Visa for overseas nurses raises concerns over who will qualify

*Exclusive by Sue Learner*

The government is to create a special visa for overseas nurses coming to work in the UK, *Nursing Standard* can reveal.

The Home Office says the move is necessary because all overseas nurses have to undergo an adaptation programme when they arrive in the UK.

Before September this year they could enter the UK on a work permit because they would be starting work straight away. But they now undergo a period of study, which means they should really be here on student visas.

A Home Office spokesperson explained that overseas nurses fall between the two types of visa, so a special new category of visa is being created. ‘We are going to change the rules and recognise their status.’

The change is due to take place before the end of the year, but the RCN is concerned about its impact.

In particular, the college fears the new visa may not be easy to obtain compared with a student visa.

College immigration adviser Susan D’Cruze said: ‘It has been difficult for the Home Office to administer these two types of visas, which is why they want to bring in just one. But we are concerned about what the change will mean, as nurses come here for various reasons.

‘Some nurses come here just for further study, so this new visa may make things more difficult for them as the student visa is relatively easy to obtain in comparison. It will be interesting to see how it works in practice.’

Meanwhile, the Home Office has changed its rules on overseas nursing students, which means they are now allowed to remain in the UK to apply for jobs after finishing their studies.

Ms D’Cruze said that students were previously in the ‘ridiculous situation’ of having to return to their countries after completing their training to apply for jobs in the UK.

Students were put on visitor visas as soon as their student visa expired. But holders of visitor visas are not eligible to obtain work permits while in the UK, so they have to return home and apply from there.

The RCN had lobbied hard for the change, Ms D’Cruze said. ‘Instead of giving them visitor visas they are allowed to put in an application for work visas regardless of whether they have a job.’

Study to find reasons for low MMR uptake

A study of parents’ attitudes to the combined MMR vaccine is being carried out to see if their views have changed as a result of the controversy surrounding the inoculation.

Around 1,000 parents of children who are due to have the MMR jab in Cardiff and the surrounding area are being targeted to find out how much they know about the vaccine and whether they still have doubts about it.

*Access to records*

Researchers at Cardiff University’s department of epidemiology and public health will have access to medical records to see if the views expressed in the study correspond with parents’ decision to vaccinate their children.

A university spokesperson said: ‘The objective of the study is to explore reasons for the unsatisfactory uptake of MMR vaccination in Wales. The questionnaire covers a variety of MMR related issues such as disease awareness and media influence, as well as parental emotions, attitudes and perceptions of risk.’