

Home Secretary announces visa extensions for frontline health and care workers

Free visa extensions will be automatically granted to more crucial overseas health and care workers, the Home Secretary has announced today.

Frontline workers, including midwives, radiographers, social workers and pharmacists, with visas due to expire before 1 October 2020 will receive an automatic one-year extension. It will apply to those working both in the NHS and independent sector and include their family members.

This builds on the Home Secretary's announcement last month for NHS doctors, nurses and paramedics. All will be exempt for the Immigration Health Surcharge for the duration of the exemption.

In total approximately 3,000 vital health and care workers and their families will benefit from the extension.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

We are incredibly grateful to all overseas health and care workers fighting this invisible enemy.

We have already announced the extension of visas for NHS doctors, nurses and paramedics. Now we are going further by extending this offer to hundreds of other frontline health and care workers, both in the NHS and in the independent sector.

These extensions will be automatic, free and include exemption from the Immigration Health Surcharge.

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

Frontline health and social care workers from overseas are doing extraordinary work in responding to this global outbreak.

Around 3,000 vital health and care workers and their families will benefit from the extension, and we are hugely grateful to them for protecting the vulnerable and saving lives.

Those benefiting are providing essential services in response to the coronavirus pandemic. It is important we relieve the pressure from the whole of the NHS, so it can focus maximum effort on fighting the coronavirus and saving lives.

The extension comes into effect immediately and is for all visas expiring between 31 March and 1 October 2020. Those benefitting from this extension will be identified by health and care employers across the UK. Any NHS workers who have paid for an unresolved application will be offered the option of a refund.

The Home Secretary has also confirmed family members and dependants of healthcare workers who sadly pass away as result of contracting the virus will be offered immediate indefinite leave to remain.

The Home Office will work with the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS Trusts to put these arrangements in place.