



Dame Diana Johnson MP  
Chair, Home Affairs Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

24 December 2021

Dear Dame Diana,

## **IMPLEMENTING MIGRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION – SOCIAL CARE WORKERS**

Congratulations on your recent election as Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee.

As you may be aware, on 15 December the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published their annual report which looked at a range of topics including current labour market trends and the role of immigration, asylum and integration and adult social care.

The MAC were complimentary about the launch of the new Points Based System (PBS) which they note has been smooth, and many stakeholders have praised the operation of the new immigration system finding it more user-friendly and efficient than the previous system. This includes the social care sector, who have made good use of the new Health and Care visa since its introduction.

As you know, the MAC are undertaking a review into the impact of the ending of free movement on the social care sector. The full report is due by the end of April 2022. Ordinarily, we would have expected the MAC to include their recommendations to Government on this topic in April. However, the MAC felt they had sufficient evidence to make a recommendation to add Care Workers and Home Carers – under Standard Occupation Code 6145 – to the Health & Care visa and the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

The MAC also recommend adhering to the existing minimum salary threshold of the SOL, which is currently £20,480 or £10.10 per hour.

Their recommendation was made in the context of increased demand for adult social services, increasing vacancies and issues with staff retention. The MAC have re-asserted their position of the underlying cause of recruitment and retention problems being mainly due to pay, terms and conditions, and lack of progression in the sector. This is now coupled with pay in other competing sectors (such as catering; retail and cleaning) catching up to the adult social care sector due to the rise in the National Living Wage. .

In light of the clear evidence which the MAC have presented and the important role the sector is playing in face of the exceptional situation faced by the care sector during the

pandemic, I am writing to notify you the Government has decided to accept the recommendation.

We will add Standard Occupation Code 6145: Care Workers and Home Carers to the Shortage Occupation List expand eligibility for the Health and Care visa, meaning these workers will benefit from the fast-track processing and reduced fees for the main applicant and their dependants.

As recommended by the MAC, the salary threshold will be in line with the rest of the skilled worker route and applicants will need to meet all of the other requirements such as having a job offer from an approved Home Office sponsor and meeting English language requirements.

We are already working at pace to implement this recommendation which will require changes to immigration rules and to IT systems. We anticipate care workers will be able to start using the system from February 2022.

However, the MAC does not believe immigration can solve all, or even most, of the problems associated with social care recruitment, but can help to alleviate difficulties in the short term. We are therefore creating an initial 12-month time window whereby workers can apply for visas in this occupation. This would be reviewed internally at a later stage in 2022 to determine the success of this change, in relation to wider changes to the sector to attract and retain staff and the position with regard to the impact of COVID-19 and whether it remains appropriate for this occupation to remain on the SOL.

This does not signal a departure from the RQF 3 threshold and the PBS more broadly, which the MAC agrees strikes the right balance between access to international talent and resident labour. Employers must continue to invest in training, opportunities and wages for the resident workforce to ensure the UK's hard-working care workers get the type of rewarding packages they deserve and which are common in other sectors.

With my very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Foster', with a large flourish at the end.

**Kevin Foster MP**  
**Minister for Safe and Legal Migration**