

## The impact of visa costs on the future of cancer research

### Introduction

As the UK prepares to leave the EU and the immigration system undergoes one of the most comprehensive reforms in decades, it is essential that Government builds an immigration system which enables the UK to remain competitive and flourish as a science superpower.

Cancer Research UK's ambition is to see 3 in 4 patients survive their cancer by 2034, up from 2 in 4 now. This ambition is contingent on the UK's world leading research environment, and our ability to attract, recruit and retain global scientific talent at all levels.

We welcome the Government's ambition to make the immigration system work for research and innovation and are pleased at a number of positive announcements – including the new Global Talent Visa and the establishment of an Office for Talent. However, we remain concerned that the costs of the system, particularly in comparison to similar countries, risks undermining that ambition and puts us at a competitive disadvantage. For example, a skilled worker coming to the UK under the new Global Talent Visa has to pay considerably more than they would in eleven other leading scientific nations (see Figure 1 in appendix). Similarly, the total average upfront cost of a Tier 2 skilled worker visa typically used by scientific workers is **540% higher than the average cost in other leading scientific nations**, and from 2021 these costs will start to apply to EEA workers<sup>1</sup>.

In the face of a global pandemic, our world-class research sector has been central to efforts tackling the Covid-19 outbreak, whether it be urgently investigating possible treatments and vaccines, delivering medical technology and devices at speed, or advising on how best to keep the public safe. And at Cancer Research UK we have been working hard to lend our support, including establishing the Francis Crick Institute in London as a Covid-19 testing facility.

But Covid-19 has also brought major disruption to research in areas such as cancer, including significant pressure on the budgets of charitable and university funders. For example, CRUK may have to reduce annual research spend by £150m over the next 3-4 years due to the impact on fundraising. We are therefore concerned the new immigration system may well add to the financial pressure faced by universities or charity-funded research institutes, who are responsible for covering many of the associated costs.

### Our analysis

As the UK Immigration System is reformed, and freedom of movement ends for EEA workers, we carried out a cost modelling analysis to help us understand the financial impact the new immigration system could have on CRUK Institutes.

Our four core-funded research institutes - The Beatson in Glasgow, Cambridge, Manchester, and the Francis Crick Institute - have an outstanding track record including four Noble Prize winners. They receive more than a third of our research spend, funding over 120 research groups across cancer science.

Given that **31% of the fellows and 42% of the post-doctoral researchers that we fund are from the EEA and currently face no visa fees**, we wanted to better understand how a typical CRUK Institute could be impacted when costs apply to EEA workers<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/Publications/2019/international-visa-systems-explainer-july-2019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Data on CRUK's funded research workforce by nationality

[https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/cruk\\_researcher\\_mobility\\_policy\\_statement\\_july\\_2019.pdf](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/sites/default/files/cruk_researcher_mobility_policy_statement_july_2019.pdf)

The costs of two routes are of particular interest for Cancer Research UK – the Global Talent Visa and Tier 2 skilled worker visa<sup>3</sup>. It's important to highlight that these costs are usually reimbursed by the Institutes once applicants have successfully applied for the visa and start working. The figures below therefore represent the costs faced by both the employer and employees – this is money that could be spent on research rather than visa administration. Further details about the methodology and calculations can be found in the appendix.

### Key findings – CRUK Institutes

For the purposes of accessibility and to provide a clear picture of the increased financial burden on our institutes, we have generated a range of averages for each visa route.

Each Institute (The Beatson, Cambridge and Manchester) has, on average, 85 researchers and scientists from the EEA. Our preliminary data indicates the **total additional cost** a typical CRUK Institute would have hypothetically faced if the immigration system applied to their current EEA workforce (as will be the case for new EEA workers entering the UK from January 2021)<sup>4</sup>:

- **Up to £315,637<sup>5</sup>** if all EEA workers came through the Global Talent Visa route
- **Up to £806,704<sup>6</sup>** if all EEA workers came through the Tier 2 (General) visa route

### Key findings – Francis Crick Institute

The Francis Crick Institute is much larger than other CRUK institutes – home to around 1,500 scientists and support staff<sup>7</sup>. Thus, we have considered it separately. In order to calculate the potential costs, we asked the Francis Crick to provide the total number of EEA research staff they employed in the last financial year and then extrapolated how much cost would be borne should those researchers have come via the GTV and Tier 2 routes – seeking a cost *per year* figure.

Our preliminary data indicates the **total cost the Francis Crick Institute would hypothetically face per year for its newly hired research staff** under the new immigration system:

- **Up to £242,320<sup>8</sup>** if all EEA workers came through the Global Talent Visa route
- **Up to £607,100<sup>9</sup>** if all EEA workers came through the Tier 2 (General) visa route

### Conclusion

If Covid-19 has made one thing apparent, it's the importance of science, research and innovation to our society.

These costs may be too much for many employers to bear, especially at a time when budgets are under considerable pressure due to the pandemic. The alternatives – passing these costs directly onto researchers – would undermine the Government's ambition to make the UK a go-to destination for scientific talent.

We must not put at risk the Government's positive science and innovation ambitions by imposing unnecessary barriers – in the form of costly visas – to our international research community. If our visa

<sup>3</sup> Under the new Immigration System, the Tier 2 (General) Visa route will close and be replaced by the new Skilled Worker route. However, the costs for the Tier 2 (General) Visa route has been used in our analysis as our current understanding is that visa costs will be comparable in the new Skilled Worker route.

<sup>4</sup> These costs are purely hypothetical to provide a sense of scale - existing EEA staff at Institutes arriving before 2021 will not be subject to visa costs.

<sup>5</sup> This figure denotes how much it would cost if all research staff applied for the Global Talent Visa up to a maximum of 5 years

<sup>6</sup> This figure denotes how much it would cost if all research staff applied for the Tier 2 (General) visa up to a maximum of 5 years

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.crick.ac.uk/research>

<sup>8</sup> This figure denotes how much it would cost the Francis Crick if all research staff hired in the last financial year applied for the Global Talent Visa up to a maximum of 5 years

<sup>9</sup> This higher figure denotes how much it would cost the Francis Crick if all research staff hired in the last financial year applied for the Tier 2 (General) visa up to a maximum of 5 years

system remains one of the most expensive in the world, we risk deterring global talent and devaluing the Government's historic investment in research.

Immigration reform is a once in a generation opportunity. **It is imperative the Government carries out an urgent review of the UK's visa costs and their expected impact on the recruitment of international research staff.** This will help ensure that, from 2021, the UK remains a top destination for global scientific talent.

## Appendix

### 1. Our methodology

Under the new immigration system, new EEA workers will have to apply through the same route as non-EEA workers, which means they will face the same high upfront cost when applying for a visa. This also applies for existing EEA workers in the UK who wish to extend or switch their visa.

In order to calculate the potential costs, we asked our institutes to provide the total number of EEA research staff<sup>10</sup> they currently employ and then extrapolated how much cost would be borne should those researchers have come via the new routes. Under Government guidelines for the Tier 2 visa<sup>11</sup>, the **fee new applicants from outside the UK have to pay is different to the fee incurred by workers already in the UK looking to switch or extend their visa<sup>12</sup>.**

For CRUK data, we are looking at the current workforce, and therefore using the below visa fees provided by the Government to carry out our analysis:

### 2. Our calculations – CRUK Institutes

- The **visa fees** for all EEA research staff, under the following visa:
  - Global Talent – **£608**
  - Tier 2 [up to 3 years] – **£704**
  - Tier 2 [more than 3 years] – **£1,408**
- The cost of the **health surcharge**:
  - Under current Government plans to increase this to £624 per person per year
- In order to create a **median range** which reflected the fact that some applicants may apply for anywhere between one and five years for either visa, we calculated the lowest possible and highest possible costs:
  - Global Talent for 1 year + health surcharge for 1 year;
  - Global Talent for (at maximum of) 5 years + health surcharge for 5 years;
  - Tier 2 for 1 year + health surcharge for 1 year;
  - Tier 2 for 3 years + health surcharge for 3 years;
  - Tier 2 for (a maximum of) 5 years + health surcharge for 5 years
- The **skills charge**
  - A fee of £1,000 incurred by the employer<sup>13</sup> for each worker per year (under the Tier 2 visa only)
  - Again, we used the ranges above and simply added this cost on

Under Government guidelines for the Tier 2 visa<sup>14</sup>, the **fee new applicants from outside the UK have to pay is £610 (up to 3 years) and £1,220 (more than 3 years).**

<sup>10</sup> Research staff includes: scientists, post docs, group leaders and scientific officers (and lab technicians?).

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/tier-2-general>

<sup>12</sup> Fee for new applicants from outside the UK under Tier 2: £608 (up to 3 years), £1,220 (more than 3 years). Fee for applicants already in the UK looking to extend or switch their visa under Tier 2: £704 (up to 3 years), £1,408 (more than 3 years)

<sup>13</sup> Each institute will have to pay £1,000, as they are all considered "medium / large employers" according to Government guidelines:

<https://www.gov.uk/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/immigration-skills-charge>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/tier-2-general>

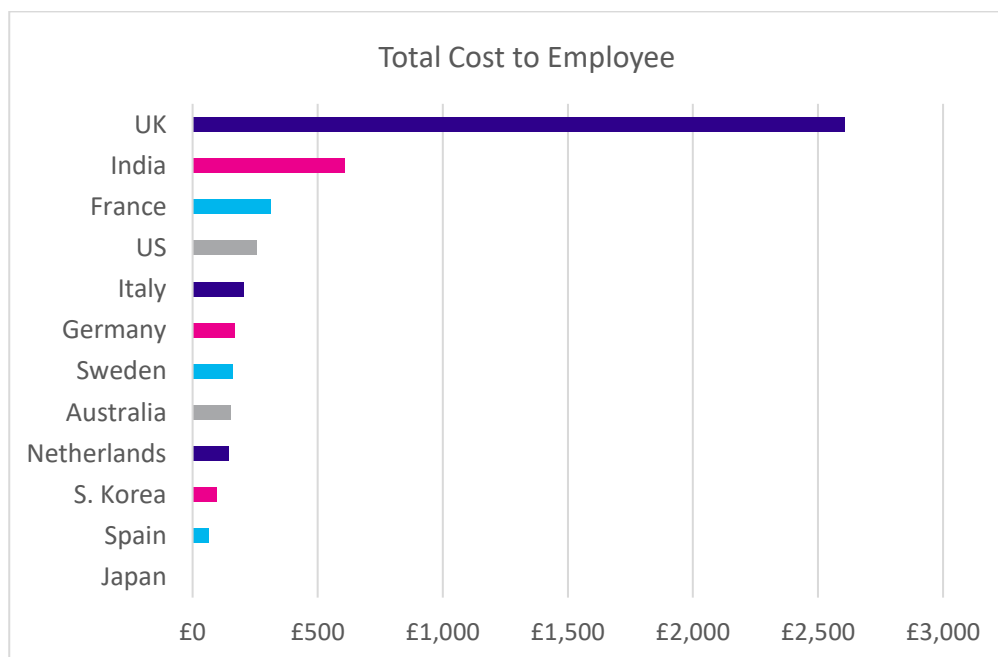
For the Francis Crick data, we are looking at new hires (from the last financial year), and therefore using the below visa fees provided by the Government to carry out our analysis:

### 3. Our calculations – Francis Crick Institute

- The **visa fees** for all EEA research staff, under the following visa:
  - Global Talent – **£608**
  - Tier 2 [up to 3 years] – **£610**
  - Tier 2 [more than 3 years] – **£1,220**
- The cost of the **health surcharge**:
  - Under current Government plans to increase this to £624 per person per year
- In order to create a **median range** which reflected the fact that some applicants may apply for anywhere between one and five years for either visa, we calculated the lowest possible and highest possible costs:
  - Global Talent for 1 year + health surcharge for 1 year;
  - Global Talent for (at maximum of) 5 years + health surcharge for 5 years;
  - Tier 2 for 1 year + health surcharge for 1 year;
  - Tier 2 for 3 years + health surcharge for 3 years;
  - Tier 2 for (a maximum of) 5 years + health surcharge for 5 years
- The **skills charge**
  - A fee of £1,000 incurred by the employer<sup>15</sup> for each worker per year (under the Tier 2 visa only)
  - Again, we used the ranges above and simply added this cost on

### 4. International comparisons

Figure 1: Upfront cost of obtaining a five-year UK Global Talent Visa (exceptional talent) compared with other leading science nations<sup>16</sup>



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<sup>15</sup> Each institute will have to pay £1,000, as they are all considered “medium / large employers” according to Government guidelines: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/immigration-skills-charge>

<sup>16</sup> <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/Publications/2019/international-visa-systems-explainer-july-2019.pdf> and <https://www.gov.uk/global-talent>