

## Changes to freedom of movement after Brexit – implications for Wales

EAAL(5) FOM02  
Evidence from Welsh Labour Representation Group

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This response is on behalf of the Welsh Labour Representation Group (WLRG), a fringe and research group made up of Welsh Labour members looking at constitutional matters for Wales. Some of the questions in this response have been answered grouped together in order to give proper context to the answer.

### Economic and public service effects of the UK Government's White Paper

What is your assessment of the implications for Wales of the UK Government's White Paper proposals on immigration after Brexit? What are your views on the salary threshold of £30,000 for Tier 2 immigration and its implications for Wales? What are your views on the proposal to bring EU nationals into an expanded Tier 2 and ending any distinction between EU and non-EU workers?

The UK Government's White Paper proposals for immigration post-Brexit are dangerous and ill-thought-out. If it will not be amended, the Welsh Government must make its own immigration policy in order to protect the economy, families, and future of Wales.

As both the Scottish Government (28<sup>th</sup> February, 2019) and Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP, February 2019) reports on the UK Government's White Paper have shown, the effect on Wales and the EU citizens living in Devolved countries will be greatly detrimental – the most detrimental effect will be felt by those EU citizens living in Wales and earning less than £30,000.

When the average wage in Wales falls below £30,000 but those same people populate our most important services like farm work and health care, it means that the policy has the very real implication of causing shortages in staffing – shortages which will very quickly lead to the services becoming untenable. The WCPP predicted a 75% decrease in EU citizens migrating to Wales over ten years; this has a great many impacts but none so clear as those that impact frontline NHS services – a recently graduated nurse would be employed at band 5 under the Agenda for Change contract, which currently has a starting salary of £24,214, and only nurses reaching the top of this band would meet the earnings threshold. This band also includes operating department practitioners, diagnostic radiographers, podiatrists and many other allied healthcare professionals. In short, the UK Government's new immigration policy will cause our economy and public services in Wales to grind to a halt in both the short and long term.

EU nationals must not be brought into an expanded Tier 2 because the EU is our closest and biggest trading partner. Many EU nationals in Wales are highly-skilled, in complex employment, and still earn under £30,000. If our relationship is to change dramatically from the status quo of freedom of movement, a separate Tier should be made for EU nationals. Without the EU nationals working for less than £30,000 then the Welsh economy, public services, and much of the everyday infrastructure we rely on will fall into disrepair. This will greatly damage the families and the future of Wales by division that sets our infrastructure back.

## International opportunities and responsible government

Is there a case for allowing the devolved nations to do things differently in relation to immigration policy after Brexit? How well is the EU Settlement Scheme operating? Is there more that the Welsh Government could be doing to ensure that EU nationals resident in Wales are registering under the scheme?

Yes, we at the WLRG absolutely agree that there is a case for the devolved nations to do things differently in relation to immigration policy after Brexit.

Not just for the economic and infrastructure reasons stated in our first answer but because there are a great many EU nationals that have made their families and lives here in Wales – there are many families with dual nationality that will be divided by the UK Government's immigration policy.

As a responsible government, Welsh Government cannot allow families to be divided by the UK Government's ill-thought-out policies.

There is a case, too, that a Welsh immigration policy could truly make Wales a Nation of Sanctuary. A world-leading policy of previous and the current Welsh Governments, making our own immigration policy reflect this Nation of Sanctuary would represent Wales greatly on the international stage.

The EU Settlement Scheme, from reports [the3million, July, 2019] and WLRG members with lived experience, has proven to operate in a bureaucratic, costly, overall ineffective, and technologically obtuse manner. Though there is little the Welsh Government can do for the moment, were Welsh Government given an opportunity to have their own immigration programme then they should make any such citizen/settlement scheme as easy as possible for those that have made families & lives here.

Are there any other issues relating to immigration policy after Brexit that you would like to bring to the attention of the Committee? What are your views on the proposal for a Wales-specific Shortage Occupation List ("SOL")?

All migrants are human and all humans are migrants – it is important that whatever policy Welsh Government develops be based on humane principles.

This should guide any decision around the use of an SOL system while keeping in mind that Wales has less of an immigration 'problem' and more of a brain-drain whereby our young leave the country.

**Thank you for your consideration.**