

20 February 2019

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
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Dear Mr Javid,

The UK's future skills-based immigration system

I am writing to you in relation to the future skills-based immigration system white paper. We note that, following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU), the Government intends to introduce a new single immigration system which will apply in the same way to both EU and non-EU citizens. We understand that this route will only be accessible for highly skilled and skilled workers whom are sponsored by an employer.

The General Medical Council (GMC) regulates the medical profession in the UK. Along with eight other professional regulators, we support more than 1.5 million health professionals in delivering safe and high quality care. It is our responsibility to set the standards for doctors to abide by in order to work in the UK and to assess whether doctors have the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours to deliver safe practise. Given our role, we believe that it will be important for us to be involved in any future discussions that have a bearing on the skills that potential doctors applying to work in the UK would need. We would welcome the opportunity to engage in further discussion with officials on this point.

We note the proposal that skilled migration will no longer be capped at 20,700 places each year and believe that this could bring significant benefits. The pressures facing the UK health system due to workforce shortages are well documented and acknowledged. We believe that ensuring that there are no limits to the volumes of skilled professionals able to work in the UK marks an important step in addressing these concerns.

The NHS Long Term Plan notes the importance of international recruitment in tackling workforce shortages and we recognise that this will continue to be an essential component of the NHS workforce strategy for the foreseeable future. We understand that, due to our responsibility in assessing and registering doctors, we have a role in enabling greater international recruitment by ensuring that our

processes are proportionate to risk and responsive to need. However, significant regulatory barriers exist which prevent professionals from entering and working in the UK that are beyond our control.

The Medical Act (1983) sets out the specific means and evidentiary basis for entry and exit onto specialist and GP registers. This legislation is highly prescriptive as it requires applicants to submit over 1,000 pages of authenticated, highly specific evidence with little room for flexibility. This means that doctors who would otherwise be fit to practise in the UK may avoid or withdraw from applying to register with us because their qualifications do not meet the current evidential criteria.

We therefore hope that, in parallel with the introduction of the new skills-based system of migration, government will ensure that legislation governing the registration of doctors will also be reformed. We believe that this is important for securing the success of the future system as it will help to ensure that those with the necessary skills and expertise to work in the UK are not unduly deterred from applying to do so.

Yours sincerely

Charlie Massey
Chief Executive

Cc: The Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP