

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London

29 September 2023

Dear Prime Minister

Restrictions to the health and care visa

We are writing to you on behalf of the Cavendish Coalition in our continued efforts to support and protect the current and future health and social care workforce, following the UK's exit from the EU. The coalition acts as a shared voice of representatives from the NHS, social care and trade unions to co-ordinate sector insight and offer expert advice on the issues affecting the health and social care workforce.

Our members and the patients and communities they serve have welcomed the support offered by the government to our sector in accessing vital global labour markets over the years. These nurses, doctors, care assistants and other colleagues are now a long-term feature of social care and health teams across the UK. They bring vital experience to our teams and, in the NHS, will help whilst colleagues await the full benefit of the Long Term Workforce Plan you launched in the summer.

The NHS would not be able to function without its international workforce, who account for 1 in every 6 people, or 18 per cent, of the health service. Likewise, international staff make up 16 per cent of the adult social care workforce.

Some job roles in the NHS are more reliant on international staff than others, with international staff making up more than a third of the medical workforce, compared to less than five per cent of managers. To assume however that these workers would come to work in the UK without their dependants would be ruinous to our services and the staffing plans you ask us to have, and there would be the additional impact that changes would have on employers of existing staff if current family visa situations were disrupted.

In April 2023, Huddersfield University published research which examined the experiences of international nurses and their initial integration into NHS England's healthcare workforce.

When questioned about their family status, around two thirds (62.4%) of respondents were married, and just under half (49.7%) said they had children aged eighteen or under. However, around 71.4% of these respondents said they lived without their children in England. 94.0% of respondents with children aged eighteen or under said they would have liked their families to have travelled with them.

There is increasing global competition for health and care workers and our country must do everything it can to be a more, not less, attractive destination. Global Health Workforce Labor Market Projections for 2030 predict that, by 2030, global demand for health workers will rise to 80 million workers- double the current stock of health workers. Therefore, we urge you to reject any suggestion by your ministers or officials that it is possible or desirable for visa rules to be restricted for our sector.

We would be pleased to meet with you and/or colleagues to discuss potential solutions and improvements to the current system.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Daniel Mortimer
Chief Executive
NHS Employers



Nadra Ahmed CBE
Executive Co-Chair
National Care Association



Sara Gorton
Head of Health
Unison