

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you as the national organisations representing care workers across the UK and wish to raise serious concerns about the impact of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and the imminent deadline of June 30th, 2021. We would respectfully urge you to reconsider the government position even at this late stage.

Care Workers in the UK have long been considered, by Government, as an unskilled workforce and therefore remain undervalued, with no parity of esteem with their colleagues in the NHS. The COVID pandemic has shone a light on the vital role Care Workers have and continue to play in supporting the NHS. It has now apparent and acknowledged that Care Workers are *highly skilled* but low paid as a direct result of historic and systemic failings in the funding of Social Care from government and commissioners alike.

There is no doubt that the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) will heavily impact the Social Care Sector; over 12% of care workers are from the EU and a substantial number of Social Care workers and their employers are still not fully aware of the Scheme. This lack of knowledge of the repercussions of not being part of the Scheme is that many Care Workers are either feeling they have no choice but to leave the UK, leave the care profession or alternatively move to the NHS. For a sector that already has over 120,000 vacancies this will have a major impact on the sustainability of social care service provision across the UK.

1. Secure Care Workers' status and rights under the EUSS

There is a clear lack of knowledge/awareness amongst EU care workers and indeed many employers as to what their obligations and requirements are caused primarily by poor engagement and communication from the Home Office with care providers.

To make matters worse, we are worried that care workers who are simply not aware of the EUSS or the deadline will not meet the "reasonable grounds" threshold for late applications. The Home Office states their "benefit of the doubt" approach will become stricter with time and historically, the Department has taken an extremely inflexible approach towards reasonable grounds. Crucially, even in cases where the guidance provides a route back to status, this is not a solution to making people undocumented. Loss of legal status, barriers to accessing services, liability to criminal penalties for continuing to work and exposure to potential detention and removal creates huge and potentially life-ruining risks.

Bearing in mind the crucial role that Care Workers provide, it is imperative that we do not underestimate the impact of this action – i.e. 'cut our nose off to spite our face'.

Action Required: We ask that the EUSS deadline must be lifted or at the very least an exemption for Care Workers must be put in place prior to the June 30th 2021 deadline. This would secure their settled status and avoid criminalisation of migrant EU workers as well as employers.

2. **The Future of a Migrant Workforce**

Care Providers in the UK rely heavily on a migrant workforce and the Government must recognise the need not only to retain the existing workforce in Adult Social Care, but also to enable migrants to make up the current 120,000 shortfalls in vacancies, which the domestic workforce has been unwilling/unable to bridge. The pandemic has highlighted the fact that we cannot rely on the domestic workforce to fill these vacancies, the growth in unemployment nationally has not resulted in a reduction of the number of vacancies in our sector.

Any strong and effective health and care system relies on a new and consistently reliable supply of resources and since care is based on human contact, the sector cannot survive without a continual and sustainable supply of care staff.

Action Required: There needs to be an urgent review into the ability of Adult Social Care providers to recruit and support care workers into the Sector. They need to have access to a migrant workforce to fill the skills shortage. This is already challenged by the current barriers of the new Points-Based Immigration system, financial cost, administration, bureaucracy and salary affordability.

We ask that you to respond to our concerns with the utmost urgency, and we look forward to receiving your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Nadra Ahmed OBE, Executive Chairman of National Care Association

Karolina Gerlich, CEO of The Care Workers' Charity

Professor Martin Green OBE, CEO of Care England

Dr Donald Macaskill, CEO of Scottish Care

Jon Wilks, CEO of the Institute of Health and Social Care Management