**Migration Advisory Committee recommendation on care workers**

Dear xxx

I am writing as your constituent following the urgent recommendation made by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) in its Annual Report 2021 that:

“*Given the severe and increasing difficulties the sector is facing in terms of both recruitment and retention, we are recommending that care worker jobs should* ***immediately*** *be made eligible for the Health and Care Visa and placed on the Shortage Occupation List*”

(p.38, emphasis added).

MAC’s interim recommendation is a welcome and important step to mitigate the care crisis. **The Home Office must now implement it with the urgency that the crisis demands.**

I am a [spinal cord injured] member of the Spinal Injuries Association (SIA). As the leading representative organisation for spinal cord injured people, SIA are extremely pleased that MAC has made this recommendation and recognised that immediate action is needed. SIA has engaged with MAC at various points over the course of the last 12 months regarding the desperate concerns of spinal cord injured (SCI) people, who include some of the most vulnerable people in the UK in terms of absolute dependence on care and regarding the huge difficulties they have faced in securing and retaining qualified carers. This is particularly the case with live-in carers.

Some of SIA’s members both receive care and work for agencies. SIA was able to convey to MAC its evidence of the massive recruitment shortfall that they currently face, and how their seriously disabled clients were at risk of going without care as a result. Implementation of this recommendation will bring crucial relief for disabled people who use carers and PAs employed by agencies, which are able to act as Home Office sponsors, in order to support work permit applications under the present scheme.

I am also pleased that as a result, primarily, of SIA’s engagement and evidence, MAC has concluded in its Annual Report to the Home Secretary and Parliament that:

“*The MAC also recognises that this recommendation [as quoted at the start of this letter] will not be relevant for other groups of workers in social care*. *A particular concern are live-in carers who are employed by individuals privately or by individuals in receipt of direct payments*.”

This recognition that extending the Shortage Occupation List will not address the specific crisis faced by disabled people who employ health and care workers directly (usually having been granted personal NHS or social care budgets to do so) is really important. Individual disabled employers have no chance of becoming Home Office sponsors under the scheme as it currently stands.

Equally important is MAC’s confirmation that they are considering a bespoke immigration solution to this problem for their final report, due by April 2022. SIA will continue to work with MAC to give them the necessary information to enable their final report to recommend a solution to this - so far unaddressed – crisis. I hope I can count on you again to call upon the Home Office to implement any such recommendations immediately.

The numbers around the issue of care support are staggering. For example, in SIA’s ‘What Matters?’ research (www.spinal.co.uk/what-matters-blog-ceo/) into the current issues and concerns of SCI people, 70% said accessing social care was their biggest concern, particularly around the turnover of carers and the quality of the care provided. And SIA’s Support Line has seen a simply astonishing 458% increase in calls in the past year from SCI people who’ve been given the desperate news that their care support is being reduced, or in some cases withdrawn, often with minimal notice.

The constant fear of being left without life-sustaining care has left many SCI people desperate and fearful. A solution cannot come fast enough. Much has been written about the social care crisis, but SCI people know better than anyone the urgency of the situation, as they depend on carers to make sure they stay out of over-stretched NHS hospitals and completely rely on care at home to stay alive.

**As your constituent, I am asking you to please write to Kevin Foster MP, Minister for Safe and Legal Migration, to seek his urgent assurance that he will comply with MAC’s recommendation to act “immediately” to make care worker jobs eligible for the Health and Care Visa and add them to the Shortage Occupation List.**

**Please also ask him to be ready to act with similar urgency to implement MAC’s further recommendations in full when its social care report is published in the Spring.**

Many of our members will spend this Christmas fearful of care worker shortages not only ruining their Christmas but endangering their lives. It is therefore vital that the Home Office should not use Christmas as an excuse for taking immediate action to help them.

Thank you for your continued hard work at this challenging time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,