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**SMITH
STONE
WALTERS**

An **ENVOY**GLOBAL Company

INSIGHT

IMMIGRATION NEWS & VIEWS
FROM SMITH STONE WALTERS
SPRING 2025

The rising cost of
UK *immigration*



THE RISING COST OF UK IMMIGRATION



Five years on from Brexit and the launch of the points-based immigration system, the UK continues to hold onto its reputation as one of the most sought-after destinations worldwide for global talent.

However, the UK is also well known for having one of the most expensive immigration systems in the world, with overseas workers and their family members often expected to fork out tens of thousands of pounds in government fees to relocate.

Employers wishing to recruit workers from overseas are also required to pay significant costs to the Home Office to obtain a sponsor licence and for each individual worker they sponsor on a Skilled Worker visa.

In 2025, some of these fees are expected to rise further as the Home Office has laid before Parliament proposed changes to immigration fees. If approved, the changes would provide the flexibility to increase the maximum fee that can be charged on a range of immigration and nationality products and services.

Against a backdrop of rising immigration costs and stricter rules for sponsors, many UK employers are beginning to question how much longer they will be able to afford to attract the international talent they need.

For internationally mobile talent, the extortionate fees to relocate to the UK with a family could prove off putting. As a result, those with highly sought-after skills may seek to live and work elsewhere, such as within the EU or other popular destinations such as the US, Canada and Australia, causing the UK to lose out on these much-needed skilled workers.

SKILLED WORKER VISA COSTS

There is a significant degree of variation in the total cost for a Skilled Worker visa, depending on the individual's circumstances and the type of sponsor they will be working for. Factors such as visa length, occupation, number of dependants and sponsor size will all have an impact on the total fees an employer or applicant will need to pay to obtain a visa.

Currently, the application fee for a 5-year Skilled Worker visa is £1,420 for main applicants and dependants. On top of this, applicants and their dependants must also pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) for each year of their stay in the UK. For a five-year visa, this would represent a cost of £5,175 per adult applicant and £3,880 for each child dependant.

These fees may rise further still if the applicant chooses to utilise the optional Home Office priority services, and if they are required to take extra tests such as English language tests or TB tests as part of their visa application.

The employer must also pay certain sponsorship fees to the Home Office, the cost of which cannot be passed onto the sponsored worker. For each worker sponsored on a five-year Skilled Worker visa, a medium or large sponsor is required to pay £5,000 in Immigration Skills Charge (ISC) fees and a £239 Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) fee.

In the above example, the total cost for the five-year visa would come to almost £12,000 for a single applicant with no dependants.



'This means employers could soon find it more expensive and challenging to recruit from overseas.'

SKILLED
WORKER
COST
UNITED KINGDOM
£11,834



STRICTER RULES FOR EMPLOYERS

As well as the high costs outlined above, the Home Office is also clamping down on employers attempting to 'claw back' some of these costs from their sponsored workers.

Due to the increasing costs of sponsorship, many employers have historically attempted to recoup some of these costs from their sponsored workers using clawback clauses in employment contracts, or by charging workers upfront for sponsoring them. However, the government is concerned that this practice has led to the exploitation and unfair treatment of staff, particularly in the care sector, where many care workers have been left in debt to their employers.

To rectify this, the sponsor guidance has recently been updated to expressly state that sponsors are responsible for paying the sponsorship fees listed in the guidance, and that the Home Office will usually revoke your sponsor licence if you recoup, or attempt to recoup, by any means the following fees from a worker you are sponsoring:

- The Skilled Worker sponsor licence fee and any associated administrative costs (including premium services).
- The Certificate of Sponsorship fee for a Skilled Worker.
- The Immigration Skills Charge for a Skilled Worker or a Senior or Specialist Worker.

This change means employers are now fully responsible for paying these fees, and none of these costs can be included in any clawback clause or requested upfront from a prospective sponsored employee. However, employers may be entitled to a partial refund of the ISC when a Skilled Worker switches to another sponsor.

UK VS EU IMMIGRATION FEES

EU countries such as Germany continue to grow in popularity for international workers, thanks to their comparatively low costs and more favourable conditions for third country nationals looking to settle permanently in a European country.

In comparison to the above UK Skilled Worker visa example, an equivalent skilled work permit for a foreign national to live and work in Germany would be a fraction of the cost. A typical application fee filed at a German mission abroad ranges from €75.00 to €85.00, and a German work and residence permit card costs around €100.00 to €120.00. Additional fees such as certified document translations and recognition of degree certifications may apply, but the overall cost for an individual to live and work in Germany for five years is still significantly lower than the UK's offering.

EU-wide schemes such as the EU Blue Card are also attractive for highly skilled workers seeking the flexibility to work in multiple EU countries with a pathway to permanent residence.

IMPACT ON UK EMPLOYERS

According to the proposals laid before Parliament in January, the government aims to implement increases across a range of fees, including the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) fee, Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) fee and naturalisation fees.

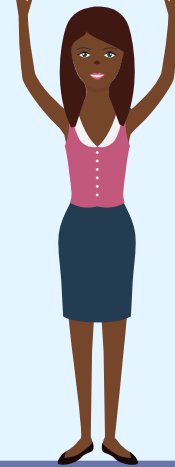
This means employers could soon find it more expensive and challenging to recruit from overseas, whilst top global talent may be less drawn to the UK and more likely to choose more affordable and flexible options such as Germany.

Reduced interest from overseas workers due to cost and other barriers has already impacted some employers, particularly in the care sector. The ban on care workers bringing dependants to the UK, which was introduced last year, has led to a sharp decline in foreign nationals applying for jobs and employers have warned staff shortages could worsen if the UK does not come up with a more competitive immigration offer.

Despite these challenges, the government is pushing forward with its plans to cut net migration, which hit a record high under the previous Conservative government. It is also tackling illegal working and migrant worker exploitation by introducing stricter sponsorship rules and ramping up sponsor compliance action.

All of these factors mean UK employers may need to work harder to attract and retain international talent in an increasingly competitive global market. When creating Global Mobility policies this year, employers may wish to consider which costs the business is willing to cover on behalf of their migrant workers to incentivise long-term job commitment and make the move to the UK more viable for workers and their families.

SKILLED
WORKER
COST
GERMANY
205€



For the latest information on UK visa and sponsorship fees, please contact Smith Stone Walters.

5 KEY GLOBAL MOBILITY FACTORS FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

When handling work visas and global mobility within an international organisation, it is essential to consider several key points to ensure compliance, efficiency, and employee satisfaction. Here are five important considerations that can enhance your global mobility management and create a supportive environment for your international workforce:

LOCAL LAW COMPLIANCE



Ensure that your business is fully compliant with immigration laws and regulations in both the home and host countries. This includes understanding different visa categories, duration, and the application process, as well as any changes in immigration policies.

Compliance not only protects your business from legal repercussions but also fosters a positive work environment for employees and contributes to the overall success of cross-border operations.

KEY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES



Assess the cultural and market environments of the host country. This includes understanding local labour market trends, salary expectations, relocation costs, and cultural integration challenges for your expatriate staff and trailing dependants.

A thorough understanding of the cultural differences is essential for a successful expatriate strategy and will ensure you are better equipped to support your expatriate staff and their families. It can also significantly contribute to the organisation's overall success in the global market.

CLEAR POLICIES AND PROCESSES



Develop and communicate clear internal policies and processes related to work visas and mobility. This includes guidelines for eligibility, application procedures, documentation required, any employee cost implications and access to support structures available for employees transitioning internationally.

An effective approach ensures that employees understand their rights and responsibilities while providing comprehensive support for those considering international assignments.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION



Provide adequate support for relocating employees, including relocation assistance, orientation programmes and ongoing communication about visa application status and requirements. Support should also extend to trailing dependants, helping them to also adjust to new environments.

An internal sign-posted support system can significantly enhance an employee's relocation experience, ultimately contributing to higher job satisfaction, improved retention rates, and a more cohesive work environment.

RE-EVALUATE INTERNAL PROCESSES



Regularly assess and improve the business's global mobility strategies by collecting feedback from employees and analysing the effectiveness of visa processes, support services provided by external partners and associated costs.

Data-driven decisions can lead to more efficient processes, better partnership management, and, ultimately, a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining global talent.

A BETTER WAY



Smith Stone Walters is now part of Envoy Global, the leading corporate immigration services provider committed to delivering a better way for companies to manage global immigration. Together, we offer a wide range of services to help clients navigate the complexities of immigration and global mobility. So if you're looking for a new immigration provider this year, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

PREPARE FOR THE ETA ROLLOUT

European visitors to the UK will soon need to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) as the government prepares to implement the final stage of the scheme's phased rollout.



Citizens from 34 European countries (including associated territories) can apply for an ETA from 5 March 2025, and can travel to the UK with an ETA from 2 April 2025.

The countries being added to the scheme in the final phase are:

- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| ■ Andorra | ■ Liechtenstein |
| ■ Austria | ■ Lithuania |
| ■ Belgium | ■ Luxembourg |
| ■ Bulgaria | ■ Malta |
| ■ Croatia | ■ Monaco |
| ■ Cyprus | ■ Netherlands |
| ■ Czechia | ■ Norway |
| ■ Denmark | ■ Poland |
| ■ Estonia | ■ Portugal |
| ■ Finland | ■ Romania |
| ■ France | ■ San Marino |
| ■ Germany | ■ Slovakia |
| ■ Greece | ■ Slovenia |
| ■ Hungary | ■ Spain |
| ■ Iceland | ■ Sweden |
| ■ Italy | ■ Switzerland |
| ■ Latvia | ■ Vatican City |

The ETA requirement already applies to citizens of over 50 non-European countries worldwide, including the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

WHAT IS AN ETA?

An ETA is an advance permission to travel to or transit through the UK for those who do not currently require a visa, or do not have a UK immigration status. The scheme forms part of the UK government's plans to strengthen and digitise the UK border and immigration system.

Once fully implemented, the ETA scheme will broadly apply to all nationalities who do not require a visa for short stays and who do not have any other UK immigration status prior to travelling to the UK. This includes European nationals.

An ETA is linked to the individual's passport. The scheme enables the government to perform robust security checks on travellers before they begin their journey to the UK, helping to prevent abuse of the immigration system.

Once granted, an ETA will be valid for multiple journeys to the UK for stays of up to 6 months at a time over 2 years, or until the holder's passport expires – whichever is sooner.

Currently, it costs £10 to apply using the UK ETA app or online through GOV.UK, and applications are usually processed within around 3 days.

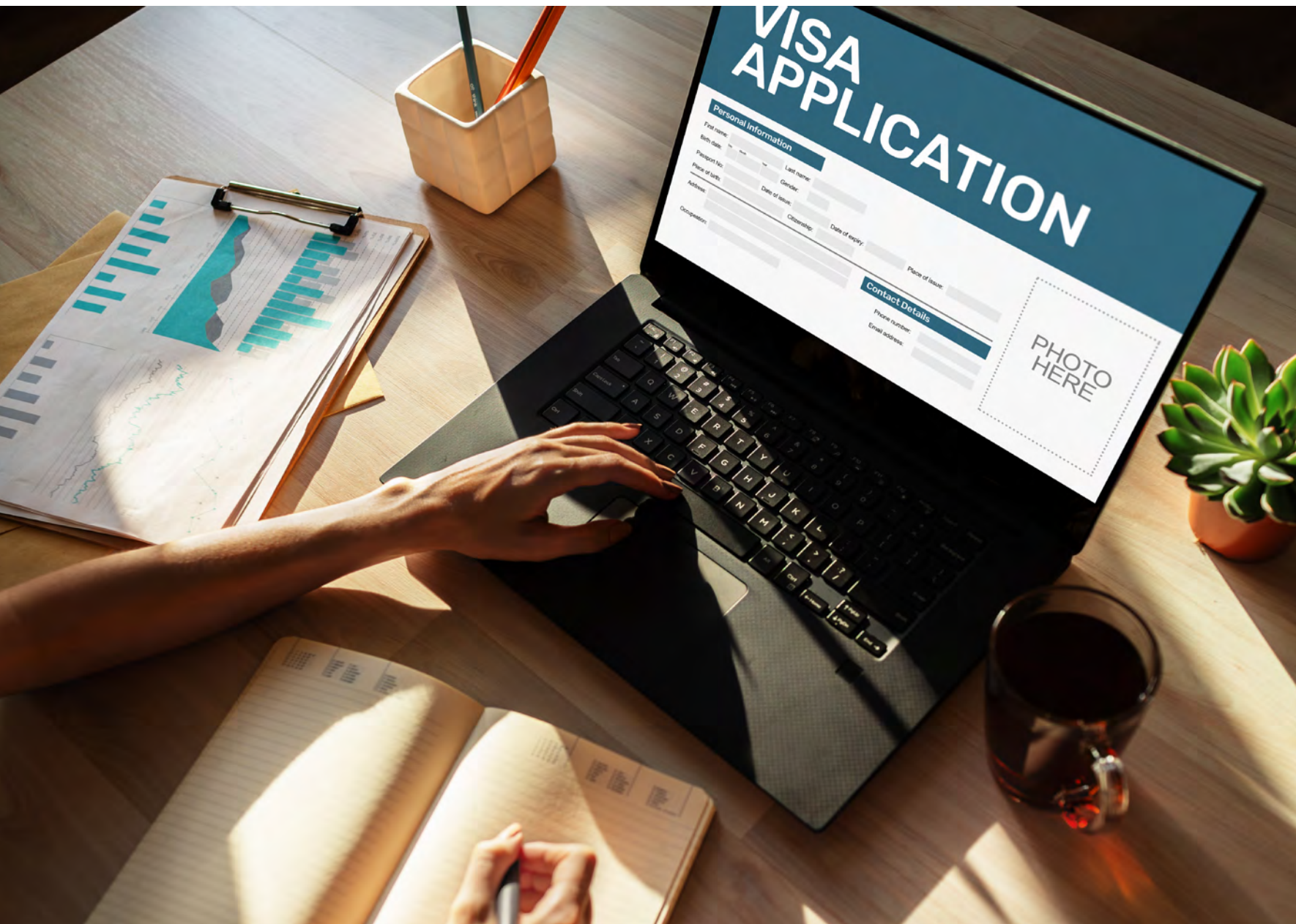
It is important to note that whilst an ETA grants you permission to travel to the UK, it does not grant you entry.

There is no right to appeal against the decision to refuse an ETA, so those deemed unsuitable will be able to apply for a visit visa if they still wish to travel to the UK. This will give a more detailed consideration of someone's circumstances.

For more information on the ETA scheme, please contact Smith Stone Walters.

E-VISA GRACE PERIOD EXTENDED TO 1 JUNE 2025

Over 4 million UK visa holders have now successfully created an account to access their eVisa, according to Home Office statistics published in February. It is also estimated that around 600,000 people are yet to switch from their physical document to an eVisa.



The eVisa rollout, which began last year, forms part of the UK government's efforts to introduce a fully digital end-to-end immigration system. This means physical documents are being phased out and most migrants with valid immigration permission in the UK will now hold proof of this digitally, in the form of an eVisa.

GRACE PERIOD EXTENDED

To support a continued smooth transition to eVisas, and ensure no one is disadvantaged, the Home Office is extending the 'grace period' announced in December 2024, from 31 March 2025 to 1 June 2025.

This transitional measure will allow people with a biometric residence permit (BRP) or EUSS biometric residence card (BRC) that expired on or after 31 December 2024, and who continue to hold underlying immigration status, to continue to use their expired document for international travel up to and including 1 June 2025.

From 2 June 2025, expired BRPs and EUSS BRCs will no longer be acceptable evidence of immigration status when travelling to the UK. This policy will be kept under review.

ACCESSING YOUR EVisA

An eVisa is an online record of your immigration status and the conditions of the type of permission you have to enter or stay in the UK.

You need to create a UKVI account to access your eVisa and share information about your immigration status and conditions, such as your right to work or rent in the UK, using the view and prove service.

You can use your valid or expired BRP to create a UKVI account to access your eVisa.

TRAVELLING WITH AN EVisA

Travelling internationally will be easier and more convenient for eVisa holders, as digital statuses can be quickly verified at the border.

Your eVisa will be linked to your passport in your UKVI account. You must keep your passport or ID card details up to date in your UKVI account and inform the Home Office about any changes, so that your immigration status can be easily identified at the UK border.

You should make sure your personal details are up to date well in advance before you travel. You may be delayed or denied boarding by carriers if your information is not correct. You'll still need to carry your current passport with you.

GET HELP WITH YOUR EVisA

Those yet to switch to an eVisa are encouraged to do so as soon as possible, to ensure they can continue to prove their immigration status in the UK.

It is free and straightforward to switch to an eVisa, and support is available to help visa holders and employers remain compliant. Detailed guidance can be found on the gov.uk website.

If you have questions about eVisas and immigration compliance, Smith Stone Walters can help. To speak to an immigration expert, please contact us today.

5 TIPS FOR MAINTAINING SPONSOR COMPLIANCE

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper recently revealed a record-breaking January for illegal working enforcement activity, as the Home Office continues to crackdown on abuse of the immigration system.



Throughout January alone, Immigration Enforcement teams descended on 828 premises, including nail bars, convenience stores, restaurants and car washes, marking a 48% rise compared to the previous January. Arrests also surged to 609, demonstrating a 73% increase from just 352 the previous year.

More broadly, between 5 July last year and 31 January, both illegal working visits and arrests have soared by around 38% compared to the same 12 months prior. During the same period, the Home Office issued a total of 1,090 civil penalty notices. Employers could face a fine of up to £60,000 per worker if found liable.

The latest crackdown serves as another reminder for employers that the Home Office takes compliance extremely seriously and will not hesitate to take action against employers who flout the immigration rules and fail to uphold their compliance duties as a licenced sponsor.

INCREASE IN SPONSOR LICENCE REVOCATIONS

In parallel with a growing number of licensed sponsors, the Home Office has also stepped up its compliance enforcement efforts over the last year, leading to a surge in sponsor licence suspensions and revocations.

According to Home Office data, 1,693 Skilled Worker sponsor licences were suspended in 2024, and 1,494 were revoked. This is a dramatic increase compared to the previous year, in which the Home Office recorded 569 suspensions and just 337 revocations.

With compliance action on the rise, employers are reminded to familiarise themselves with the Home Office guidance for sponsors and ensure they have clear strategies in place to maintain compliance.

KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR SPONSOR COMPLIANCE

Our top 5 essential areas for employers to consider when developing a sponsor compliance strategy are as follows.

1. Maintain accurate records

As a licenced sponsor, you are required to keep accurate, up to date records on your sponsored workers and the running of your organisation. These documents can be kept in electronic or paper format and must be made available to the Home Office if requested. You must keep certain documents for each worker you sponsor. Appendix D of the sponsor guidance lists these documents and how long you must keep them.

2. Report key changes to the Home Office

Reporting is a key part of your sponsor duties and you must tell the Home Office about any significant changes that affect your sponsored workers or your organisation. Such changes must be reported within set time limits as specified in the guidance for sponsors – usually within 10 working days or within 20 working days, depending on the change(s) you are reporting.

3. Run regular mock audits

To ensure sponsors are complying with their sponsor duties, the Home Office conducts regular checks and may visit your business premises at any time, announced or unannounced. Carrying out regular mock audits can help identify any gaps in your internal systems and processes and ensure your business is ready for a visit from Home Office compliance officers.

4. Ensure wider compliance

Sponsors are required to comply with all aspects of the Immigration Rules and the guidance for sponsors, as well as wider UK law. The Home Office will take the appropriate compliance actions if a prospective or existing sponsor is engaging, or has ever engaged, in any behaviour or actions that are deemed 'detrimental to the wider public good'.

5. Provide training for your teams

Changes to the UK's immigration rules and the guidance for sponsors are regularly introduced and sponsors must ensure their knowledge is up to date at all times. Providing regular training for your HR team, your sponsor licence key personnel, and anyone within your organisation responsible for the recruitment of migrant workers, is an essential part of any good compliance strategy.

Sponsor compliance can be a complex matter, and employers are advised to seek the support of a qualified immigration advisor if they are in any doubt.

To learn more about our sponsor compliance services, please contact us today.

A BETTER WAY TO MANAGE GLOBAL IMMIGRATION

Smith Stone Walters is proud to now be a part of Envoy Global, the leading corporate immigration services provider committed to delivering a better way for companies to manage global immigration.

This strategic merger unites two innovative teams, providing a comprehensive range of services designed to enable businesses to attract, hire, manage, and retain top-tier global talent effortlessly and efficiently.

We are excited to unveil this powerful alliance and the benefits it will bring for our clients, both new and existing.

To help our clients learn more about this new partnership and the enhanced level of immigration services now available to your business, we have put together a mini guide which explores how together, Smith Stone Walters and Envoy Global can deliver all your immigration needs in one place.

To request a digital or hard copy of our new guide, please email info@smithstonewalters.com



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EXPANDING HORIZONS

Smith Stone Walters' new partnership with Envoy Global means we can now offer an even greater scope of corporate immigration services that empower businesses to navigate global immigration with ease.

1

DEDICATED TEAM

22

GLOBAL OFFICES

180+

COUNTRIES COVERED



Key
● ENVOY OFFICE LOCATION

If you'd like to know more, we'd be delighted to help. To speak to a member of our team, please contact us today.

Based in the United States with immigration experts in 180+ countries and more than 1,700 clients worldwide, Envoy Global delivers the complete range of services required to manage immigration for a global workforce.

AN EXPANDED GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

The Envoy Global team is strategically situated in regional offices and other locations across the globe to ensure assistance can happen in real-time, no matter the time zone or jurisdiction.

Joining forces with Envoy Global significantly enhances our presence and service offering globally. Smith Stone Walters' existing offices in London, Frankfurt, Mumbai, and Hong Kong remain intact. This partnership will now give us additional local operations in the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific regions.

OUR GLOBAL IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS

Envoy Global stands out as a premier provider of corporate immigration services, dedicated to offering innovative solutions for managing global immigration needs effectively.

Our team are on hand to support your business with everything you need, from day-to-day operational support to high-level strategic guidance, including:

- Fully outsourced corporate immigration programme management
- Immigration compliance services
- Business visa travel management
- Global work assessment and analysis
- Benchmarking and budgetary insights
- Immigration training and strategic planning.

ENVOY EXPANDS AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST SERVICES



In February 2025, Envoy Global announced that it will be expanding its business presence and immigration services in Africa and the Middle East, following a recent company acquisition and the establishment of a new office.

ACQUISITION OF IBN IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS

On 12 February, Envoy Global announced the acquisition of IBN Immigration Solutions, a prominent immigration services provider headquartered in Cape Town and with offices in Johannesburg, Nairobi and Windhoek.

This strategic acquisition expands Envoy Global's footprint in the EMEA region and strengthens the company's ability to provide a better way for companies to manage their global immigration programmes around the world.

IBN Immigration Solutions has been a trusted partner for businesses navigating the complexities of immigration in the African continent since its founding in 1998. The award-winning firm has built a reputation for excellence and reliability, and their deep expertise in African immigration law has made them a key player in the region.

The acquisition allows Envoy Global to extend its services to South Africa, Kenya, Namibia and the broader African market, enabling better service to its multinational clients with operations in the region and reinforcing its presence as a global leader in corporate immigration solutions. Clients will benefit from a seamless integration of services, ensuring a smoother and more efficient immigration process.

NEW OFFICE IN RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

On 26 February, Envoy Global announced the establishment of a new office in Saudi Arabia. Philipp von Zitzewitz and Anita Chalke will lead the new practice group as Managing Director and Senior Immigration Manager, respectively. The announcement comes as part of Envoy Global's continued international growth in key markets.

Recognized for its geopolitical importance, diversification strategies and economic stability, Saudi Arabia increasingly serves as a gateway to markets in the Middle East and presents significant opportunities for international business innovation and growth. Envoy Global's entry into Saudi Arabia demonstrates its commitment to helping clients strengthen their investments by supporting their talent mobility and immigration needs in this critical market.

The team in the new Riyadh office will leverage their extensive knowledge of Saudi Arabian immigration procedures and the local business landscape to support clients with their immigration needs across the Middle East.

“On 26 February, Envoy Global announced the establishment of a new office in Saudi Arabia. Philipp von Zitzewitz and Anita Chalke will lead the new practice group as Managing Director and Senior Immigration Manager, respectively.”



EU UPDATES ETIAS TIMELINE



On 19 February, the European Commission published further information clarifying the timeline for the introduction of the ETIAS online travel authorisation system.

ETIAS is currently not in operation and will not start in the first half of 2025. No action is required from travellers at this point.

The launch of ETIAS will take place a few months after the introduction of the Entry Exit System (EES), now expected to be later in 2025. The implementation of ETIAS will be gradual.

ETIAS TIMELINE EXPLAINED

- The launch of ETIAS will be followed by a transitional period of at least six months. This means that, for travel during this time, travellers should already apply for their ETIAS travel authorisation, but those without one will not be refused entry as long as they fulfil all remaining entry conditions.
- This will be followed by a grace period of at least six months. During this period travellers must have an ETIAS travel authorisation to enter the 30 European countries.
- As an exception, during the grace period, those coming to Europe for the first time since the end of the transitional period will be allowed to enter without an ETIAS provided they fulfil all remaining entry conditions. All other travellers will be refused entry if they do not hold an ETIAS travel authorisation.

Once the new system is in place, nationals of 59 countries and territories who do not need a visa to travel to any of the 30 European countries, will have to apply for an ETIAS travel authorisation before starting their trip. Similar entry requirements for visa-free nationals are currently in place in the United States, Canada and Australia.

Travellers will have to submit their ETIAS applications online using either the official ETIAS website europa.eu/etias or the official mobile app.



“The launch of ETIAS will take place a few months after the introduction of the Entry Exit System (EES), now expected to be later in 2025. The implementation of ETIAS will be gradual.”

Stay up to date with the latest global immigration news by following Smith Stone Walters on LinkedIn.

SSW CO-HOSTS 2025 GLOBAL BUSINESS MOBILITY SEMINAR



On Monday 24 February, Smith Stone Walters and Envoy Global teamed up with leading tax, accounting and business advisory firm Blick Rothenberg to host the 2025 Global Business Mobility Seminar.

This hybrid event brought together a panel of leading global mobility experts to discuss what's on the horizon for immigration and tax matters in 2025 and beyond.

Attendees heard presentations on the day from:

- Robert Salter, Director & Fahad Saad, Senior Manager at Blick Rothenberg discussed key tax considerations for managing a globally mobile workforce.
- Alastair Mason, Senior Associate at Smith Stone Walters set out the key costs employers should consider when sponsoring overseas workers under the UK's points-based immigration system.
- Keynote speaker Adam Lee, Work Services Operations Lead at UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) joined our panel to share first-hand insights from the Home Office on the future of work visa sponsorship and the key points employers need to know.

If you attended either online or in-person, we hope you found the presentations valuable and took away some useful information to share with your teams. But if you couldn't join us live for the event, don't worry – you can still catch up on all the insights and discussions from our panel.

If you'd like to watch the seminar recording or download a copy of the slides, we'd be happy to share these with you and your team. To request a copy, please email info@smithstonewalters.com.

“Alastair Mason, Senior Associate at Smith Stone Walters set out the key costs employers should consider when sponsoring overseas workers under the UK's points-based immigration system.”



We look forward to welcoming you at future events hosted by Smith Stone Walters and Envoy Global.

MEET OUR LATEST WOW AWARD WINNER!



Each quarter, SSW team members are invited to nominate their colleagues to receive a 'WOW' Award, our company prize to recognise the hard work and outstanding contributions our staff have made to their teams and the business.

We are delighted to introduce our latest award winner for Q1 2025: Kerry Backshell!

Kerry has been with Smith Stone Walters for 23 years and has made a significant impact during her time with us. Kerry's work ethic, commitment, and dedication are second to none. She has consistently gone above and beyond to assist her team and everyone else in the company.

KERRY'S COLLEAGUES AT SSW DESCRIBE HER AS:

- Always helpful and approachable
- A ray of sunshine who brings positivity to every interaction
- Prompt, professional, and supportive in all she does
- Always willing to assist, no matter the challenge.

Thank you for your hard work, Kerry!



If you have had a great experience working with a SSW team member recently and would like to share your feedback, we'd love to hear from you. You can call us on 0208 461 6660 or email info@smithstonewalters.com.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY ABOUT US!

We always strive to deliver a WOW service to our clients. Our dedicated team have been working hard to provide successful solutions and swift results, getting our clients where they need to be. Here is just some of the feedback we have been proud to receive recently:

"Phill was incredibly helpful throughout and made what can be a very stressful process totally seamless. He went above and beyond to ensure everything was submitted thoroughly and swiftly."
AR, Software company

"Sarah was very helpful and very prompt, arranging my visa extension in very little time and with no hassles at all - thanks Sarah!"
DB, Law firm

"Amazing service by the team. Their knowledge, promptness, thoroughness was amazing."
VS, Private client

"Thank you, Ling and Rob for your patience and timely support throughout this process, truly appreciated!"
QY, Software company

"Corina and Simrone provided exceptional and prompt assistance throughout my visa process. Their professionalism, efficiency, and attention to detail made the entire experience smooth and stress-free. I truly appreciate their dedication and excellent support."
SA, Travel company

"Emilia was great to work with. She made the whole process incredibly simple and was very knowledgeable about what I needed for my application. I really appreciate all her help and would recommend her to anyone else applying for ILR."
KB, Law firm

“
WOW
”

“
VERY HELPFUL
AMAZING
SUPPORTIVE
PROMPT
STRESS-FREE
DEDICATED
SIMPLE
KNOWLEDGEABLE
”

FOCUS



UNLOCK YOUR IMMIGRATION DATA: A GUIDE TO ACCESSING PERSONAL RECORDS

When you apply for a UK visa, it is necessary for the Home Office to collect and process certain personal information about you, in order to provide the immigration services you are requesting and conduct the relevant checks on you.



If you want to see the personal information about you that is held by the Home Office's immigration systems, you have the right to request access to this data under the Data Protection Act 2018. This type of request is known as a 'Subject Access Request' (SAR) or a 'Right of Access Request'.

You can use this service to request personal information for yourself or someone else who has given you permission to act on their behalf.

In this Focus, we set out the three different types of request, how to submit a request, and what information you can ask the Home Office to provide.

WHAT INFORMATION CAN YOU REQUEST?

A dedicated Subject Access Request Unit (SARU) handles all requests for information held by the following parts of the Home Office:

- Immigration
- Citizenship
- Border Force.

Processing Subject Access Requests is expensive for the UK taxpayer, therefore you should be as clear as you can about what information you require in order to get the best service.

You cannot submit a SAR to get proof of your immigration status or for UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account registration. This information will not be provided. Instead, you must use the Home Office View and Prove service to see your immigration status and share it with others, such as an employer or landlord. If you need help with setting up a UKVI account and accessing your eVisa, you should contact UKVI directly.

All other personal information held in the government's borders, immigration and citizenship system can be obtained using a SAR.

TYPES OF REQUEST

The Home Office offers three online request options. Depending on the information you require, you can choose to make either:

- A basic request
- A specific request
- A detailed request.

All types of request are free of charge. If multiple requests are submitted for the same person, you will be contacted and asked to confirm which information you require. You will usually receive a response within one month of your supporting documents being received by the Home Office.

BASIC REQUEST

This is the most common type of request submitted, and most people find that a basic request provides them with all the personal information they need. With a basic request, you can ask the Home Office to provide all of the digital information recorded about you since the year 2000, including:

- Details of your immigration history, for example, dates applications were submitted and decisions made.
- Landing cards.
- Visa applications you submitted from outside of the UK (as part of entry clearance).
- Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) information if you are a national of Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.



"Processing Subject Access Requests is expensive for the UK taxpayer, therefore you should be as clear as you can about what information you require in order to get the best service."



SPECIFIC REQUEST

A specific request allows you to ask for more specific information if you need to. This is the best option if you require a particular document.

You can request copies of up to 5 single documents, for example:

- A list of your applications or a copy of a specific application form.
- A particular decision letter.
- The outcome of an appeal (appeal determination).
- A particular detention progress report.
- A particular interview record.

This list is not exhaustive. When submitting a specific request, you should clearly describe which documents you are looking for.

DETAILED REQUEST

As the name implies, a detailed request is the most comprehensive form of Subject Access Request you can make.

When you make a detailed request, you will initially be sent an electronic summary of your immigration information (as with a basic application). This gives most people the information they need.

This option also allows you to request paper records from your Home Office file if the electronic data does not fulfil your request. Refining your request to state clearly which paper records you need will help your application.

HOW TO MAKE A REQUEST

To submit a SAR online, you should use the online application form available at: <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/saru>.

You must have a UK address to use the online form. If you want to apply from an address outside the UK, you should email your request to subjectaccessrequest@homeoffice.gov.uk.

You can also write to the Home Office at the following address: Subject Access Request Unit (SARU), 2 Ruskin Square, Dingwall Road, Croydon CR0 2WF.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The Home Office has a strict obligation to protect the personal information of its customers. Therefore, when you make a SAR you will need to provide evidence to confirm your identity and show that you have permission to access the data you are requesting.

You may need to provide:

- A copy of your photo identification, such as a passport.
- A letter of authority, to give permission for your records to be sent to you or your representative.
- Proof of your relationship, if you are applying for a child under 12.

Your application will not be accepted until the relevant documents have been provided. It will be automatically rejected if you do not send them within 15 days of making your application.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Home Office will usually process your request within one month of receiving all information.

Your request may take longer to process if the Home Office needs to contact you to request additional information. In exceptional circumstances, the deadline may be extended if your request is considered to be complex. If this happens, the Home Office will write to you separately explaining why.



Any data disclosed as a result of a SAR is the property of the data subject and should be retained by them for their records.

WHERE TO GET HELP

If you would like more information on making a Subject Access Request or if you need help filling in your form, you can contact the Home Office by email on subjectaccessrequests@homeoffice.gov.uk.

If you wish to make a complaint, you should contact customer services on the same email address to seek resolution through the Home Office complaints procedure.

If you are not satisfied, you can contact the Office of the Data Protection Officer (ODPO). The ODPO investigates complaints in relation to suspected or identified breaches of subject rights under the Data Protection Act 2018. This includes subject access rights.

Additionally, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) adjudicates on individual complaints. Individuals have a right under section 165 of the Data Protection Act to bring a complaint to the ICO.

However, the role of the ICO remains as a regulator, not an ombudsman. More often, the ICO use complaints to help build up a picture of a data controller's general compliance which will then inform decisions as to whether more formal enforcement action is required.

If you are seeking advice on UK immigration, our qualified immigration advisors at Smith Stone Walters are on hand to assist. You can contact us on 0208 461 6660 or email info@smithstonewalters.com

CONTACT
US

Smith Stone Walters' new partnership with Envoy Global means we can now offer an even greater scope of corporate immigration services that empower businesses to navigate global immigration with ease.

Together we provide innovative solutions that streamline the management of your workforce's international movements, ensuring smooth relocations and driving unparalleled business success.

Ready to transform your global immigration strategy? Reach out to our global immigration experts today, and let's discuss how we can help your organisation thrive on the international stage.

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