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Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP  
Minister of State for Immigration



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Jo Swinson MP  
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11 APR 2019

*Dear Jo*

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 April to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents regarding NHS staffing when the UK leaves the EU. I am replying as the Minister of State for Immigration.

The Government recognises the tremendous contribution that overseas health workers, and other highly skilled professionals, make to the UK. We currently have a generous offer for health professionals seeking to work in the UK. Nurses currently benefit from an exemption from the minimum salary threshold for Tier 2 and a number of health professionals appear on the Shortage Occupation List.

In addition, on 6 July 2018 we took action to exempt all doctors and all nurses entirely from the annual Tier 2 cap that applies to skilled workers. This change means that there is no limit on the number of doctors and nurses needed in the UK who can be sponsored to work here. The Home Secretary has recently made clear that he has no plans to remove that exemption.

On 19 December 2018, the Government published a White Paper setting out its proposals for the UK's future skills-based immigration system after our exit from the European Union, which can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-future-skills-based-immigration-system](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uks-future-skills-based-immigration-system).

The White Paper proposes a new route for skilled workers. In line with the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) recommendations, we will lower the current skills threshold to include RQF levels 3-5 (A level+) to ensure that medium-skilled roles can be filled via this route.

The MAC recommended retaining the minimum salary threshold at £30,000. As set out in the White Paper, we intend to engage businesses and employers as to what salary threshold should be set. The Government believes that in some circumstances, for example where the skills are in shortage, there should be some flexibility to allow migration at lower salary levels.

We have also commissioned the MAC to review the existing Shortage Occupation List (UK-wide and Scotland specific) and they expect to report in Spring 2019. We will want to carefully consider their recommendations before making any decisions. Graduate entry jobs are already subject to a lower salary threshold and we will continue with that approach.

In line with the MAC's recommendations, the skilled worker route will not be capped, giving business certainty and ensuring the economy is sufficiently supported, and there will be no requirement for employers to carry out a Resident Labour Market Test (RLMT) for highly skilled roles (RQF level 6). The MAC concluded that the RLMT did not have the desired effect of helping secure jobs for British workers, and instead makes the process more cumbersome for business. We will engage with employers and businesses as to whether a modified RLMT should be maintained for medium-skilled occupations.

In the future system, as many jobs in the NHS and senior care roles are at skill levels above RQF3 (A level), migrants will be able to come to the UK under our new skilled workers route.

As a transitional measure, we are also introducing a Temporary Workers route, which will allow employers to bring in migrant labour at all skill levels for short periods, subject to strict conditions.

Proposals in the White Paper provide a platform for further discussion. The Home Office will engage with a wide range of stakeholders across the UK, including with the private, public and voluntary sector and local government, as well as industry representatives and individual businesses. We will also launch a range of new advisory groups on key proposals for the future system to ensure we understand unique perspectives and listen to views, while making best use of, and building on, existing forums.



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