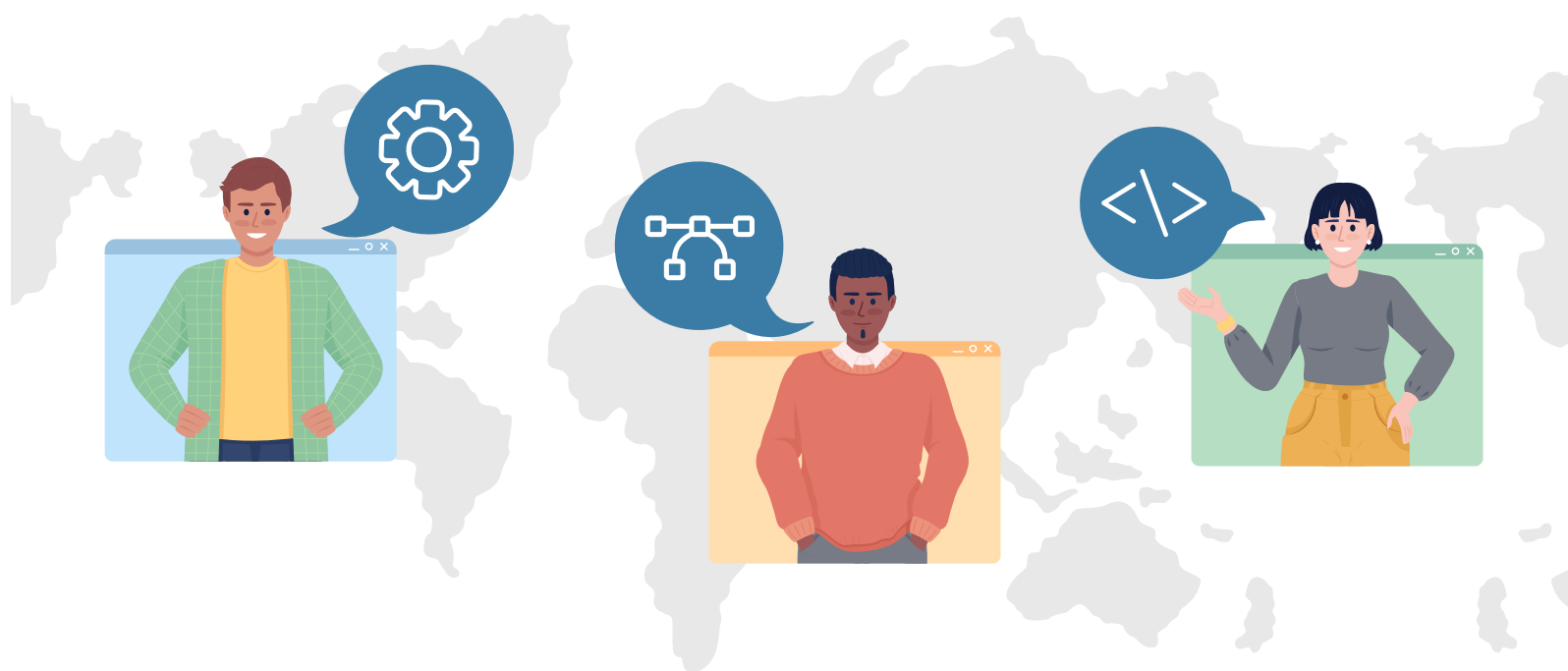




Recruiting overseas workers?

Get the basics right from the start



You didn't get in to dentistry
to deal with HR headaches,
endless admin and payroll
stress. *We did.*

Recruiting Overseas Workers?

Get the Basics Right from the Start

The recruitment challenges facing dentistry are well documented and, for many practices, recruiting overseas workers has become an important part of attracting and retaining talented clinicians.

Whether you're employing an overseas dentist, dental nurse or another member of the practice team, becoming a licensed sponsor can open up opportunities that may otherwise not be available. However, it's important to remember that obtaining a sponsor licence is only the first step. From that point onwards, there are ongoing responsibilities which need to become part of your day-to-day people management.

In my experience, most practices don't encounter difficulties because they have deliberately failed to meet their obligations. More often than not, issues arise because they weren't fully aware of what was expected of them or they simply didn't have the right processes in place from the outset.

The good news is that sponsor licence compliance doesn't need to be complicated. If you invest time in understanding your responsibilities and build good HR practices from the beginning, compliance soon becomes part of business as usual.

Here are some practical tips I'd recommend for any dental practice considering, or already employing, overseas workers.



1. Get the Right Advice from the Outset

Before applying for a sponsor licence or making an offer to an overseas candidate, take the time to understand exactly what becoming a sponsor involves.

There are a number of organisations who specialise in supporting employers through the sponsorship process, including immigration advisers and sponsor licence specialists. Seeking advice early will help you understand your responsibilities, avoid common pitfalls and ensure your practice is properly prepared before recruitment begins.

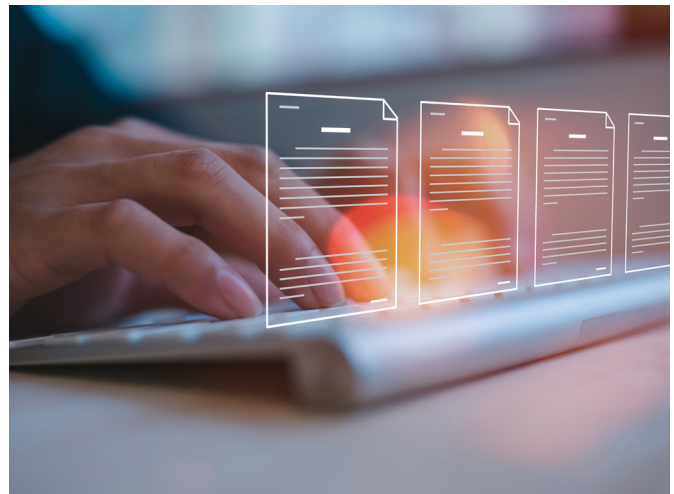
It's far easier to build compliant processes from the beginning than it is to correct issues later.

2. Understand That Sponsorship Doesn't End Once Someone Starts Work

A common misconception is that once a visa has been approved and your new colleague joins the practice, the process is complete.

In reality, this is where your responsibilities as a sponsor really begin.

Your obligations continue throughout the individual's employment and include maintaining accurate records, monitoring attendance, reporting relevant changes and ensuring they continue to work in the role for which they were sponsored.



3. Decide Who Is Responsible for Sponsor Licence Compliance

One of the first questions I would ask any practice is, "Who owns sponsor licence compliance?"

Whether that's the Practice Owner, Practice Manager or someone within your HR team, there should be one individual with overall responsibility for ensuring sponsor duties are met.

Having clear ownership helps ensure compliance remains part of your everyday processes rather than something that's only considered when a visa is due for renewal.



4. Don't Underestimate the Importance of Good Record Keeping Good HR administration is at the heart of sponsor licence compliance.

Personnel files should be accurate, organised and up to date. This includes Right to Work evidence, immigration documentation, employment contracts, job descriptions, salary information and up-to-date contact details.

If the Home Office ever requests information, you'll want to be confident that everything can be produced quickly and accurately.

5. Make Right to Work Checks Part of Your Recruitment Process

Every employer has a responsibility to carry out compliant Right to Work checks, regardless of whether someone requires sponsorship.

Ensure you're using the correct process for each employee and remember that some workers will require follow-up checks where permission to work is time limited. Having a consistent recruitment process helps reduce the risk of mistakes.

6. Keep the Home Office Updated

One area that's often overlooked is the requirement to report certain changes during employment.

Changes to salary, working hours, work location or employment status may all need to be reported depending on the circumstances.

If you're unsure whether something needs reporting, seek advice rather than making assumptions.

7. Remember the Role Must Continue to Meet Sponsorship Requirements

As practices evolve, so do jobs.

If someone's duties change significantly or they're moving into a different role, don't assume their sponsorship automatically covers those changes.

It's always worth checking before changes are implemented.

8. Good Attendance Management Matters

Attendance management isn't just good HR practice—it also forms part of your responsibilities as a sponsor.

Practices should have systems in place to record attendance, annual leave and any periods of unauthorised absence.

In reality, if your HR processes are working well generally, you're already doing much of what the Home Office expects to see.



9. Review Sponsored Employees Regularly

Immigration rules change, salary thresholds change and sometimes people's roles change too.

Rather than waiting until a visa extension is due, build regular reviews into your normal HR processes to ensure everything remains compliant.

These reviews don't need to be complicated, but they can help identify potential issues before they become bigger problems.

10. Make Sure Your Managers Understand Their Responsibilities

Sponsor licence compliance shouldn't sit with one person alone.

Practice managers and anyone involved in recruitment or managing sponsored colleagues should understand the basics, including Right to Work checks, reporting responsibilities and when to seek advice.

A little knowledge across the management team can prevent a lot of unnecessary problems.

11. Be Ready — Not Worried

The possibility of a Home Office compliance visit understandably makes some employers nervous.

My advice is simple: don't prepare for a visit, prepare your everyday processes.

Practices with good HR systems, well-maintained records and a clear understanding of their responsibilities generally have nothing to fear. Compliance shouldn't be something that's only considered when an inspection is announced—it should simply form part of good people management.

Final Thoughts

International recruitment is helping many dental practices address ongoing workforce challenges, and for many businesses it will continue to play an important role.

Like many aspects of employment, success comes down to having the right foundations in place. By understanding your responsibilities, seeking advice where needed and embedding good HR practices into everyday management, sponsor licence compliance becomes far less daunting and much easier to maintain.

As HR professionals, we often say that prevention is better than cure. Sponsor licence compliance is no different. Investing time at the outset can help protect your practice, your sponsor licence and, most importantly, the talented people you've worked hard to recruit.