

Briefing: Reviewing immigration rules for Doctors - the need to include child and adolescent psychiatrists

House of Lords

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Issue: The Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, has recently pledged to look at the issue of the UK's current restrictions on the number of foreign doctors coming to work under a tier 2 visa¹. Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in England are struggling to recruit the child and adolescent psychiatrists they need among UK and EU workers². This has a negative impact on the timely provision of NHS mental health services for children and young people that are close to home and that enable them to live fulfilled lives.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists³ recently reported that child and adolescent psychiatrists from outside the EU who apply to work in England were having their visa applications rejected because the quota for Tier 2 visas has been reached and because they do not qualify as a priority.

To remedy this, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) and the Royal College of Psychiatrists have recommended that the UK Government should add child and adolescent psychiatrists to the shortage occupation list.

Doing so represents a practical way for the UK Government to demonstrate its commitment to deliver parity of esteem between mental and physical health, and between adult and children mental health

¹ HC oral answers to questions (2018) 642 col. 20; 4 June 2018. Available at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-06-04/debates/881FFC40-1937-461B-AF3E-7E7BD8CDD655/OralAnswersToQuestions>

² Royal College of Psychiatrists, Census, 2017. Workforce figures for consultant and speciality doctor psychiatrists. Available at https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/RCPsych_workforce_census_report_2017.pdf

³ BBC News article dated 9 March 2018 entitled 'Number of child and adolescent psychiatrists falling' Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-43347403>

provision. It will also enable the UK Government to deliver on its plan to introduce a four week waiting time for access to CAMHS.

Evidence:

In 2015/16, the UK Government invested £1.4 billion to transform CAMHS. However, there are concerns that this funding has not been spent on the frontline.⁴⁵ In its recent review of CAMHS, the Care Quality Commission reported that too many young people in England found it difficult to access CAMHS and therefore did not receive the care they needed, when they needed it.⁶ In 2016, Public Health England also reported that only 25% of children and young people with a diagnosable mental health condition accessed support.⁷

The UK Government recently published a Green Paper⁸ setting out proposals to transform mental health service provision for children and young people in England including by introducing mental health support teams in schools and colleges across England and by trialling a 4 week waiting time for access to CAMHS in 20-25% of the country by 2023.

In its submission to the Health and Education Select Committees' Inquiry into the Green Paper⁹, the Commission¹⁰ expressed concerns that the Green Paper did not go far enough to address the chronic shortage of community CAMHS across England and that the establishment of new

⁴ Emily Frith, 2016. Children and young people's mental health: time to deliver. The report of the Independent Commission on Children and Young People's Mental Health. Education Policy Institute. Available at <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/time-to-deliver-web-1.pdf>

⁵ Young Minds, 2016. Children's mental health funding not going where it should be. Available at <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/1285/foi-2016-press-release.pdf>

⁶ Care Quality Commission, 2017. Review of children and young people's mental health services: Phase one report. Available at <http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/themed-work/review-children-young-peoples-mental-health-services-phase-one-report>

⁷ Public Health England, 2016. The mental health of children and young people in England. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575632/Mental_health_of_children_in_England.pdf

⁸ Department of Health and Social Care & Department for Education, 2018. Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664855/Transforming_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_provision.pdf

⁹ The Health and Education Select Committees launched an inquiry into the Government's Green Paper to transform mental health services for children and young people in December 2017 and produced a report of findings and recommendations in May 2018 which is available at <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/health-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/transforming-young-peoples-mental-health-provision-inquiry-17-19/>

¹⁰ Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018. Submission to Education and Health Select Committees' joint inquiry in response to the government's green paper on transforming young people's mental health provision. Available at <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/health-and-social-care-committee/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision/written/78355.html>

mental health support teams may result in a rise in demand for CAMHS treatment in the short term.

In addition, there is evidence that providers are increasingly struggling to recruit and retain child and adolescent psychiatrists. In particular, in its latest workforce census, the Royal College of Psychiatrists reported that the consultant vacancy rate for children and young people psychiatry has almost doubled from 6.2% in 2013 to 12% in 2017 and that the growth rate in the consultant psychiatry workforce had been significantly lower than the growth rate in the wider consultant medical workforce ¹¹.

Recommendations:

To remedy current and future short staffing in CAMHS across England and to implement the proposed 4 weeks waiting time for access to CAMHS sooner and nationally, the Commission recommends the UK Government:

- adds child and adolescent psychiatrists to the shortage occupation list ¹² as the UK Government has done for other health specialities such as 'emergency medicine' or 'old-age psychiatry'; and
- ensures that any removal of the Tier 2 visa cap applies to all health professionals across both physical and mental health specialisms in accordance with the principle of parity of esteem.

Further information

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006. Find out more about the Commission's work at: www.equalityhumanrights.com

For more information, please contact:

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¹¹ Royal College of Psychiatrists, Census, 2017. Workforce figures for consultant and speciality doctor psychiatrists. Available at https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/RCPsych_workforce_census_report_2017.pdf

¹² NHS Employers (2017). Shortage Occupation List. Available at <http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/recruit/employer-led-recruitment/international-recruitment/shortage-occupation-list>

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