

Working in the UK Toolkit



**A guide to finding employment
for people new to the UK**

Introduction

This Toolkit gives newcomers to the UK an overview of employment in this country. It does not provide comprehensive information but is designed to give a broad overview. The guide requires a good understanding of English. It can also be used by people who support refugees and other migrants who are looking for work.

There are links to more information on each subject that can be accessed by clicking on the picture or highlighted text. There are also links and resources at the end of each section with more information and advice.

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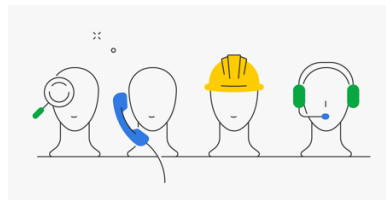
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Right to work in the UK

Unless you are a British citizen, you need to prove that you have the right to work in the UK., Employers can be fined, or even face jail if they employ someone illegally.

There are more than 20 types of specific working visa in the UK and the list is regularly updated. Use [this online service](#) to find out if you have the correct visa to work in the UK.

Click on pictures or links for more in-depth information

Proving the right to work 	If you have been told you can view your immigration status online you can get a share code to prove your right to work in the UK. The code is valid for 30 days and can be shared with employers, who can then check: • The type of work you are allowed to do • How long you can work in the UK • If you can claim benefits or access NHS services • If you are able to open a bank account You can access your share code via the government website. You will need your passport or identity card, Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) or visa and your Biometric Residencies Card number.
What is a National Insurance Number? 	NINO stands for National Insurance Number and is a reference number for paying tax, national insurance and also claiming benefits. British citizens receive a NINO at the age of 16. Refugees are also issued with a NINO. However, this does not apply to everyone who has the right to work so you may need to apply for one. You can start work without a NINO, but you will need one to make sure that national insurance contributions and tax you pay is correctly registered to your name. This can take up to 16 weeks so it's worth doing this as soon as possible.
The shortage occupation list 	The shortage occupation list is a list of jobs where UK businesses and employers face a shortage of workers. People seeking asylum are generally not allowed to work but if their claim is outstanding after 12 months through no fault of their own, and they are suitably qualified, they are eligible to apply for jobs on the shortage occupation list. You must apply in writing to UK Visas and Immigration for the right to work in these jobs.

Disclosure and Barring Service



Many jobs in the UK require a criminal record background check. These usually involve work with children, the elderly, and disabled people.

[The Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (DBS) is a way for employers to check your criminal record. Checks can only be made within the UK. If you have not lived in the UK for the past 5 years you may need to apply for a 'Certificate of Good Character' from your country. The application process varies from [country to country](#).

You may find it difficult to obtain these records from your country, so it is worth speaking to employers about alternative checks such as additional character references. You could also offer to make a 'sworn oath' through a legal professional.

Some criminal convictions are considered 'spent' and do not need to be declared. However, the rules are complicated so if you have a criminal conviction, it is best to seek advice if you are asked about it by an employer.

Main Points

1. It is illegal to work in the UK without the correct documentation
2. Employers must request a share code to check your eligibility to work
3. You need to apply for a National Insurance Number to work or claim benefits
4. Some asylum seekers are allowed to work after 12 months but only in specific jobs.
5. Many jobs in the UK require a criminal records check called a DBS

Useful links and resources

- [Citizen's Advice](#) has lots of clear and easy to understand information and advice on the different documents you may need to produce depending on your immigration status.
- An up-to-date list of current UK [work visas](#)
- What are [National Insurance](#) contributions?
- The Migration Justice Project has produced a [guide](#) to help people seeking asylum understand how and whether they can apply for permission to work while their claim is pending.
- An [A-Z of countries](#) and the application process for overseas criminal record checks
- Government guidance on [sworn oaths](#) and character reference for people applying for an SIA licence, which is required to work in security services.
- If you have a criminal record, [Unlock](#) can offer information, advice, and support.

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Types of employment

Employment usually falls into one of three categories:

Private sector – these are companies and businesses that make a profit for their owners. They are financed through sales of goods and services. Examples include shops, hotels, warehouses, and factories.

Public sector – these are organisations that are managed by the government. They provide services for the benefit of the community and are paid for through taxes. These include schools, hospitals and local councils.

Voluntary sector – this is also known as the ‘Third sector’ and includes, charities, community groups, social enterprises and other groups who do not make a profit.

Click on picture or link for more in-depth information

What is your employment status?



Your employment rights depend on your [employment status](#).

You are an **employee** if your employer provides regular work, says when and where it should be done. You are a **worker** if you are not offered regular or guaranteed hours by an employer, for example casual staff or seasonal workers.

In both cases, the employer pays tax and national insurance on your behalf and you are entitled to basic employment rights such as paid annual leave and the minimum wage. If you work part time, you have the same rights as a full-time worker.

More information can be found in [Section E – Your Rights at Work](#)

Recruitment and employment agencies



Recruitment agencies work on behalf of employers to find suitable candidates to fill their vacancies. A recruitment agency should **never** charge you a fee for getting you a job.

Some recruitment agencies find staff for other businesses but pay the staff themselves. They are known as employment businesses. In this case you will be an [agency worker](#). This is often the case in sectors such as manufacturing and warehousing.

Employment contracts



When you are offered a job, your employer **must** provide you with a ‘written statement of employment particulars’, often referred to as a [contract of employment](#). This is a legal agreement that sets out your rights and responsibilities. Agency workers must also be given a written statement of employment particulars and have basic employment rights from day one.

Permanent contracts do not have a set end date for employment. Fixed term, or temporary contracts have a set end date for employment. A [‘zero-hour contract’](#) refers to an agreement where there are no minimum set working hours.

Apprenticeships 	An apprenticeship is a type of paid employment where the employee spends some of their time training, which leads to a nationally recognised qualification. Many people think apprenticeships are only for young people, but people of any age can apply for an apprenticeship, the same as any other job. However, the minimum wage for an apprentice is much lower than for other jobs Apprenticeship training is funded by the government so some groups of migrants may not be able to access this type of job. You can find out more about apprenticeships and browse opportunities near you through the government website.
Self-employment 	Self-employed people own their own company or business and are responsible for how and when they work. They pay their own tax and National Insurance. They do not have the same employment rights and responsibilities as employees or workers. If you are self-employed and earn over £1000 a year you must register with HMRC for tax purposes. You may be a worker/employee of a company but also run your own business and be self-employed at the same time.

Main points

- 1. All employers, including agencies, have a legal responsibility to give you a written statement of your terms and conditions at work.**
- 2. If you are a worker or an employee, you are entitled to basic employment rights. This applies even if you work for an agency or have a part-time, casual or zero-hour contract.**

Useful links and resources

- The government publishes [monthly statistics](#) that includes information about the number of people in employment and vacancies.
- This [guide](#) gives a overview of the differences between the public and private sector in the UK and the advantages/disadvantages of working in each sector
- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has more [information](#) about what should be in a contract of employment.
- Information about the rules covering [employment agencies](#)
- This is a helpful [guide to self-employment](#) by the Low Incomes Tax Reform Group, which also contains information to help you work out if you are [employed or self employed](#)

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Finding and applying for a job

Most vacancies are now found online. This means that you will need to know how to use a computer. However, it is still worthwhile knocking on the door of local employers to ask if they have any vacancies.

There is a lot of advice and information about how to apply for jobs. It can be overwhelming, so this section covers only the necessities. You will find a list of websites with great advice for writing CVs and cover letters at the end of this section.

Click on picture or link for more in-depth information

Job search websites  An illustration showing a laptop with a magnifying glass over it, surrounded by various icons representing different aspects of job searching: a lightbulb, a person, a calendar, a document, a bar chart, and a person running.	There are hundreds of different job sites, or employment websites, where you can find job vacancies advertised. You can find a list of the most commonly used ones here with some advice on how to choose the best one for you. Recruitment agencies frequently use job sites. There are some sites that specialise in certain professions or work sectors. CharityJob is an example of one that is widely used by the Third Sector. Many companies have pages on their website listing job vacancies, and you can apply directly on their own site. This is more common with large businesses, so if you know the main companies working in your industry you should sign up to their sites for updates.
Networking  A photograph of a black sign with the text 'now hiring' in white and 'inquire within' in smaller white text below it.	Networking is important and many people find jobs through friends, family, and ex-colleagues. This is much more difficult if you do not have those networks in the UK but there are ways to build them. It is worth sending your CV and covering letter to small and medium sized businesses to ask about vacancies. These companies do not always have dedicated HR staff, so vacancies are not always advertised. Even if they have nothing now it is a way to start the conversation and they will remember you if something comes up in the future. LinkedIn is the best-known online networking site for professionals finding work. Here is some good advice on how to use it to your advantage when you are looking for work.
Transferable skills  An illustration of a human head profile with gears inside, surrounded by various icons representing different skills: a lightbulb, a person, a calendar, a document, a bar chart, and a person running.	Transferable skills are skills that you use in every job. Some are easy to describe in a job application, for example project management and IT skills. Other transferable skills include relationship building and attention to detail. Transferable skills are considered very important in the UK. Employers recognise that a person with transferable skills is flexible to adapt to changing workplaces. Many job descriptions list a series of skills that the company is looking for. You may not have all the requested skills, but your transferable skills could be very similar.

CV and covering letter 	A CV, or resume, is a document that lists your education, skills, experience, and employment history. There is no right or wrong way to write a CV but there are a few basic rules you should follow. • Use a clear structure • Keep it short • Avoid spelling errors • Tailor it to the role What not to include in your CV • Unprofessional email address • Photograph • Personal details
Application forms 	Employers do not always ask for a CV. Sometimes they will ask you to complete an application form, which is usually online. Your CV will come in useful here as you can cut and paste most of the information. When you complete a job application there is always a section which asks you to explain more about your application. This requires more detail than a covering letter. Vacancies are usually advertised with a Job Description and Person Specification, which tells you what the job involves, and a list of skills, knowledge and experience are required to do the job. When you complete this section, you should try to match your answer with this list, giving examples if possible. There is usually a deadline to apply for a job. Don't leave it until the last minute!
Interview 	There are different types of job interview, they may take place face to face, on the telephone or via video conferencing software. Sometimes interviews take place in assessment centres. You should prepare in advance for an interview and research as much about the company and the job role as possible. There are some common questions that employers are likely to ask so you can practise your answers to these. Examples include: • Can you tell us about yourself? • Why do you want to work here? • What are your strengths and weaknesses? • How do you manage your work? • Can you give me an example of when you have had to deal with a difficult situation? At the end of the interview you may be asked if you have any questions. Make sure your questions are relevant. You could ask about training opportunities or the day to day working culture.

References



[References](#) are people who can talk about your work experience, skills, and character. Most employers ask for two references, one of whom should be your most recent Manager. A Manager may be able to speak about your transferable skills, for example that you are organised and a good problem solver.

Providing this information may be difficult for some people new to the UK. If your work references are all from abroad, you might include one who is comfortable to speak in English.

Character references can be from anyone who can speak about your good personal qualities, Voluntary work is a good way of getting references who can vouch for honestly, reliability and good nature.

Main points

1. **Direct your job searching carefully, there are a lot of search engines, and you can end up with an email inbox full of spam**
2. **Your CV should be short and make sure there are no spelling mistakes**
3. **Transferable skills are considered important in the UK. Think about your personal strengths and weaknesses**
4. **Always prepare for an interview**
5. **Doing voluntary work is a good way of getting a reference in the UK**

Useful links and resources

There are hundreds of guides on how to apply for work in the UK. Here are a few of the best examples

- [Back to Work Toolkit](#)
- [Job Applicant Toolkit](#)
- How to write a [cover letter](#)
- Some cover letter [examples](#)
- Some of the [benefits of transferable skills](#)
- [20 Tips for Great Interviews](#)

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Important things to consider when starting a job

Click on picture or link for more in-depth information

Childcare 	If you have children or care for other family members, you may find it difficult to find work that fits around your responsibilities. State-provided childcare in the UK is relatively low. The government provides subsidies such as free hours and childcare vouchers to offset some of the costs, which depend on your income and the age of your child. More information about the different types of government help can be found here including where to find early education and childcare in your area. Childcare Choices also produce a comprehensive guide. There are a variety of different types of childcare available in the UK but the availability and affordability of childcare options can vary a lot depending on where you live. In addition to private and public providers, you can sometimes find voluntary and community organisations that offer free childcare in some areas. A small number of employers also offer on-site crèche facilities.
Transport 	If you do not drive, it may be difficult, or take a long time to get to work using public transport. This is especially important if you live in a rural area or the job involves working unsociable hours. You can plan your journey online to work out the easiest and cheapest way to get to work. You may find someone at your workplace to share a lift to work with. Some large companies run carshare schemes and If your employer is not a member you may be able to find someone who works nearby.
In-work benefits 	If you earn a low income or are disabled, you may be still be able to claim in-work benefits to top up your wages. This will also depend on the number of hours you work, your immigration status and family circumstances. Work out if you can claim here.
Tax 	Unless you are self-employed, income tax, National Insurance contributions, student loan repayments and pension payments are deducted directly from your wage. Your employer is not allowed to make other deductions from your pay or wages unless it is required or allowed by law, or your contract specifically allows the deduction. Use this tax calculator to work out what your take home pay will be. If you are self-employed you must register for self-assessment with HMRC and complete and annual tax return.

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Training, work experience and volunteering

There are lots of 'entry level' jobs in the UK, that do not require qualifications or experience of work. Examples include catering and cleaning. However, many employers prefer to employ someone who has a good work history that shows their skills and knowledge.

[Click on picture or link for more in-depth information](#)

ESOL and English language skills 	Your spoken and written English skills will also have an effect on the jobs you can apply for. Learning English is an easy way to find information about English language classes in your area and across Yorkshire. You can find out which classes are free, where they are held, what level they are and whether childcare is available. Some 'entry level' jobs will not require qualifications in English. Some employers will require GCSEs or Functional Skills English certificates. Other professions demand high levels of English and may ask you to provide IELTS certification, which is covered in the next section.
Training for work 	The National Careers service provides a range information, advice and guidance, including a skills toolkit full of free courses to help you learn new skills or change jobs. There is also an online skills assessment to help you identify 'transferable' skills. These are skills that you are good at and are useful in lots of different jobs. Your local college will usually offer a range of adult education courses including qualifications for work known as 'vocational qualifications'. Check their website so see what is on offer. They may also hold open days when you can go and speak to staff about the courses on offer. Aside from traditional colleges, there are lots of other courses and programmes to help you get into work: • Employability programmes ran by local charities or in local community venues. • There are schemes specially designed to help young people who have no work experience, for example traineeships. • Private companies can also provide training in specialist areas such as IT. • If you claim Universal Credit, the job centre may be able to help you through programmes like Sector Based Work Academies that also include a work experience placement.

	There are often new schemes announced by the government to help people get into work. The Careers Service features a Find a Course search engine where you can find training in your local area. Some jobs require training and certification by law, for example, • To work on in construction you will need a CSCS card. • To work as a security guard, you need an SIA license. • Employers in catering usually require workers to have a food hygiene certificate.
How can I pay for training? 	Lots of courses in the UK are completely free but if you want to gain a qualification there is usually a cost involved. Many people are eligible for these costs to be covered by the government's Adult Education Budget The rules are very complicated, especially if you are not a UK citizen. If you want to study on a University access course, you may be eligible to apply for an Advanced Learner Loan. Again, this is not straightforward if you do not have permanent residence in the UK.
Volunteering and work experience 	Volunteering is very common in the UK. People volunteer for a variety of reasons. It is a great way to gain work experience, meet different people, find out about your local area and practise speaking in English. Volunteering is a good way to rebuild your confidence while you are looking for work. You can find volunteering opportunities in your area by typing your postcode into Dolt.org . or pop into your local volunteering centre, which are in most towns and cities in the UK.

Main points	1. If you are not confident speaking English, you can easily find a local ESOL class to attend. These are often free of cost 2. There is lots of free training available, online and in person to help you get into work 3. Volunteering is very common and a good way to make contacts and get work experience.
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Useful links and resources

- The [Open University](#) has 1000s of free course you can complete online.
- If you are unable to access education for free, there are a number of grants you may be able to apply for. [Refugee-study](#) provides a list of funders as well as lots of other useful information.

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Your rights at work

UK employment laws are a series of basic human rights that are in place to make sure that both employees and employers are protected.

If you have a problem at work, you should speak to your line manager or someone from HR. If you are unable to sort out the issue informally with your employer, you can contact [ACAS](#) for free advice.

Click on picture or link for more in-depth information

Equality Act (2010) 	Discrimination means treating you differently because of who you are. It covers race, religious beliefs, gender, sex, sexuality, disability age, marital status, and pregnancy and maternity. Equality law protects you from bullying and harassment. If you are disabled, your employer must also make 'reasonable adjustments' so that you are able to carry out your work.
Health and Safety at Work (1974) 	Employers have a legal duty to carry out risk assessments and ensure that workplaces are safe for the people who work there. This covers a wide range of activities including manual handling, fire safety, managing hazardous substances and even looking at a computer screen. Your employer should provide 'personal protective equipment' to anyone who is exposed to a health and safety risk at work. For example, hard hat, eye protection or ear protectors. This also applies to agency workers. Self-employed people are also protected by Health and Safety at Work Act if they are working from a client's premises.
Basic employment rights 	These rights apply to all workers and employees including those people who work part time or on a casual basis. • You must receive written terms of employment and a payslip showing any deductions from your pay. • Your employer must pay you the national minimum wage. • You are entitled to regular breaks at work and paid holidays. • You should not be asked to work for more than 48 hours in one week – this is known as the working time directive. You can choose to work more hours than this through an agreement known as 'opting out' but your employer cannot force you to do this. If you are an employee there are extra rights including statutory sick pay, maternity, paternity, and adoption leave and pay. After two years working for the same employer, you are also entitled to redundancy pay and protection from unfair dismissal.

	Your employer may offer additional benefits, such as uniform, reimbursement of travelling expenses, mobile phone, and laptop for work use.
Pensions 	A pension is a way of saving money so you can have an income in retirement. All employers must offer a workplace pension scheme and workers are automatically enrolled. You may opt out of paying into a pension. Retirement age in the UK is usually 68 years old but you may be able to draw down some of your pension from the age of 55.
Protection from abuse at work 	A trade union is an organisation made up of members who usually work in a specific type of workplace. They negotiate with employers about pay and conditions at work. Your employer must not treat you unfavourably because you are a member of a union. Unions can support members if they have problems at work. They also provide legal and financial advice as well as educational opportunities. Labour exploitation is a form of modern slavery and involves forcing people to work long hours for little or no wages. It occurs in businesses of any size and in any country, including the UK, where it is illegal. Employers must do everything they can to prevent modern slavery happening in their business. If you are worried that someone you know is being abused by their employer, you can call the Modern Slavery Helpline. The helpline is confidential.

Main points

1. You should never be discriminated against at work, even at the application stage.
2. Your employer MUST ensure that your workplace is safe.
3. ALL workers have basic employment rights.

Useful links and resources

- The [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#) has more information about the Equality Act and how it protects you from discrimination.
- [Moneyhelper](#) is the government's free advice service to help you choose the right pension.
- [Worksmart](#) contains up to date information on employment rights, health and safety and also pensions. It also features a union finder if you are unsure which is the most appropriate union for you.
- This is a guide from the [Gangmasters Licensing Authority](#) to spot the signs of labour exploitation and advice about what to do if you come across it.

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Information for people with professional qualifications

Many highly qualified people move to the UK with many years of experience in their chosen profession yet face barriers accessing the same type of work in this country. There are approximately 400 different professional member organisations, so it is impossible for this Toolkit to give specific advice on specific professions. Therefore, this section focusses on common threads.

Click on picture or link for more in-depth information

Professional bodies and specialist programmes 	Contact the professional body governing your area of work. These organisations aim to maintain high standards within that profession. The organisations with the highest number of members are within healthcare, accountancy, engineering, and human resources. For Teachers, there is a lot of information in one easy to access website put together by the Department for Education. Get Into Teaching also has a page dedicated to non-UK Teachers. If you are a refugee and a doctor you may be eligible for help from the General Medical Council.
English language requirements  	To work in your profession in the UK, you will require a very good level of English and most employers will require IELTS certification (International English Language Testing System). The test is recognised as the best indicator of a good ability to communicate in English and assesses listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The fee for IELTS is approximately £185 (price correct July 2022) Some areas of work require subject specific language skills. If you are a medical professional and wish to work in the healthcare sector, you will also need to pass an OET (Occupational English Test). The fee for OET is approximately £320 (price correct June 2022) The Phoenix Project provides English language sessions and other support services to refugee and other displaced doctors.
UK-ENIC 	As well as requiring a high level of English, some qualifications gained abroad are not given the same status in the UK. If you did not get your qualifications in the UK, they may not be recognised in this country. UK ENIC is the UK National Information Centre for international qualifications and skills and provides an online service that compares overseas qualifications to the UK education system. The service provides a Statement of Comparability which is recognised by UK employers and universities. The service costs around £50 + VAT (price correct July 2022)

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Additional resources

- [Expatica](#) has a section devoted to employment basics in the UK with several guides available from work-life balance to understanding British Office culture.
- [Prospects](#) also produces a guide which is aimed at graduates and professionals.
- [Robert Walters](#) is a professional recruitment company with has some good advice including career advice and help with job searching
- The Low-Income Tax Reform group has a [section](#) with advice on how to deal with tax issues faced by migrants coming to and leaving the UK.
- “[Succeed in the workplace](#)’ is an online course from the Open University designed to help you find a job that suits your interests and values.
- The [Refugee Employment Network](#) is a national membership network focussed on creating better job opportunities for refugees across the UK. There are regularly updated job opportunities on the website.
- [TERN](#) is the Entrepreneurial Refugee Network, a non-profit that supports refugees to start their own business.
- This [blog](#) has a lot of good information and is written by someone with lived experience of coming from another country to work in the UK. This is written from a personal perspective so some information may not be correct.



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- **ACAS** - The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service which gives employees and employers free, impartial advice on workplace rights, rules and best practice.
- **Certificate of good character** is a letter or certificate from an overseas authority confirming part or all of your criminal record history. They sometimes have different names, e.g. Certificate of Good Conduct.
- **CSCS** – The Construction Skills Certification Scheme is a health and safety qualification for construction workers. Reputable employers will insist that all workers pass this test.
- **DBS - Disclosure and Barring Service**, which is a way for employers check your criminal record, to help decide whether you are a suitable person to work for them
- **HMRC – His Majesties Revenue and Customs** is the UK tax office.
- **IELTS** – International English Language Testing System is an international standardised test of English language proficiency for people who want to study or work in some professions
- A **Job Description** sets out the purpose of a role and the main tasks to be carried out.
- **Labour exploitation** means the abuse of people in the workplace for profit. For example, being forced to work long hours without breaks or subjected to poor workplace health and safety, working conditions.
- **NINO - National Insurance Number** is a reference number for paying tax, national insurance and claiming benefits
- **NRPF** – No Recourse to Public Funding is a condition applied to some people's immigration status which means they are not entitled to claim certain UK benefits or housing assistance
- **OET** – Occupational English Test is an English language test for healthcare professionals
- A **Person Specification** is a description of the qualifications, skills, experience, knowledge and other attributes needed to perform a particular job.

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- **PPE** – Personal Protective Equipment is specialised clothing or equipment to protect an employee against exposure to chemical, biological or physical harm.
- **Share Code** is a personal identifier that proves a worker's immigration status. Using an online service, potential employers can easily and quickly check that migrant workers have the right to work in the UK.
- **Shortage Occupation List** is a list of jobs where UK businesses and employers face a shortage of workers.
- **SIA stands for Security Industry Authority**. An SIA licence permits people to work in security jobs such as door supervisors or CCTV operators.
- **SSP** - Statutory sick pay is paid to employees who are off work due to illness for more than three consecutive workdays
- **Sworn Oath** - swearing an oath relating to a document means that you are using the law to guarantee that what is contained within the document is the truth.
- **Trade Unions** are groups of employees who join together to maintain and improve their conditions of employment.
- **Transferable skills** are those you can carry from one job to another or can be applied to a wide range of different jobs and industries.
- **UK-ENIC** – is the UK National Information Centre for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills.
- **Vocational qualifications** are practical qualifications that relate to a specific job or career sector.
- **Zero-hour contracts** are a type of employment contract that does not provide the worker with a guaranteed number of work hours. This means you could have different hours or days each week, and there may be periods where you're not needed at all.

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The 'Working in the UK Toolkit' was produced in 2022 for Connecting Opportunities
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with assistance from Connecting Opportunities Champions

For interactive PDF copies of this Toolkit, please email

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