

NHS frontline workers visas extended so they can focus on fighting coronavirus

As part of the national effort to combat coronavirus, doctors, nurses and paramedics will automatically have their visas extended, free of charge, for one year.

The extension, announced today (31 March) by the Home Secretary Priti Patel, will apply to around 2,800 migrant doctors, nurses and paramedics, employed by the NHS whose visa is due to expire before 1 October.

The extension will also apply to their family members, demonstrating how valued overseas NHS staff are to the UK.

By giving them the peace of mind that they do not need to apply for a visa extension, this will allow those at the frontline – working around the clock in hospitals to treat the most seriously ill – to focus fully on combatting coronavirus and saving lives.

To get more doctors and nurses on the frontline, the Home Office has also lifted the restriction on the amount of hours student nurses and doctors can work in the NHS.

On top of these changes, pre-registered overseas nurses who are currently required to sit their first skills test within 3 months and to pass the test within 8 months, will now have this deadline extended to the end of the year as well.

This will give overseas nurses more time to pass their exams, whilst they spend the immediate term working on the frontline.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Doctors, nurses and paramedics from all over the world are playing a leading role in the NHS's efforts to tackle coronavirus and save lives. We owe them a great deal of gratitude for all that they do.

I don't want them distracted by the visa process. That is why I have automatically extended their visas – free of charge – for a further year.

The extension to NHS visas will be automatic, there will be no fee attached and it will be exempt from the Immigration Health Surcharge.

Trainee doctors and nurses will also not be limited by the number of hours they can work in the NHS during term time.