

MINUTES OF THE TWELTH MEETING OF THE MIGRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON 6 FEBRUARY 2009

Present:

Chair	Professor David Metcalf CBE
Members	Dr Diane Coyle OBE Dr Martin Ruhs Professor Jonathan Wadsworth Professor Robert Wilson
Secretariat	Mark Franks (Head of secretariat) Stephen Earl Vanna Aldin Daniel Livingstone Andrew Watton Dan James Anna Downs Anne Ball
Observers	Jonathan Sedgwick Jeremy Oppenheim Ian Robinson

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

1. Apologies for absence were received from Professor Mike Campbell.
2. The Chair welcomed Ian Robinson and Jeremy Oppenheim to the meeting. Ian explained that he has taken over from Andrew Honeyman as UKBA liaison for the MAC as well as having policy responsibility for Tiers 2 and 3 of the PBS. Jeremy said that as well as being UKBA Regional Director for the North East and Yorkshire, he also has policy responsibility for Economic and Social Migration, ID Cards and the PBS.
3. The Chair offered congratulations on behalf of the MAC to Diane Coyle for her recognition in the New Year Honours list.
4. Attendees relayed relevant discussions and meetings undertaken since the previous meeting.

Agenda Item 2 – Feedback from the Stakeholder Forum

5. The Chair reported that the Stakeholder Forum held on 30 January 2009 had been very successful with a positive atmosphere and constructive contributions from all present. The Forum was particularly good on stakeholder engagement.

Agenda Item 3- Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 December

6. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed without amendment.

Agenda Item 4 – Paper 12.1: Worker Registration Scheme report update

7. The secretariat presented paper 12.1 updating the MAC on the potential review by the MAC of the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS). The secretariat stressed that the MAC has not been asked to do this work but that it was likely to be asked to do so and to report at short notice. Working assumptions were presented and the MAC asked to offer comments on the working definition of a serious labour market disturbance and on the level and nature of analysis contained within the draft of the report attached to paper 12.1.
8. The MAC said that it was not clear yet whether and to what extent the issue of benefits was to be discussed in its analysis of the WRS, but that in the interim the paper could usefully be expanded to enlarge upon the nature of any direct link between the WRS and access to benefits.
9. The MAC agreed it would like to reconsider the WRS at its next meeting.

Agenda Item 5 – Paper 12.2: Progress report on shortage occupations

10. The secretariat introduced paper 12.2 outlining evidence gathering efforts to date and an initial analysis of emerging national level data. The MAC considered particularly the emerging analysis on occupations in the health and social care sectors. With regard to those occupations that had provided evidence to the MAC but were not previously identified as being considered under the March review nor those included in the list of occupations that the Government asked that the MAC look at in March, the MAC agreed that these occupations would not be considered under the March review but would instead be looked at under the next review in September 2009.
11. The MAC agreed which members were to be champions for each occupation under review. The secretariat undertook to supply copies of evidence received and draft occupation summaries to each champion by mid-February.
12. The MAC noted that there were some significant changes in the national level data and discussed the implications of this for compiling the shortage occupations lists. In its discussions the MAC noted that skill needs appeared to fall into three categories:
 - those driven by a general, cyclical shortage of relevant skills;
 - those that arise due to a chronic shortage of particular skills;
 - those that arise from the fact that some occupations intrinsically operate in global markets.

The MAC noted that it had been using the same methodology for each of these different sets of circumstance and considered whether it might be better to identify which occupations fell into which categories and to begin from there as a starting point for assessing skill needs, and hence potential shortages.

12. The MAC also heard an analysis from the secretariat of the data being generated under the PBS. This was not the same as the data generated under

the old work permits system. There was information about flows under Tier 2 but it was hard to break this down by shortage occupation route, and the data recorded does not include points awarded and the numbers granted by occupation. Occupational classifications are recorded but the quality of coding is unclear. The MAC was concerned lest the PBS fail to produce data that would enable a proper assessment of its effectiveness and asked that the secretariat work with UKBA to produce a paper on PBS data for the next MAC meeting.

Agenda Item 6 – Paper 12.3: Update on March Shortage Report: revised structure and chapters outline

13. The secretariat outlined the format of the March Shortage Report which will follow the lines of the previous Shortage report. The MAC was content with the outline but asked that more be said about the impact of recession on shortages.

Agenda Item 7 – Paper 12.4: Research update

14. The secretariat provided an update on progress on commissioning each of the research projects previously agreed by the MAC. The MAC were content with progress to date.
15. The MAC also considered potential subjects for longer term research. Items considered included assessing which occupations are the most used access routes and comparisons with experience under the PBS and under the previous work permits system, looking at which indicators are changing over time and the effects of the economic cycle on the indicators, setting things into the broader context such as how do labour markets and immigration interact at the EU level and an examination of synergies and divergences between immigration policy in Scotland and in the rest of the UK. The secretariat was asked to keep a log of these and other potential longer term research projects.

Agenda Item 8 – Paper 12.5: International Conference update

16. The secretariat presented an outline of the format of the conference and potential list of speakers, and the MAC approved these.
17. The MAC agreed that Rob Wilson and Martin Ruhs would form an oversight committee to assist the secretariat in planning this event.

Agenda Item 9 – Immigration and shortage occupations in the economic downturn

18. The Chair presented the MAC with a set of slides offering a potential analysis of the impact of the economic downturn on immigration and shortage occupations as a tool to help in analysing and explaining what was occurring. The Chair stressed that these did not constitute a line for MAC members to take but represented his latest thinking on this issue.

Agenda Item 10 – Update on Government thinking on controlling migration

19. Jonathan Sedgwick gave the MAC an update on emerging Government thinking on migration and where the MAC might fit into that. Ministers are looking carefully at the PBS and how it is working. The system has flexibility built into and Ministers are considering to what extent the system would benefit from readjustment. It is possible that the MAC might be asked to look at this as well as the wider issue of the skills needs of UK Plc.
20. The MAC had a brief discussion of some of the ramifications of these issues including the difficulty of relying on data being generated at a time of economic downturn, whether that data might not be asymptomatic as well as symptomatic. The MAC also considered other areas of work that could arise including considering the different types of skill shortage, looking at the social as well as economic rationale behind deciding which employees to let go first, whether there is any data around how long migrants remain in a country before deciding to stay long term and what are the consequences of allowing students to work as well as study.

Agenda Item 11 – AOB

21. There was no other business. The next MAC meeting is on 6 March 2009.

**MAC secretariat
February 2009**