



Welsh Affairs Committee

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From the Chair of the Committee

Professor Philip Kloer
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2 April 2024

Dear Professor Kloer,

The Welsh Affairs Committee is holding an inquiry into the [Impact of population change in Wales](#). Migration to Wales from other parts of the UK and internationally is an important part of population change in Wales, and we would like to understand the role of international migration in Wales's workforce. We are therefore reaching out to sector bodies and organisations to invite evidence about their perspectives.

We are particularly interested to learn more about the following:

- To what extent does international migration fill skills gaps in the Hywel Dda University Health Board in Wales? We welcome any case studies you would like to share.
- Is the current immigration system, including the Skilled Worker visa, Health and Care Worker visa and Seasonal Worker visa, fit for purpose for both employers and prospective employees in Wales?
- What impact will announced changes to the immigration system, including the move to the Immigration Salary List and an increase in the general salary threshold for the Skilled Worker visa, have on employers and recruitment in Wales?
- Should there be a made-for-Wales immigration pathway to enable businesses in Wales to more effectively recruit people from outside the UK, which addresses Wales-specific skills gaps and reflects median salaries in Wales?
- What is the role of international migration in the Hywel Dda University Health Board in Wales in future?
- How has Brexit impacted the recruitment of EU citizens to work in the Hywel Dda University Health Board in Wales?
- Is Wales effectively promoting its opportunities overseas, to attract people coming from outside the UK to Wales as a place to live and work?

The Committee would be grateful if responses to the questions above could be provided by **Friday 19th April**.



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Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP

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Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP
Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons
LONDON
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By email: STACEL@parliament.uk

Dear Sir

Re: Welsh Affairs Committee – Impact of Population Change/University Health Boards

Thank you for your letter dated 2 April 2024 seeking information around the impact of population change in Wales. Please find below a response to each of the questions asked.

To what extent does international migration fill skills gaps in the Hywel Dda University Health Board in Wales? We welcome any case studies you would like to share.

International migration/recruitment is critical to the delivery of clinical services within Hywel Dda, with over 50% of medical recruits originating from overseas. Since December 2021, Hywel Dda has been engaged in the Once for Wales International Educated Nurse (IEN) Recruitment Programme, which has to date added 197 Nurses to our nursing workforce. We continue to source ethically via this route, with Welsh Government and the Government in Kerala having a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in place to ensure IENs are sourced with no use of commercial agencies.

Is the current immigration system, including the Skilled Worker visa, Health and Care Worker visa and Seasonal Worker visa, fit for purpose for both employers and prospective employees in Wales?

Assuming this question is based on the rules before the changes of 4th April 2024, NHS Wales could sponsor a wide range of applicants that wish to work in NHS Wales under a wide range of positions. It was uncommon that NHS Wales was unable to sponsor someone due to salary, so therefore it would be considered that it was fit for purpose for both employees and employers. However, the new rules may

stop organisations from providing sponsorship for some non-clinical posts that they were able to provide sponsorship for previously.

What impact will announced changes to the immigration system, including the move to the Immigration Salary List and an increase in the general salary threshold for the Skilled Worker visa, have on employers and recruitment in Wales?

It will have an impact as it is now more difficult to sponsor lower banded non Health and Care Visa employees, for example employees in IT or Workforce etc, as these will not have any exemption to the increase in general salary.

The majority of sponsorships the Health Board assigns are to those under the Health and Care Visa, which mostly is unchanged. However, there is an impact to the wider care sector, as the changes do impact on social care colleagues. De-stabilising this sector will in turn impact on health and care provision.

The biggest change under a Health and Care Visa are to those under Biomedical Scientist SOC code.

The salary threshold has risen for Biomedical Scientist, despite them being under the Health and Care Visa. This means the pay would be too low to meet the required salary threshold.

Should there be a made-for-Wales immigration pathway to enable businesses in Wales to more effectively recruit people from outside the UK, which addresses Wales-specific skills gaps and reflects median salaries in Wales?

The majority of Sponsorships that NHS Wales assigns come under the Health and Care visa, which is based on Agenda for Change salary rates rather than a general threshold. However, there are many positions in NHS Wales that are not on the Health and Care Visa list, which would need to meet the increased general threshold.

Therefore, there is a case to suggest that there should be an NHS pathway to encompass the positions that UKVI do not class as Health and Care, but are recruited and required in NHS Wales.

What is the role of international migration in the Hywel Dda University Health Board in Wales in future?

The Health Board commissions pre-registration education programmes and whilst places have increased year on year, Higher Education Institutions in Wales have been experiencing challenges in recruiting to the commissioned numbers from UK domiciles. This downturn in applications is mirrored across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This is partly due to UK demographics and the competing demand with other professions/roles.

Additionally, other initiatives such as partial retirement have been implemented to give eligible staff options around retirement and also grow your own development pathways for Health Care Support workers and apprentices. However, these programmes will take time to come to fruition. Therefore, for the foreseeable future international migration will play a significant part in covering the skills gap across the NHS in Wales.

The implementation of the All Wales International Recruitment Programme and the Kerala MoU has created sustainable pathways for recruiting health professionals to fill skill gaps across NHS Wales.

However, there are still significant challenges to onboarding large numbers of international health professionals due to availability of housing and public transport issues, particularly in rural locations in Mid and West Wales.

How has Brexit impacted the recruitment of EU citizens to work in the Hywel Dda University Health Board in Wales?

It is difficult to quantify the exact impact of Brexit on the recruitment of EU citizens, due to a number of factors.

These include the gap between the vote in 2016 and the removal of free movement in early 2020, which was then compounded by the pandemic in 2020 that prevented recruitment from outside of the UK for a number of months.

For Hywel Dda University Health Board however, the impact has been minimal although the number of EU citizens applying has dropped. We have recently recruited two Nurses (Germany and Spain), which we have sponsored with Health and Care Worker Visas.

Is Wales effectively promoting its opportunities overseas, to attract people coming from outside the UK to Wales as a place to live and work?

We do not proactively advertise overseas – although do advertise online (NHS Jobs, BMJ, LinkedIn, Facebook, Indeed etc), which is available globally to prospective applicants/ candidates. We adhere to WHO ethical recruitment codes of practice. As stated above, the Welsh Government has an MoU in place with the Government in Kerala, which results in NHS Wales being promoted in the country as an employer of choice. This recruitment is managed between the Government in Kerala and NWSSP on behalf of the Health Boards who are recruiting internationally in Wales.

I hope this sufficiently responds to your queries. If, however, you would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board

Yours faithfully

Professor Philip Kloer
Interim Chief Executive

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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Hywel Dda yw enw gweithredol Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Hywel Dda
Hywel Dda University Health Board is the operational name of Hywel Dda University Local Health Board

Mae Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Hywel Dda yn amgylchedd di-fwg Hywel Dda University Health Board operates a smoke free environment