

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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United Kingdom – Youth Mobility Scheme Changes

On 31 May 2023, the U.K.'s first post-Brexit trade deals with Australia and New Zealand came into effect and incorporate changes to the Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) that will make it easier for both New Zealand and Australian nationals to obtain U.K. immigration permission under this category.¹

In March 2023, the government had announced that the U.K.'s reciprocal, bilateral arrangement with New Zealand would be enhanced from 29 June, with the age range for eligible individuals to be expanded from 18-30 to 18-35, and the length of stay increased from two to three years.²

WHY THIS MATTERS

The changes will allow U.K. employers to readily access talent from New Zealand and Australia, whilst British nationals can also avail themselves of generous reciprocal arrangements with Australia and New Zealand. Given that the costs of sponsorship can be prohibitive, employers that opt to support and recruit New Zealand and Australian nationals holding YMS visas will have far less cost outlay.

Context

The YMS is a self-sponsored visa category that provides a cultural exchange program allowing individuals aged 18 through 30 from participating countries and territories to experience life in the U.K. for up to two years. The YMS offers a more flexible and accessible immigration route into the U.K. given that it does not require sponsorship nor the requirement to meet any specific skills or salary thresholds.

Post-Brexit, some countries negotiating trade agreements with the U.K. have included migration as part of negotiation discussions. The import and export of goods and services is equally critical to building relationships as is the ability for

people to move across borders with less bureaucracy and convoluted immigration processes. This allows for cultural exchange but also the expansion of soft power that is key to retaining long-term trade agreements.

Further Details

Notable changes include the following:

- From 29 June 2023, nationals of New Zealand will be able to take advantage of the increased upper age limit to qualify under the YMS and remain in the U.K. for up to three years as opposed to two years, which was the previous maximum grant of stay under this visa category.
- From 31 January 2024, Australian nationals will also be able to avail themselves of the increase to the upper age limit to qualify for the YMS (age range being expanded from 18-30 to 18-35) and remain in the U.K. for up to three years as opposed to the current two years for which a YMS visa is currently granted.

KPMG INSIGHTS

Whereas employers in the U.K. will have greater access to talent from Australia and New Zealand given the changes, it should be noted that under current U.K. immigration law, a YMS visa cannot be extended. Therefore, long-term retention of talent may warrant consideration of other U.K. visa categories that will facilitate this. Employers may find that the YMS is an attractive and cost-effective way to plug immediate skills gaps, sustainable recruitment and business continuity may require more strategic and holistic planning.

FOOTNOTES:

1 U.K. government press release, "[U.K.'s first post-Brexit trade deals to go live at midnight on Wednesday](#)" (31 May 2023).

2 See the U.K. government policy paper updated 6 June 2023, "[Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 1160, 9 March 2023](#)."

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Contact us

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