

21<sup>st</sup> February 2020

Dear Mr Carlaw

I am writing to you to seek your support as the Leader of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Scotland. I am the CEO of Scottish Care which is the representative body of the independent social care sector in Scotland. Our members number over 400 organisations across the charitable, not for profit and private sectors and together employ 100,000 staff.

The specific reason for writing is to express to you the profound concern of the care sector in Scotland following the announcement of the new immigration system by the Home Secretary.

Scottish Care has consistently made representation to Westminster officials to highlight the critical importance of the sector being able to recruit from as diverse a field as possible. For a number of years, there has been a growing level of vacancies which now means that 9 out of 10 of our members have vacancies for staff which they cannot fill. This includes levels of nurse vacancies in some care homes in excess of 30%. We are, therefore, as a sector facing a critical shortage of staff. This is felt most especially in some of the most rural and remote areas of Scotland.

You will, I know, appreciate the changing demographic challenges we face in Scotland with both an ageing population with increasing levels of health needs and an ageing and reducing pool of workers. Without inward migration we simply will not have sufficient staff to undertake these essential roles.

The announcements on Wednesday brought us particular dismay. Our representations have simply not been heard or acknowledged.

Together with others I was dismayed by the suggestion that the skilled, professional, registered and highly regulated role of care worker was dismissed out of hand as being 'low-skilled.' As a sector we were further disappointed by the suggestion that all we needed to do was to improve terms and conditions to fill the gaps. Given that most social care in Scotland is paid for by the public purse the capacity to increase salaries etc lies with both the UK and Scottish as well as local governments. But even were we to substantially improve salaries we still would not have sufficient individuals to fill posts.

In addition, it has further been suggested that we need to use technology and automation more. Scottish Care as a representative body has led the field in the promotion of the appropriate use of technology in care. But there are limits. No one would surely want a machine to be the means of comfort or presence in someone's moments of distress or dying? We will always need human carers.

Given all these circumstances I am writing to you to ask you to bring your personal influence to bear upon both the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister to make social care as a whole sector an area of priority in order to ensure that we can continue to recruit from outwith Scotland.

I would contend that unless there are significant changes to the current proposals then the provision of essential life preserving care and support across Scotland will become impossible.

I am more than happy to meet with you and colleagues to further explain our position and our issues of concern.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald Macaskill".

Dr Donald Macaskill  
Chief Executive