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Paulette Hamilton  
Acting Chair, Health and Social Care Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Paulette,

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 May 2025 regarding international recruitment in adult social care, Fair Pay Agreements (FPA), and the changes set out in the Immigration White Paper: Restoring Control over the Immigration System.

As stated in the White Paper it is the government's policy to reduce reliance on international recruitment in adult social care and improve domestic recruitment and retention.

International recruitment has played a valuable role in helping grow the workforce, giving the sector the benefit of the skill and commitment of international workers. However, it is important to note the context behind opening international recruitment in adult social care. Following significant recruitment and retention challenges in the sector in 2021/22 where the workforce contracted for the first time on record, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) recommended adding care workers to the Shortage Occupation List and Health and Care visa in December 2021. Adding care workers to the Shortage Occupation List was intended to be a temporary measure. The MAC has consistently made clear their view that immigration is not the solution to the issues in adult social care and that wider structural issues facing the sector, including pay and conditions, must be addressed.

The care route has seen unacceptable levels of abuse and exploitation including people being brought to the UK where promised work does not materialise or they are being paid less than the required Minimum Salary Threshold, leaving workers at risk of becoming destitute. These issues, discussed during the Public Accounts Committee hearing on 8th May 2025, stem in part from tensions between how adult social care – particularly domiciliary care – is commissioned and the requirements of the immigration system. The scale of non-compliance is significantly greater in adult social care than in any other sector eligible for the skilled worker visa. Between July 2022 and April 2025, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) revoked more than 550 sponsor licences, impacting over 43,000 workers in the care sector.

Since Autumn of 2023 – following close collaboration between the Home Office and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), UKVI has been scrutinising applications from employers, by applying the Genuine Vacancy Test, to confirm that employers actually have the work which they are recruiting for. The Genuine Vacancy Test, which is a long-standing part of the skilled worker route, combined with a greater understanding of how the sector commissions care, means that we have seen visa grants drop significantly for care workers and senior care workers.

**What reassurance can you provide to the care sector that there will be sufficient alternative measures in place to support providers to fill vacancies, including upskilling the domestic workforce and telling a more positive story about care work as a career?**

We recognise the scale of reforms needed to make the adult social care sector attractive, to support sustainable workforce growth, and to improve retention of the domestic workforce. We are introducing the first ever FPA to the adult social care sector, as part of the government's Plan to Make Work Pay, which sets out a significant and ambitious agenda to ensure workplace rights are fit for a modern economy, empower working people and deliver economic growth. FPAs will be transformative for the sector and will cover the breadth and diversity of the sector by bringing together trade unions and employers around the table to negotiate matters to better reward and support the workforce. We are determined to ensure those who work in care are respected as the professionals they are. The FPA will be an important first step towards a National Care Service.

The government is committed to a well-supported and trained adult social care workforce. Promoting opportunities to develop skills and knowledge is essential to raise the status of adult social care, and those with the opportunity to develop and progress in their role are far more likely to remain within the workforce. On 9th April 2025, DHSC published the expansion and revision of the Care Workforce Pathway, which includes the crucial role categories for registered and deputy managers, personal assistants (PAs), as well as a new enhanced care worker role. These Pathway role categories help to guide staff to build their careers in adult social care through training and development and give proper recognition, support integration, and show progression opportunities for the adult social care workforce. In September 2024, DHSC launched the Adult Social Care Learning and Development Support Scheme, providing funding for eligible care staff to complete courses and qualifications, including the new Level 2 Adult Social Care Certificate. The scheme is funded by up to £12 million this financial year. In the same month DHSC also launched the Quality Assured Care Learning Service, which enables adult social care providers to easily identify high-quality learning and development opportunities. This will build trust that training courses and qualifications, including those funded through the Learning and Development Support Scheme, meet the needs of the sector.

Since launching in 2019, our domestic adult social care recruitment campaign has showcased authentic moments in care careers, highlighting the rewarding nature of care roles and driving people with the right skills and values to apply for paid vacancies in the sector. The most recent phase, which ran between February and March 2025, utilised a multichannel approach to spotlight the everyday emotive and empowering moments between real care workers and recipients. This simultaneously improved understanding of the potential a career in care can offer, from the variety of roles to the training and progression opportunities available and drove people to apply for roles via the campaign website. We will continue to build on this success, with another round of promotional activity across a range of channels planned for this autumn.

**What evidence do you have that the ‘existing pool of care workers already in the UK’ will be enough to mitigate any negative impact from ending overseas recruitment?**

There is a significant pool of international care workers, who have been impacted by sponsor non-compliance and workers who came to the UK to pursue rewarding careers in care but never had the chance to support the sector as they intended. Whilst many of the 43,000 workers affected by revocations will have taken action to regularise their stay by either making a new application as a skilled worker, switching to another route, or making arrangements to leave the UK, there are still many thousands of people, estimated to be in excess of 15,000, who need help.

DHSC funds 15 regional partnerships across England to respond to, and prevent, unethical international recruitment practices in the sector. Over 2024/25, DHSC provided £16 million to regional partnerships to put in place infrastructure to support international care workers to understand their rights and switch employers when they had been impacted by sponsor non-compliance. Over 2025/26, DHSC is providing up to £12.5 million to the regional partnerships to continue this work.

UKVI data indicates that sponsor revocations are significantly lower in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, when compared to England. DHSC is in the process of developing links with Devolved Governments to ensure that displaced workers in England have access to vacancies in all parts of the UK.

As of 31 May 2025, of the approximately 43,000 workers affected by revocations, UKVI has issued over 30,000 letters to workers signposting them to regional partnerships. Of these, c.16,000 workers have contacted regional partnerships for support and over 1,100 have been supported into new roles. In addition, thousands more are being supported through the regional partnerships with CV writing, interview techniques, employability skills support, support to better understand workplace culture in the UK, and signposting. We would like the regional partnerships to be supporting more displaced workers into new employment, and we are exploring options to improve the effectiveness of the matching process.

It is also important to note, alongside this group of workers, the very recent changes to the Immigration Rules include protections for sponsored workers already in sustainable employment who wish to extend their visa. The new Rules also deliver the Immigration White Paper commitment to a transitional period until 2028, during which time individuals in

the UK already can switch into the Health and Care route, provided they are already working in the sector. This ensures that individuals already making a valuable contribution to the sector can continue to do so, for example Students or Graduates wishing to pursue a career in adult social care, recognising that this group has provided vital capacity in the sector in recent years. These arrangements will be kept under close review.

Despite the drop in out of country visa grants since late 2023 following Government interventions, in country visa grants have remained stable in recent months, after presenting an upward trend between March and December 2024. This has provided significant capacity to the sector through both retention of the existing workforce and additional capacity from those switching to the Health and Care visa from other immigration routes. The sector will be able to continue to draw on this source of capacity throughout the transition period.

International workers already sponsored to work legally in the sector by the end of the transition period will be able to continue to extend their stay, change sponsors, and apply to settle, subject to the settlement rules in place at the time, representing a continuing source of capacity in the sector.

In addition to this, there will continue to be people with general work rights who do not have any restrictions on the work they can undertake. These include students, those on the Graduate route, dependants of other skilled workers and those on family routes, who would be available to work in social care should the sector be able to attract them to the roles.

**What other options were considered to reduce the number of care worker visas, before the option of ending overseas recruitment was decided upon, and why were other options not considered to be sufficient? Specifically, did the Government consider reducing the number of social care worker visas over several years to give the sector time to adapt?**

In Autumn 2023, the previous government introduced a range of measures aimed at tackling abuse and high volumes of applications. We have continued and built on these measures to tackle the problems which we have seen in the sector. The number of applications to come to the UK as care workers being granted had already reduced significantly from the

height of 2023. Out of country visa grants for caring personal services (which includes care and senior care workers alongside small numbers of other professions eligible for the Health and Care visa) have declined considerably since late 2023. Despite this reduction, current Skills for Care data shows that the adult social care workforce continued to grow. The workforce grew by 4.2% (70,000 filled posts) in 2023/24. Over the same period, workforce retention improved, partly due to international recruitment, with turnover in the independent sector decreasing from 30.4% in 2022/23 to 25.8% in 2023/24, while turnover rates for local authority and independent staff have reduced from 29.1% in 2022/23 to 24.8% in 2023/24.

There have also been a series of measures introduced aimed at tackling both high numbers of applications and exploitation. Since March 2024, sponsorship of care workers and senior care workers in England has been restricted to providers who are regulated by the Care Quality Commission ensuring only legitimate providers can access the route. In April 2025, we implemented new rules to respond to the impact of unacceptable practices in the sector which have left thousands of care workers without work and at risk of destitution. Under these rules, providers must prioritise care workers already in the UK who need new sponsorship before hiring from overseas.

However, these measures have been insufficient in addressing non-compliance and exploitative practices in the sector and we need to take stronger action to safeguard both workers and those who draw upon care. Therefore, the Immigration White Paper made clear we would be closing the route for care workers and senior care workers. However, while we are not introducing the changes over several years as referenced in the question, it is important to note that in country switching from other immigration routes will continue to be permitted during the transition period until 2028, bringing more people into the sector and providing a period during which the sector can prepare for the end of in country recruitment. Health and Care visa holders will be able to switch employers and extend their visas until the point at which they can settle including beyond the transition period.

**Will you be producing an impact assessment for this change, including the impact on the care market, care worker recruitment and retention and the adult social care sector's contribution to the economy. If not, will you commit to do so?**

Yes. An Impact Assessment is being prepared for the Immigration Rules laid on 1st July 2025. This will include an assessment on the implication of this change on the adult social care sector, which the Home Office and DHSC are working closely together on. The Impact Assessment will be published shortly. During the development of the White Paper, there was a cross-government analysis on the proposed measures across all sectors, including adult social care, which informed the publication of the White Paper.

**From when do you intend the Adult Social Care Fair Pay Agreement to be in place and when would you expect to see results from it?**

We are committed to consulting on the design of the FPA process, and we aim to begin the public consultation after the Employment Rights Bill receives Royal Assent later this year. Secondary legislation and the establishing of the Negotiating Body will follow. The Negotiating Body will then negotiate the first FPA. This government is committed to implementing the first FPA within this Parliament.

**a. By how much do you expect the Adult Social Care Fair Pay Agreement to increase domestic recruitment and improve retention? Will this fully mitigate the impact of the end of overseas recruitment?**

We know that investing in pay and terms and conditions can improve recruitment and retention and that by delivering an FPA we can boost the supply of domestic staff and provide a shift away from relying on overseas workers. For example, as set out in our Impact Assessment<sup>1</sup>, research found that a 1% pay increase for all workers can improve labour supply in the sector by 1.8% through a combination of stronger recruitment and retention. The scope of the FPA will ultimately be determined by the Negotiating Body, and it will be possible for this to be set differently each time negotiations are commenced. This will ensure the process and resulting agreement best meets the needs of the sector at the time. As such, the exact way that the FPA supports the shift from overseas worker will ultimately depend on the outcome of each negotiation. The Negotiating Body will be responsible for considering this, amongst other factors, when evaluating options for negotiated outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> [Impact assessment: Establish a Fair Pay Agreements process in the Adult Social Care sector](#)

**b. How will the timing for the implementation of the Fair Pay Agreement relate to the timing for change to the rules for the social care worker visa?**

As indicated previously, this government is committed to establishing the first FPA and to doing so within this Parliament. We are consulting on the design of the FPA, and we aim to launch the public consultation after the Employment Rights Bill receives Royal Assent later this year. Secondary legislation and the establishing of the Negotiating Body will follow. It will then negotiate the first FPA.

We expect the process of establishing FPAs to coincide with the transition period outlined in the Immigration White Paper where in-country switching for those already in the UK will continue to be permitted until 2028 (to be kept under review). This means, for example, that care providers will continue to be able to access students and individuals on the graduate route who we know have provided a vital role in workforce capacity in recent years. International workers who are already sponsored to work legally in the sector by the end of the transition period will be able to continue to extend their stay, change sponsors and apply to settle, subject to the settlement rules in place at the time. These arrangements include those who need to switch employers following a sponsor licence revocation.

Yours sincerely,



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