



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

29th January 2021

Dear Constance,

RE: RECOGNISING KEY NHS & SOCIAL CARE WORKERS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of recognising the efforts of our remarkable NHS and social care key workers; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I share your admiration for the frontline workers who are making such immense sacrifices to help those affected by the Coronavirus outbreak – they are the very best of us all and our community, and the entire country, stand shoulder to shoulder in appreciation for all they have, and continue to do. Without question, ongoing restrictions continue to present new challenges and our key workers are supporting people across the country magnificently at this trying time for everyone.

I therefore fully support the Government's announcement of a pay rise of 2.8 percent, backdated to April 2020, in line with the recommendations of the independent pay review body for dentists and doctors. This pay rise is an important acknowledgment of the commitment and hard work of staff throughout this difficult time. Staff on the Agenda for Change (AfC) deal are already scheduled to receive pay rises, with the starting salary for a newly qualified nurse increased by more than 12 percent by the end of the AfC time period, with all nurses receiving pay increases of at least 6.5 percent. The Government has also introduced a nurses' bursary which provides at least £5,000 of additional support to nursing students. I understand that the NHS Pay Review Body, covering AfC staff, will return to making recommendations for next year's pay awards.

When people voted to leave the EU, they did so in the knowledge that the free-movement system imposed by the EU would end. The Home Secretary has been clear that she has a particular responsibility to take back control and end free-movement once and for all. Instead, I welcome the Government's commitment to build a fairer, single, global, immigration system which considers people based on their skills, rather than their nationality. The Coronavirus pandemic has proven beyond all doubt the need for an immigration system that will not just allow, but actively welcomes, a range of health professionals to the United Kingdom. I welcome the fact that the Government has ensured that this will be the case. Indeed, the new 'Health & Care Visa' creates a new fast-track visa route for eligible health and care professionals.



I am particularly pleased that the Government has taken action to ensure the immigration system does not unduly infringe on the ability of the NHS to respond to the outbreak. It is good news that thousands of health professionals and their family dependants will have their visas extended for a year, free of all fees and charges. This comes after a previous announcement offering free visa extensions for health professionals whose visas were due to expire between the 31st March 2020 and the 1st October 2020. This further action taken by the Government will now extend that offer from the 1st October 2020 until the 31st March 2021.

As I say, the fight against Coronavirus is a national effort, and my colleagues and I are committed to giving NHS staff the additional support they need throughout it. The dedication and sense of duty shown by key workers during the outbreak has been exemplary. I am grateful for their tireless work in ensuring that society can continue to function and that the ill and vulnerable are so well cared for. With all that in mind, I will of course be sure to relay your views on this to Ministers during the conversations I have, but I am sure you will welcome the pay rises outlined above.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,
Tom

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE