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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 an International Sportsperson visa. You will need to be sponsored on a short or long-term contract and have been endorsed by an appropriate UK sports governing body. 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:

- Standard Visitor
- International Sportsperson
- Permitted Paid Engagement

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 International Sportsperson route, you must be a UK-based sporting body, sports club, events organiser or other organiser operating in the sporting sector. Agents and overseas-based sports clubs and organisations cannot sponsor workers on the International Sportsperson route.

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 the sports player has permission as an International Sportsperson, they are sponsored by a sports club and player loans are specifically permitted by the relevant sports governing body. 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.

	Standard Visitor	Permitted Paid Engagement	International Sportsperson
Maximum length of initial visa	6 months*	1 month	Either 12 months or 3 years
Extension	X	X	✓
Settlement	X	X	✓
Sponsor Licence required	X	X	✓
Minimum salary requirement	X	X	X
Restrictions	Permitted Sporting activities only	Permitted Paid Engagements only	Must work for sponsoring employer
Dependants	X	X	✓

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

Standard Visitor

The Standard Visitor visa is for individuals 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 Standard Visitor 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.

Standard Visitor visa holders may undertake a wide range of business activities in the UK. In terms of sporting visitor 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' with no 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 Standard Visitor 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 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 available to established sportspersons 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?

In order to be granted a Permitted Paid Engagement visa, you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that:

- You intend to undertake specific pre-arranged paid work within the sporting sector;
- You have been invited by a UK-based sporting organisation, agent, agency or broadcaster;
- The work relates to your full-time profession;
- You will leave the UK at the end of your visit;
- You have sufficient funds to maintain and yourself during your visit;

What else do I need to know?

The Permitted Paid Engagement visa category is open to all full time established sporting professionals. You will need to show that you are an established sportsperson in your home country through, for example, media coverage, awards or proof of recent performances.

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 for one single visit.

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.

You will be able to receive payment for your work in the UK.

Most visitors will need to make an application for a Permitted Paid Engagement 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 Permitted Paid Engagement visitor at the UK border.

International Sportsperson

The International Sportsperson visa is designed for elite sportspersons and qualified sports coaches over the age of 16 who are internationally recognised as being at the highest level of their sport internationally. Applicants need to be sponsored on a short or long-term contract and have been endorsed by an appropriate UK sports governing body.

What are the main eligibility requirements?

In order to qualify for an International Sportsperson visa, you will need to satisfy UK Visas and Immigration that:

- You have a job offer in the UK from an employer that holds an International Sportsperson sponsor licence;
- You have been endorsed by an appropriate UK Sports Governing Body;
- You genuinely intend, and are able, to undertake the role for which you are being sponsored;
- You satisfy an English requirement (if applying for an International Sportsperson visa for a period exceeding 12 months);
- You have enough money to support yourself without relying on public funds.

Your sponsor will be a UK-based sporting body, sports club, events organiser or other organiser operating in the sporting sector and will hold a sports sponsor licence. Agents and overseas-based sports clubs and organisations cannot sponsor workers on the International Sportsperson route.

The relevant UK Sports Governing Body for your sport will need to confirm that:

- You are internationally established at the highest level; and
- You will make a significant contribution to your sport at the highest level in the UK.

What else do I need to know?

International Sportsperson visas are available for a period of either 12 months or less, or for a period exceeding 12 months.

If your International Sportsperson visa application is successful, you will be permitted to work in the job you have been sponsored for. Supplementary employment and study will also be permitted.

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

International Sportspersons who have, at any point in the last 5 years, been granted leave as an International Sportsperson for a period exceeding 12 months, can apply for settlement (indefinite leave to remain) in the UK after 5 years' continuous residence in the UK.

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**.