

Legal Information Briefing

This Legal Information Briefing provides guidance on what rights you have and what you need to do as a result of the new Frontier Workers Permit Scheme.

For free, tailored advice on any of the issues discussed in this FAQ or any other aspect of immigration law, please call (028) 9024 4401 and ask to speak to an immigration adviser.

Does the information in this briefing apply to me?

Are you an EEA citizen who lives in Republic of Ireland and works in NI? If so, the information in this briefing is relevant to you and **you need to take action to maintain your right to work in NI.**

Examples

- A woman from Bulgaria who lives in Drogheda with her two children and works in a factory in Newry.
- A self-employed painter and decorator from Latvia who lives in Letterkenny and regularly works in Strabane and Derry.

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What is a frontier worker?

Frontier workers are people who work in one country but live primarily in another. In this case, people who live and work across the border.

What is the Frontier Worker Permit Scheme?

Due to Brexit, EEA citizens living outside the UK need to apply for permission to continue to work in the UK. This scheme enables EEA citizens to obtain the necessary permission.

What does the permit allow frontier workers to do?

They can use this permit to continue to enter NI as a frontier worker and continue to have a right to:

- work
- rent
- access benefits and services, including NHS healthcare, if they meet the relevant eligibility requirements

When does the Frontier Worker Permit Scheme open?

The scheme opened on 10 December 2020 and is now live.

Who needs to apply for a permit?

A person needs to apply for a permit if they are:

- An EEA or Swiss Citizen working in NI; and
- Living in the Republic of Ireland; and
- A worker or self-employed person

A person must be a worker or self-employed person by 31 December 2020, and they must have been working in NI at least once every 12 months since starting work in the UK.

Do Irish Citizens need a frontier worker permit?

Irish citizens do not need to do anything to continue working in the UK from 1 January 2021. They will not need a frontier worker permit but may apply for one if they wish.

What if a person was a frontier worker, but is not currently working?

Some people might be eligible to apply for a permit even though they are not currently working. This includes people who:

- Are temporarily unable to work because of an illness or accident
- Were working in the UK but are now involuntarily unemployed, and are looking for work in the UK
- Are in vocational training while involuntarily unemployed
- Are in vocational training while unemployed, and the training is related to the work carried out in previous work
- Are temporarily unable to work as a result of pregnancy or childbirth
- Are on maternity or paternity leave, and will return to previous employment, or find another job, at the end of this period

If a person fits one of these categories, it is known as having 'retained worker' or 'retained self-employed status'. They should obtain advice before making an application for a permit.

How is an application made?

A frontier worker makes the application online by following the link

<https://www.gov.uk/frontier-worker-permit/apply>. They can apply from outside or inside the UK. When making the application a person will need:

- The required biometric information (e.g., photographs or fingerprints)
- A valid identity document (e.g., passport)
- Evidence that you are a frontier worker (e.g., contracts, wage slips)

If someone doesn't provide all the information needed in the original application, the law says they should be given an opportunity to provide any extra detail or proof needed.

How much does the application cost?

There's no fee to apply for the permit, but a person may have to pay to submit biometric information.

How long does the permit last for?

For a worker or self-employed person, it lasts for 5 years.

If someone is not working but has 'retained worker or self-employed' status, it lasts for 2 years.

Is it necessary to apply for a permit right away?

A frontier worker doesn't have to apply immediately. Until 1 July 2021, they can continue entering the UK as a frontier worker using a valid passport or national identity card.

From 1 July 2021, a person will need to hold a valid frontier worker permit, as well as a valid passport or national identity card, to enter the UK as a frontier worker.

It is recommended that you apply promptly.

What if an application for a permit is refused?

A person will receive a notice explaining why their application has been refused. This notice will also explain if they have a right to ask for a review, or to appeal the decision.

If you have been refused a permit, please contact us for advice.

What if someone only becomes a frontier worker from 1 January 2021?

If someone wants to work in the UK from 1 January 2021, and were not working here before, they'll need to apply for a visa.

The visa they'll need depends on the type of work and how long they want to come for. [Check which type of visa is needed.](#)

Where can I get advice?

If you are not sure if you need to apply, or if you have any questions about your application, you can obtain free, specialist immigration advice from Law Centre NI.

Our immigration advice line is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9.30 – 1pm. Just call 028 9024 4401 during these times and ask to speak to one of our immigration advisors.

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