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02 July 2025

Dear Professor Bell,

I am writing in reply to your letter of 29 May to thank you for the MAC's report on professionals in IT and engineering, and to commission the MAC to undertake two further reviews, on salary requirements for work visas and on the new Temporary Shortage List (TSL).

As you know and refer to in your letter, on 12 May the Government published its Immigration White Paper, setting out our plans for reducing net migration by tackling the underlying causes of workforce shortages and reliance on international recruitment. I would like to thank you and the Deputy Chair for your ongoing contributions to discussions regarding the approach set out in the Immigration White Paper, particularly with regard to the key role the MAC has to play in continuing to advise on migration issues and as one of the bodies making up the new Labour Market Evidence (LME) Group.

I am grateful for the MAC's report, which builds our evidence base and understanding of two key groups of professionals and serves as a useful early test of how the LME Group can work together. I am also grateful for the MAC's continuing work in building links with the rest of the LME Group and developing plans for future cooperation.

The Immigration White Paper sets out two key areas we wish the MAC to review in relation to work visas, and so I am writing to now formally commission these:

1. Review of salary requirements (including discounts):

The salary requirements for Skilled Worker visas are complex and have evolved over time. Workers must be paid at least the higher of either a general threshold or an occupational going rate. There are discounts relating to the Immigration Salary List (ISL) (which will be abolished, as set out in the Immigration White Paper), PhD qualifications, new entrants, and occupations on national pay scales. There are similar, but different, rules for Health & Care Worker visas and the Global Business Mobility and Scale-up routes.

We are clear in our Immigration White Paper that salary thresholds must rise, must ensure that international recruitment is never a cheap alternative to fair pay and must reflect the new changes to our immigration system. On this basis, the consideration of any additional discounts should be exceptional.

In this context, I am asking the MAC to consider the following questions:

- What should the general salary threshold be for the Skilled Worker route?
- Should there continue to be different salary thresholds for Health & Care Worker visas and the Global Business Mobility and Scale-up routes and, if so, what should these be?
- What, if any, discounts should apply to salary requirements?
- Should there be any changes to the current approach to occupational going rates?
- How frequently should salary requirements be updated?

I would be grateful if the MAC could report on these questions by 6 months from now.

2. Review of the Temporary Shortage List (TSL):

On 1 July, the Government published changes to the Immigration Rules, under which occupations below RQF level 6 continue to be eligible for the Skilled Worker route where they appear on either:

- an expanded Immigration Salary List, containing the existing entries plus occupations at RQF levels 3-5 which the MAC identified as being in shortage in its 2023 review and 2024 rapid review
- an interim Temporary Shortage List, containing occupations at RQF levels 3-5 which the Department for Business and Trade and His Majesty's Treasury have identified as being important for the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

These lists are interim measures while the MAC carries out a more thorough review and these lists, and the occupations on them, will automatically fall out of use on 31 December 2026 as set out in the Immigration Rules.

In future, as the Immigration White Paper sets out, occupations will only be included on the next update of the TSL where the MAC has advised it is justified, where there is a workforce strategy in place, and where employers seeking to recruit from abroad are committed to playing their part in increasing recruitment from the domestic workforce. Sectors must also be key to the industrial strategy or delivering critical infrastructure.

There must be a proper workforce strategy which aims to maximise the use of the UK workforce and includes agreed training and broader plans with skills organisations, including Skills England and equivalent representatives from the Devolved Governments. In reaching its TSL recommendations, the MAC should look at issues such as:

- How far the workforce strategy is underpinned by a skills strategy;

- How far it is underpinned by a commitment to work with the Department for Work and Pensions on a domestic labour strategy;
- How the sector will manage the risk of exploitation of workers, particularly migrant workers in the sector; and
- Whether the strategy is sufficiently ambitious.

The MAC should also work with the Labour Market Evidence Group (LMEG) to collect and analyse data relevant to this review.

In this review, I am asking the MAC to make an assessment of:

- Which occupations could be potentially eligible for inclusion on the TSL because they are crucial to the delivery of the Industrial Strategy or critical infrastructure. This section of the review should consider the visa terms and conditions, including time limits and caps on the number of visas, which should apply to occupations on the TSL. These could either be universal terms conditions applying to all TSL entries, or a framework which could be adapted for each occupation in line with workforce strategies for that occupation.
- Of those occupations identified as potentially eligible, which of them have met the criteria for inclusion on the updated TSL through evidence of workforce shortages and existing or new workforce plans to address those shortages (as per the criteria set out above). Occupations on the current ISL and initial TSL may be retained or removed whilst others may be added. I recognise that workforce strategies will not yet be fully developed for each occupation. The MAC should make allowances for this, and may decide to focus the review on sectors where overarching bodies who could lead on such plans are already in place. However, the MAC should apply the principles for inclusion on the TSL in relation to workforce plans as far as is reasonably possible at this time.

As was the case with the ISL, the updated TSL may include shortages which exist UK-wide, or which are specific to a specific UK nation or nations. The MAC has a strong track record of engaging with bodies across the UK, and this will be important in informing recommendations for the new list.

I would be grateful if the MAC could report on the first stage of the review by 6 months from now and the second stage by 12 months from now. This timescale is intended to allow time for sufficient stakeholder engagement to inform any conclusions.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Secretary