



The new immigration guidelines effectively ensure the renewal of work permits for Filipino senior carers who have changed employers.

Carers win key concessions from British government

Waiver on mandatory minimum hourly wage gives timely reprieve to Filipinos

Filipino senior care workers in Britain have won significant concessions from the British Home Office that would facilitate the renewal of their work permits, ambassador Edgardo Espiritu (right) said.

Under the new guidelines, the waiver of the skills criteria for work permit holders has been extended to those who have changed their employers due to the refusal of their previous employers to pay the required minimum hourly rate of £7.02.

Previously, transfer applications had been treated as new applications subject to strict compliance with existing skills criteria making renewal of work permits extremely difficult.

“Under the old guidelines, Filipino senior care workers whose employers refuse to pay the required hourly rate simply have no choice but to leave the UK upon completion of their contract,” Espiritu said.

The new guidelines also effectively ensured the renewal of work permits of those who are only a year shy of the minimum five-year requirement to be eligible for permanent settlement in Britain.

This was made possible by waiving both the skills criteria and the required hourly rate for those who have been working in Britain before December 31, 2003.

“Without those changes, thousands

BY THE NUMBERS

New mandatory minimum hourly wage, in peso equivalent, of nurses in Britain

560



of Filipino senior care workers would have ended up without work,” Espiritu added.

Espiritu thanked the British government for the new guidelines

and expressed the appreciation of the Philippine government to “our friends in the UK parliament”.

He also thanked Filipino and British non-government organizations in Britain concerned with migrant workers for their unfailing support to the cause of the Filipino migrant workers in the the country..

During her last visit to Britain in December, President Arroyo raised the issue concerning Filipino senior care workers with senior British government officials and parliamentarians. She requested their assistance in protecting the continued employment of Filipinos in Britain.

Few Filipinos taking up UK citizenship

Foreigners living in Britain will be expected to go through a new expanded citizenship process or leave the country under new plans outlined by ministers.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said she wanted to end the situation where foreign nationals “languish in limbo” by living here but not adapting to the British way of life.

Even the ultra-wealthy – who can currently avoid some of the conditions imposed on less well-off immigrants – will be expected to apply for British nationality or permanent residence.

Immigration minister Liam Byrne



Jacqui Smith ... adapt or leave.

said current take-up rates for British citizenship were low among certain foreigners – such as Filipinos (50 per cent), Australians (49 per cent) and Americans (40 per cent).

“I would want to see a larger proportion of those that are here

moving to full British citizenship,” said Ms Smith.

Winning citizenship will take at least six years from the point someone arrives in the UK, a year longer than at present because of a new stage of “probationary citizenship”.

“There are some residents from some parts of the world who are languishing in limbo for some considerable period of time,” he said.

Full access to benefits, such as jobseeker’s allowance and income support, will no longer be granted after a person has been in the UK for five years.

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