

News story: Doctors and nurses to be taken out of Tier 2 visa cap

As part of a long-term government plan for the NHS, more details of which will be set out in due course, doctors and nurses are to be excluded from the cap on skilled worker visas.

The move will mean there will be no restriction on the numbers of doctors and nurses who can be employed through the Tier 2 visa route – giving the ability to recruit more international doctors and nurses to provide outstanding patient care when required.

The Tier 2 visa route, which has had an annual cap of 20,700 since 2011, has in recent months seen the number of applications exceed the monthly allocation of available places.

This has been driven, in large part, by demand from the NHS, which accounts for around 40% of all Tier 2 places.

The change will be outlined in the Immigration Rules laid before Parliament today.

As well as providing a boost to the NHS, it will also free up hundreds of additional places a month within the cap for other highly skilled occupations, such as engineers, IT professionals and teachers.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I recognise the pressures faced by the NHS and other sectors in recent months. Doctors and nurses play a vital role in society and at this time we need more in the UK. That is why I have reviewed our skilled worker visa route.

This is about finding a solution to increased demand and to support our essential national services.

The exclusion of doctors and nurses from the cap comes as the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care puts in place long-term measures to increase the supply of domestic doctors – including increasing the number of training places.

Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

Overseas staff have been a vital part of our NHS since its creation 70 years ago. Today's news sends a clear message to nurses and doctors from around the world that the NHS welcomes and values their skills and dedication. It's fantastic that patients will now

benefit from the care of thousands more talented staff.

This builds on steps we have already taken to make sure the NHS has the staff it needs for the future – boosting training places for home-grown doctors and nurses by 25 per cent and giving over a million NHS employees a well-deserved pay rise.

The Tier 2 cap forms part of the government's approach to controlling net migration. It relates to certificates of sponsorship which are applied for by UK employers looking to bring in non-EU skilled workers.

Before December 2017, the cap, which was set on the advice of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), had only been reached on one occasion. However, it has been reached every month since last December.

When the cap is reached, places are scored using a points-based system, with top priority given to jobs on the shortage occupation list. The shortage occupation list already includes a number of medical professions and no role that is part of this list has ever been refused.