



7 May 2020

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
The Secretary of State for the Home Department
The Home Office
2, Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary

Review of Immigration Health Surcharge – Social Care Workers

We warmly welcome your announcement on 25 April 2020 that the payment of the Immigration Health Surcharge for healthcare workers who have come to the UK, and are fighting the coronavirus pandemic, is under review.

We are writing to request that this very welcome review be extended to include the social care sector, and the payment of the Immigration Health Surcharge by international volunteers here under Tier 5 visa arrangements, and by those with Tier 2 visas. This follows our previous letter, dated 23 April 2020, requesting that visa extensions afforded to healthcare staff be extended to the social care sector. We believe that staff in the social care sector, including international volunteers, should be afforded the same consideration as NHS staff for the purpose of both policy announcements.

For Camphill Scotland in particular, international volunteering is a very important issue. Camphill communities in Scotland look after around 600 people with learning disabilities and other support needs. There are currently around 251 international volunteers in Scotland living in Camphill communities, many of whom are young students who will volunteer within their host Camphill community for about a year.

We note that in October 2020 the Immigration Health Surcharge is due to increase to £624, and to include all EU citizens coming to the UK from 2021. UK visa fees are already high for young people wishing to join Camphill communities, often on gap years between school and university to gain experience within social care. Indeed, the Immigration Health Surcharge is already a deterrent to volunteers wishing to join Camphill communities, and our concern is that the increased surcharge will mean far fewer young people will be able to afford the costs of coming to the UK to volunteer adding to our residents' quality of life on a daily basis.

With the outbreak of Covid-19 many Camphill international volunteers received advice to return home from their families, from their governments and from the volunteer agencies which support their placements at Camphill. Despite this, the vast majority of Camphill international volunteers decided to stay, and to help their host community during this crisis. The main reasons given by these volunteers for staying was their commitment to their host Camphill community, and to the people with learning disabilities and other needs that they help to support.

In summary, we wish to request that the UK Government's review of the payment of the Immigration Health Surcharge by NHS staff should be extended to include staff in the social care sector, including international volunteers.

Thank you very much for your interest in this matter.

Yours sincerely



Neil Henery, Director
Camphill Scotland



Annie Gunner Logan, Director
CCPS



Ian Welsh OBE, CEO
The Health & Social Care Alliance



Donald Macaskill, CEO
Scottish Care



George Thomson, CEO
Volunteer Scotland