



Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination
(EU Withdrawal) Bill –House of Lords -
Committee Stage – Amendment No.65 – 7
September 2020

New Clause - Immigration health surcharge:
exemption for international volunteers

BARONESS JOLLY





Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill – Amendment No.65

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After Clause 4

Insert the following new Clause–

“Immigration health surcharge: exemption for international volunteers

() A charge under section 38 of the Immigration Act 2014 (immigration health charge) may not be imposed on EEA and Swiss nationals who have leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom through a visa to work voluntarily for a period of no more than 12 months for a registered UK charity advancing the charity’s primary purpose.”

Member’s explanatory statement

This new Clause would ensure that international volunteers, including those working in health and social care, will be exempt from paying the immigration health surcharge.

Supporters

Amendment No.65 is supported by the following organisations:

Action Group
ACVO - Aberdeen's Third Sector Interface
Alcohol Focus Scotland
Association of Camphill Communities
Camphill Loch Arthur
Camphill Scotland
Capability Scotland
Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland
Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS)
Cyrenians
Impact Funding Partners
Inclusion Scotland
L'Arche
National Carer Organisations
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
Partners in Advocacy
Quarriers
Royal Blind and Scottish War Blinded
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
Scottish Care
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)
Scottish Volunteering Forum
The Ayrshire Community Trust (TACT)
The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (The ALLIANCE)
Thistle
Volunteer Edinburgh
Volunteer Scotland
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Welsh Centre for International Affairs

Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill – Amendment No.65

Effect

Amendment No.65 would ensure that international volunteers, including those working in health and social care, will be exempt from paying the immigration health surcharge.

Reason

The ALLIANCE, Camphill Scotland, CCPS, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), Scottish Care, the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA), and our other supporters, totalling 29 organisations across the UK, warmly welcome the UK Government's recent announcement that health and social care workers from other countries will be exempt from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge. The Government's Command Paper focusing on the proposed points-based immigration system, however, appears to confirm that those wishing to apply to work in the UK as international volunteers, including in health and social care settings, will be liable to pay the international health surcharge¹.

Our organisations are calling on all Peers to support Baroness Jolly's Amendment No.65, when it is considered at Committee Stage of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill on 7 September 2020. Amendment No.65 tabled by Baroness Jolly is necessary to ensure that international volunteers are also exempt from the Immigration Health surcharge.

We believe that requiring international volunteers, including those working in health and social care, to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge, is unfair and inequitable, particularly as paid staff from other countries working in health and social care in the UK will be exempt. This New Clause is a probing Amendment tabled to seek urgent reassurance from the UK Government that the recently announced Immigration Health Surcharge exemption for health and social care staff will include international volunteers working in, or applying to work in, the UK under the current Tier 5 Visa arrangements.

International volunteers from EU and non-EU countries make an enormous contribution to the work of the Camphill communities in Scotland which support people with learning disabilities and other support needs, and also to the work of other charities across the UK in health and social care and in other settings. By way of further background, there are currently around 215 international volunteers in Camphill communities in Scotland providing social care and education to people with learning disabilities and with other support needs. A total

¹ Command Paper, 'The UK's Points-Based Immigration System: Further Details', (CP 258), July 2020, Page 52, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/899755/UK_Points-Based_System_Further_Details_Web_Accessible.pdf.

of 61 of these international volunteers currently rely upon a Tier 5 visa to do so. These young people have chosen to stay and provide social care to UK citizens during a national health emergency, which demonstrates their dedication to, and compassion for, the people they support. It would, therefore, be a terrible blow to the morale of the Camphill communities, and to that of charities across the UK, if the UK Government's very welcome announcement about the Immigration Health Surcharge exemption does not extend to international volunteers.

Post-Brexit all international volunteers from EU countries and Switzerland wishing to volunteer in UK charities will require visas, along with international volunteers from other countries outside the EU and Switzerland. Against this background, excluding international volunteers from the Immigration Health Surcharge exemption could deter international volunteers from working as volunteers for charities in the UK in health and social care, and in other settings, in the future. This will impact upon the capacity of the Camphill communities in Scotland to provide care and support, and education, to people with learning disabilities and other support needs, and upon the capacity of charities across the UK in health and social care and in other settings including youth work and other services supporting young people.

Case Studies

The significant contribution of international volunteers to the work of charities in health and social care, and in other settings in the UK including services to support young people, can be put in perspective by considering the following case studies.

International Volunteers and Youth Work in Wales

The **Welsh Centre for International Affairs (WCIA)** has been funded by the European Solidarity Corps to support international volunteers coming to Wales to work in a variety of fields for many years. Each year since 2017 sixteen volunteers have come to Wales for 10 – 12 month periods. Nine of the volunteers work with children and young people in youth organisations, including Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales (BGC), and Valleys Kids of South Wales.

BGC supports children and young people, including those with disabilities. Sylvie from France, who worked with BGC 2019/20, reported, "I work with children aged five to 15 years old, and every time the experience is different. I have started to build relationships with the children, and they look out for me [at the youth centres]. The Boys & Girls Clubs appreciate the value of [international volunteers], and have had them for the past few years. They [the young people] are really keen to learn about my culture and habits." Grant Poiner, COO, said "Sylvie has become a great member of our team of workers and volunteers who are supporting youth clubs in Wales. She has played an important role in helping young people develop new skills and abilities."

Valleys Kids of South Wales describes volunteers as the life blood for their organisation, and has hosted two or three international volunteers per year for a number of years. The volunteers assist with their outreach work amongst children and young people. Part of the organisational mission is developing an international perspective for young people who come from the former mining communities of Wales.

Flora from Hungary, who worked with Valleys Kids during 2019/20, said: "I really enjoyed the work itself, especially with the younger children. All the people I met at Valleys Kids were extremely supportive, welcoming and interested in my culture. This was my first time in Wales so the first six months were full of new experiences of a different country and culture. What I found especially fascinating was the history and the present of the Rhondda Valleys. Spending this much time drew my attention to many differences between Wales and my country but more importantly, made me aware of the many similarities and aspects we have in common. I learnt of the struggles and challenges locals face."

Flora and Sylvie did not return to their home countries during the COVID19 pandemic but stayed in Wales to continue to support those in need through the crisis. Excluding international volunteers from the Immigration Health Surcharge exemption could deter international volunteers from working in youth work in the United Kingdom in the future.

Current impact of Immigration Health Surcharge

International volunteers enable residents within Camphill communities to live full and rich lives. They help alongside support staff making the day fun for the residents, and becoming a friend to the community's residents. They perform a vital role in the Camphill communities, as well in other charities across the UK. The impact of the Immigration Health Surcharge is further illustrated in the following case studies provided by international volunteers at Camphill Blair Drummond:

"My name is Constantin Jacobs, I am 18 years old and I have just graduated from High School in Germany. Before starting my studies I always wanted to do a Gap year in a foreign country. I want to experience a new culture, new people and a new environment. In my opinion a gap year in general is a great possibility to learn a lot about yourself, and to get a more reflective view about the society you are living in! I think that a voluntary year brings a lot of fun and happy memories with it, but also some hard times and crises. I expect those hard moments to be the most worthy experiences I will get in my voluntary year. They will show you how to deal with problems and how to get along with yourself, even when you are not in your usual, well known environment".

"I hope that this year will teach me a lot about people with special needs. Moreover, you learn to take responsibility, not only for yourself, but also for others and to work as a team. I think that these are all things that I will learn and need not only in my

voluntary year, but throughout my entire life! That is why I am so grateful to have the possibility to do this gap year at Camphill Blair Drummond in Scotland”.

“Unfortunately not everyone has got the chance to do a voluntary year abroad after school, because often it is too expensive. In Germany, a lot of my friends would actually love to do a gap year, but cannot afford to do so, and are unable to go abroad after High School. Some of them are paying the whole costs of going abroad from their own savings, without financial support from their parents because they cannot afford it”.

“The UK government has increased now the International Health Surcharge for all those arriving in the UK from 1st January 2021, and requiring a visa, from 400 pounds to 600 pounds. That means every volunteer arriving in the UK after the 1st January 2021 will have to pay this on top of their visa and volunteer agency costs. A gap year in the UK would be even more expensive than it is at the moment. There will be so many people that cannot afford to volunteer abroad any more. It might not sound like a huge difference for everyone but for young people who have just finished their school or their studies, and who do not have a lot of money, this difference can mean the decision to go or not to go to the UK to spend their voluntary year there. The UK would be much less attractive as a host country. I am sure that there would be many people who would actually love to go to the UK, deciding in the end to go to another country because of this change. This would be very bad for the volunteers and even worse for the organisations in health and social care system that rely on volunteers from abroad!”.

While the purpose of the Immigration Health Surcharge is to ensure everybody contributes, it should be recognised that volunteers in health and social care are already contributing. International volunteers from non-EU countries volunteering in Camphill communities, and wishing to volunteer in Camphill communities must pay the Immigration Health Surcharge, and post-Brexit volunteers from EU countries and Switzerland will also be required to pay the surcharge. The decision to travel thousands of miles to help vulnerable people in the UK is a huge decision and commitment. On top of the costs of the visa, insurance and flights the international volunteers from non-EU countries have to pay hundreds of pounds to use the system in which they volunteer. They receive no salary while in the UK just a small subsistence allowance. The impact of the health surcharge will mean that far fewer international volunteers will be able to travel to the UK, and our country will be a lot poorer for it, particularly as post-Brexit the UK Government’s Command Paper ‘The UK’s Points-Based Immigration System: Further Details’ suggests that all international volunteers seeking to volunteer in a charity in the UK will have to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge.

Information provided by Chardon Nguyen from Vietnam about why she joined Camphill Blair Drummond, a community near Stirling for adults with learning disabilities and other support needs, highlights the impact that having to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge had on her family:

“It took almost 10 months for my application and visa to the UK. It has been a great financial cost to my family, and the international health surcharge was an additional expense. With the increase cost of this I would not be able to afford to come to the UK. It took 29 hours to travel from Vietnam to Scotland. It was my Parents’ contribution and sacrifice to enable this to happen, and to ensure I had this experience and could help those in need in the UK. I remember my Father’s words - ‘if everyone chooses to do easy tasks who will do the difficult ones?’ As I help to support those most in need I know I am on the right path and the orientation of my future career I have made a good choice. As a volunteer I am not paid so it is a huge commitment and decision to take this journey, ‘volunteers are unpaid not because they are worthless but because they are priceless.’” Chardon Nguyen, June 2020.

Chardon, in common with the vast majority of international volunteers at the 11 Camphill communities in Scotland, did not return home during Covid19, but stayed and helped staff to support Camphill Blair Drummond’s vulnerable people during these very difficult times.

Future visa arrangements for international volunteers

It is hoped that the debate on Amendment No.65 will also help to clarify other issues relating to the future arrangements for international volunteers seeking to work as volunteers in the UK.

The UK Government’s Command Paper CP 258 confirms that there will be a ‘charity route’ “for applicants who want to enter the UK to undertake unpaid voluntary work for a registered UK charity, advancing the charity’s primary purpose”.² The Command Paper also states that individuals “of all nationalities who wish to work voluntarily for a registered UK charity for up to a maximum period of 12-months” will be able to apply.³ The Command Paper does not, however, confirm if the ‘Charity route’ will be based on current Tier 5 Visa arrangements or if new arrangements will be put in place to replace the existing arrangements.

Questions for HMG

It would be helpful if HMG could clarify the following issues, in response to Amendment No.65:

1. Will the Immigration Health Surcharge exemption extend to international volunteers from other countries currently working in health and social care in the UK, and also to those from other countries who are currently applying, or will be applying, to work as volunteers in the UK, including in health and social care?
2. Will the current Tier 5 Visa arrangements for non-EU citizens to be engaged as volunteers by registered sponsoring organisations for periods of up to a year be

² Command Paper CP258, Paragraph 121

³ Command Paper CP258, Paragraph 122

extended to include EU citizens, or will alternative arrangements be put in place to enable non-EU and EU citizens to volunteer in health and social care and in other settings in the UK post-Brexit?

3. What action is HMG taking to promote volunteering opportunities in the UK post-Brexit for young people from EU and non-EU countries?

Further details about the Bill, and about the information and issues in this briefing paper can be obtained from:

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