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Our Reference: 202500492983
Your Reference: Announcement on visas for social care workers

9 December 2025

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 October 2025 in relation to the experience of international social care workers in Scotland, in which you share valuable insights into instances where standards for employing international workers has fallen short of our expectation of employers.

I've provided a response to concerns raised in your letter which I hope reassure you that this is a matter myself and the Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing take extremely seriously.

Although the Scottish Government has taken steps to protect the rights of migrant workers in the social care sector, it should be noted that both immigration and employment matters are both reserved, which makes our powers to direct, or intervene, limited.

Sponsorship Licences and Immigration Insecurity

I share your concerns relating to the impact of sponsorship licence revocations. The Scottish Government is acutely aware of the issues faced by displaced workers when the Home Office revokes a sponsorship licence. The loss of a Sponsor Licence leads directly to the loss of employment for all affected migrant employees. This not only disrupts their ability to settle and build lives in our communities, but also negatively impacts the stability of the social care workforce which is already operating under significant pressure.

According to statistics published by the Home Office in August, the number of Health and Care Worker visas for those in a Caring Personal Service Occupation being granted has fallen by 77% in the year ending June 2025.

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Tha Ministearannta h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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Further more, between July 2022 and December 2024, more than 470 sponsor licences in the care sector were revoked, leaving over 39,000 workers without sponsorship.

Donald Macaskill of Scottish Care has also described UK Government's closure of health and social care visa routes as having an 'incalculable' impact on the sector, particularly in Scotland's remote and rural communities.

Displaced Workers

In October this year, the First Minister announced £500,000 funding to mitigate the devastating impact of the UK Government's closure of the care worker visa route and provide targeted support to help displaced social care workers.

The scheme, launched on 3 December, offers targeted funding to Adult Social Care employers, to help remove barriers in recruiting displaced adult social care workers. The scheme supports local recruitment efforts by helping employers meet costs associated with the recruitment of displaced workers.

In its first week, the scheme has received 61 expressions of interest from Adult Social Care employers. Boosting successful recruitment of these workers, allows social care employers to effectively deliver care and relieve pressure on the social care workforce.

Adult Social Care employers can learn more and submit an expression of interest by visiting [Adult Social Care Displaced Worker Scheme - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-Wellbeing/Adult-Social-Care/Displaced-Worker-Scheme)

Regarding an imbalance in the allocation of Certificates of Sponsorship, immigration matters are fully reserved to the UK Government, which manages the design and operation of the immigration system through the Home Office. Scottish Government have no say in how decisions are made on Certificates of Sponsorship applications. However, we will continue to engage with the UK Government to make the case for an immigration system that meets Scotland's distinct demographic and economic needs.

Employment Conditions

I deeply value the social care workforce and believe the wellbeing of all those working in the social care sector is of paramount importance. Although the Scottish Government is not a social care employer, we have taken several meaningful steps to promote and support ethical recruitment of international workers.

The Scottish Government remains committed to improving the pay and conditions of all workers within the social care sector and we are currently consulting with key stakeholders on how the Fair Work agenda can continue to be addressed in light of the current financial constraints to ensure terms and conditions for all social care workers remains on the agenda.

The ability to establish regulatory sectoral bargaining arrangements and set legal minimum rates of pay are reserved matters and therefore, the Scottish Government currently does not have legal competence to mandate in this area.

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However, we are continuing to engage with the UK Government on their Employment Rights Bill, which we hope will extend the scope for the option of a regulatory Social Care Negotiating Body, and associated Fair Pay Agreements, to Scotland.

Depending on the outcome of the UK Government's Employment Rights Bill, Scottish Ministers will then consider options around establishing voluntary sectoral bargaining arrangements, based on the framework that has been designed in partnership with our stakeholders, alongside the potential of a regulatory Social Care Negotiating Body.

Once introduced, any sectoral bargaining arrangement will encourage improvements in pay, and terms and conditions, that are specific to the entire social care workforce and take into consideration the roles and responsibilities across the sector.

On the matter of employment support for migrant workers specifically, the Scottish Government fund Centre for Workforce Supply of Social Care (CWSS) who specialise in supporting employers ethically recruit international workers.

Via their online TURAS platform, mentoring, LinkedIn and Facebook platforms, CWSS provides information for providers on Fair Work and staff on recognising the signs of exploitation.

CWSS also provides specific information for displaced workers. This includes information specifically to support sponsored workers in knowing their rights and signposts to additional support services. Worker can visit; [Displaced Workers | Turas | Learn](#) or email nes.cwssocial@nhs.scot for assistance.

Exploitation

In response to increasing evidence of exploitation and human trafficking in the social care sector as reported by Police Scotland and others, Scottish Government now chair the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Regulatory Group, which includes social care sector regulator representatives. The purpose of this regulatory group is to build understanding of how trafficking and exploitation should be tackled and co-ordinate partners in a sector wide response.

Government officials are also in regular attendance at the Four Nations engagement meetings, attended by UK Visas and Immigration and the devolved administrations, in order to share best practice in the treatment of migrant employees.

Oversight, Regulation and Accountability

In Scotland, services are required to register with the [Care Inspectorate](#) who regulate providers to ensure the quality of care delivered in Scotland meets high standards. This includes supporting providers in creating a safe and supportive workplace for the workforce.

It should be noted that employment law is reserved to UK Government and it is not the responsibility of the Care Inspectorate to oversee the employment conditions of individual social care providers.

The Care Inspectorate are a member of our Human Trafficking and Exploitation Regulatory Bodies Working group and are equally concerned about the impact to individual workers, and more broadly social care, when an employer loses their licence.

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The Care Inspectorate has in place policies and procedures for Human Trafficking and Exploitation including making referrals to the relevant agencies Police Scotland and Home Office where it becomes aware of concerns.

It also receives direct information from the Home Office about license revocation and ensures appropriate action is taken and informs Health and Social Care Partnerships to protect people who experience care and workers who may be displaced. The Care Inspectorate ensures that it considers this information as part of their regulatory work as appropriate and in line with their legislative framework.

We will continue to work within our powers to improve the working conditionals for both the local and migrant social care workforce. This involves continuing to work closely with UK Government to advocate for Scotland's unique needs on employment and immigration matters and to ensure that the rights and wellbeing of all social care workers are protected.

We are clear that within this, however, the Scottish Government does not support an immigration system which increases the risks for forced labour and exploitation of migrant workers.

I hope this letter has reassured you that the insights of people with lived experience is heard by this Government and meaningful steps are being taken to ensure ethical and fair recruitment, as well as effective support for migrant workers in the sector.

Yours sincerely,



NEIL GRAY

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