

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights
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Rt. Hon. Matthew Hancock MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
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Dear Mr Hancock,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 September to the Minister for Europe and International Development about the Immigration Bill language provisions for public sector workers. Your letter has been passed for me to reply as I am leading for the Scottish Government on responding to this UK Bill.

I am grateful for the efforts of your officials to discuss these provisions with Scottish Government officials, and to ensure that the provisions were not extended to devolved functions at the time of the Bill's introduction.

I note your preference that the Scottish Government should support a Legislative Consent Motion in the Scottish Parliament in order to be able to apply these provisions to devolved and reserved functions. I would not support this measure at this time as I am not aware of any evidence that there are difficulties in the use of English in Scotland's public services. This legislation has the potential to fuel misconceptions about migrants and those of migrant heritage who play valuable roles in our public services, and as you are aware, there are already stringent English language requirements in the current UK immigration system.

I appreciate that these measures will apply to reserved functions in Scotland and it is important that Scotland's languages and public sector landscape are understood. To this end, I have asked my officials to ensure that the Cabinet Office receives appropriate information as required. I understand that lines of contact are already in place.

ALEX NEIL