

# Letter to the Public Bill Committee Scrutinising the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill

June 2020

Dear Committee,

The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and health care for people in the UK. We have been following work on the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill 2019-21. We have not submitted a full response to the evidence request. But we want draw your attention to some of our work on immigration in the context of health and social care for consideration in the next phase of the Bill's progress.

By ending freedom of movement between the EU and the UK, this Bill represents a significant shift in immigration policy. Migrants are a vital part of the health care workforce, and existing evidence tells us that international migration is good for the NHS.<sup>1</sup> The government's proposed fast-track NHS visa aims to support much needed international recruitment into the NHS. But current government plans for a points-based immigration system do not protect social care. Around 17% of people working in adult social care in England are non-British nationals. Skills for Care data suggest that EU workers have made up an increasing proportion of this total since 2012/13.<sup>2</sup> We highlighted our concerns about the proposed new system's impact on the social care workforce in February.<sup>3</sup>

Workforce issues in social care are already severe. Vacancies have risen to 122,000, with around 1,100 people leaving their job each day – one third of whom leave the sector.<sup>4</sup> Many providers rely heavily on agency staff, with around one quarter of the workforce on zero

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<sup>1</sup> Alderwick H and Allen L. Immigration and the NHS: the evidence. Health Foundation; 2019. (<https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/blogs/immigration-and-the-nhs-the-evidence>)

<sup>2</sup> Skills for care. Workforce nationality figures. *Skills for Care*; 2019. (<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/Workforce-nationality.aspx>)

<sup>3</sup> Gershlick B. New points-based immigration system looks set to make our social care crisis even worse. *Health Foundation*; 18 February 2020. (<https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/news/new-immigration-system-will-make-social-care-crisis-even-worse>)

<sup>4</sup> Health Foundation. *The Health Foundation's response to the Health and Social Care Select Committee inquiry on social care: funding and workforce*. Health Foundation; 2020. (<https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/Health-Foundation-submission-to-HSC-social-care-funding-and-workforce-inquiry.pdf>)

hours contracts.<sup>5</sup> Terms and conditions are poor, with the majority of those working in social care earning below the £25,600 salary requirement put forward in the new immigration system.

Without a sector-specific visa route enabling international recruitment into social care, current immigration policy plans risk exacerbating these pressures. It is also concerning that there is no plan for a transition period to give employers time to adapt to the changes.

We – like the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC)<sup>6</sup> – recognise that an accommodating immigration system would not resolve the underlying causes of these problems. Social care is in desperate need of reform and significant additional funding. We estimate that between £2.1bn and £12.2bn funding on top of current government funding plans may be needed annually in 2023/24, before accounting for the impact of COVID-19 on local authority incomes and demand for care.<sup>7</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded long-standing funding and workforce challenges in social care. And the pandemic has shown more than ever that people working in social care are not ‘low-skilled’. But the current proposals for the new immigration system continue to categorise the majority of social care roles as such and therefore make no provision for them. We should value and support everyone working in social care, now and in the future. As it stands, the Immigration Bill does not do this.

We hope that you find this summary helpful. We would be very happy to share more information or discuss these issues with you further at any time.

Yours faithfully,

Hugh Alderwick, Assistant Director of Policy

Lucinda Allen, Policy Officer

Nihar Shembavnekar, Economist

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<sup>5</sup> Gershlick B and Charlesworth A. *Health and social care workforce: priorities for the next government*. Health Foundation; 2019. (<https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/GEO4-Health%20and%20social%20care%20workforce.pdf>)

<sup>6</sup> Migration Advisory Committee. *A points-based system and salary thresholds for immigration*. Migration Advisory Committee; 2020.

([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/873155/PBS\\_and\\_Salary\\_Thresholds\\_Report\\_MAC\\_word\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/873155/PBS_and_Salary_Thresholds_Report_MAC_word_FINAL.pdf))

<sup>7</sup> Health Foundation. *The Health Foundation's response to the Health and Social Care Select Committee inquiry on social care: funding and workforce*. Health Foundation; 2020.

(<https://www.health.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-06/Health-Foundation-submission-to-HSC-social-care-funding-and-workforce-inquiry.pdf>)