

# Health and care staff can claim immigration health surcharge reimbursement

- Immigration health surcharge reimbursement scheme opens from today
- Delivers on Prime Minister's commitment to exempt all health and care workers from the surcharge following heroic efforts throughout the pandemic
- Guidance and new online portal available to help health and care workers claim reimbursement

Tens of thousands of international health and care staff who have worked tirelessly to save lives during the pandemic are exempt from the immigration health surcharge (IHS) to pay to use the NHS from today.

Overseas NHS and care workers are now able to claim their reimbursement from the surcharge, fulfilling a pledge made by the Prime Minister in May.

The IHS allows non-European Economic Area nationals to access the NHS on broadly the same basis as UK residents if they are seeking to work, study, or join family members for more than 6 months.

The government's Tier 2 health and care visa, launched in August, exempted eligible staff from paying the IHS. The new reimbursement scheme goes further to ensure that staff not covered by the visa, but who have worked in the NHS or care sector since 31 March, are able to claim reimbursement for themselves and their dependants, even if they paid the surcharge before this date.

Those eligible can now [apply online](#) and access [guidance on claiming the reimbursement](#), which will be paid in 6-month instalments.

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

I am incredibly proud of all the fantastic health and care workers from all over the world we have working in our NHS who provide such an invaluable service, from cleaners to care workers to porters.

We can now deliver on our promise as the reimbursement scheme will benefit those who have given so much this year to protect us all from COVID-19.

This will encourage overseas health and care workers to continue to come and work in the UK and help those already living here to provide first-class care and support for patients.

Applications will be processed by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) and UK Visas and Immigration.

The IHS reimbursement scheme will work alongside the [health and care visa](#) announced in July and launched in August this year. Reimbursements for the IHS will be paid in 6-month instalments.

The visa offers a fast-track visa route for eligible health and care professionals and includes an exemption to the surcharge, making it cheaper, quicker and easier for people with the right skills from around the world to come to the UK. This will help grow the workforce to deliver 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors in general practice, as well as thousands more physiotherapists, pharmacists and other highly skilled practitioners over the next 5 years.

Rebecca Smith, managing director of NHS Employers, part of the NHS confederation, said:

Employers and recent overseas recruits will welcome detail on how the immigration health surcharge reimbursement service will work in practice.

The government's decision in May to exempt health and social care staff from the fee and reimburse those who have paid it after 31 March this year demonstrated some recognition of the incredible contribution overseas staff make to the NHS. Now more than ever, we must show our gratitude for all our staff, including those from overseas, who have worked with dedication, fortitude and selflessness to care for our communities in one of the most challenging periods in our history.

Anyone holding a relevant visa, who has worked in health and social care continuously for at least 6 months and paid the IHS will be eligible for a reimbursement.

Applications will be processed by the NHSBSA and UK Visas and Immigration.

Anyone holding a relevant visa, who has worked in health and social care continuously for at least 6 months commencing on or after 31 March 2020 and has paid the IHS may be eligible for a reimbursement. Their dependants may also be eligible for a reimbursement if the IHS has been paid for them. Applicants may only claim a reimbursement if they have paid the IHS in conjunction with a current visa.

Applicants will need to apply for reimbursements on a 6-monthly basis, when they have worked for at least 16 hours per week over the full 6 months. These reimbursements will be processed in 6-month instalments in arrears. This means, for example, if a claimant paid for the IHS in 2019, for a period of 3 years, they will be able to claim 6 months' worth of IHS reimbursement on 1 October 2020. This can be repeated on 31 March 2021 and for any additional 6-month periods, as long as they have met the eligibility criteria for this period. IHS in respect of any period of time or work before 31 March 2020 cannot be reclaimed. The reimbursement scheme is designed for claimants who are in the UK on visas that give them a generic right to work. Examples of

this may include:

- a dependant of a UK national or another migrant
- someone on a Tier 4 student visa who can undertake up to 20 hours of work a week during term time
- someone on the Tier 5 youth mobility scheme