



Welsh Affairs Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA Tel: 020 7219 1424

Email: welshcom@parliament.uk Website: www.parliament.uk

From the Chair of the Committee

Dr Richard Evans
Interim Chief Executive
Swansea Bay University Health Board
One Talbot Gateway
Baglan Energy Park
Baglan
Port Talbot
SA12 7BR

2 April 2024

Dear Dr Evans,

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 Swansea Bay 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 Swansea Bay University Health Board in Wales in future?
- How has Brexit impacted the recruitment of EU citizens to work in the Swansea Bay 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

Pencadlys Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Bae Abertawe

Un Porthfa Talbot, Parc Ynni, Baglan, Port Talbot, SA12 7BR Ffôn 01639 683334

Swansea Bay University Health Board Headquarters

One Talbot Gateway, Baglan Energy Park, Port Talbot, SA12 7BR Phone 01639 683334

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg ac yn y Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

 01639 683302

Dyddiad/Date: 17th April 2024

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To Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP
Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Sent by email: STACEL@parliament.uk

Dear Mr Crabb

Thank you for your letter dated 2nd April 2023 in relation to the Welsh Affairs Committee inquiry into the Impact of population change in Wales. In the letter you invited the Health Board to submit evidence from its perspective and in particular you provided a number of points you are particularly interested in us responding to. Therefore, please find below our responses to those specific points:

1. To what extent does international migration fill skills gaps in the Swansea Bay University Health Board in Wales?

Both our doctor and nursing workforce planning and recruitment currently rely heavily on international migration for the smooth running of our services. To put this into context, from a nursing perspective since 2021 we have recruited circa 500 nurses from overseas, the majority from India and the Philippines. To date the nurses we have recruited have been for our general adult wards and also with our Theatres activity, however we are now focussing on more specialist nursing areas such as Mental Health and Paediatrics, as these are proving to be difficult to recruit to currently. In terms of doctors, in the last financial year we recruited 118 from a range of countries mainly outside of the



EU. This number is broadly in line with previous years overseas doctor recruitment activity.

2. 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?

Generally for both our doctor and nursing recruitment needs we would say yes. Whilst we have experienced small delays in the process from time to time these delays have not seriously impacted on our plans overall.

3. 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?

From the changes announced we would envisage that there will be minimal impact on our ability to continue to recruit internationally for doctors and nurses as these can be recruited via a Health and Care Worker visa where the salary threshold change has no impact on these professions and dependants are still able to join them in the UK. However, outside of those staff groups we do recruit some staff from overseas albeit in smaller numbers. These would be Band 3 Health Care Support Workers where the current minimum salary of that post is now just below the "new" £23,200 salary threshold for the Health and Care Worker visa. This impact is likely to be short lived once there is a decision made on the NHS Pay Award 2024/25. In addition the other staff group where we may see an impact is within our Digital workforce where we have needed to recruit more skills from overseas due to specific skills shortages within our domestic workforce. These posts would have to be recruited via the Skilled Worker visa route and is impacted due to the significant increase in the annual salary threshold of minimum £38,700 depending on specific role, which is significantly above a Band 6 starting salary.

4. 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?

Whilst this could be seen as a viable option to be considered for the reasons given in the question, we feel that there is a possibility that this becomes confusing for employers and prospective employees alike which could have the unintended consequence of putting people off coming to Wales. From our perspective we need to continue to promote the benefits of living and working in Wales which from our perspective has helped us attract our international recruits.

5. What is the role of international migration in the Swansea Bay University Health Board in Wales in future?

From the Health Board perspective, it has been vital in particularly filling vacancies that we would have been unable to fill domestically due to skills shortages within both the Medical and Nursing professions. By doing so we have been able to reduce the amount of expensive temporary workforce options we need to deploy i.e. agency in order to continue to provide safe and viable



care to our patients. In addition, we have seen a reduction in the turnover of nursing colleagues due to there being a more stable team around them.

6. How has Brexit impacted the recruitment of EU citizens to work in the Swansea Bay University Health Board in Wales?

The impact of Brexit on the Health Board ability to recruit EU citizens has been minimal on the basis that the recruitment of Doctors and Nurses are in the main drawn from countries outside of the EU.

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

From a Health Board perspective, we feel that the individuals that we recruit from overseas are generally looking to come to Wales to work and live and in addition our own recruitment brand is heavily focussed on the benefits of coming to live and work within the Swansea Bay community. Our positive attraction rate is also based on the fact we have a good overseas community that has developed within our workforce and this community are helping to promote us as a place to come and work to their friends and family. We would say that we have definitely used available resources to assist us in the first place of attracting overseas candidates to us and of course any further efforts to promote Wales as a place to live and work particularly in health services is always welcome.

We thank you for allowing us to submit the evidence to assist in the inquiry and hope you find our responses of use to this work.

Yours sincerely



Richard Evans
Interim Chief Executive

