



Customs and Immigration Service

Report

To: Minister for Home Affairs

Submitted By: Senior Manager Immigration Policy

Date: 11 July 2023

Subject: Changes to the Work Permit Policy

Purpose of Report

To enable the Minister for Home Affairs to approve changes to the work permit policy by:

- Include Occupation Code 6121 for Nursery Practitioners and Assistants in the work permit policy for skilled occupations.

Background

Work Permits are a requirement under the Immigration (Work Permits) (Jersey) Rules 1995 and as such employers are required to apply for a work permit for those individuals who require immigration permissions to enter and remain in Jersey for work.

The Work Permit Policy sets out the criteria that must be met by employers applying to recruit skilled workers in Jersey on a temporary or longer-term basis.

In February 2023, the Jersey Customs and Immigration Service (JCIS) received a request from GR8 Employment Solutions & Training Ltd on behalf of Jersey Early Years Association and La Petit Ecole to include Standard Occupation Classification Code 6121 Nursery Practitioners and Assistants to Appendix 1 of the work permit policy.

The request centred on the need to recruit qualified and experienced staff into the Early Years Care Sector (EYCS) to meet the demand.

This initial request has been followed up by JCIS over various meetings with Ministers, representatives of the sector and relevant GoJ departments. A business case was submitted by La Petit Ecole and GR8 on behalf of the sector in June 2023



The Early Years Care Sector are struggling to recruit, and retain their existing workforces, with the demand for both qualified and non-qualified staff being unremitting. The existing workforce are feeling the pressures brought about by child-staff ratios and the lingering effects of COVID resulting in many choosing to leave the sector and seek employment elsewhere.

Traditionally recruitment has come from students graduating from Highlands College with a Level 3 qualification in childcare however many students are not entering the workforce and choosing to use the qualification as a springboard to studying primary school teaching at university.

The cost-of-living crisis has also seen an increased demand for all year-round nursery places as both parents are returning to work when children are at a younger age and working longer hours. The settings are unable to meet this demand as there is insufficient workforce to comply with the statutory ratio of staff to children. The major concern is that a lack of qualified and unqualified Early Years workforce will lead to a reduction in capacity as settings will be unable to meet their regulatory obligations. This may result in childcare being unavailable for many working parents and the cost of childcare will potentially become unaffordable. The quality of service provided by the nursery / pre-school settings is already being impacted with less time being allocated to individual child development and staff training.

The sector has tried to attract suitably qualified practitioners from the UK but the salary packages and the higher cost of living in the Island make it unattractive.

The workforce issues will not be resolved by students attending childcare courses as there is insufficient workforce in the Island to meet the demands of the sector. In addition, the ongoing work being done within the Best Start Partnership will not address the immediate workforce issues and the benefits of this work are unlikely to be felt in the short to medium term.

The only viable solution is to look further afield and employ suitably qualified and experienced early years practitioners from abroad. Initial work conducted by the sector, in conjunction with GR8, has identified a solution to the recruitment issue which would require the issuance of work permits to third country nationals with the necessary skills, qualifications and experience required for the Jersey Early Years sector. Recruitment will be in line with Government of Jersey Safer Recruitment Guidance, and it is proposed that all qualifications held by potential candidates will be scrutinized by CEYS to ensure that they are comparable with Jersey standards.

Recommendation

JCIS recommend that occupation code 6121 for Nursery Practitioners and Assistants (Early Years Practitioners) is added to the work permit policy for skilled occupations with a salary threshold of £30,000.