



Professor Brian Bell
Migration Advisory Committee
2nd Floor Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

24 December 2021

Dear Brian,

I would like to thank you and the rest of the Committee for your annual report and for bringing forward your interim recommendation to add Care Workers and Home Carers to the Health & Care visa and the Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

I welcome your recognition that the launch of the new Points Based System (PBS) 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.

I wanted to inform you the Government has accepted the recommendation, including your recommended minimum salary level of £20,480. The expansion of the Health and Care visa and addition of care workers to the SOL is a significant step for the Government, as they would be the only occupation outside the RQF level 3 eligible to use the PBS.

The Government is making this decision in recognition of the exceptional situation faced by the care sector during the pandemic, and the strong evidence you provided to support the recommendation. As your report points out, immigration cannot be the only answer to addressing workforce issues in the sector, but we accept your recommendation it could help alleviate some of the short-term difficulties posed by the pressures faced during the pandemic.

Some employers in the sector have only very recently become sponsors, with the addition of senior care workers and other key health and social care roles at the launch of the PBS in December 2020, and there is a degree of uncertainty about how they will respond to this latest occupation being added.

The Home Office will therefore need to keep this measure under close review, and may also need to consider the position further when you publish your full report in April 2022. We are 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 the impact of COVID-19.

The Home Office will work with the Department for Health and Social Care to determine the best way to assess the impact of this change and whether it remains appropriate for care workers to be on the Shortage Occupation List.

We are also taking forward implementing this recommendation in as quick a timeframe as possible. In order to introduce this change, we will need to amend the Immigration Rules, make changes to our IT systems and guidance and ensure caseworker readiness. We believe these measures will come into force in February 2022.

I look forward to receiving the full report on the impact of ending free movement on the social care sector in April.

With my very best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

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

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Safe and Legal Migration