

Ending freedom of movement could result in 'meltdown' of health care, warns MEP



14 June 2017

Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West, has said Conservative and Labour plans to end free movement will leave the country struggling to fill places in the NHS and care sectors. Recent [analysis by the GMB](#) shows that the number of EU nationals working in health and social care has increased by 72% in the last eight years and there are now 209,000 EU nationals working in the sector – up from just 121,000 in 2009.

EU nationals now make up more than five per cent of the entire health and social care workforce – including one in ten care home staff. The latest report comes hot on the heels of a leaked Department of Health [study](#) revealed that ending freedom of movement and clamping down on immigration would leave the NHS short of 40,000 nurses by 2026. A Freedom of Information request by Heart Radio further reveals the extent to which NHS Trusts in Devon and Cornwall are dependent on overseas nurses [1].

Molly Scott Cato said:

“The catalogue of evidence should be a wake-up call to the Tories and Labour who both want to end free movement. The GMB has called for an urgent post-Brexit plan for when free movement ends. But the surest way to guarantee our hospitals and care services are adequately staffed is to immediately grant rights for all EU nationals living in the UK to remain here, and to continue to allow freedom of movement. Greens are unequivocal on this – we will continue to defend free movement.

“While we should acknowledge perceptions around immigration were key to influencing the outcome of the EU referendum last year, people did not vote to see their hospitals and care services go into meltdown over a staffing crisis. If we are to keep our health and social care services functioning

properly we will continue to rely on people of all nationalities coming to work in the UK.

“Where there are problems associated with free movement in the EU – with some countries experiencing skills shortages due to the emigration of workers – these should be addressed collectively by all EU countries, working on solutions together. What is clear is that one country shutting the doors on everyone else is a self-defeating policy when it comes to addressing the differing needs of different countries in Europe.”

Notes:

1. **FOI request by Heart Radio reveals** (provided by Carrian Jones of Heart Radio: Carrian.Jones@heart.co.uk Further information on request)

Cornwall Partnership: 22 nurses from the EU, 6 non-EU

Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust: 48 registered nurses and 30 healthcare support workers of non-British nationality. The Trust currently has nurse vacancies of 194.16 FTE (registered nurses) and 116.24 FTE (healthcare support workers).

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust: 116 nurses from overseas, 77 from EU countries

Other NHS Trusts did not respond or said they did not have such information.

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