

Edwina Hart AM MBE

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services

Our ref: EH/06521/07

Your ref:



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Welsh Assembly Government

Val Lloyd
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28th November 2007

Dear Val

Thank you for your letter of 11th October regarding a petition about Work Permit Regulations for Foreign Care Nurses and other Care Staff.

These concerns have arisen due to the revision of the occupational guidance issued by the Border and Immigration Agency. This guidance advises work permit case workers on current and planned industry requirements for the post of Senior Care Worker, and provides updated labour market information to enable them to apply the existing work permit criteria correctly. There has been no change to the work permit criteria themselves and there has been no change of policy.

Government policy is that the resident labour force (including the expanded EU) should be sufficient to meet the needs of posts below the level of the work permit criteria. Recent research and consultation by the Border and Immigration Agency with the social care sector has shown that the majority of Senior Care Worker posts are unlikely to meet the work permit skills criteria.

As a temporary transitional measure (until the 3rd quarter of 2008), to ensure continuity of care provision while the sector adapts its recruitment practices, the work permit skills criteria will be waived for extension applications for those Senior Care Workers who have been issued work permits in the past. They must, however, demonstrate that the post is unchanged and that the salary level reflects the higher skills requirement with a minimum wage of £7.02 per hour.

The Care Council for Wales have indicated that between the period 2004 to 2007, six hundred and eighty one work permits were issued to Senior Care Workers in Wales.

The Department of Health (England) are currently monitoring the impact of reduced work permit provision on the workforce to provide evidence to the Migration Advisory Committee.

In response to the Petitions Committee's request for the impact of these revisions to guidance on the health and social care workforce in Wales, I have requested officials to work with the Department of Health to ascertain how the impact is being monitored across the UK, to ensure that the needs of Wales are incorporated into any evidence to be provided to the Migration Advisory Committee. Suitable arrangements will be established to monitor the impact in Wales.

I would be happy to keep the Petitions Committee updated on progress.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. M.', written in a cursive style.