

Visas extended for thousands of frontline health and care workers

Thousands of crucial frontline health workers and their dependents will be granted free visa extensions, Home Secretary Priti Patel has announced today.

Free one-year visa extensions will be automatically granted to eligible overseas health and care workers whose visas were due to expire before 1 October 2021.

Since starting the free extensions last year, the Home Office has extended the visas of more than 10,000 people across the UK. It is expected that today's announcement will benefit a further 14,000 applicants.

This will mean that doctors, nurses, paramedics, midwives, occupational therapists, psychologists and others will be able to continue their crucial work in the fight against coronavirus.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The dedication and skill of overseas health and care workers who are leading the UK's fight against coronavirus is truly extraordinary.

Thousands of them have helped save countless lives throughout this pandemic and are now playing a vital part in the hugely successful vaccination rollout.

Our offer of free visa extensions shows how our country values the contributions of these heroes.

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

Our overseas health and care workers make such a vital contribution to our health system and have been a key part of fight against the pandemic. They are protecting our loved ones and vaccinating the public so that we can save lives and return to normality.

To help those staff from overseas, we are extending their visas to provide security while they continue to tackle this virus.

This extension will cover healthcare professionals working in the NHS and the independent health and care sector. Their visas will be extended for a year, free of all fees and charges, including the Immigration Health Surcharge.

Those benefiting from this extension will need to complete a simple online form to verify their identity. We will also ask their employers to confirm

their eligibility.

The government is committed to continuing to support overseas health and care workers and make it as easy as possible for talented people wanting to work in the sector to come to the UK.

Our Health and Care Visa, which launched last August, makes it easier, cheaper and quicker for the best global health professionals to work in the NHS, the social care sector and for those organisations which provide commissioned services to the NHS. On 29 January, we expanded the list of occupations which are eligible to benefit from the Health and Care Visa.

So far more than 20,000 people have been granted a visa through the route.

Last year we expanded the Bereavement Scheme to all NHS, health and social care workers and continue to encourage healthcare workers who are EU, other EEA or Swiss citizens, or their family members to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme, to secure their rights in UK law.