

Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
SW1P 4DF

12 May 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

Visa issues affecting frontline social care workers

You will have seen the figures published by the ONS yesterday which indicate that, up to and including 20 April 2020, men and women working in social care, a group including care workers and home carers, both had significantly raised rates of death involving COVID-19, with rates of 23.4 deaths per 100,000 males (45 deaths) and 9.6 deaths per 100,000 females (86 deaths).¹

Further to my letter of 4 May, and in the light of these deeply disturbing figures, I would be grateful for your answer to the following questions:

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) for family of workers who have died

As you will recall, the Committee welcomed the Home Office decision to award ILR to the family members of NHS staff who have tragically died as a result of Covid-19, but we have raised concern about the fact that this has not been extended to social care workers.

- Can you tell us how many of the 131 care workers who have died are foreign nationals, and how many have family in this country whose immigration status is now in question because the care worker has died?
- Please can you confirm and explain why in these tragic circumstances the Home Office is unable to offer ILR to those family members of care workers who have already lost so much?
- Please can you confirm if it is correct that the Home Office has also decided not to include NHS cleaners, porters and other non-medical support staff?

¹ [Deaths involving Covid-19 among health and social care workers](#), Office for National Statistics 11 May 2020

- If this is the case, can you explain why the lowest paid NHS staff are not included in the ILR award especially given the evidence of the higher impact of the virus on lower paid workers? Do you have figures on the number of these NHS employees who are foreign nationals and have died from Covid-19?

Visa extensions for frontline workers

I wrote to you on 4 May with further questions on the visa extensions for NHS staff and the Home Office decision not to include social care workers in that extension. As you know, the Home Affairs Select Committee has previously called for social care workers to be included in our letter of 14 April.

Your letter of 29 April said that all policies are being kept under review and that you are “continuing to consider what more we can do to support frontline workers.”

- What efforts have been made to work with the Care Quality Commission to identify workers in social care who, as you have stated, “are providing vital services following the coronavirus outbreak”, but who work for independent social care providers and are therefore excluded from existing measures for frontline workers?
- In the light of these troubling figures about the number of care workers losing their lives to Covid-19 as well as the evidence on the continued spread of the virus in the care sector and the pressures on frontline care staff, is the Home Office now able to look again at expanding the fee-free visa extension to cover social care workers (if necessary using approaches such as statutory instruments or replicating the eligibility criteria for DHSC’s death in service scheme, that I highlighted in evidence and in my previous letter)?

As you have rightly said, we should be incredibly grateful to all overseas health and care workers who are risking their lives to keep people safe and provide vital services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I would be grateful for your swift response.

Yours sincerely

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

Yvette Cooper MP