

Our ref: Pol/17/3/2020-1

Date: 17 March 2020

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Secretary of State for the Home Department
The Rt Hon Priti Patel
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

By email to: public.enquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk

Re: Empowering migrant healthworkers to respond to Covid-19

Dear Ms Patel:

Consonant works to support and advise migrants, including those in need of protection in the UK. We seek to ensure that migrants are empowered to offer their skills, energy, and resources to British society.

During the unprecedented public health crisis posed by the Covid-19 virus, we implore you to permit the employment of all people currently present in the UK, regardless of their immigration status, in the healthcare sector and in other positions which are vital to efforts to deal with this crisis, in any positions for which they are qualified. There are many migrants who are prohibited from working but who want to work and have needed healthcare expertise and/or other skills or availability to help. The healthcare professions in particular face overwhelming pressures on the capacity of existing staff, and this will only worsen as more people become ill.

We also urge you to immediately suspend issuance of any **negative** decisions by the Home Office relating to an applicant's immigration status, British citizenship, application for protection or recognition as a victim of trafficking or human slavery, or relating to support or accommodation, for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis, as many people may not be able to access adequate legal advice or other support or remedies during this time. Issuance of negative decisions during this time will only contribute to human misery and increased panic. In some cases, a negative decision will oblige people (both refused applicants and those seeking to help them) to travel and potentially spread the virus; and likely lead to numerous costly appeals or judicial review proceedings in future.

My colleagues and I would be happy to discuss these proposals with you should you wish to consult with us. We are today temporarily closing our physical premises due to the Covid-19 crisis, but we continue our work remotely.

Sincerely,

Vic Langer
Interim CEO