

UK contracting for expat and overseas workers - the complete guide

Workers who are citizens from non-UK or European Union countries and choose a [contracting career in the UK](#) can enjoy a huge range of benefits from [working](#) and [living](#) in the UK, and can take advantage of skills shortages to win lucrative contracts.

The [expat section](#) of this website provides information on all the key issues likely to face expatriate (expat) contractors coming into the UK, whilst this article will provide a broad outline of the areas of interest.

Most potential contractors who are not UK or EU citizens [must have a visa to live and work in the UK](#), and they may also require [additional entry visas for family members](#). In order to successfully navigate the [UK visa system](#), some expat workers will find it helpful to engage the services of an [immigration adviser](#); they are mostly likely to be needed by [workers who don't qualify for Tier 1 entry requirements](#).

High level skills and experience

Highly qualified workers with the right level of skills and experience can [find contracts in the UK](#). Many non-UK academic [qualifications and professional skills and accreditations are formally recognised](#), and highly valued, by clients and recruiters in the UK.

Contractors can come from a wide range of sectors and disciplines. Demand for specific contractor skills ebbs and flows, but those always in demand, to a greater or lesser extent, include:

- o [Information technology](#) (IT) and telecoms
- o [Engineering](#) and construction
- o Science and technology
- o Medicine and medical technology
- o Marketing, media and management.

Successful contractors have transferable skills and can hit the ground running, creating value for their clients from day one of their contracts.

Finding contract work in the UK

The best qualified contractors are not the ones who win the best contracts. It's the contractors who are best at finding and securing contracts who win the best contracts in the UK contracting market.

It is not necessary for a contractor who qualified for a Tier 1 visa to have work before they come to the UK. However, some expat workers [try to have a contract in place](#) before they come to work in the UK, and others come to the UK first and then [secure their first contract](#) – there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach.

The first place for most new contractors to start finding work is either through their personal contact network, which for many expat contractors will be alumni networks, or through adverts on job boards and in the trade media, both online and print.

Winning contracts

To grab the attention of an agent or client when responding to an advert on a job board or in the trade media, an expat contractor has first to [convert their existing résumé into a high impact, 'killer' CV](#).

The right CV will catch an agent's or client's attention and this will win the contractor an [interview](#) with the client. The interview is the opportunity for the contractor to sell themselves to the client, so a faultless interview technique needs to be developed.

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When the contractor knows the client wants them to work on the contract, it's time for [effective negotiation](#), usually with the agent, to secure the best possible rate and contract conditions. Knowing when to use a professional legal adviser is also a key skill.

The first contract and a trading solution

When a contractor wins their first contract, from day one of that contract they are officially trading and can start billing their client and receiving an income.

However, they need a legal entity or [trading vehicle](#) for the contract, so that they may start to invoice the client or agent. For most new contractors, this is usually either a [limited company](#) or an [umbrella company](#).

In addition, the contractor has to [open business and personal bank accounts](#) in order to receive the income from their contracting business. This can take time, so the sooner a contractor starts the process, often at the same time as the contract search begins, the better.

Tax efficiency and IR35

One of the major benefits of being a contractor in the UK is [tax efficiency](#), which means contractors pay less tax and receive more net income – that is to say, more of their gross income goes into their pocket.

There are a [range of calculators](#) on the ContractorCalculator website that can be used to calculate how much more can be earned by being a contractor. There are also many other useful calculators to allow contractors to plan their finances.

[Understanding how the UK tax system works](#) is very important. In particular, many contractors are affected by important tax legislation called [IR35](#). Failure to understand and allow for IR35 could cost contractors up to 25% of their income.

Contracting in the UK

All that remains is for contractors to stay on top of the [latest news](#) and any changes to tax and regulations – ContractorCalculator is the ideal resource. As well as regularly checking the home page for news and features, expat contractors are recommended to sign up for the free [ContractorCalculator Newsletter](#).

For expat contractors who want a comprehensive and detailed resource on how to become and stay a successful contractor in the UK, there is the [Contractors' Handbook](#), packed full of essential guidance covering every situation a contractor is ever likely to face.

Contracting should provide expat workers with an interesting and fulfilling career, not only helping them use their skills at the cutting edge on some of the world's leading projects, but also having fun and earning good money whilst they do so. The guidance provided by ContractorCalculator and the [Contractors' Handbook](#) will help them do so!

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- [Contractor Financial Profile Calculator](#)

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- [Contractors' Handbook](#)



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