

## **British Au Pair Agencies Association (BAPAA) – Written evidence (FTA0059)**

*Is it Au revoir for the UK Cultural Au Pair Programme?*

**Having actioned Brexit, the UK Government have completely ignored the European Youth Cultural Exchange Au Pair Programme which now leaves 45,000 families in the UK without flexible live-in childcare. Au Pairs have been coming to the UK for well over 50 years to improve their English and experience our British Culture. Currently, this is now lost which is detrimental to both Europe and the UK.**

We are totally mystified as to why the UK government has not implemented the special affordable European YMS Programme (T5) that they had promised since the 2016. By not doing what was promised, have now put our European friends at the very bottom of the pile and excluded them from a cultural exchange programme.

The programme was revitalised after the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war to harness the enthusiasm of the youth of Europe and Britain to help improve relationships throughout Europe.

Arrangements between Au Pairs and Host Families are reciprocal, each party benefits and the Au Pair lives as a family member, an older sibling to the children of the family and care for their needs daily (along with their attendance of English lessons) to support the hard -working parents – many of whom work unsociable hours.

Au Pairs are transient nationals on a gap year with their own Health and Travel Insurance, have no drain on the UK state financially and return home with improved English, life skills and friends for life. They receive full board and lodging with the family and an average of £100 per week in “pocket money” and a monthly contribution to English lessons. Au Pairs spend their pocket money in the UK in our high streets, language schools, public transport and tourism. Some £4.5 million of weekly revenue to the British economy that is also lost.

In 2008, the Au Pair visa ended however young Europeans continued to come to the UK under free movement. Over the years, Au Pairs have become a **necessity** for the many families who rely on them for flexible childcare. NHS workers, shift workers, single parents being the hardest hit and are currently in a panic right now during stressful COVID times as to how they are going to cover their shifts without an Au Pair. Au Pairs are not a luxury for the wealthy as some people perceive them to be.

In our recent correspondence with the EU over the future of EU Au Pairs entering the UK, we quote a letter written by Mr Rossi on behalf of Mr Barnier in August 2020:

*“First, the **EU’s legal migration acquis is open to all third country nationals, including UK nationals after the end of the transition period,** and offers opportunities and protection to categories such as workers (including*

*in particular seasonal workers), students, researchers, au pairs, trainees, volunteers, school pupils, family members, and long-term residents. Second, the EU's Negotiation Directives of 3 February 2020 (paragraph 54, COM(2020)35 final) and its draft text of the Agreement on the New Partnership with the United Kingdom of 18 March 2020 (Title XI on Mobility of Natural Persons) show that the **EU is open to concluding reciprocal mobility arrangements with the UK for purposes such as research, study, training and youth exchanges, and where applicable family members. The EU considers this to be in line with the Political Declaration it co-signed with the United Kingdom.**"*

We fear that negotiations for bilateral au pair agreements with each EU country would probably take years. Thus, we wonder whether an **accord could be negotiated with the EU that would include au pairs and other cultural exchange programmes based on the EU Directive 2016/801 ?**

The British Au Pairs Agencies Association (BAPAA) have expressed our major concerns at the lack of a dedicated visa route for Au Pairs post Brexit which includes the risk of exploitation of the visitor visa route as determined individuals and host families will feel it is worth taking the risk.

Currently, Au Pairs have been placed under the Skilled Worker Visa under the job occupation code: 6122. We feel that this is totally inappropriate to categorise Au Pairs as skilled workers as they have no formal childcare qualifications, they do not belong in that bracket and Cultural Exchange is completely dismissed. In recent correspondence with the Home Office over the SWV I was informed that Au Pairs were not placed under the job code for Au Pair agencies or Host Families to recruit Au Pairs, so cannot be sponsors. So there is no viable visa route.

Surely a Scheme can be implemented relatively quickly with out the need to wait for the YMS to be expanded to include the EU countries? Surely it would not take much at all to re-instate the original Au Pair visa.

BBC National TV News Au Pairs post Brexit 10minute broadcast at 10:40am 11/02/2021 - [BBC News - BBC News, 11/02/2021](#)

[UK au pairs under threat from new immigration rules | Financial Times \(ft.com\)](#)

[If au pairs like mine can't get a visa, balancing my job and childcare will be impossible \(telegraph.co.uk\)](#)

**<https://www.change.org/SaveAuPairs>**

Thank you in advance for your support and attention on this urgent matter.

*11 February 2021*