

# Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
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4 May 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

Thank you for giving evidence to us on 29 April. Following on from that session, and in response to your letter received on the same morning, we wished to ask some further questions on the issue of visa extensions for NHS staff:

- 1) In your letter you stated that free one-year visa extensions will be offered to "a range of health professionals in the NHS and the Independent Health Sector", and that this will include social workers who work in "one of the defined occupations". Could you please provide us with a full list of all the job roles which will be entitled to fee-free one-year visa extensions;
- 2) In oral evidence you said that "we are conscious right now of the service of all NHS professionals [...] This is not about segmenting or discriminating against anybody who works in the NHS". However, the decision to offer visa extensions to "health professionals" means that non-medical NHS staff - such as hospital porters, cleaners and administrative staff - will not benefit from this offer. Why has the Government decided to exclude these workers from this scheme?
- 3) You said that the Home Office would find it difficult to establish those social care workers entitled to free visa extensions because of the number of independent providers in the sector. However, the life assurance scheme announced by the Department of Health and Social Care on 27 April does include social care workers and has established a method to identify, list and include them. Has the Home Office attempted to use the same process and categories? Why has the Home Office decided not to include the same list as the Health Department's life assurance scheme for the purposes of visa extensions?
- 4) When asked whether the Home Office intends to provide a clear legal basis for the visa extensions through a statutory instrument, you replied that "as Home Secretary, I am able to exercise discretion to extend immigration leave in exceptional circumstances, and I think we can all agree that these are exceptional circumstances". A statutory instrument would

give certainty of definition as to those provided with an extension, and of compliance with the Immigration Act 1971. If it is correct to understand from your words to us on Wednesday that the Department is not considering introducing a statutory instrument, what are the Home Office's reasons for not proceeding with an SI?

- 5) Has the Home Office considered using an SI with a specified list of occupations similar to the Health Department's life assurance list, in order to reach social care workers whose visas may be coming up for extension, rather than a discretionary approach operated through NHS employers?
- 6) Has the Home Office considered exempting all NHS and social care workers from the NHS surcharge during the Covid-19 crisis?
- 7) Does the Government intend to vary the Immigration Rules to allow individuals on visitor visas (for example those on clinical attachment who are eligible to secure GMC registration) to apply 'in country' for work visas?

I would be grateful for your response by 11 May.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvette Cooper', written in a cursive style.

**Yvette Cooper MP**