United Kingdom

Home Secretary commissions Migration Advisory Committee review of IT and engineering occupational groups

Executive summary

On 6 August 2024, the Home Secretary wrote to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), requesting that it look at key occupations, namely the Information Technology and Telecommunications sector and the Engineering sector, to try and understand the reasons behind the UK's reliance on international recruitment.

Key developments

The UK government remains committed to bringing down high levels of migration to the UK. In its commission, the Home Secretary requested the MAC to consider several questions and produce an evidence-led report by or before May 2025. The MAC has accepted the commission, for which it will be provided with additional staff to aide with the delivery of the report. The MAC will work alongside several bodies to provide a more structured and evidence-based approach to the labor market, as requested by the Home Secretary.

In its continued efforts to curb migration, the Home Secretary has stated that the UK's current immigration system needs to be managed and controlled, stating *"the current high levels of international recruitment reflect weaknesses in the labor market including persistent skills shortages in the UK."* The Home Secretary considers the UK's reliance on overseas workers to be unsustainable and not working in the national interest. The government has stated that it wishes to deliver a fair, coherent, joined up approach to the labor market by linking immigration with skills policy.

The MAC will work alongside Skills England, the Devolved Nations, the Industrial Strategy Council and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide a more structured and evidence-based approach to the labor market. The expectation is that these bodies will collate and compare the data they hold, meet on a quarterly basis and use the data to identify the sectors facing significant labor shortages and the reasons for these shortages. The bodies will then be expected to report to government ministers.

The Home Secretary has identified the IT and Engineering sectors to be the largest groups relying on international recruitment. In its report, the MAC is expected to set out the reasons behind this as well as potential future demands on these sectors.

The Home Secretary has asked the MAC to consider, but not be limited by, questions such as:

▸ What types of roles are in shortage?
▸ What are the different drivers of these shortages including training, pay and conditions?
▸ How have the sectors sought to respond and adapt to these shortages, beyond seeking to recruit from overseas?
▸ Where relevant, what, if any, impact has being on the shortage occupation list had on these sectors/occupations?
▸ What policy levers within the immigration system could be used more effectively to incentivize sectors to focus on recruiting from the domestic workforce? This could

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include whether the Immigration Salary List should remain in its current form.

In accepting the Commission, the MAC has requested the full cooperation of the government and Home Office colleagues to provide it with data, such as:

▸ Home Office Management Information for Certificate of Sponsorship data for all occupations, specifically including IT, Telecommunications and Engineering occupations, covering all immigration routes with large usage by these sectors including Global Mobility Route, Intra-Company Transfer, Skilled Worker Route and Tier 2 General going back to 2014, by 16 September 2024

▸ Migrant Journey data for all occupations including relevant Standard Occupational Codes (SOC) under IT, Telecommunications and Engineering occupations, including all immigration routes with large usage by these sectors by 1 October 2024

▸ His Majesty Revenue and Customs (HRMC) and Home Office linked data from 2019 to present (most recent available data) including SOC codes and reported salary at the application stage for relevant routes (Global Mobility Route, Intra-Company Transfer, Skilled Worker Route) by 1 October 2024

Impact on employers
The impact on employers will depend on the outcome of the MAC's findings in its report. It is likely that employers heavily relying on migrant workers within the IT and Engineering sectors will need to re-evaluate their hiring strategies, based on the MAC's recommendations and subsequent actions.

Key steps
EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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