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immigration barristers

**IMMIGRATION
ROUTES
FOR
SPORTSPERSONS**



IMMIGRATION ROUTES FOR SPORTSPERSONS

The UK is a top destination for athletes and sporting professionals in a diverse range of disciplines. Whether you are a sportsperson, coach or club, our immigration barristers are well versed in the full range of UK visas available to sportspersons who wish to visit, or work in, the UK.

Our specialist immigration barristers work closely with professional and amateur sportspersons, employers and event organisers across all sports to ensure that their immigration and visa requirements are met.

General visa information

If you want to work as a sportsperson, undertaking sporting activities in the UK, you will normally need to have a visa under one of the tiers of the points-based system. The points-based system has special categories and rules for those in the sporting industry, both professional and amateur. In most categories you will have to be sponsored by an employer. However, if you are going to be in the UK briefly, or for a single event or activity, one of the visitor visas may be appropriate.

The main immigration routes available to sportspersons are:

- Visit (Standard) – Business Sports
- Tier 2 (Sportsperson)
- Permitted Paid Engagement
- Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Sporting)

Employers, clubs and event organisers

If you want to employ someone who does not already have the right to work in the UK, you will need to sponsor them. All companies and organisations who want to sponsor their employees must obtain a Sponsor Licence.

To sponsor a sportsperson under the Tier 2 (Sportsperson) or Tier 5 (Temporary Worker: Creative and Sporting) categories, you must be a sporting body, sports club, event organiser or other organiser operating, or intending to work in, the sporting sector. Agents cannot be sponsors.

You will need to obtain an endorsement from the governing body for your sport, which must be recognised by the Home Office. The endorsement will confirm that you are a genuine club or similar organisation and have a legitimate requirement to bring migrants to the UK as sportspersons. If the governing body for your sport is not recognised by the Home Office, it is important to ensure you plan well ahead if intending to sponsor any migrants, as it can take up to 6 months for a governing body to be added to the approved list.

Players on loan: if you sponsor a sportsperson you will have special duties if they are on loan to another club. You can only loan and accept loaned players if your governing body permits this. If one of your players is moving on loan then you must report this to the Home Office. The player may only be loaned if they will return to your club after the loan period. You will continue to be responsible for the player and must make arrangements with the loan club so that you can continue to meet your sponsor duties. The loan club does not need to make an application for an endorsement or have a Sponsor Licence.

If the player is permanently transferred, you must inform the Home Office and the new club must make an application for the player, both for an endorsement and a visa. The player must be granted leave to play for the new club before they begin playing for them. If a player is on loan from an overseas club to a UK club, you must meet all the requirements of Tier 2 or Tier 5 and have a governing body endorsement.

	Visit (Standard) Business Sports	Permitted Paid Engagement	Tier 2 (Sportsperson)	Tier 5 (Temporary Worker)
Maximum length of initial visa	6 months*	1 month	3 years	12 months or length of engagement
Extension	X	X	Up to 6 years in this category in total	X
Settlement	X	X	✓	X
Sponsor Licence required	X	X	✓	✓
Minimum salary requirement	X	X	X	X
Restrictions	Permitted Sports Visitor activities only	Permitted Paid Engagements only	Must work for sponsoring employer	Must undertake role sponsored for
Dependants	X	X	✓	✓

* It is also possible to obtain a Visitor (Standard) visa for 1, 2, 5 or 10 years. However, each visit must last no more than 6 months.

Visit (Standard) Business Sports

The Visit (Standard) – Business Sports visa is for non-EEA nationals who are seeking to come to the UK to take part in a sports tournament, event or series of events.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to be granted a Visit (Standard) – Business Sports visa, you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that you are a genuine visitor. This means that you:

- Will leave the UK at the end of your visit;
- Will not live in the UK for extended periods through frequent or successive visits, or make the UK your main home;
- Are genuinely seeking entry for a purpose that is permitted by the visitor routes and will not undertake any prohibited activities;
- Have sufficient funds to cover all reasonable costs in relation to your visit without working or accessing public funds.

Visit (Standard) – Business Sports visa holders may undertake a wide range of business activities in the UK. In terms of sporting business activities, a sportsperson may:

- Take part in a sports tournament or sports event as an individual or part of a team;
- Make personal appearances and take part in promotional activities; take part in 'trials' provided they are not in front of a paying audience;
- Take part in short periods of training provided they are not being paid by a UK sporting body; and
- Join an amateur team or club to gain experience in a particular sport.

Personal or technical staff of the sportsperson, or sports officials, may support the activities mentioned above, if they are attending the same event as the sports person, and are employed to work for them outside the UK.

What else do I need to know?

Most visitors will need to make an application for a visit visa from their country of residence, before travelling. However, nationals of some countries are exempt from this requirement and can simply apply for leave to enter as a visitor at the UK border.

A Visit (Standard) – Business Sports visa will allow you to stay in the UK for up to 6 months. Within the period for which your visit visa is valid, you may enter and leave the UK multiple times, unless the visit visa is endorsed as a single or dual-entry visa. You may also apply for a long-term visa if you can prove that you need to make repeated visits over a longer period.

You may visit friends and family and/or come to the UK for a holiday. You may also undertake a maximum of 30 days incidental study.

You will not be permitted to work, receive payment from a UK source for any activities undertaken in the UK or undertake more than 30 days' non-incidental study in the UK.

You must have sufficient funds to cover all reasonable costs in relation to your visit without working or accessing public funds. This includes the cost of your return or onward journey, any costs relating to dependants, and the cost of planned activities.

Permitted Paid Engagement

The Permitted Paid Engagement visa is for non-EEA nationals over the age of 18 who wish to come to the UK for a short paid engagement, without having to be sponsored.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

You will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that:

- You intend to undertake specific pre-arranged paid work within the sporting sector;
- The work relates to your area of expertise or occupation overseas;
- You have been invited by a UK-based sporting organisation or client;
- You will leave the UK at the end of your visit;
- You have sufficient funds to maintain and accommodate yourself during your visit.

What else do I need to know?

The Permitted Paid Engagement visa category is open to all full time sporting professionals.

You must be invited to the UK by a sports organisation which is involved in organising or staging sporting events or matches. Agents and broadcasters may also invite sportspersons to the UK.

The engagement in the UK must be relevant to your expertise or employment overseas. UK Visas and Immigration will expect to see evidence confirming where you work and your expertise.

You will be allowed to stay in the UK for up to 1 month.

During your stay you will be able to undertake certain specific activities. For example, a professional footballer may enter to give a paid interview and also attend meetings to discuss a contract.

Tier 2 (Sportsperson)

The Tier 2 (Sportsperson) visa is designed specifically for elite sportspersons and coaches internationally established at the highest level, whose employment will make a significant contribution to the development of their sport at the highest level in the UK, and who will base themselves in the UK.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to qualify for a Tier 2 (Sportsperson) visa, you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that:

- You are an elite sportsperson or qualified coach;
- You have a job offer in the UK from an employer that holds a Tier 2 Sponsor Licence;
- Your application must be endorsed by your sport's appropriate governing body, as recognised by the Home Office. The governing body should confirm to the Home Office that:
- You are internationally established at the highest level;
- You will make a significant contribution to the development of your sport at the highest level in the UK;
- It is suitable to fill the post with a migrant and not someone who is already settled in the UK.
- You have knowledge of English to the required level;
- You have enough money to support yourself without relying on public funds.

The Home Office maintain a list of sporting bodies who can endorse applications e.g. the Football Association, the England Wales Cricket Board and the Royal Caledonian Curling Club. There are around 60 endorsing bodies covering a wide range of sports.

Each endorsing body has its own set of criteria.

What else do I need to know?

If your application for a Tier 2 (Sportsperson) visa is approved then your first visa can be valid for a maximum period of 3 years.

Your partner and any children under the age of 18 may accompany you as your dependents.

You can apply to extend your stay for up to another 3 years, as long as your total stay is not more than 6 years.

You can settle permanently in the UK after being in the Tier 2 (Sportsperson) category for five years, and if you have been in the UK in certain other immigration categories you may be able to combine the time spent to count towards settlement.

You must work for your sponsor in the job described in your CoS. You may do a second job, play for your national team in the UK, temporarily work as a sports broadcaster, do voluntary work and study, as long as this does not interfere with the job that you have been sponsored for.

Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Sporting)

The Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Sporting) visa is for sportspersons who wish to work in the UK for a temporary period.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to qualify for a Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Sporting) visa you will need to have been offered work in the sports industry (for example, as a sportsperson or coach).

You will need to have a certificate of sponsorship from a licensed sponsor before you can apply for a Tier 5 (Temporary Worker - Sporting) visa.

You will need to be endorsed by the governing body for your sport. They must be satisfied that:

- You are internationally established at the highest level; and/or
- Your employment will make a significant contribution to the development of your sport at the highest level in the UK; and
- Your post could not be filled by a suitable settled worker.

The Home Office maintain a list of sporting bodies who can endorse applications e.g. the Football Association, the England Wales Cricket Board and the Royal Caledonian Curling Club. There are around 60 endorsing bodies covering a wide range of sports.

Each endorsing body has its own set of criteria.

What else do I need to know?

You will be permitted to come to the UK for up to 12 months.

This category does not lead to settlement in the UK.

There is no English Language requirement in the Tier 5 category.

It is possible to switch into Tier 2, if you are still required for your position and are able to meet the English Language requirements for Tier 2.

At Richmond Chambers LLP, our immigration barristers provide expert advice to sportspersons, coaches and clubs on UK visa and immigration requirements. We assist professional and amateur sportspersons, employers and event organisers across all sports to ensure that they can visit and undertake sporting activities in the UK.

For advice and assistance with applying for a UK sportsperson visa, contact our immigration barristers on **020 3617 9173** or by email to **info@richmondchambers.com**.