



Covid-19: doctors' visas are automatically extended for one year

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The visas of doctors, nurses, and paramedics that will expire before 1 October will automatically be extended for one year, free of charge, the government has announced.

The extension will also apply to family members and will be exempt from the immigration health surcharge.¹

Making the announcement on 31 March, Home Secretary Priti Patel said, "Doctors, nurses, and paramedics from all over the world are playing a leading role in the NHS's efforts to tackle coronavirus and save lives.

"I don't want them distracted by the visa process. That is why I have automatically extended their visas—free of charge—for a further year."

Immigration law specialist Katie Newbury, a senior associate at Kingsley Napley, said the government's announcement was welcome but lacked detail.

"For those who are on tier 2 sponsored visas, it's relatively easy to see how this will apply. But for those, for example, who are here as spouses of British citizens, it's less clear," Newbury said.

She added, "Clarity is needed imminently because people may be relying on this announcement and not extending their visas."

Newbury also noted that the legal underpinning for the changes was still unclear. "It's worrying that we have to rely on such vague policy announcements for now, especially when we're talking about visas expiring and the associated risks that come with that."

1 Home Office. NHS frontline workers visas extended so they can focus on fighting coronavirus. 31 March 2020. www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-frontline-workers-visas-extended-so-they-can-focus-on-fighting-coronavirus

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