

By E-Mail

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

8 July 2020

Dear Prime Minister

New points-based immigration system and social care

We write to you as members of the Cavendish Coalition, a group of 37 organisations from across the UK who are committed to helping the UK Government design and deliver post-Brexit policies that have a positive impact on the UK's health and social care system. We are writing to express grave concern that the current proposals around the Immigration Bill will have a highly damaging impact on the care sector.

We welcomed your commitment last year to fixing the social care crisis and we recognise that we too have our role to play. We remain committed to working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and equivalent departments in devolved nations on a range of domestic actions to improve the attraction, recruitment and retention of the workforce and we share your aspiration to design an immigration system fit for our society and the economy.

At every opportunity, we have highlighted the precarious position of social care and the need for the future immigration proposals to take account of this. Whilst the proposed new system does include migratory routes for registered health and care professionals, it excludes social care staff. We share a profound concern that the resulting Immigration Bill and proposals are swiftly heading towards an alarming destination with no obvious solution for the care sector.

It is critical that the Government ensure a transitional solution is in place for social care in January 2021 to navigate the gap between the introduction of the new immigration system and a longer term plan and funding settlement for social care in England; an urgent domestic priority which you re-committed to in your recovery speech last week.

The disparity between social care services and the NHS has been laid bare through COVID-19 with vulnerabilities in funding, market stability, data, PPE and testing and workforce all leaving a marked impact on patients, families and communities. The key workers supporting our health and care services have been caring for people under unprecedented pressure for months. Our health and care services will need to weather the storm of further waves of COVID-19, the demands of winter and resumption of non-COVID services as we approach January 2021.

For a sector where one in six are foreign nationals and which is struggling with 122,000 vacancies in England alone it would be unwise to believe that domestic recruitment will solve all social care's immediate problems. Indeed, a recent survey of health and care workers found that one in five are likely to leave their roles following the pandemic. Retention will become a growing problem for the social care sector which is vulnerable, as highlighted during COVID-19 with social care workers twice as likely to die from COVID-19 as the general population.

In January, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) referred in their report on a points-based system to the failure to offer competitive terms and conditions as a key factor in the domestic supply problems in the social care sector. However, MAC also recognised the absence of a sustainable funding model. Care workers in England earn between £16,400 and £18,400. This level of income does not meet the new salary and qualification thresholds you propose. Currently, there appears to be recognition of the problem and ambition for the long-term solution but little thought about the short-term collateral if services cannot be properly staffed.

Our international care workers make a phenomenal and essential contribution to our health and care sector, and without them here, patient care would be unsafe. In social care, without them we will see reductions in beds, care homes will close and people will be starved of the help they need and deserve in their own homes, which is critical to them living well.

We cannot afford to wait and see what happens to the citizens who need the services of our care workers over the coming months and beyond before considering changes to policy. We will also have failed to learn from history. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the recent nursing and doctor recruitment crisis. We have a chance as a nation to learn from previous shortage occupation list omissions and to instead develop an agile immigration policy. Getting it right ultimately saves lives, and also benefits the health and wealth of the wider community.

We have just celebrated the 72nd anniversary of the start of the NHS and this week marks #GladtoCare Awareness; poignant moments of reflection following the past 100 days of the pandemic. We hope you will now reflect on the unstinting dedication and professionalism shown by care workers, who have risked their own lives, by telling them that the UK is open to them and values their work.

The proposed new immigration system must provide a migratory route for social care staff; they are and always have been key workers. If praise does not turn swiftly to action, the applause of an appreciative nation will echo hollow and we will have fewer carers to hear them.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Signed by members of Coalition



Danny Mortimer, Chief Executive, NHS Employers

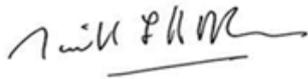
(Co-convenor, Cavendish Coalition)



Nadra Ahmed OBE, Chair, National Care Association
(Co-convenor, Cavendish Coalition)



Sara Gorton, Head of Health, UNISON
(Co-convenor, Cavendish Coalition)



Niall Dickson, Chief Executive, NHS Confederation



Darren Hughes, Director, Welsh NHS Confederation



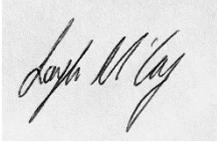
Heather Moorhead, Director, Northern Ireland
Confederation



Sean Duggan, Chief Executive, Mental Health Network



Louise Patten, Chief Executive, NHS Clinical
Commissioners



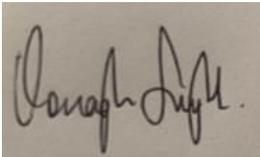
Dr Layla McCay, Director, NHS European Office



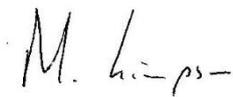
Dr Katerina Kolyva, Executive Director, Council of Deans of Health



Rhidian Hughes, Chief Executive, VODG
(Voluntary Organisations Disability Group)



Oonagh Smyth, CEO, Skills for Care



Merron Simpson, Chief Executive, NHS Alliance



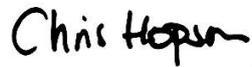
Neil Tester, Director, The Richmond Group



Martin Woodrow, Chief Executive, British Dental Association



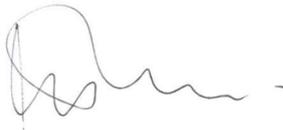
Dame Donna Kinnair, Chief Executive and General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing



Chris Hopson, Chief Executive, NHS Providers



Prof. Karen Middleton, CEO, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists



Prof. Caroline MacEwen, Chair, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges



Dr Edward Morris, President, Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists



Prof. Ravi Mahajan, President, Royal College of Anaesthetists



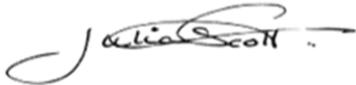
Prof. Martin Green OBE, Chief Executive, Care England



Vic Rayner, Executive Director, National Care Forum



Dr Chaand Nagpaul CBE, Chair, British Medical Association



Julia Scott, CEO, Royal College of Occupational Therapists



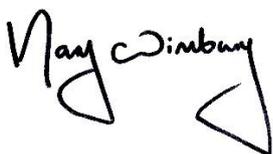
Lisa Lenton, Director, Association for Real Change



Gill Walton, Chief Executive, Royal College of Midwives



John Rogers, Chief Executive, Skills for Health



Mary Wimbury, Chief Executive, Care Forum Wales