

The voice of frontline doctors

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION UK Press Release –Overseas NHS Workers Day – March 5th 2021

NHS – many countries, one family

Overseas NHS workers day is a recognition of the extraordinary contribution that people who have migrated to the UK and played an integral role in the UK's fight against COVID-19. The **Doctors' Association UK** with support from **the Royal College of Physicians (RCP)**, **British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO)**, **British International Doctors Association (BIDA)**, **Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA)**, **Royal College of Surgeons and Unison** aim to recognise the incredible contribution these people make in all the roles they fulfil in the NHS.

Almost 200 different nationalities are represented within the NHS in England. The majority of staff are British, but as of January 2020, 169,000 (13.8%) NHS staff report a non-British nationality, with Indian, Filipino and Irish representing the highest numbers. 67,000 members of staff are nationals of other EU countries. Despite being the biggest employer in the UK, the NHS doesn't have enough staff to meet demand. According to recent data from NHS digital, the NHS has a shortfall of 84000 FTE staff, and this is before absence figures due to COVID-19 are factored in.

Dr Pushpo Hossain of the Doctors' Association UK (DAUK) Committee said:

"Between 9 March and 28 December 2020, 883 health and social care workers died from COVID-19 in England and Wales. Unfortunately, there have been many more since then during the traumatic start to 2021 the NHS faced. NHS staff working through the pandemic have risked their lives to help others. Despite this, thousands of overseas healthcare staff face uncertainty about their fate in this country, as they continue to

show up on the NHS frontlines everyday. A Bill to grant these workers Indefinite Leave to Remain is having its second reading when Parliament returns for physical sittings.

Currently ILR is granted to the families of healthcare workers if they die. DAUK believes that this sends a message that these heroic people only deserve recognition in the event of their dying in service, which is simply not in keeping the British Values or morally defensible.

Dr Jenny Vaughan - Chair of the Doctors' Association UK (DAUK) said:

The contribution of overseas workers should be recognised, and we call for healthcare workers who have served in the NHS in any capacity during the COVID-19 crisis, to be granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK”

Patients have also come forward with their support, including acclaimed actor Sir David Jason and former Children's Laureate Michael Rosen:

Sir David Jason said:

Anyone who has worked for the NHS during this global pandemic whether it be at home or overseas, deserves our gratitude for all their hard work, commitment and personal sacrifice. Well done to you all

Michael Rosen said:

“Over the years I've had several longish spells in hospital and quite a few visits to clinics. The NHS has mended my nose, picked me up off the road having been knocked down, knitted my pelvis together, taught me how to walk, spotted my auto-immune disease, stitched up hernias and, most recently, saved my life from Covid. My parents too, of course especially in their last years.

As I write this, I'm still seeing doctors and nurses every two weeks or so. In all this time, going back to the 1950s, I can remember time and time again, I have been looked after by doctors and nurses who were born overseas: Jamaica, Denmark, Brazil, Uganda, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Grenada, Ireland, Trinidad, China, Australia...apologies to people and places I've missed out - but I'm matching people to places, as I write this list. And I don't want to overlook the people who did the scans and x-rays ,taught me

how to walk - twice! - cooked and brought me food, cleaned the wards, did the laundry and 100s of jobs I didn't see.

Right now, in this tribute, I'm also thinking of the kinds of sacrifice that people born overseas make too. Leaving home, with all its tugs of family, friends, familiar places, familiar foods can be a hard struggle. I know that look on people's faces when they remember loved ones, loved places 'back there'.

So - in four huge words - a huge thank you! "

Dr Mumtaz Patel - Vice-President of Royal College of Physicians Global (RCP) said:

"The NHS would not be able to cope, even in 'normal' times, without the contribution of our international colleagues. Their work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been crucial to saving lives and we should celebrate this.

"We know from our own polling that there is immense public appreciation for international NHS and social care staff who have worked throughout such challenging times over the last year and people want the government to publicly acknowledge their invaluable contribution.

"The Royal College of Physicians has called on the government to provide a [new deal for international staff](#), including giving all NHS and social care staff who have worked during the pandemic, and their spouses and dependants, indefinite leave to remain in the UK."

Mr Amit Sinha - Media and Communication Lead for British International Doctors Association (BIDA) said:

The International medical healthcare workers are truly the architects of the NHS. However, their stories in Britain have not always been one of celebration. It's the opportune time now to recognise their dedication and selfless love for the NHS highlighted by the tremendous contributions these doctors, nurses and numerous others coming from countries all over the world have made during this horrendous pandemic. We pay our respects to those who have lost their lives and honour and value those who continue to stand as pillars of the NHS.

We whole-heartedly support the initiative taken by DAUK. We would urge all to participate in this event in recognition and acknowledgement of the sacrifices made by all our colleagues from the International community working in the NHS.

Dr Ramesh Mehta OBE - President of British Association of Physicans of Indian Origin (BAPIO) said:

"It is hard now to think why we never celebrated such an important day. The NHS has benefited greatly from migrant doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare workers. We salute them for their commitment and passion over the last decades".

"I am so pleased that BAPIO in a small way can honour the dedication and sacrifices of migrant NHS workers. The last year has been especially challenging; most of the overseas workers are BAME, and over 60% of deaths have been in this group, so there has never been a better time than this to honour their support for the NHS."

Dr Claudia Paoloni - President of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association (HCSA) said:

"NHS staff have united as one to deliver a pandemic response which has rightly been lauded far and wide, so it is outrageous that thousands of overseas colleagues involved in that response still face an uncertain future due to government reluctance to grant indefinite leave to remain.

"The greater insult lies in the fact these individuals need to make the ultimate sacrifice and die in service for their families to qualify. "The current situation is the equivalent of saying 'thanks, and close the door on the way out' and does them and frankly the country a disservice. This national injustice could be resolved swiftly if there was the will, and we urge the government to show that will. "NHS Overseas Workers Day aims to shine a light on the immense contribution of these individuals at a time when the authorities appear unwilling to do the right and moral thing."

The Hastings and Eastbourne Branch of Unison said:

The branch supports the initiative for 5 March to be declared Overseas NHS Workers Day. So this Friday, re-affirm this by showing your solidarity with the great NHS workers who have literally put their lives on the line for the UK. We support the call for full citizenship and indefinite right to remain.

We invite everyone to come together and celebrate not just our doctors, but all clinical, laboratory, clerical and estates staff that have made our NHS stronger than ever, and who have fought so bravely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Their efforts deserve to be recognised and celebrated, and we must ensure they must never feel that UK is not their HOME.

Eva Omondi - A frontline NHS overseas nurse who is originally from Kenya and local representative for the Royal College of Nursing said:

For healthcare workers, Being on a limited leave to remain comes with a lot of challenges that take away the most needed peace of mind in standard health care service delivery.

To deliver healthcare services in a pandemic like the current one triples the need for a complete settled mind! These services involve fixing mental, physical or psychological health needs of individuals which requires the service provider to be in the right status of mind. ILR has the sure key to this for overseas workers who lack this status unlike their settled counterparts. It will assure them of acceptance, put real value on them while approving appreciation for their sacrifice in taking the risk care for others during a pandemic in a country they chose to call home.

It is the key to opening doors of affordable childcare and housing to the low earning healthcare workers. In healthcare sector the shift patterns are varied unpredictable, antisocial and indiscriminate of weekends or bank holidays. Affordable not private childcare is vital for them. Yet they lack support due to denied access to public funds which they nevertheless pay for through their taxes. This group seldom have relatives around to offer a helping hand.

Granting them Automatic leave to remain while they are alive will be the morally upright thing to do to show that they are valued and appreciated; They won't be able to know this if it's only granted to their dependants when they are dead; a position which also sounds really cruel to the worker. Besides, it's not too much to ask."

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¹The Doctors' Association UK (DAUK) is a professional association for UK doctors. Run by frontline NHS doctors, DAUK campaigns for patients and the NHS as well as advocating for the medical profession