

Proposed Limits on non-EU economic migration

NIACE response to the UKBA consultation

The Government aims to reduce levels of net migration. The UKBA paper asks for advice on implementation mechanisms and levels of this limit. Only some of the consultation questions relate to adult learning.

Context

The introduction makes the point about the importance of up-skilling British workers. NIACE agrees this is crucial but would ask for clarity in defining British workers to ensure this mean all the UK domestic labour force, including migrants, spouses, refugees and those from settled communities already here.

Question 5

Should we provide for additional points to be scored for:

- **Higher level language ability**
- **Skilled dependants**
- **UK experience**
- **Shortage skills**
- **Health insurance?**

The question asks if government should provide additional points for higher level English language ability, among other criteria. The current implementation of English language requirements for Citizenship in-country has proved problematic to enforce. How much more difficult would this proposal prove to be? How will language be assessed as there is no parity of English language standards across non-EU countries at present. NIACE has examples (Progress GB, Upskill, Impact projects) of migrants' journeys down the academic ladder as migrants enter UK, choose to study and are assessed at much lower levels than previously achieved.

The UKBA consultation document refers to Tier 1 of the Points Based System as a route for the "brightest and the best" migrants. NIACE finds difficulties with this concept, which is not context free, but actually culturally specific.

Most migrants under Tier 1 sit the advanced International English Language Testing System (IELTS). NIACE asks if IELTS is fit for purpose, in its current form and whether it is administered at the same standard across the world?

Question 9

Do respondents agree that dependants should be accounted towards the limits?

This raises questions on the rights of dependants and whether they should be counted towards the limit. NIACE supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 16 on the Right to Family Life. Any proposed legislation which has a negative impact on family life should be questioned.

Question12

Do respondent believe that there is merit in raising the English language level for Tier 2? If so, to what level?

This proposes raising the English language requirement for Tier 2. The current language requirement is too complex and includes qualifications aligned neither to the Common European Framework nor the UK national standards. NIACE proposes that language requirements are likely to be sector and job specific and must include the language of health and safety. Employers should fund language support for migrants entering under Tier 2.

Question 13

If a supply of migrant workers is no longer readily available, what action will you take to train and source labour from the domestic market?

This asks about action to train and source labour from the domestic market. NIACE points out that there are already migrants in the UK under employed and unemployed, whose skills are underused. Refugee employment projects have demonstrated significant numbers of refugee doctors, nurses, engineers and teachers who want to work in their professions in the UK . (REACH project in NW, NHS case studies). Adult learning providers, SSCs and employers should work more closely together to train and employ this existing workforce.

Conclusion

In conclusion, NIACE stresses the value of adult learning in promoting and sustaining social inclusion and community cohesion for new migrants and the host community. One of the recommendations in 'Learning through Life' Communities and Migration paper proposes a welcome entitlement for migrants.

The "brightest and best" migrants already come with a high level of skills and knowledge (paid for by another government) and for a small further investment to allow these migrants to apply their knowledge, the UK economy could benefit from these skills for years to come.

As stated in the MAC document, current data sources are very poor and we rely heavily on separate initiatives and projects. For example, the BMA database of refugee doctors, NHS rose database of nurses, Refugee Council data of refugee teachers.

Government and adult learning providers need intelligence on the knowledge, skills and learning needs of migrants to plan effectively. At present, spouses and newly arrived dependants fall under the radar (spouses and dependants of Gurkha service men being a good example of this).

NIACE would be happy to answer any further queries about this response. In the first instance please contact chris.taylor@niace.org.uk.