

Points-based immigration system: delivering on people's priorities

One year ago today, the government launched the points-based immigration system and opened the Skilled Worker Visa, marking the UK's biggest shift in immigration policy in recent history.

Twelve months on and this has delivered on the public's priorities to attract top talent from across the globe, while encouraging businesses to invest in the British workforce.

The new points-based immigration system means the British immigration system is now under the control of the UK government. This has given British firms the freedom to recruit and employ people based on the skills and talent they offer, rather than basing employment decisions on the country where someone comes from.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Our departure from the European Union enabled us to end freedom of movement and introduce a new points-based immigration system to control who can come to our country legally.

One year on, our system is making it easier for businesses to hire the skills and talent they need, while incentivising investment in our domestic workforce, boosting wages across the country.

But illegal migration remains a long-standing problem with the number of small boats crossing the Channel unsafe, unfair and unacceptable. My New Plan for Immigration will reduce the pull factors in our asylum system enabling us to have full control of our immigration system.

The Skilled Worker route, which accounts for 61% of work-related visas granted, saw the largest increase in visa numbers, up 45,866 or 57% to 126,017 and the Global Talent route increased from 595 to 2,786 visas issued by the end of September 2021.

In comparison, 110,721 Skilled Worker visas were granted by the end of September 2019 and 80,151 granted by the end of September 2020 – highlighting the impact of the pandemic on migration, while the end of free movement a year ago allows the UK to count all skilled workers coming to the country.

This has meant that over the last year, the UK has welcomed thousands of workers with the skills the country needs including IT workers, scientists, plumbers, architects, butchers, doctors, creative workers and bricklayers.

As well as helping to support public services, boost growth and drive

international competitiveness of the UK's most innovative companies, these skilled workers are complementing the UK workforce – helping to boost wages and opportunities.

The number of visas issued across work and study routes has recovered to pre-pandemic levels – demonstrating that the UK continues to attract worldwide talent and skills to support the post-pandemic economic recovery.

Minister for Safe and Legal Migration Kevin Foster said:

As we recover from the pandemic, our points-based immigration system encourages businesses to focus on their UK workforces, investing in British people and skills, while boosting growth and the economy.

At the same time, we recognise there are jobs where we need the expertise and skills of overseas workers and extraordinarily talented people who want to make the UK their home. Under our points-based immigration system, people who want to contribute to our society will be welcome, based on their skills and talents, not where their passport is from.

Lynne Watson, Vice President of Human Resources, Thales UK said:

The work we do at Thales, from engineering to manufacturing, is highly skilled and requires us to draw on talent from across the globe to deliver cutting edge technology and products for our customers.

We are very proud of our diverse workforce at Thales and we see our sponsored route visa workers as a strong asset to that. We are pleased that the UK continues to be such an appealing place for so many of our global employees to live and work.

All states have a responsibility to control their borders, which is why the points-based immigration system supports the government's New Plan for Immigration, ensuring the system is fair to UK workers while allowing employers to recruit those who have the skills the country needs and to contribute to society.

The points-based immigration system is a simple system, awarding points for people who have a skilled job and are paid at a rate that does not drive down wages, as well as having a good standard of English. Supporting the UK to build back better, the points-based immigration system is working in tandem with government initiatives such as the Plan for Jobs and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee which are designed to help more people secure a great job while ensuring businesses have access to the workforce they need now and in the future.

Plan for Jobs has delivered with unemployment falling and the number of employees on payrolls back above pre-pandemic levels. Meanwhile the government's Kickstart Scheme is helping young people develop skills, confidence and experience to support them into long-term sustainable employment, with over 100,000 now in work.

In spring 2022, more visa routes will open, including the Scale-Up, High Potential Individual and Global Business Mobility routes. These will provide more opportunities for businesses to recruit leading people in their fields and encourage brilliant innovators and entrepreneurs to open enterprises in the UK – supporting British jobs, contributing to the economy and improving the UK's standing on the world stage.