

# **International recruitment of care workers following changes to the Health and Care visa in February 2022: What can we learn from the research?**

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# Acknowledgement and disclaimer

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# Changes to UK immigration policy

To help meet the staffing shortages in frontline adult social care

- 27 January 2021  
'Senior care workers' added to shortage occupation list (SOC 6146)

- 15 February 2022  
'Care workers' added to shortage occupation list (SOC 6145)

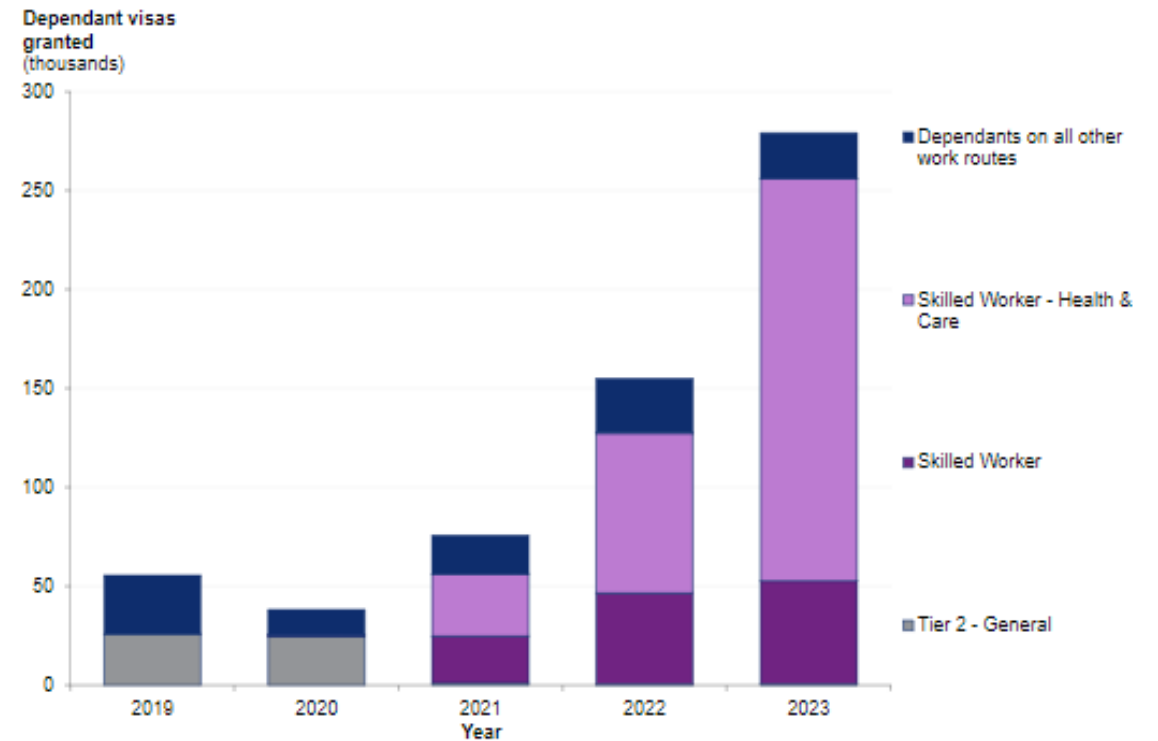
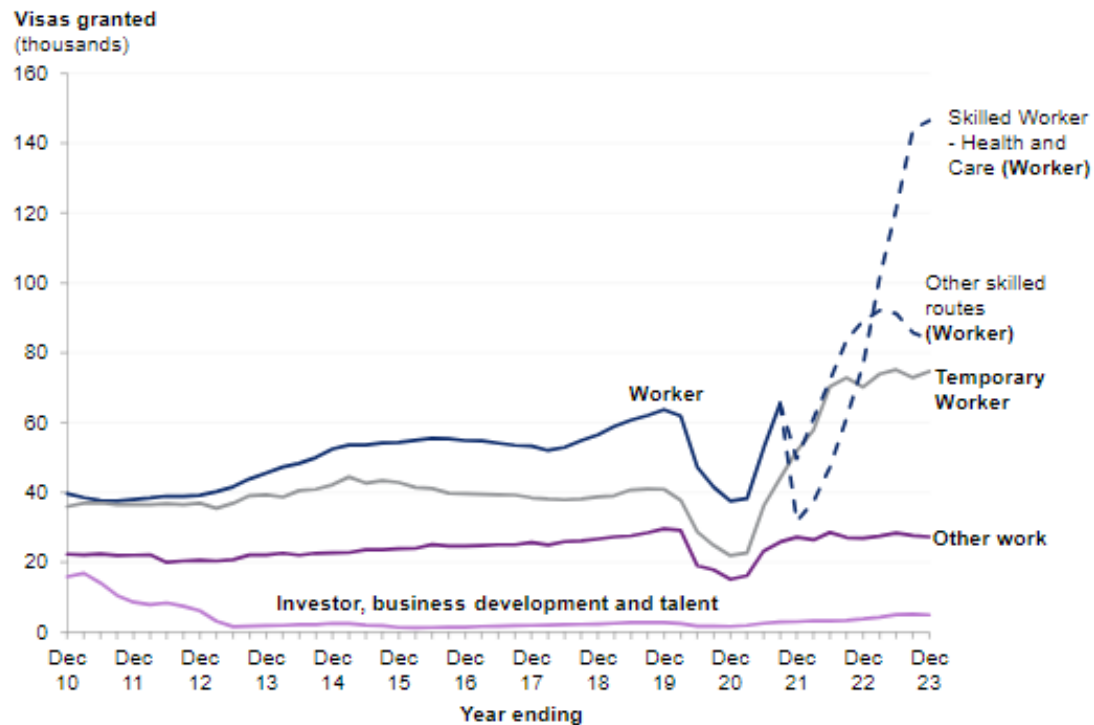
Allowed people from other countries to apply for a Health and Care Worker visa to work as a with a licensed UK employer who acts as sponsor.

- 11 March 2024  
Health and Care Visa applicants can no longer bring dependants to the UK as part of their visa

Health and Care Visa holders who are already in the UK can bring dependants whilst on their current visa



# Visas issued for Health and Care workers and their dependents



<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2023/why-do-people-come-to-the-uk-to-work>

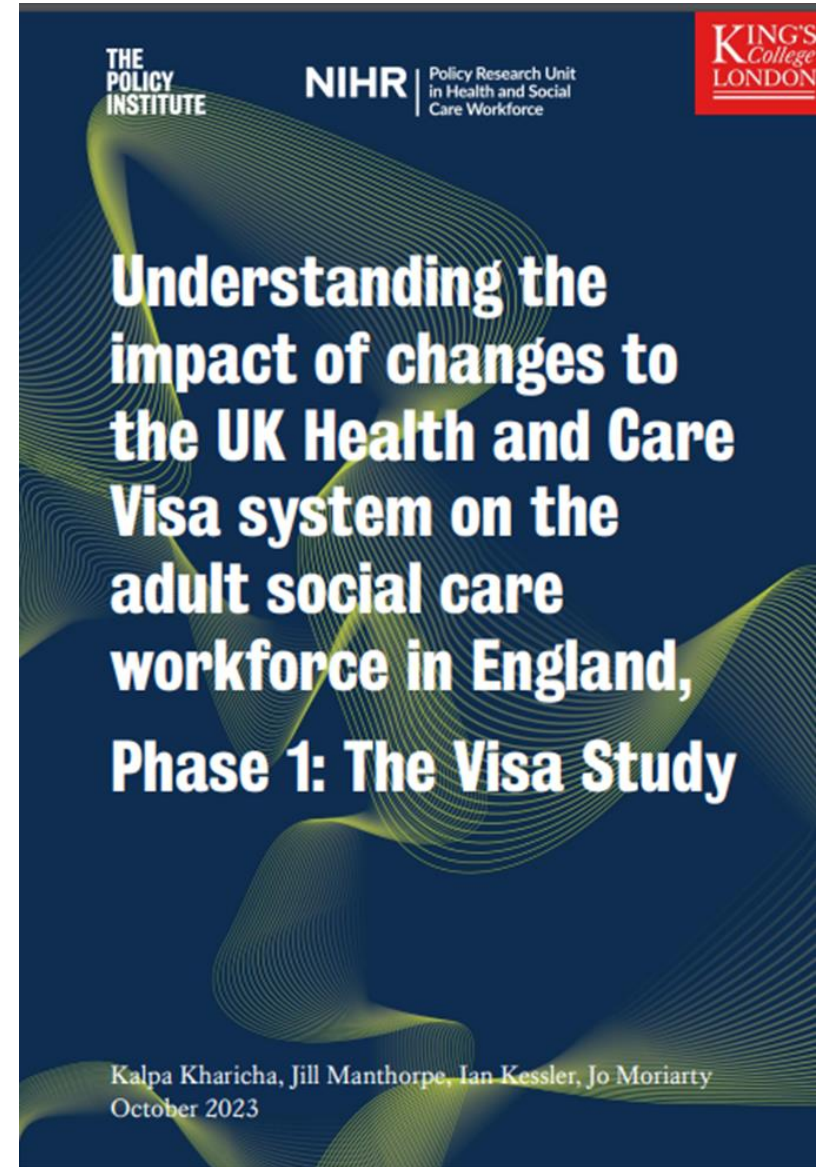
Published 29 February 2024

# The Visa study

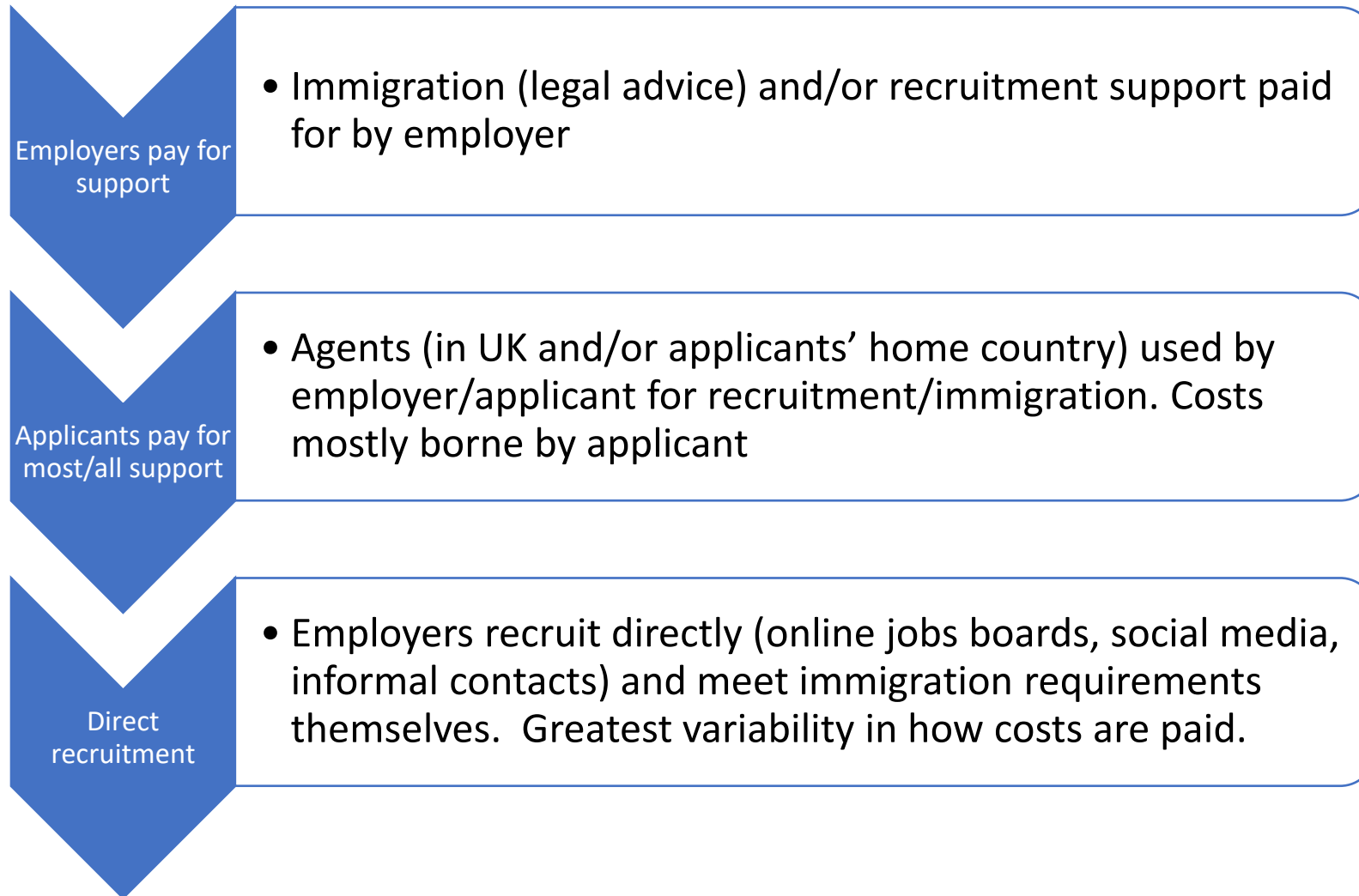
April 22-April 23

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- Internationally recruited care workers & dependants
  - Diverse adult social care providers
  - Brokerage/legal/recruitment agencies
  - Sector experts
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- Care provider reasons for and against international recruitment
  - Care worker motivations, ambitions, experiences of settling and starting work in UK



# Models of support and cost



Additional costs met variably:

- international travel,
- initial and longer-term accommodation,
- orientation and settling in UK and starting work,
- pastoral support

Contractual repayment clause (in Code of Practice) to recoup costs if employee leaves early

Care workers reported paying between £3-13K

# Particular challenges

- Costs and paying back debt
- Longer-term accommodation and location
- English language
- Dependency on sponsor / costs of moving to another sponsor
- Vulnerability to exploitation

# Internationally recruited care workers and dependents (n=29)

- Internationally recruited care workers compared to domestically recruited peers:
  - Predominantly female
  - Younger (most were aged 25-39 years old)
  - Skill level high (in terms of formal qualifications and experience)
    - nurses and graduates,
    - professional training in other subjects
    - paid and unpaid experience of care work
- Previous experience of working in other countries. Ability to bring dependent children makes UK an attractive option for longer-term settling
- Almost all Health and Care visa holders with dependents, initially came to the UK alone, with the plan to bring their dependents once they had settled and secured appropriate accommodation
  - Travel and accommodation challenging in rural/expensive parts of England



# Dependents

- Dependents already in UK had paid or unpaid roles
  - Paid roles: care workers and auxiliary roles in kitchen and housekeeping in care homes, warehouses and food delivery
  - Unpaid roles: eg ran a virtual diaspora group on a voluntary basis supporting individuals looking to move to the UK on the Health and Care visa
- Dependents have flexibility in type of work and terms of contract
  - Dependents: Change jobs as needed eg agency care worker - care assistant (care home) - healthcare assistant (NHS hospital) within 9-10 months
  - Care providers: part-time roles, responsive to fluctuating demands for care and turnover of staff.

# Implications and current work

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- Visa Study has identified factors to expediate and improve international recruitment and immigration processes, promote ethical practice and safeguards for people who seek care work and longer-term opportunities in the UK
- Policies that deter people from moving and staying in the UK may put further pressures on workforce shortages and the availability of care for those with care and support needs.
- Whilst long-standing issues of pay, terms and conditions and the value placed on social care work remain, international recruitment of care workers has potential to contribute to workforce shortages in adult social care

Current work – due to report early summer 2024

- Evaluation of International Recruitment Fund 2023-2024

Local authority led partnerships at regional / sub-regional level

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-recruitment-fund-for-the-adult-social-care-sector>

 GOV.UK

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Guidance

## **International recruitment fund for the adult social care sector**

Information on the £15 million fund to help tackle the barriers of international recruitment, while upholding ethical recruitment and employment practices.

# Thank you

Study participants who shared their views and experiences.

Thank you for listening

Any comments or questions?

For more information

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<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/visa-study>

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/international-recruitment-fund-for-adult-social-care>

