



Royal College of
General Practitioners

The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
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Sent by email to: ps.homesecretary@homeoffice.gov.uk

10 February 2026

Dear Home Secretary

In September 2025, my predecessor as Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners alongside our two GP Registrar Co-Chairs wrote to you regarding the need to better support international GPs in the context of planned immigration reforms.

While I welcomed your announcement in November that doctors would not be required to wait for ten years to obtain Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), I am writing to ask you to consider allowing International Medical Graduates (IMG) GPs to apply for ILR upon completion of their three-year GP training programme.

Because GP training typically lasts three years, most IMG GPs are not eligible for ILR at the point of qualification. We estimate that around 1,590 (40%) newly qualified GPs this year will require a visa in order to continue working in the UK. At the same time, only 29% of GP practices currently offer visa sponsorship, making it increasingly difficult for these doctors to secure posts. Visa uncertainty, short sponsorship windows and complex routes to settlement are influencing some IMGs to leave the UK or to take up roles outside of general practice, risking the loss of highly skilled clinicians immediately after qualification.

Since the introduction of the Medical Training (Prioritisation) Bill, I have been contacted by a number of international GPs who are concerned that the Bill may be perceived as a signal that international doctors are not welcome in the UK. It is therefore particularly important that action is taken on visas for GPs to send a clear and reassuring message to international doctors that they are valued in the NHS.

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The RCGP recognises the exceptional pressures facing medical specialty training, with record levels of competition for a limited number of places. The College therefore supports the Government's ambition to ensure public investment in medical education best supports a sustainable NHS workforce and understands the Government's motivations for prioritising speciality training based on a defined set of factors, including graduation from a UK medical school. We also acknowledge the Government's goal to strengthen domestic recruitment into medicine and general practice. However, expanding the number of UK-trained GPs will take time, and policy must not inadvertently undermine the current workforce on which services currently depend.

IMGs are central to the delivery of general practice. Around 50% of all current GP registrars are IMGs, and 38% of RCGP members trained outside the UK before completing GP training here. The NHS invests significant resources in training these doctors, with GP training costing approximately £50,000 per trainee per year. In return, international GPs make an invaluable contribution to patient care and community health across the UK.

It is policy-incoherent to invest substantial public funds in training doctors, only to place settlement barriers in their way at the very point at which they are most needed by the NHS. Moreover, any perception that international doctors are less valued risks contributing to uncertainty and damaging narratives that undermine morale and retention.

We therefore urge the Government to ensure that international doctors who are already training in the UK, and those who secure speciality training posts following the implementation of the Training (Prioritisation) Bill, are robustly supported to remain in the NHS upon completion of training. By granting ILR upon completion of GP training through earned settlement routes, the UK would send a clear message that it values the skills and dedication of international GPs who have invested heavily in contributing to the NHS and their local communities. Furthermore, this would help ensure that public investment in GP training is not lost due to avoidable visa barriers.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you and your officials.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Vt3Brom', set against a light grey rectangular background.

Professor Victoria Tzortziou Brown
Chair of Council
Royal College of General Practitioners