



Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

15 August 2018

Dear Home Secretary,

The Contribution of Non-UK Citizen Volunteers

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is the national membership organisation for Scotland's charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises and has a membership of 1,993. Volunteer Scotland is the national centre for volunteering in Scotland and has a membership of 550. Both are aware of the significant contribution made by Non-UK Citizen Volunteers to the work of the third sector in Scotland, and across the UK.

We are writing to request an urgent meeting with you to discuss our concerns about the impact of Brexit, and about the current treatment of Tier 5 applications from Non-EU Citizens wishing to volunteer in Scotland. We are deeply concerned that these factors will have a major impact on volunteering in Scotland and have serious consequences for the third sector, and for society in Scotland and the UK as a whole.

As you know, millions of people give their time and talents as volunteers every day and make an astounding contribution to improving lives and communities across the country. We believe this should be acknowledged and celebrated. However, our members tell us that the decision to leave the European Union is already having an effect on the ability of groups within Scotland's third sector to recruit and retain volunteers. For example, Camphill Scotland has a long-held tradition of welcoming volunteers from beyond our shores but have reported that applications have dropped significantly since June 2016. We have also been contacted by other organisations, including Cyrenians and L'Arche who are facing new challenges in recruiting volunteers from non-EU countries as a result of increasing levels of rejections of Tier 5 applications from potential volunteers from Non-EU countries.

Charities in Scotland need to recruit more volunteers than ever, and it is vital that current volunteering schemes are not only maintained, but further enhanced. We believe it is of the utmost importance that the UK Government commits to recognising the important contribution made by volunteers and voluntary workers across the UK. In all of this, the vital contribution made by volunteers from EU countries, and from non-EU countries, should not be overlooked or forgotten, given the positive impact international volunteers have on building mutual respect through the exchange of cultural, social and professional knowledge and experience.

Volunteering programmes present a wide range of opportunities for workers in Britain to extend their skills which can then benefit them on their return to work. There are also high numbers of young Britons who take part in schemes around the world to give them vital experience in preparation for careers in the third sector, and different industries across the country. With this in mind, one of the issues we would like to discuss with you is the reciprocal arrangements which the UK Government will be seeking to put in place with EU countries, and with non-EU countries, for volunteer travel, and the form these arrangements might take following EU withdrawal.

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Tel: 0131 474 8000 • Web: www.scvo.org.uk • SCVO Information Service: 0800 169 0022.

With regard to international volunteering more widely, our members report an alarming increase in the rejection by the Home Office of Tier 5 applications from non-EU citizens. SCVO, Volunteer Scotland and our members are concerned that there no longer seems to be a consistent approach applied to applications from different countries leading to a loss of volunteer contributions that many charities rely on. We would, therefore, welcome an opportunity to meet you to discuss your views on the Tier 5 visa process, including much needed clarification on the current and future interpretation of existing rules around the processing of Tier 5 visa applications for volunteers. We would like to discuss how Tier 5 regulations and process could better reflect the value of international volunteers, and the important contribution they make to organisations across Britain.

Your department plays an important role in ensuring that voluntary organisations can continue to attract volunteers from non-UK countries who have the skills and experience to ensure their vital community can continue. We believe that a strong, effective working relationship between voluntary organisations and the Home Office, and your support in helping to address these matters, would be massively beneficial to UK charities, to our communities and to individual volunteers from both the UK and beyond.

We look forward to meeting you, and to discussing ways in which we can work together constructively to take forward these issues.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Anna Fowlie
Chief Executive
SCVO

George Thomson
Chief Executive
Volunteer Scotland

Countersigned by:

Neil Henery
Chief Executive
Camphill Scotland

Euan Aitken
Chief Executive
Cyrenians

Oonagh Aitken
Chief Executive
Volunteering Matters

Anthony Kramers
Regional Leader
L'Arche

CC:

Dominic Raab MP, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union
Tracey Crouch MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Civil Society
Michael Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations
Ben MacPherson MSP, Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development
Aileen Campbell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government