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Dental recruitment: plan the role before you plan the visa

Recruitment strategy

In an increasingly competitive market, many dental practices are turning to overseas recruitment to address workforce shortages and support growth.

According to the regulator's latest statistical report, more than half of dentists who joined the General Dental Council (GDC) register in 2025 were internationally qualified.

Successful recruitment requires a legally compliant recruitment strategy that meets business needs.

Newfields can help you to tailor your plan by advising eligibility, the evidence you would need to collect to show that you need to employ an overseas worker, timelines for applications, sponsor licence compliance and right to work checks.

Job role

While the visa process itself is important, defining the role you want to hire for at the outset is essential.

For sponsorship, the job title and description must fit within one of the eligible Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes. Getting the job title, duties and skill level right at the outset can help avoid delays and compliance issues later in the recruitment process.

Following changes effective from 22 July 2025, several dental occupation codes for medium skilled roles are no longer available for newly sponsored workers under the Health & Care visa, but transitional regulations remain in effect for existing sponsored workers.

We can advise on whether the role you want to recruit for comes under these transitional provisions or whether it comes under the general dental practitioner SOC code, which covers higher skilled roles at RQF level 6 and above.

Salary

The salary that you offer for a role will have to meet business needs, but it will also need to be compliant with the Immigration Rules.

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For dental practitioners at RQF level 6 and above, there are specific eligible salaries. The exact salary requirements should be confirmed before you advertise any dental practitioner role.

Once you have decided what role you want to recruit for, and the salary that meets your business needs, we can check whether the salary is legally compliant and whether any transitional rules apply.

Other points to consider include the number of hours each sponsored employee works, whether the package is commercially sustainable in the long-term, and any potential salary increases that may be needed when the employee's visa is extended or renewed.

Getting these things right is essential to make sure that your recruitment strategy is effective and avoid compliance issues further down the road.

Evidence of need

Employers must satisfy the Home Office that a job being sponsored is a genuine vacancy.

While a formal resident labour market test is no longer required, employers should retain documentation demonstrating that the vacancy is genuine, and that the role is required by the business.

This could include evidence of previous recruitment activity, records of applications received, workforce planning documents, expansion plans, or evidence of increasing patient demand.

Timing

Many recruitment delays occur because practices only begin considering sponsorship once a candidate has been identified.

Building immigration timelines into workforce planning from the outset can help avoid delays to patient services and business growth.

Key considerations include whether you have a sponsor licence in place, whether you are hiring in-country or overseas, whether you have a sufficient allocation of certificates of sponsorship, and the timelines for visa applications.

Conclusion

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Recruitment of overseas workers can play an important role in helping dental practices to meet their recruitment needs and support future growth. A successful recruitment strategy requires more than just obtaining a visa.

Job design, salary planning, consideration of business needs, and a keen awareness of recruitment timelines are all necessary to ensure that your strategy is both commercially viable and legally compliant.

Newfields advises dental practices on sponsorship eligibility, sponsor licences, Health and Care Visas and ongoing compliance, helping employers to make informed decisions and maintain their sponsor licence. We can also help you to apply for and manage your sponsor licence. If you would like us to help you to design your overseas recruitment strategy, get in touch with the Newfields team.

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