

Government launches Health and Care Visa to ensure UK health and care services have access to the best global talent

The Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care have today announced the new Health and Care Visa will be launched this Summer, creating a new fast-track visa route for eligible health and care professionals and delivering on a key manifesto commitment.

They have also today announced further details on how the exemption to the Immigration Health Surcharge will work for health and care staff, who will now be permanently exempt from this charge.

The Home Secretary and Health and Social Care Secretary have together developed the Health and Care Visa to demonstrate the government's commitment to deliver for the NHS and wider health and care sector. It is designed to make it easier and quicker for the best global health professionals to work in the NHS, for NHS commissioned service providers, and in eligible occupations in the social care sector.

The legislation needed to open this new route will be laid in Parliament today and health professionals will be able to apply from August.

The new Health and Care Visa will come with a reduced visa application fee compared to that paid by other skilled workers, including exemption from the Immigration Health Surcharge. Health and care professionals applying on this route can also expect a decision on whether they can work in the UK within just three weeks, following biometric enrolment. Those working in health and social care who do not qualify for the Health and Care Visa will still be able to claim a reimbursement from the Immigration Health Surcharge if they have paid this on or after 31 March.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

We are indebted to overseas health and care professionals for their tremendous contributions, not just in saving thousands of lives throughout this crisis, but for the vital role they play year-round.

This new visa is part of our new immigration system making it quicker, cheaper and easier for the best and brightest health and care professionals from around the globe to work in our brilliant NHS.

Health and care professionals from all over the world have played a vital

role in hospitals and care homes across the country fighting coronavirus. The introduction of the Health and Care Visa follows a number of unprecedented measures to show the UK's gratitude to health workers from overseas.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

Our health and care system has always had a proud tradition of welcoming overseas staff to work, train and live in the UK, and I'm proud that the NHS is a destination of choice for talented people from around the world.

The unwavering commitment, skill and compassion staff have shown during the fight against this deadly virus is nothing short of phenomenal, and the reimbursement of the immigration health surcharge recognises the enormous contribution of those who have come to the UK to work in health and social care.

I'm incredibly proud of our health and care workforce and look forward to welcoming new professionals from across the globe to continue the fantastic work to ensure our health system remains the best in the world.

Right across the immigration system the Home Office is already supporting frontline healthcare staff through initiatives such as visa extensions and the creation of the bereavement scheme.

The Prime Minister has previously announced that health and social care workers will be permanently exempt from the Immigration Health Surcharge going forward, and Immigration Health Surcharge payments made since 31 March will also be refunded.

As part of the launch of the Health and Care Visa, those who apply via the visa and their dependants will be exempt from the Immigration Health Surcharge. The government has already begun refunding Immigration Health Surcharge payments for any healthcare professionals on Tier 2 visas who have paid since 31 March 2020, and this process will continue. More information will be published on the Immigration Health Surcharge GOV.UK pages for customers to contact us directly if they believe they are due a refund. The Department of Health and Social Care is currently working with the sector to set up operational arrangements for reimbursing health and social care staff outside the scope of the Health and Care visa. These arrangements will commence from 1 October in 6 month reimbursements.

The new Health and Care Visa will apply to eligible roles within the health and care sector. The events of recent months have illustrated just what a crucial role the care sector plays in UK society. The government is working closely with the sector to support and recognise the contributions of care workers. This includes a widespread focus on training and introducing a proper career structure to provide opportunities for those in the sector and makes it an attractive profession for prospective carers.

The independent Migration Advisory Committee has been very clear that immigration is not the answer to the challenges in the social care sector and, as we implement the new immigration system, we want employers to focus on investing in our domestic workforce.