

HEIDI ALLEN MP
SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

To:

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Prime Minister
The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department

29th May 2018

Dear Prime Minister, Jeremy and Sajid,

We write to request urgent action be taken to alleviate the impact of the Tier 2 Visa cap on NHS recruitment.

The Tier 2 Visa cap has now been reached for an unprecedented fifth month in a row. The structure of this policy and the points based system is naturally driving up the minimum wage threshold, hitting the NHS particularly hard. In order to deliver the services that we ask of the NHS, we believe immediate adaptation to current policy is essential.

We welcome and appreciate the initiatives of government to deal with NHS staffing shortages. The announcement of five new medical schools to make the NHS self-sufficient by 2025 will make a huge contribution to recruitment pressures. However it will take time to bring these new staff online, so we urge the government to consider action to ease the immediate operational difficulties our hospitals are facing. We see no evidence of the usual seasonality, with patient flows unabated since the Winter.

You will be aware, as we are, that the relentless pressures on the NHS necessitate an ongoing need to attract clinical staff from outside the UK. The NHS relies on its highly skilled and dedicated workforce across multiple disciplines, yet the current demand for nurses recruited from overseas is severely restricting the number of available certificates for other professionals within the NHS. Between December 2017 and March 2018, 1,518 applications from doctors were refused a Certificate of Sponsorship under the Tier 2 visa policy.

Our current Tier 2 policy is forcing the country to make a binary choice between professionals needed to grow the economy and professionals needed to staff our health system. When combined with the decline in EU nationals choosing to come to Britain since the Brexit referendum, without urgent intervention, we believe our NHS is heading towards a perfect storm.

One suggestion has been to exempt all shortage occupation roles from the Tier 2 allocation process. However, given the possible unintended consequences of such a blanket approach, we are keen to see an NHS focused solution set within a fair and balanced immigration policy designed to facilitate economic growth through innovation and enterprise in the private sector.

As such, we respectfully encourage you to consider the option of exempting NHS professionals altogether from the Tier 2 process. We are confident this would enjoy full public support and be warmly welcomed by our NHS.

We are keen to work with the government and NHS professional bodies to develop a robust solution so would welcome your views on this most urgent issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. A.', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.