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Our Ref: IDC632602

Rt Hon Humza Yousaf MSP
Minister for Europe and International Development
Scottish Government
Edinburgh
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16 September 2015

Dear Humza,

IMMIGRATION BILL: Language provision for public sector workers

The UK Government will shortly be introducing an Immigration Bill in the UK Parliament. This will deliver on a number of our manifesto commitments, including ensuring that every public sector worker operating in a customer facing role must speak fluent English. Our approach is to set out a duty in the Immigration Bill that will be supported by a statutory Code of Practice.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure consistently high standards in public services through the promotion of sufficient standards in English. It will reduce time taken in routine interactions and ensure that health and safety procedures are upheld.

Public authorities will be expected to adhere to the Code of Practice but will be given a reasonable level of autonomy in standard-setting and enforcement. Public authorities will also be expected to ensure compliance with existing equalities and employment legislation and provide appropriate learning for their employees when issues are raised.

When implementing this commitment in Scotland we would like it to apply to public authorities on a devolved and reserved basis. This would ensure that it is to the benefit of all Scottish public authorities and, in the case of public authorities exercising devolved functions, is aligned with any requirement to promote Scottish Gaelic

I am aware that we would require a Legislative Consent Motion in the Scottish Parliament to achieve this and I am hoping that you will support this given the potential for increased quality of public services across the UK.

We will publish a consultation on the draft Code of Practice shortly and will actively seek the views of the Scottish Government, public authorities in Scotland and Scottish employer groups.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Hancock', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

THE RT HON MATTHEW HANCOCK MP