

**MAC salary threshold and points-based system commission:
COSLA response to call for evidence**

Summary and Recommendations

As part of COSLA's continued commitment to highlight the positive benefits of migration and make the case that a reduction of in-migration to Scotland from European Economic Area (EEA) countries will adversely impact on Scotland's local authorities, we are responding to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) call for evidence on a future post-Brexit immigration system.

This paper invites members of the Community Wellbeing Board to:

- i. Discuss COSLA's response to the MAC call for evidence (please refer to Annex A): and,
- ii. Endorse the COSLA response to the MAC call for evidence.

References

Previous reports on the MAC call for evidence:

- None

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CWB Item xx

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Purpose

1. As part of COSLA's ongoing commitment to highlight the positive benefits of migration and to lobby for a post-Brexit immigration system that can meet Scotland's economic, workforce and demographic needs on a local, as well as a national level, officers have drafted a response to the current call for evidence on salary thresholds and a points-based immigration system.
2. Board members are asked to discuss and endorse the proposed submission to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) attached at Annex A.

What is changing?

3. The former Home Secretary commissioned the MAC to carry out an analysis of potential future salary thresholds, as a key component of the skilled worker route in the UK's future immigration system. Following the appointment of the new Home Secretary, this commission was expanded to look into an 'Australian-style' points-based system and how this might work in the UK.

Current COSLA Position

4. COSLA has consistently supported the stance that Scotland has benefited from freedom of movement and we have argued that its continuation would be the most advantageous system for Scotland. However, in the absence of that, our priority is that a future immigration system enables Local Government and employers to attract and retain migrant workers, particularly in key sectors where we are facing skills gaps and shortages. Our immigration system should also give us the ability to encourage inward migration and incentivise young people to work and settle within areas of Scotland where local populations are facing the sharpest decline.
5. In short, COSLA wants to ensure that we leave the EU with an immigration system that suits Scotland's needs.

Proposed COSLA Position

6. COSLA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the MAC call for evidence as a means of ensuring that a robust Scottish Local Government voice is heard and our needs are considered in any immigration system that is developed as a result of Brexit.
7. The submission has been prepared by COSLA in consultation with our member councils. We have received formal written evidence from a total of 16 local authorities. These are: Aberdeen City Council, Angus Council, Comhairle nan Eilean

Siar, Dumfries & Galloway Council, East Ayrshire Council, East Lothian Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Falkirk Council, Fife Council, Glasgow City Council, Highland Council, North Ayrshire Council, Scottish Borders Council, Shetland Islands Council, South Ayrshire Council, and South Lanarkshire Council.

8. The key points highlighted in the draft response are as follows:
- Migration is crucial to Scotland's economy, to Scottish local authorities and to our local communities. COSLA and our member authorities recognise that Scotland has benefited significantly from membership of the single market, and the continuation of free movement of people would be the most advantageous system for Scotland.
 - COSLA and our member councils are calling for a flexible immigration system that can meet Scotland's economic, workforce and demographic needs. This must be responsive to local as well as national needs.
 - The salary threshold is currently too high and is a barrier to many occupations in our key sectors and in some local areas. There should be more focus on the value and need of the job, rather than on an arbitrary salary threshold.
 - There should be no minimum salary, other than the Scottish Local Government Living Wage.
 - We support the position of awarding points based on parts of the country in need of increased population.
 - Scottish local authorities must have a greater role in monitoring and addressing our immediate and projected labour shortages.

Next Steps

9. Members' views on COSLA's draft response to the MAC are welcomed. Subject to agreement from the Board, and any amendments that are required by members, COSLA's response will be submitted to the MAC.
10. COSLA will continue to seek every opportunity to lobby the MAC and UK Government for a flexible post-Brexit immigration system that works for every part of the country.

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