

# Post-Brexit staff shortages: Business chiefs blast 'ballet dancers but not builders list' of key jobs

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[London](#) business leaders have called for urgent reform of the [Government's](#) "[ballet dancers](#) but not [builders](#)" list of key [jobs](#) that can be filled by lower paid foreign [workers](#).

The so-called "shortage occupation" list specifies 30 skilled roles for which workers are in desperately short supply after [Brexit](#). Overseas candidates can apply for work visas to do the jobs at pay rates that are up to 20 per cent below the normal "going rate" salary.

As well as highly specialist roles – such as biochemists, civil [engineers](#) and web designers – it also includes classical ballet dancers, first violinists in an "internationally-recognised UK orchestra" and artists.

However, employers say the list is not fit for purpose and it is contributing to the massive staffing crisis that threatens to stifle Britain's economic recovery. They point out that roles such as chefs and carpenters are not on the list despite a massive shortfall of homegrown talent.

Mark Hilton, membership director of business group London First, said: "The shortage occupation list is not doing what it says on the tin – the skills threshold is set too high, making it of little use to London's employers, who are desperate to fill substantial labour shortages.

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To avoid derailing recovery, the Government should create a short-term recovery visa for sectors most in need, including restaurants, care homes and construction sites, as well as investing in re-skilling unemployed Londoners.”

They also argue that a national list does not recognise acute regional labour shortages such as the dearth of chefs in London. Nick Bowes, chief executive of the Centre for London think tank, said the Government was warned a “one size fits all” national list would not work for London “which has different needs to the rest of the country”.

The list is revised several times a year on the advice of the Migration Advisory Committee. Chefs were included on the first version but removed in the last major revision in March.

Tony Sophocliides, strategic affairs director at the trade body UKHospitality, said: “We have 188,000 vacancies in the sector, but the number one problem is with chefs, and then security door staff because a lot of those pre-Covid came from eastern Europe and have gone back to their country of origin.

“These shortages are really impacting on the ability of the hospitality sector to try to make up the £100 billion of lost sales over the pandemic. I’m all for ballet dancers, but where

there is a theatre there is also a restaurant.”

Jane Gratton, head of people policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, said more roles needed to be added to the shortage occupation list or “consumers will see further reductions in the goods and services available to them as we progress into winter”.

As well as the shortage occupation list, the Government has also drawn up separate foreign lists for healthcare and education. It has issued temporary visas for up to 5,000 HGV drivers and 5,500 poultry workers to ease supply chain pressures in the festive period.

A Government spokesman said: “We are closely monitoring labour supply and working with sector leaders to understand how we can best ease particular pinch points. Similar challenges are being faced by other countries around the world.

“We want to see employers make long-term investments in the UK domestic workforce instead of relying on labour from abroad. Our Plan for Jobs is helping people across the country retrain, build new skills and get back into work.”