

# What does a Conservative Party government mean for immigration?

**The Conservative Party has been elected on a pledge to deliver on Brexit, a promise that will have significant implications for immigration between the UK and Europe.**

It is widely expected that the Withdrawal Agreement will now pass through Parliament. If this is achieved, the UK will leave the European Union on 31 January 2020. A transition period will be in place until 31 December 2020, during which time the benefits associated with freedom of movement would remain in place (including the right to move and work in the UK and all EU countries, and unrestricted business travel). Those who relocate to the UK or an EU country before the end of 2020 may continue living and working in that country after Brexit, but should take the necessary action to protect this position.

Passage of the Withdrawal Agreement would provide relief from the cliff edge of a no deal Brexit, but the end of the transition period will quickly arrive. From 1 January 2021, a new immigration regime is expected in the UK and would apply to any EU national relocating to the UK from 1 January 2021 (Irish nationals can continue to work freely in the UK even after the transition period ends). UK nationals arriving in EU countries (other than Ireland) on or after 1 January 2021 will be subject to the standard immigration rules for non-EU foreign workers, which vary from country to country. Similarly, business travellers will have to comply with the specific restrictions in each country they visit.



## KEY MESSAGES TO THE BUSINESS

- ▶ It seems likely that the UK will leave the EU with a deal on 31 January 2020 and free movement rights will remain in place until 1 January 2021
- ▶ Unless favourable terms are quickly negotiated, UK nationals will have to comply with country specific immigration rules in the EU as from 1 January 2021
- ▶ EU nationals living here before free movement ends will be able to apply under the EU settlement scheme. We recommend any moves planned for early 2021 are brought forward or in some circumstances that prospective employees visit the U.K. and make an application before the cut off
- ▶ There will be a new immigration regime, planned for 1 January 2021
- ▶ Employing skilled overseas workers will be substantially more expensive and our access to lower skilled workers will be curtailed: it is likely that those aged 18 to 30 will be limited to two years (and only if from certain countries).
- ▶ Others may not be able to come at all unless arrangements are made in bilateral free trade agreements to allow nationals of signatory countries a single year of unskilled employees



## THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES WILL MEAN THAT:

- ▶ It will likely cost more and take longer to recruit EU nationals from 2021, but in some cases it may not be possible
- ▶ It is not clear whether overseas workers will be able to travel to fill lower skilled jobs in the UK and those who are allowed may be limited to 12 or 24 months stay
- ▶ We will need to assess what these policies will mean for our workforce in the future and that enough is known to make an initial assessment
- ▶ We will need to look at how we can reassure, educate and direct our existing EU workers to apply for immigration status under the EU settlement scheme
- ▶ Similar assessments and guidance will be needed for UK workers in the EU
- ▶ From 2021, EU and Non-EU nationals entering the UK will be treated broadly equally and will require a work permit (Irish nationals aside). The system will be more complicated than free movement rules but more generous than current non-EU arrangements
- ▶ Workers will be allowed to stay permanently if they are in a skilled job, meet a minimum salary, speak English and meet other requirements
- ▶ The minimum salary may remain at £30,000 for established workers and £20,800 for younger people and new graduates, although those figures are being reviewed
- ▶ Those who do not qualify may be able to enter for two years, but only if aged 18 to 30 and from a youth mobility country, for instance Australia, Canada and presumably the EU
- ▶ Other workers may be able to enter for a year if they are from a country with temporary work provisions in a UK free trade agreement, none of which are in place yet
- ▶ Otherwise workers will not be able to enter unless they qualify on family ties, for instance as a spouse
- ▶ The system is likely to be more expensive as the immigration health surcharge increases from £400 to £625 per year.
- ▶ The government is looking to revise the Points Based System, based on the Australian system. It is not clear how this will work but it may be limited to scientists and entrepreneurs
- ▶ There will likely be a visa specifically for NHS workers
- ▶ Students will be able to apply to stay in the UK for an additional 2 year period after completion of their course