

Article/Comments by **Kathryn Bradbury, Partner and Head of Citizenship & Immigration at Payne Hicks Beach**, first published online in HR Magazine on 8 August 2017 and is reproduced with kind permission <http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/have-your-say-on-post-brexit-immigration>



Have your say on post-Brexit immigration

Kathryn Bradbury, AUGUST 08, 2017

The government commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to advise on the impacts of Brexit

There is still a significant amount of uncertainty around what will happen when the UK leaves the EU. More than three million EU nationals resident in the UK have been assured of their right to remain, but the process for securing evidence of that right remains uncertain. Even more uncertain is what schemes will be in place for new EU nationals to enter the UK. Some ministers have suggested free movement will continue during a transitional period, others have suggested it will end immediately on the date we leave the EU.

Many believe that the best outcome for business would be for free movement to be maintained, however that seems politically unlikely. So what does a post-Brexit immigration policy look like? Would EU nationals have to fit within the current immigration system? Would a new scheme be opened up? Would this apply just to EU nationals or all foreign nationals?

Highlighting the complexity of answering these questions, industry groups such as the City of London and TheCityUK have both commissioned separate reports by PwC outlining what the UK's immigration framework should look like post-Brexit. The City of London suggested regional visas, while TheCityUK (focusing on the fintech sector) suggested greater flexibility in the immigration framework and a specific digital skills visa.

TheCityUK report highlights that under the current immigration policy, the costs to employers of a five-year work visa have risen by 250% to £7,000, the minimum salary threshold for sponsoring a worker has increased by 44% to £30,000, and visa processing times are longer than many other financial centres around the world. Enabling the various sectors, including financial services, creative sectors and low-skilled industries to bring in the workers they need will require amendments to the current immigration rules.

The government has recently commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), a non-departmental body that advises the government on immigration issues, to "advise on the economic and social impacts of the UK's exit from the European Union and also on how the UK's immigration system should be aligned with a modern industrial strategy". Interestingly this includes an exploration of the effects on the UK of a reduction in immigration, which presents an opportunity to examine just how damaging this could be to the economy.

This presents an opportunity for employers, industry bodies and individuals to contribute to the debate and give their views. The MAC will conclude its call for evidence by 27 October and report on its findings probably early in 2018.

Whatever the new regime may be, there are steps organisations can take now to assess the impact of changes to the UK's immigration policy post-Brexit. Many organisations are setting up internal Brexit committees to conduct an audit of their employees and future staffing needs, including how reliant the organisation would be on new EU national entrants to fill vacancies and the consequent impact of more restrictive immigration requirements. Businesses that employ EU nationals may wish to advise them of their options to obtain permanent residence and British citizenship so that their status is secure.

Kathryn Bradbury, is a partner and head of citizenship and immigration at Payne Hicks Beach

