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Dear Dr Mehta,

Thank you for your letter of 06 December 2023 about the net migration measures announced in December 2023. Your correspondence has been passed to a Home Office official to provide a response.

As you are aware on 4 December the Home Secretary announced a range of measures aimed to reduce net migration and tackle exploitation in the care sector. This included removing the right for care workers and senior care workers to bring dependants and requiring social care organisations in England to be CQC registered before they can sponsor care worker and senior care worker visa applications. The restriction on bringing dependants applies only to those applying as a care worker or senior care worker and not to other health and care professions such as doctors or nurses.

No measures introduced as part of this package will be applied retrospectively to people in the affected visa categories. For clarity, I can confirm that up until the point with which the Immigration Rules have effect:

- Care workers and senior care workers already in the route, will be able to remain with their dependants and children born in the UK, including extending, changing employer (within these occupations) and settlement.
- Where a care worker or senior care worker is in the route before the Immigration Rules change, but has not yet brought dependants, they will be allowed to bring dependants during their sponsorship (on this visa), including children born in the UK.
- However, individuals who are in the UK on any other route, including where that route permits dependants, who switch into the care visa as a care worker or

senior care worker after this date, will not be able to stay with (or bring over) dependants.

The Government launched the Health & Care visa in August 2020 making it easier, cheaper, and quicker for health workers to come to the UK to work compared to other immigration routes. Visa applicants pay a lower fee, they are subject to quicker processing time and also have a dedicated UKVI team that assists them with the application process. In addition, visa holders are exempt from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge and we have no plans to change this exemption. Further details on the requirements of the Health and Care visa can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/health-care-worker-visa>

Since the Home Office added care workers to the Shortage Occupation List and Health and Care visa on 15 February 2022 over 100,000 visas have been issued to care workers, they have been accompanied by an estimated 125,000 dependents, this volume of people has bolstered our care workforce but has also added pressure to our infrastructure and services. The Government remains committed to supporting the sector, and recognise the importance and benefit of international recruitment, to ensure we have a sustainable Adult Social Care workforce supply. This announcement reflects a balanced approach that the Government is taking. It will help address net migration and reports of illegitimate use of the visa route, whilst ensuring the health and care sectors are still able to recruit the valuable staff they need.

The addition of carers in the UK's immigration system was a temporary measure to fill labour shortages by responding to an urgent need in the adult social care sector following the coronavirus pandemic. These measures will ensure we continue to protect our NHS and social care systems while addressing significant concerns that have emerged since the introduction of the visa about high levels of non-compliance and worker exploitation and abuse within the adult social care sector, particularly for overseas workers employed within care occupations.

The UK continues to have an attractive offer for overseas health and care professionals. Given the strength of global labour supply, we expect people will continue to come to the UK as care workers and senior care workers. We appreciate that an individual with a family may of course be dissuaded because of these restrictions, however, someone else who does not have those family commitments will most likely be willing to apply for a job in the UK.

The measures announced are possible because the government is prioritising growing our domestic workforce through our Back to Work Plan – a package of employment-focused support that will help people stay healthy, get off benefits and move into work – as part of the Autumn Statement. The new Back to Work Plan builds on the ambitious £7 billion employment package from the Spring Budget, to help up to 1,100,000 people with long-term health conditions, disabilities or long-term unemployment to look for and stay in work.

Further details on the net migration measures, including the other changes that were announced, can be found through the following link: www.gov.uk/government/news/fact-sheet-on-net-migration-measures-further-detail

Your Sincerely

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