

Migration Advisory Committee reviews shortage occupation lists

Senior care workers and nursing assistants are among the occupations that should be added to the SOL to relieve pressure when freedom of movements ends.

The committee has, however, warned of the stark consequences of low wages in social care, with most frontline occupations in the sector ineligible for the skilled worker route and the SOL. It has reiterated the need to make jobs more attractive to UK workers by increasing salaries rather than relying on migrants, particularly during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Other occupations which should be added to the UK-wide list include butchers, bricklayers and welders, where there is clear evidence of staff and skills shortages which could be filled by overseas workers.

The MAC has also recommended additions to separate lists for all of the devolved nations, allowing additional flexibility and reflecting the different needs of each. This includes fishmongers, bakers and horticultural workers for Northern Ireland, childminders and nursery nurses for Scotland and health professionals for Wales.

It is proposed that a minor review of all lists takes place annually, with a major review taking place every three years.

MAC Chair, Professor Brian Bell said:

The number of migrants coming to work in the UK has already decreased and we are likely to see an increase in unemployment over the next year as the economic impact of the pandemic continues, so this has been a very challenging time to look at the Shortage Occupation Lists.

It has made us more willing to recommend some roles for inclusion simply because it is the sensible thing to do, but we have been clear that migration is not always the solution.

We remain particularly concerned about the social care sector, which is so central to the frontline response to this health pandemic, as it will struggle to recruit the necessary staff if wages do not increase as a matter of urgency.

The MAC, which provides independent, evidence-based advice on migration issues to the Government, was commissioned to consider what medium-skill occupations should be included ahead of the introduction of a points-based immigration system on 1 January 2021.

The SOL shows which occupations, amongst those eligible for the skilled worker route, are facing a shortage of suitable labour and where it is sensible to fill those shortages with migrant workers.

Read the full report on the Migration Advisory Committee website.