

NEW FRONTIERS

MIGRATION AND INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE GROWTH



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Context

Limits to the numbers of European Economic Area (EEA) nationals allowed to work and study in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are seen by businesses and public service bodies as one of the greatest risks of Brexit for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's society and economy, particularly for key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, horticulture, higher education, health, care services and construction.

A post-Brexit UK immigration policy that works for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will help us to attract talented overseas students and overseas workers with the skills that our economy needs, accommodating both permanent and seasonal working patterns.

Cornwall currently has around a 3% unemployment rate, while at the same time has a higher than the UK average number of those economically inactive with long term health issues who want to work. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will help to create flexible responsive workplaces to enable more people to work, working with employers to address their needs while gaining the health and wellbeing benefits for those in 'good' work, and establishing Inclusive Growth¹⁵.



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¹⁵ "State of the Economy 2017", Cornwall Council Economic Intelligence Service,

Unlocking barriers

The rationale for change

The free movement of people between the UK and the EU is scheduled to end in March 2019. It is essential that the impacts of ending free-movement of labour are understood from the varying and specific needs and perspectives of the devolved nations and English regions, including more rural regions such as Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Localis has identified Cornwall as one of the areas of England that will be left most exposed by a post-Brexit labour shortage¹⁶. Research recently commissioned by Cornwall Council and the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LEP on the economic and social impacts of EEA workers on Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly¹⁷ not only supported our Catalyst for Change findings on key sectors that will be significantly affected by restrictions on future migration from the EU to the UK, but also highlighted that rural and peripheral areas of the UK are likely to find it challenging to attract migrant workers after Brexit if they are required to compete against urban areas for a restricted number of migrant workers allowed to enter the UK.

Early research has shown that employer anxiety over the employment of older and disabled workers prevents many from gaining the opportunity to contribute to the economy¹⁸. Employers are missing out on a wide skills and knowledge pool. A lack of flexibility and understanding is often a barrier to committed workers being given the chance to remain in work or to gain access meaningful work, if they develop long term conditions. Employers' concerns reflect a lack of awareness of new ways of working, an understanding of the legislation and knowledge of the support services available.

Our ask

To be directly involved in ongoing Government discussions regarding the design and delivery of post-Brexit UK immigration policy. Regional variation in migrant workforce requirements and skill levels cannot be fully accommodated under a single, centralised policy. To see investment in 'good' work, to maximise productivity and the health and wellbeing of the Cornish workforce. To invest in innovative, responsive support models that address both employer and employee needs to employment.

Our offer

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is building an emerging evidence base on the potential impacts of future UK immigration policy on peripheral, rural and coastal areas. We are developing a greater understanding of which sectors in these areas are likely to be the hardest and most immediately affected by restrictions on future migration from the EU to the UK. The involvement of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in the design of post-Brexit UK immigration policy would help the Government to ensure that the implementation of the policy will work for all parts of the UK.

Cornwall is working with the Department for Work and Pensions as a location for piloting new approaches to support employers take on older and disabled workers and those with long term chronic health conditions. Cornwall will offer expertise and a 'test-bed' to create evidence based solutions to increase access to work for those currently struggling to (re-)enter the workplace and help retain those in work, while also improving productivity and workforce retention.

¹⁶ : *In Place of Work*, Localis, <https://www.localis.org.uk/research/in-place-of-work/>

¹⁷ *Economic and Social Impacts of EEA Area workers in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly*, <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/29104898/economic-and-social-impacts-of-eea-area-workers-on-cornwall-and-the-isles-of-scilly-2017-final.pdf>

¹⁸ *Employment and mental health: Assessing the economic impact and the case for intervention*, (McDaid et al, London School of Economics), *passim*; *“We’ve Got Work to Do: Transforming employment and back-to-work support for people with mental health problems”*, (Mind UK, 2014), *passim*.

Benefits

A UK immigration policy that is sufficiently flexible to cater for the specific workforce requirements of all parts of the UK would enable Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to continue to re-balance and grow its economy. The Government must recognise the distinct, sector-specific needs of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and other regions within the UK that cannot be met through a UK-wide approach.

Improving access to work for older workers and those with disabilities or health conditions is a major challenge for all economies as we see workforces age, and individuals seek to work for longer. Employers are struggling to recruit and yet are uncertain how to engage with this talent pool. By breaking down these barriers, companies can recruit and grow, more people gain the health and wellbeing benefits good work can provide and there is less demand on the NHS and benefits resources. Solutions developed in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly can be applied throughout the UK and beyond.