

Benefits to non-UK and non-EU citizens of contracting in the UK

Contractors who are not UK or EU citizens and who want to work on contracts in the UK can benefit in a number of ways. But they will either need a significant amount of cash or have highly-sought-after skills, combined with some business acumen and the attitude required to find and secure a sponsor, and then an ongoing stream of contracts.

It's not just the earning potential and flexible lifestyle that can attract many expatriate (expat) contractors to work in the UK. For many, it is also the opportunity to experience a different culture, to improve their professional skills and to polish their English. Others choose to contract in the UK to enjoy a higher standard of living than may be possible in their country of origin and/or to build up substantial savings.

Plus, as many contractors have IT, telecoms, engineering, oil and gas/energy and technical backgrounds, they have the opportunity to work in sectors where the UK is among the world leaders.

Although virtually all of the previous immigration channels for highly skilled workers from outside the European Economic Area, the Commonwealth and selected other countries are closed to contractors, there are still options for those with cash to invest or who can find a UK-based sponsor.

Financial benefits

Expat contractors who work through their own contracting limited company or, to a lesser extent, through an umbrella company have the opportunity to earn more than by simply being an employee of a UK business.

Not only do contractors generally earn more in fees than the corresponding salary of an employee, but they are also able to use various legal tax planning methods to reduce their tax liability and thus increase their take-home pay.

Many other European nations do not offer such an attractive tax regime as the UK, and levels of corporate taxation are among the lowest in the developed world. There are few restrictions for legitimate business people moving money around the world, which means non-UK and non-EU citizens can share the financial benefits of their UK contracting career with family in their home countries.

Professional development and training

The UK is a world leader in so many areas of business and commerce, science, engineering and technology. This is reflected by the numerous global corporations headquartered or with significant operations in the UK and the huge number of leading universities and research institutes, many of them world class.

Expat contractors have the opportunity to work in these fast-paced, cutting-edge environments, providing them with chances that might not exist in their home country. In fact, expat workers throughout the economy are what make contracting in the UK, and working in the UK in general, so exciting and vibrant.

The UK is also home to many professional bodies that allow contractors from some sectors, such as engineering and science, to benefit from a wealth of continued professional development (CPD) and training opportunities. This makes it relatively easy for expat contractors' qualifications to be matched with or upgraded to the [UK equivalent](#).

Be your own boss

Contractors are not employees, which provides them with considerable control over their work, earnings and lifestyles.

This is never truer than when a client asks a contractor to do something that is not in their original contract. In the UK, employers have a duty to provide their employees with work and this can often result in boring or unattractive tasks, but usually the employee has to do those tasks if they want to keep their job.

A contractor can (and in most cases should) say, 'No – it's not in the contract, so I don't have to do it'. Or they can renegotiate the contract in their favour. Contractors are their own boss and can pick and choose the contracts they want to work on.

Because they are their own boss, and particularly if expat contractors are working through their own contracting limited company, UK contractors are in much greater control of their destiny, financially, professionally and personally.

Lifestyle benefits

Most UK contractors say the flexibility of working on contracts is one of the major attractions. So assuming they have the right visa in place and sufficient funds, expat contractors in the UK can choose whether and when they want to work.

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Non-UK and non-EU citizens who have worked in workplaces and organisations in their home countries may find the UK model takes a bit of getting used to. Although contractors are generally required to work the duration of their contracts, typically three or six months, most clients are flexible if a contractor wants time off, say for a long weekend.

Assuming the contract goals are being effectively achieved, most clients are happy to agree to time off. Naturally, though, if the contractor is being paid an hourly or daily rate, they will not be paid for this time.

Between contracts, contractors are free to take off as much time as they like, assuming they have sufficient financial reserves to do this and their visa conditions allow. The UK is itself a great holiday destination with a fabulous array of leisure activities available to cater to virtually all tastes. It is also one of Europe's major transport hubs, so there are plenty of opportunities to travel abroad, assuming your UK visa allows you to.

The benefits of contracting in the UK are numerous and many UK and expat contractors find them highly attractive. That is why, according to independent research commissioned by the UK's leading contracting professional body, the [Professional Contractors Group](#), at the time of writing there are an estimated 1.56 million contractors currently working in the UK, and this has grown by 12% over the three years from 2008 to 2011.

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