currently facing the home care sector; and
- highlight practical, meaningful solutions to support sustainable recruitment and retention of displaced workers.

A rare opportunity to **hear directly from UKVI**, gain clarity on evolving regulations, and ask the questions that matter most to your service.

[**REGISTER HERE**](#)

Supplemental Employment for Migrant Workers Updated Guidance

In response to the high volume of questions we receive from providers, the immigration experts at **Lester Aldridge Solicitors** have prepared detailed guidance on the rules around **supplemental employment** for sponsored migrant workers.

The guidance explains:

- what counts as supplemental employment,
- which workers are eligible (and which are not),
- the 20-hour weekly limit and restrictions on working time,
- what employers must check to meet **Right to Work** requirements, and
- the significant penalties for non-compliance, including fines of up to **£60,000 per worker**.

[READ THE GUIDANCE](#)

Driving Test Reforms Good News for Overseas Care Workers



We welcome the recent announcement by the Department for Transport that major changes are being introduced to the UK driving test booking system, to cut waiting times and stop third-party “bots” reselling test slots at inflated prices.

Under new rules, only learners will be able to book tests directly with the DVSA, with new limits on moving test dates and 36 additional examiners to help reduce the backlog.

With average waits at 21.8 weeks, these reforms should make it easier for overseas care workers—many of whom need a UK licence for community roles—to secure genuine test appointments.

OTHER NEWS

Fair Pay Agreement - Consultation Update

Open consultation

Fair pay agreement process in adult social care - consultation document

Published 30 September 2025

Following our [previous update](#) on the Government's plans to establish the first-ever **Fair Pay Agreement (FPA)** for adult social care, the **Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)** has now released an **Easy Read version** of the public consultation and survey.

This version aims to make the process **more accessible**, helping a wider range of people – including care workers – to share their views on how the agreement should be designed and implemented.

The Easy Read consultation will remain open for **15 weeks**, closing on **6 March 2026** (the original consultation close date is **16 January 2026**).

Have Your Say:

[Plans for fair pay agreements in adult social care \(Easy Read\) – GOV.UK](#)

We strongly encourage all providers and care workers to take part in the consultation. The adult social care sector's voice must be heard to help shape a fair, practical, and sustainable pay framework for the workforce.

CQC Engagement Events Register by 1st December 2025



CQC has launched a programme of online and in-person engagement events to help shape the next stage of its Assessment Frameworks.

These sessions offer an important opportunity for South-East providers to influence how CQC refines its quality statements, assessment principles and sector-specific expectations.

Online Workshops

CQC is hosting a range of sector-specific online workshops, including a dedicated **Adult Social Care session on Wednesday 3 December (3:00–4:30pm)**.

Other sessions cover hospitals, primary care, community services and mental health.

In-Person Workshop – Adult Social Care

CQC is also running a face-to-face ASC workshop in London on **Wednesday 10 December (10:30am–4:00pm)**, led by **Chris Badger, Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care and Integrated Care**.

This session will explore the future shape of the assessment framework and what “good” should look like.

PLEASE NOTE: Providers must submit an expression of interest by Monday 1 December 2025 to attend the in-person session.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Employment Rights Bill Consultations

As part of the **Make Work Pay Plan**, a number of important public consultations have opened on key measures in the Employment Rights Bill (ERB).



Consultations Now Open

- **Duty to Inform Workers of Right to Join a Union >>>**
Closes 11:59pm, 18 December 2025
Employers may be required to inform workers in writing about their right to join a union.
- **Trade Union Right of Access >>>**
Closes 11:59pm, 18 December 2025
Proposals include a framework for trade unions to access workplaces physically or digitally to communicate with staff.
- **Enhanced Dismissal Protections for Pregnant Women & New Mothers >>>**
Closes 11:59pm, 15 January 2026
The government proposes making it unlawful to dismiss pregnant women, those on maternity leave, or those within six months of returning to work.
- **Leave for Bereavement (Including Pregnancy Loss) >>>**
Closes 11:59pm, 15 January 2026
A new right to unpaid bereavement leave is proposed for employees who lose a loved one, including early pregnancy loss.

These proposals have the potential to impact workforce management, recruitment, and employment practices across adult social care.

SESCA encourages all providers, managers, and sector representatives to submit responses before the deadlines and to share these links across your networks.

Erica Lockhart Receives MBE



We are delighted to share that SESCOA Chair, **Erica Lockhart**, recently attended her official **Investiture Ceremony at Windsor Castle**, where she was formally presented with her **MBE for Services to Social Care** by **Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal**.

Erica was recognised in the **King's New Year Honours List 2025** for her outstanding services to social care. This honour celebrates a distinguished career spanning more than five decades — from her early work as a qualified Social Worker, through her leadership as CEO of Surrey Care Association (SCA), to her current role as Chair of SESCOA.

On receiving her MBE, Erica said:

"It was a truly memorable day and an enormous honour. I'm grateful to have worked alongside so many inspiring individuals who dedicate their lives to caring for others. This award is as much a recognition of their commitment as it is of mine."

Thank you for reading our latest Bulletin!