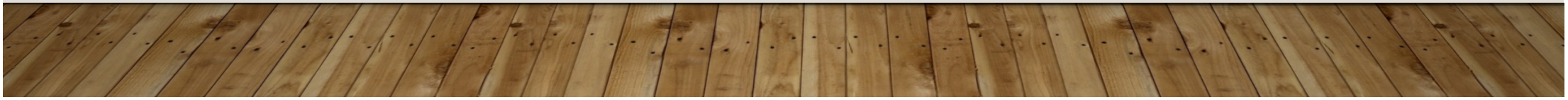
VISA SPONSORSHIP: GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICES

DR LOUISE SANDS

NIMDTA

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(ADAPTED FROM – NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT WEBINAR)



WHY?

- We have a workforce crisis
- We have increasing numbers of IMGs in GP Training
- Mainland UK practices are already doing this
- We need to recruit from beyond UK and we have interested GPs from EEU and beyond

WHY?

Gaining the right to be a UK visa sponsoring practice could form an important part of your recruitment efforts

A sponsorship licence lasts for 4 years and covers any skilled health and care worker

The Visa changes were part of the Brexit agreement.

Despite concerns raised by BMA and RCGP (and other stakeholders) there is no way around them.

WHO DOES **NOT** NEED TO HAVE A VISA SPONSOR?

- EU, EEA or Swiss nationals that have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- Irish citizens
- People with 'indefinite leave to remain' in the UK
- People who have another type of visa that provides the right to work

Swann announces streamlined processes for recruitment and retention of GPs

Date published: 18 October 2022

Health Minister Robin Swann is taking action to streamline the processes for GPs qualified in the Republic of Ireland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa to take up roles in Northern Ireland.



Under current rules, GPs who have trained outside the UK, or who have not practised in the UK in the past two years, are required to undertake an initial knowledge assessment exam as part of the GP Induction and Refresher Scheme before they can practise in Northern Ireland.

Under the new process being brought forward by the Health Minister, GPs who qualified in the Republic of Ireland in the last two years will be exempt from sitting the exam.

> The Minister said: "The similarities between GP training in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are well recognised. Amending the Scheme so that doctors who have completed training in the Republic of Ireland will not be required to sit the knowledge test (MCQ) if they have successfully completed the Irish College of General Practitioners examination within the last two years is a pragmatic step which removes an unnecessary barrier to qualified GPs practising in Northern Ireland."

NEW OPPORTUNITY

- GP trainees who have CCT in ROI
- Within the past 24 months
- Irish Citizens or other reasons they don't need a Visa
- Eligible for a Streamlined Process to work in NI
- Short induction placement in a NIMDTA training practice

GP SPECIALTY TRAINING AND IMGS

- Over 40% of all trainee GPs in UK are IMGs
- Around half (49%) of all IMG trainees have difficulties with the Visa process
- Around 30% of all IMG trainees consider not working as an NHS GP because of Visa issues
- 17% are considering leaving the UK entirely
- Problem not the same for hospital trainees as their programmes lasts 5 years+

GP SPECIALTY TRAINING AND IMGS



GP SPECIALTY TRAINING AND IMGS

Approx 37 IMGs due to CCT by August 2024 in NI

These doctors will usually require a Visa to stay in Northern Ireland after their training is completed

We do not wish to lose these GPs from our workforce, and therefore need to provide Visa sponsors across NI

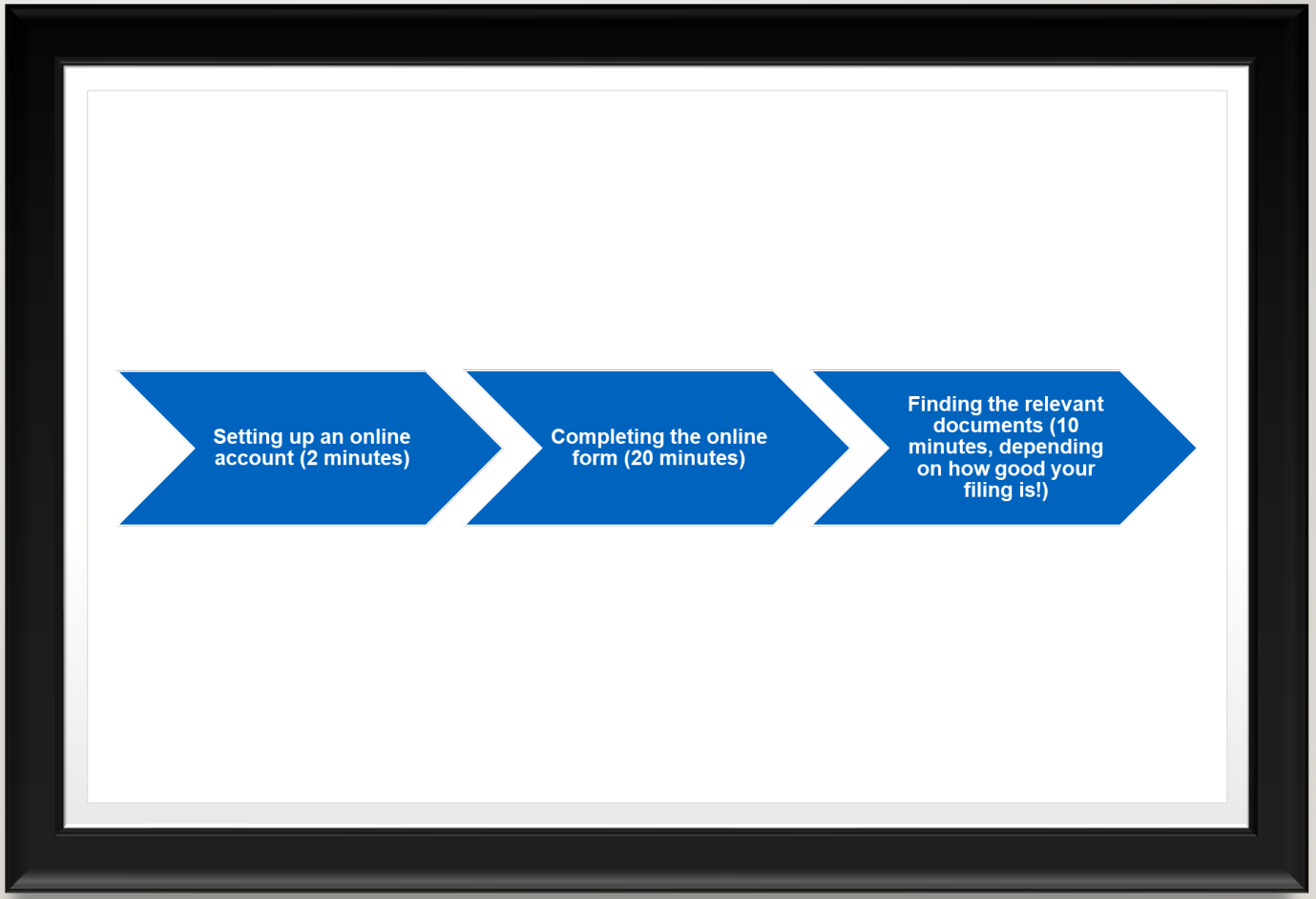
HOW?

The Home Office Guidance is very detailed and so the essential information is included here

There are two important areas:-

- How to complete the online registration process
- How to identify the correct documents to send to the Home Office as part of your registration

HOW LONG DOES THE PROCESS TAKE?



APPLYING THROUGH THE SPONSORSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM(SMS)

- The application process to apply for a visa sponsorship licence is all completed online via a Home Office portal – the Sponsorship Management System (SMS).
- To set up an account, click on the following link which will take you to the registration page:

https://www.points.homeoffice.gov.uk/gui-sponsor-jsf/Register/SponsorRegister.faces

APPLYING THROUGH THE SPONSORSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM(SMS)

Enter your name and your email address

The next page will give you a short UserID

- Keep this safe, as you will need it each time you log in
- You will be emailed a temporary password
- Click the link in the email to reset your password to something memorable and secure
- Keep the new password safe and log into the system

From this point on you can access the login page by clicking on the following link:

- https://www.points.homeoffice.gov.uk/gui-sms-jsf/SMS-001-Landing.faces

It is strongly advised that you check in every month or so as there are often important messages that are sent via the SMS regarding sponsorship licences

KEY DOCUMENTS



You will need to send the Home Office a minimum of 4 supporting documents to prove you are a legitimate employer within 5 working days of submitting your application.



These are set out in full in the sponsor guidance appendix A.



You can send these electronically.



A simplified list of example documents which may be most relevant for a GP Practice is on the next slide.



Follow the Step-by-Step guide

RECOMMENDED DOCUMENTS

- Corporate/Business Bank Statement (mandatory for start-ups operating for less then 18 months) or supporting letter from your bank manager
- Employers Liability Insurance Certificate
- HMRC Registration – PAYE Reference Number/Account Office Reference Number
- Proof of ownership or lease of your business premises. If you send a copy of your lease agreement, it must be signed by all parties concerned
- HMRC VAT registration certificate
- Latest acknowledgement of a Company Tax Return CT620, or the completed CT600 tax return and the CT603 notice.
- You will also need the GMC registration details of the senior partner of the GP practice (mandatory)

KEY PEOPLE

In order to complete an application, you will need to assign three key personnel to manage your sponsorship process. These roles can all be filled by the same person . These roles are:

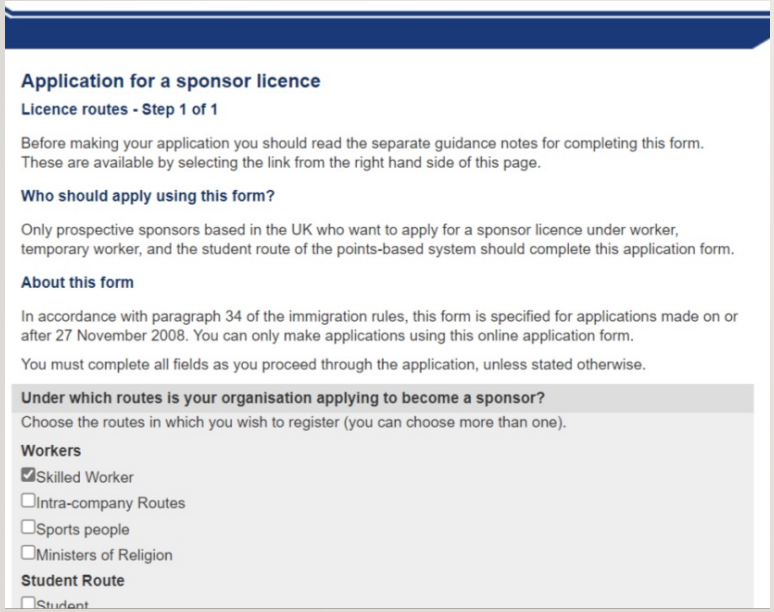
Authorising officer (AO) – this will be your most senior person responsible for the recruitment of all migrant workers and ensuring that all of your sponsor duties are met

Key contact – this person will act as the main contact between the Home Office and the practice

Level 1 user – this person will carry out your day-today sponsorship activities on the system

Level 2 user – this is an optional role and you do not need to initially assign it (typically used by very large employers)

STEP BY STEP GUIDE - VISA ROUTE



Application for a sponsor licence

Licence routes - Step 1 of 1

Before making your application you should read the separate guidance notes for completing this form. These are available by selecting the link from the right hand side of this page.

Who should apply using this form?

Only prospective sponsors based in the UK who want to apply for a sponsor licence under worker, temporary worker, and the student route of the points-based system should complete this application form.

About this form

In accordance with paragraph 34 of the immigration rules, this form is specified for applications made on or after 27 November 2008. You can only make applications using this online application form.

You must complete all fields as you proceed through the application, unless stated otherwise.

Under which routes is your organisation applying to become a sponsor?

Choose the routes in which you wish to register (you can choose more than one).

Workers

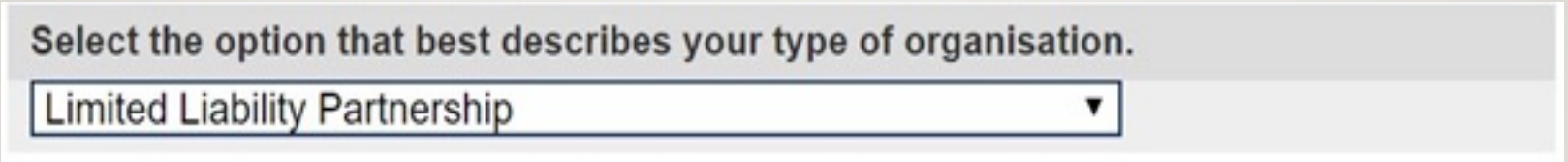
- [x] Skilled Worker
- [ ] Intra-company Routes
- [ ] Sports people
- [ ] Ministers of Religion

Student Route

- [ ] Student

1. Having logged onto the application system, click **'Apply for a sponsor licence'.**
2. This will take you to your first questions, about the kind of licence you require.
   Choose **Skilled Worker**
3. Where it asks if you are already on the register of sponsors, select: **No**

STEP BY STEP GUIDE - ORGANISATION



What type of organisation is the practice. It is likely that the practice will be a Partnership, Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) or a limited company.
If you are unsure, check the practice's incorporation documents.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE - ORGANISATION



The practice will likely pay both PAYE tax and National Insurance, because the practice has employees. The practice may also have a VAT registration number.

It is important to provide this information because your HMRC registration will help the Home Office to confirm the authenticity of the practice and who the people working at the practice are, and that you are paying the worker in line with the Immigration Rules and sponsor guidance.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE - ORGANISATION



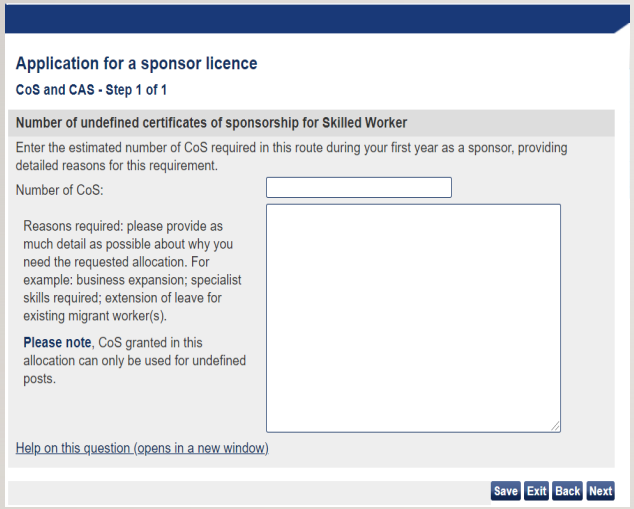
When asked what sector your organisation operates in, you should select **'Human Health and Social Work Activities'.**

STEP BY STEP GUIDE - ORGANISATION



Next you will need to provide details of any memberships or accreditations that the practice is legally required to have with a governing body. The answer for Northern Ireland is **NO**
You will need to provide details of any non-legally required memberships or accreditation. Specifically, this is the GMC membership details of the senior partner at the GP practice

STEP BY STEP GUIDE – CERTIFICATE OF SPONSORSHIP (COS)



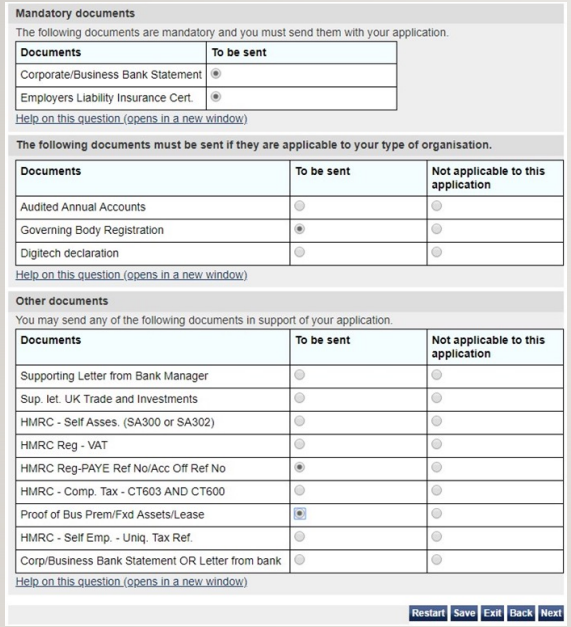
Example text to use when explaining why you need your CoS.
This can be tailored to reflect your individual practice circumstances (limited to 2000 characters):

The UK has a national shortage of qualified General Practitioners to meet the growing demands of the population. Typical recruitment efforts have not provided us with the suitable candidates required to fulfill General Practitioner roles within our practice. The impact of this is extended waiting times for patients and greater pressure on our current workforce to meet the needs of our patients.

The role of a General Practitioner is one that requires many years of specialist training including: a full medical degree, two years of foundation medical training and at least three years of specialist GP training. While there are concerted national efforts to increase the numbers of available GPs in the UK, this does not address the immediate pressure in our service and, for this reason, we anticipate needing to recruit from overseas.

The role of a General Practitioner has been included on the UK Shortage Occupation list as of 6 October 2019.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE – DOCUMENTS



Mandatory documents

The following documents are mandatory and you must send them with your application.

Documents	To be sent
Corporate/Business Bank Statement	◉
Employers Liability Insurance Cert.	◉

Help on this question (opens in a new window)

The following documents must be sent if they are applicable to your type of organisation.

Documents	To be sent	Not applicable to this application
Audited Annual Accounts	○	○
Governing Body Registration	◉	○
Digitech declaration	○	○

Help on this question (opens in a new window)

Other documents

You may send any of the following documents in support of your application.

Documents	To be sent	Not applicable to this application
Supporting Letter from Bank Manager	○	○
Sup. let. UK Trade and Investments	○	○
HMRC - Self Asses. (SA300 or SA302)	○	○
HMRC Reg - VAT	○	○
HMRC Reg-PAYE Ref No/Acc Off Ref No	◉	○
HMRC - Comp. Tax - CT603 AND CT600	○	○
Proof of Bus Prem/Fxd Assets/Lease	◉	○
HMRC - Self Emp. - Uniq. Tax Ref.	○	○
Corp/Business Bank Statement OR Letter from bank	○	○

Help on this question (opens in a new window)

Restart Save Exit Back Next

1. Remember the recommended documents list. This next page asks you to tick-off the ones you have to support your application.
2. For the full Home Office guidance on supporting documents please click here and also see Section L7 Part 1 of the sponsor guidance.
3. 'Governing Body Registration' documents Not applicable In Northern Ireland.
4. You must choose 2 documents from the list in the section entitled 'Other documents'. If you fail to provide at least two further documents, your application may be refused by the Home Office.
5. You should scan or take pictures of your supporting documents and send them to the email address given on the sponsor submission sheet.
6. If you are unable to provide the submission sheet and supporting evidence digitally, you can contact the Home Office using the contact details given on the submission sheet

STEP BY STEP GUIDE – FINAL STEPS AND USEFUL CONTACTS

Your application is not complete until you have paid and sent the Home Office your submission sheet and supporting documents. Information on where to send your submission sheet and supporting documents are provided at the end of the application process, once your payment has been made.

How long it takes to get a decision

Most applications (8 out of 10) are dealt with in less than 8 weeks.
You may be able to pay £500 to get a decision within 10 working days. You'll be told if you can after you apply.

Help and advice

If you do have any difficulty with the application, further advice can be obtained from the sponsorship, employer and education helpline:
Telephone: 0300 123 4699
Monday to Thursday, 9am to 5pm
Friday, 9am to 4:30pm
Or email
businesshelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk

COST OF BECOMING A VISA SPONSOR

The cost depends on the size of your practice

For **small sponsors** the fee is £536

For **medium or large sponsors** the fee is £1,476

You're usually considered a small business if you meet two of the following conditions:

- annual turnover is £10.2 million or less
- balance sheet is £5.1 million or less
- you have 50 employees or fewer

The fee is non-refundable if your application is refused (i.e. doesn't meet the requirements)

If your application is rejected because it is invalid (i.e. full fee not paid or mandatory documents not submitted) the fee is refundable

CERTIFICATES OF SPONSORSHIP (COS)

- You will be asked how many "Certificates of Sponsorship" you require and why
- A CoS is not a physical certificate, but a number
- When the practice is ready to employ someone, they can assign one of their CoS to the individual by inputting personal information linking them to that number and submitting this to UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) /Home Office
- The individual then uses this number to apply for their visa
- There is no restriction on the number of CoS that can be granted (however it should be proportionate to the size of your practice)
- **Undefined (previously unrestricted)** CoS are for individuals already in the UK.
- **Defined (previously restricted)** CoS are for individuals applying from overseas.

TOP TIPS

- Start your application as early as possible
- You can add details of a "Branch Surgery" to the application (if applicable)
- Please **do not wait until you have appointed a newly qualified GP before applying**
- Applications **can take around 8 weeks to be approved** – sometimes longer
- If you wait, there is not usually enough time between the GP qualifying and their existing visa sponsorship with NIMDTA expiring
- If you wait until the GP qualifies before applying for the licence, the GP may need to take a role elsewhere as your licence is unlikely to be approved in time
- We therefore recommend that practices already have a licence in place before they commence recruitment activities

TOP TIPS

Most trainees qualify in either February or at the end of July – apply for your licence **at least 8 weeks before these dates**

Get all your documents ready before applying – being prepared makes the process so much easier

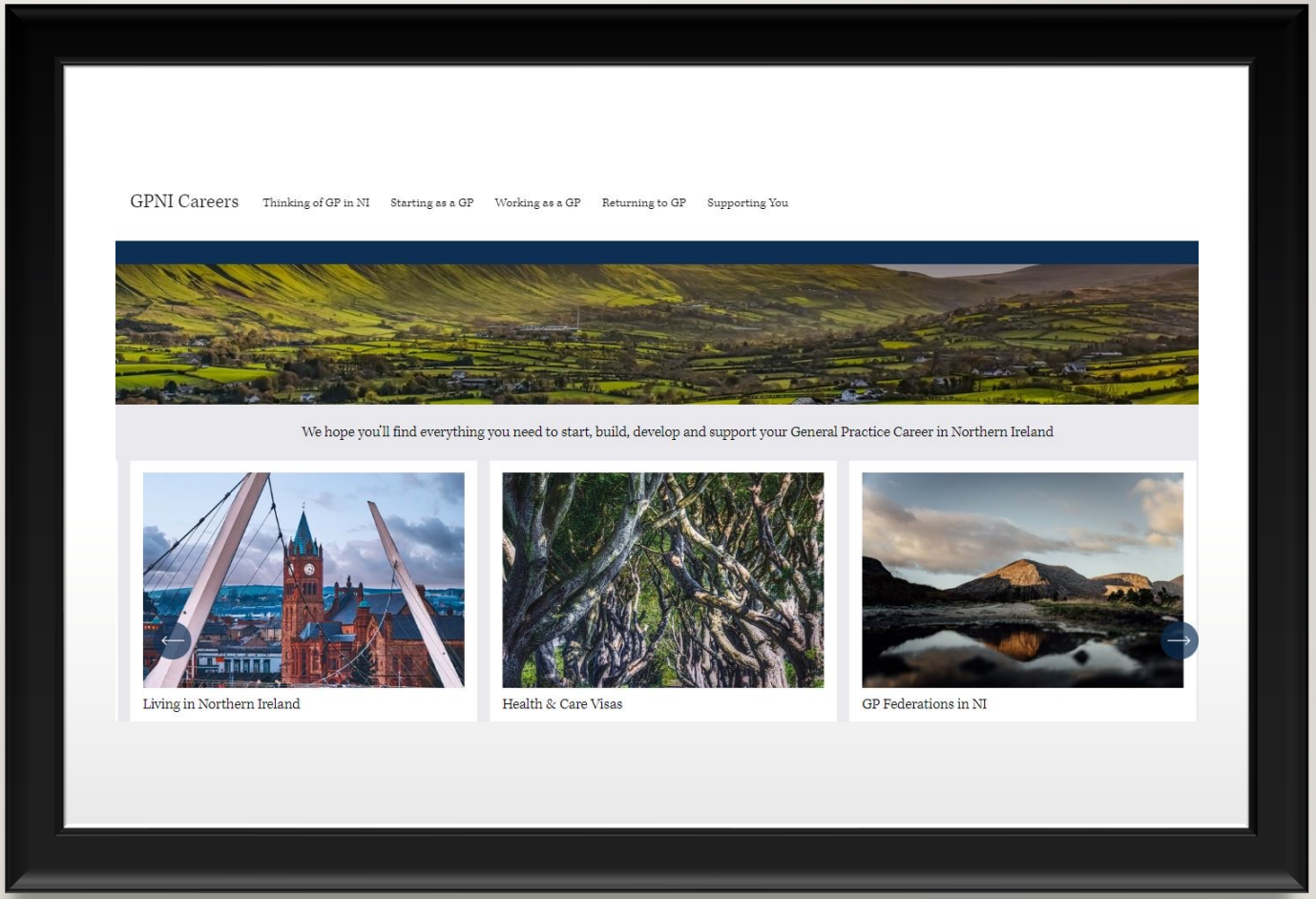
Once you have received a licence, **please let NIMDTA know**.

This will ensure that you are sent information about GPs that have asked us for help in finding employment with a practice with a sponsorship licence

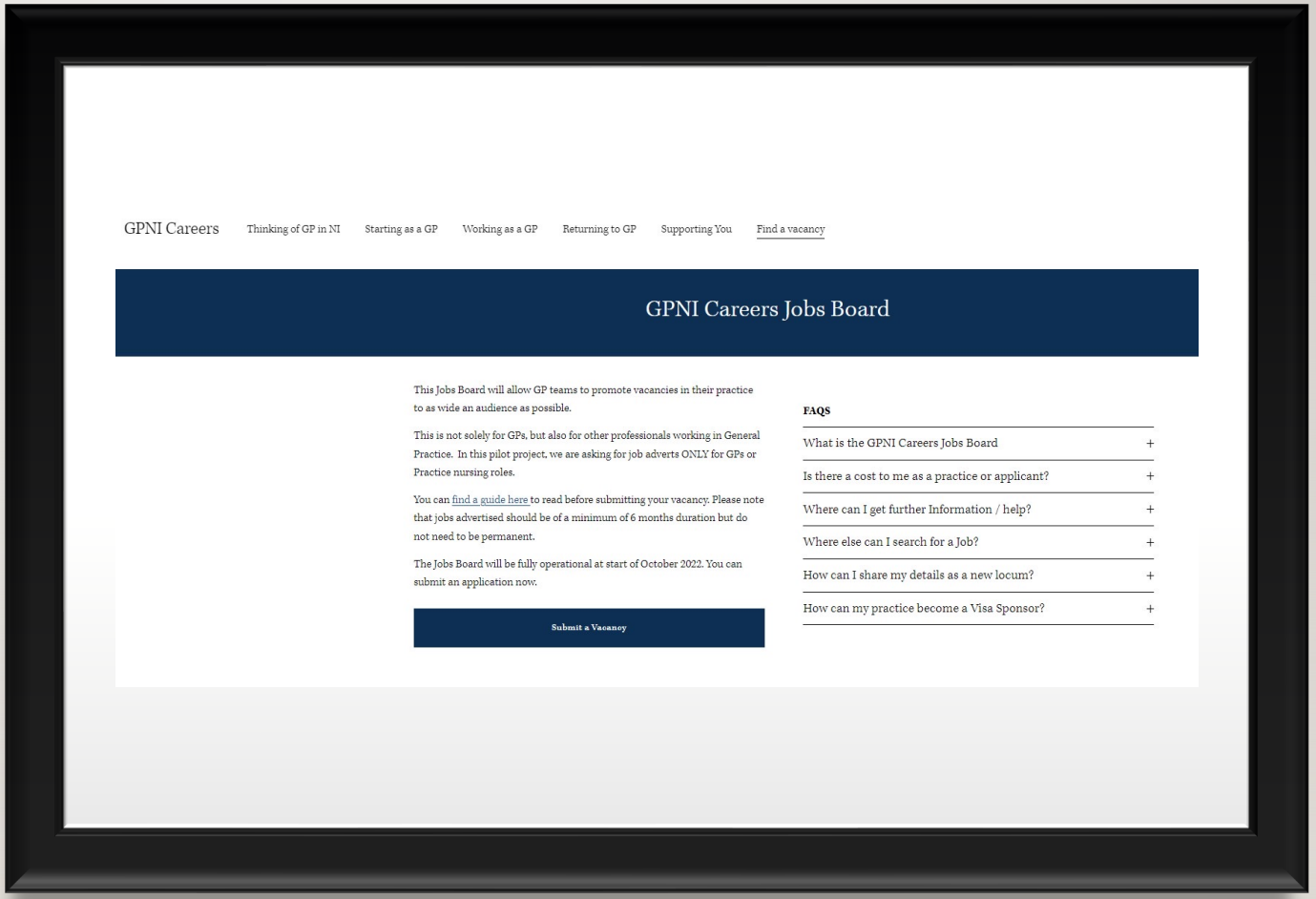
Use the dedicated Home Office NHS support team to resolve any issues - UKVINHSTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk

Contact for enquiries and to advise you have become a Visa Sponsor gpcpd.nimdta@hscni.net

HTTPS://WWW.GPNICAREERS.CO.UK/



HTTPS://WWW.GPNICAREERS.CO.UK/NORTHERN-IRELAND-GENERAL-PRACTICE-JOBS-BOARD



HTTPS://WWW.GPNICAREERS.CO.UK/APPLYING-FOR-A-HEALTH-AND-CARE-VISA

