



The Workplace Justice Visa Amendment

Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026

Summary

This amendment introduces a Workplace Justice Visa for migrant workers in the UK, who have experienced labour exploitation or abuse. The visa would provide exploited workers with a temporary permission to remain and work in the UK while they pursue a workplace claim, participate in an investigation and/or seek forms of redress.

John McDonnell MP will table this amendment to the [Immigration and Asylum Bill](#) 2026 at Report Stage.

The Amendment

Workplace Justice Visa

1. The Secretary of State must within the period of three months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed, make provision in the Immigration Rules for a "Workplace Justice Visa" in accordance with this section.
2. A Workplace Justice Visa may be granted to a person who —
 - a. has experienced a "workplace justice matter" as defined in subsection (3) below; and
 - b. requires permission to remain in the United Kingdom in order to:
 - i. leave exploitative employment;
 - ii. report exploitation to a public authority;
 - iii. participate in an investigation related to the exploitation;
 - iv. participate in legal proceedings related to the exploitation;
 - v. recover unpaid wages, compensation or other employment-related remedies related to the exploitation; or
 - vi. otherwise secure redress arising from the exploitation.
3. For the purposes of this section "workplace justice matter" means labour exploitation, forced labour, trafficking for labour exploitation, slavery, servitude, debt bondage, or other breaches of employment rights in the United Kingdom as the Secretary of State may make provision for in the Immigration Rules.

4. A person is eligible (subject to any other requirements the Secretary of State may require under the Immigration Rules) to apply if they —
 - a. hold valid permission to enter or remain and work in the United Kingdom; or
 - b. submit an application within six months of the expiry of their most recent grant of permission to enter or remain and work in the United Kingdom, provided that the workplace exploitation occurred during the period in which they held permission to work.
5. If the Secretary of State is satisfied all the suitability and relevant eligibility requirements for a Workplace Justice Visa is met, the application will be granted.
6. Eligibility shall not depend upon —
 - a. the applicant's immigration route;
 - b. sponsorship by an employer;
 - c. the length of time remaining on an existing visa;
 - d. whether the applicant continues to be employed by the employer responsible for the exploitation.
7. The Secretary of State may require certification that the applicant has experienced a workplace justice matter from one or more prescribed bodies, including —
 - a. the Fair Work Agency; or
 - b. an accredited body.
8. The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the accreditation of bodies for the purposes of subsection (7)(b), including legal advice providers, trade unions and such other organisations as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.
9. A Workplace Justice Visa shall —
 - a. grant permission to remain in the United Kingdom for a period of 12 months;
 - b. permit the holder to undertake employment, self-employment or voluntary work without restriction;
 - c. permit the holder to change employer without requiring the permission of the Secretary of State;
 - d. be renewable in periods of up to 12 months where this is necessary to enable the holder to pursue a workplace justice matter, including the conclusion of any investigation, legal proceedings or enforcement action and the securing of any relevant remedy or redress;
 - e. permit access to legal aid;
 - f. permit the holder to be accompanied by, or remain with, any partner and any dependent child who would have been entitled to accompany or remain with the holder under the conditions of the holder's most recent grant of permission to enter or remain in the United Kingdom; and
 - g. not prohibit the holder from making an application for any other form of leave to remain for which they may be eligible.
10. An application for, or the granting of, a Workplace Justice Visa shall not prejudice any investigation or determination relating to any workplace justice matter or immigration status.
11. The Secretary of State must publish guidance on the operation of the Workplace Justice Visa ("Workplace Justice Visa guidance"), including arrangements for referrals, accreditation and cooperation between labour market enforcement bodies and immigration authorities.
12. The Secretary of State may, from time to time, revise the Workplace Justice Visa guidance published under subsection (11).

13. For the purposes of this section “Immigration Rules” means rules under section 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971;

The Problem

Migrant workers can lose their immigration status when they try to leave exploitation.

The UK immigration system creates significant barriers for migrant workers seeking to leave or challenge labour exploitation and abuse.

Many migrant workers in the UK are recruited through employer-sponsored or otherwise restrictive visa routes, including the Skilled Worker, Overseas Domestic Worker and Agricultural Seasonal Worker routes, which means their right to live and work in the UK depends on their continued employment.

As a result, workers experiencing labour exploitation — including underpayment, wage theft, excessive hours, unlawful deductions, unsafe conditions, discrimination and/or modern slavery — may be unable or unwilling to leave their employer or report abuse, because doing so can jeopardise their immigration status and limit their ability to find alternative work.

These barriers can persist even after a worker has left an exploitative employer. Workers whose immigration permission is close to expiring are often unable to remain in the UK long enough to pursue a workplace claim, participate in an investigation or obtain compensation.

Other workers may have become undocumented, including as a direct consequence of exploitation, and fear that approaching an enforcement body will expose them to immigration enforcement. Where sponsorship ends or an employer loses their sponsor licence, workers may have as little as 60 days to secure new sponsorship or leave the UK.

Without an independent immigration status that allows workers to leave exploitation safely, workers most at risk of abuse are also those least able to challenge it.

Why it matters

Immigration insecurity undermines workers’ rights and labour market enforcement.

The UK Government has committed to strengthening employment rights and improving labour market enforcement, for example through the [Employment Rights Act 2025](#) and the establishment of the [Fair Work Agency](#).

However, these reforms will only succeed if workers are able to report breaches and participate in enforcement action without putting their ability to remain and work in the UK at risk.

Migrant workers are often the people best placed to identify exploitation. They know where wages are being withheld, where unlawful deductions are taking place, where employers are circumventing employment law, and where abusive practices are occurring. Yet, the current immigration system

discourages workers from coming forward, as this puts their livelihoods at risk. This has negative consequences for workers' rights and labour market enforcement because:

- exploitative employers are less likely to be identified and held accountable;
- workers are less able to recover unpaid wages or obtain compensation;
- enforcement bodies lose access to crucial intelligence and evidence;
- employers that comply with employment law are undercut by businesses able to exploit migrant workers; and
- workers who leave abusive employment without secure immigration status can be pushed into destitution, irregular work and further exploitation.

International Examples

- Australia: [Workplace Justice Visa](#)
- Finland: [Certificate due to Exploitation by Employer](#)
- Ireland: [The Reactivation Employer Permit](#)
- Canada: [Open work permit for vulnerable workers](#)
- New Zealand: [Migrant Exploitation Protection Work Visa](#)



The Remedy

Provide a safety net for vulnerable workers.

The amendment would require the Government to establish a Workplace Justice Visa for migrant workers who have experienced labour exploitation in the UK. The visa would provide temporary permission to remain and work where this is necessary for the worker to pursue workplace justice, including to:

- report exploitation to a relevant public authority;
- participate in an investigation;
- bring or participate in legal proceedings;
- recover unpaid wages, compensation or other sums owed; and
- pursue another appropriate form of workplace redress.

Workers granted the visa would have the right to work and to change employers, enabling them to support themselves while pursuing their case rather than remaining dependent on an exploitative employer. The route would be temporary and purpose-specific. Applications would be supported by evidence that the worker has experienced workplace exploitation and is taking steps to pursue workplace justice, with appropriate organisations able to support or certify applications.

The amendment would therefore create a bridge between leaving exploitation and obtaining justice.