

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Home Office Immigration Consultation

The forthcoming Immigration Bill will make it more difficult for illegal migrants to live in the UK unlawfully and ensure that legal migrants make a fair contribution to our key public services. I am launching two consultations to set out some proposals on how we will achieve this. Copies are available in the House Library and on the Home Office website at <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/consultations/>. Further proposals will be set out over the summer.

The first consultation is on proposals to better regulate migrant access to health services in the UK and will run for eight weeks. We are responding to public concern that the current rules regulating non-EEA migrant access to publicly funded healthcare services are both overly generous, particularly when compared with wider international practice, and poorly applied. These current weaknesses result in the UK taxpayer unfairly bearing the healthcare costs of temporary non-EEA migrants, who will not make the same financial contribution to our healthcare systems as permanent residents over their working lives in the UK, and short term visitors and illegal migrants who access free health services when they should be subject to treatment charges.

This consultation will run in parallel to a separate Department of Health consultation which analyses the vulnerabilities of the current charging regime for overseas visitors in England, and sets out a range of proposals for reforming the system, including through improved registering and tracking of chargeable patients.

The second consultation launched today concerns proposals to prohibit illegal migrants from renting accommodation in the UK and will run for seven weeks. This forms part of the Government's wider drive to prevent illegal migration, including by removing the means by which migrants can live in the UK unlawfully. Our intention to take action in this area was signalled by my Rt Hon Friend the Prime Minister in his speech on immigration on 25 March, and the inclusion of related measures in the forthcoming Immigration Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech on 8 May.

The consultation seeks views on the creation of a duty to require landlords to conduct immigration status checks on tenants before providing residential accommodation, with financial penalties for those landlords who let property to illegal migrants having failed to conduct the necessary checks. The landlord checking proposal is modelled on the existing civil penalty scheme for employers of illegal migrant workers.