

# Aide-Mémoire

## Immigration of health workforce

<b>Date due to MO:</b>	13 December 2023	<b>Action required by:</b>	N/A
<b>Security level:</b>	IN CONFIDENCE	<b>Health Report number:</b>	H2023033412
<b>To:</b>	Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Health		
<b>Consulted:</b>	Health New Zealand: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Māori Health Authority: <input type="checkbox"/>		

## Contact for telephone discussion

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**Date due:** 13 December 2023

**To:** Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Health

**Security level:** IN CONFIDENCE **Health Report number:** H2023033412

### Purpose

1. This aide-memoire responds to your request for information on the immigration pathways available for the health workforce and what can be done to provide additional support and make processes faster.

### Summary

2. Due to workforce pressures, several changes were made to immigration settings in early 2023. Immigration settings are now more permissive and attractive for health workers. Many health professions can gain rights to live and work permanently in New Zealand (residence) once they have a job offer. Others can generally access a temporary work visa and seek permanent work rights after working in New Zealand for several years.
3. We understand you wish to build on these settings to support and manage workforce challenges. We can provide you with advice on these issues and the opportunities to address them, working with your office on the timing of advice.
4. There is also an opportunity to consider the impact of professional registration on the recruitment of the international health workforce. We will be providing you advice on the review the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) shortly.
5. Over 10,000 health workers have been approved for a work visa and more than 2,600 approved for residence since July 2022. Data and trends for immigration pathways are limited due to the short time current immigration schemes have been operational.

### Current Immigration settings are permissive for most health professions

#### There are different pathways to work in New Zealand

6. The immigration pathways for migrants in the health workforce are varied. An overview of immigration pathways is provided at **Appendix 1**. Further detail on temporary work visas and residence pathways is provided at **Appendix 2**.

#### Generally, professional registration requirements apply before receiving a formal job offer

7. Most employers require health workers to be registered in the health system before formally offering a role. This ensures a person can practise safely in New Zealand and has the necessary cultural competency. The pathway for registration depends on whether a profession is regulated under the HPCA Act and whether the migrant comes from a comparable health system.

8. For regulated professions, registration occurs through a responsible authority established under the HPCA Act. Non-regulated professions may be registered through a professional self-regulating body or have no registration body at all. The timeframes for registration vary between professional bodies.
9. Migrants from countries with non-comparable health systems often face additional requirements that can extend the time for registration. In most cases, they will need to come to New Zealand to carry out competency assessments before registration is granted.
10. Once any registration requirements have been met and a migrant has a formal job offer, they can begin the immigration process through applying for either a temporary work visa or residence.

### **Following a formal job offer, health workers can seek a temporary work visa**

11. A temporary work visa provides someone with the right to work in New Zealand for a specified period. Most health workers on temporary work visas are on an Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV).
12. Most health professions meet the job requirements for an AEWV. These include an earnings threshold (to be paid at or above the median wage) and working hour per week requirements (more than 30 hours).
13. The care workforce has a different earnings threshold under the AEWV Scheme (the Care Workforce Sector Agreement). This agreement acknowledges this sector has traditionally relied on lower-paid migrants. Sector agreements are intended to be short-term while the sector transitions to less reliance on lower-paid migrants.

### **But many health workers can apply for residence immediately**

14. Residence allows someone to stay and work in New Zealand indefinitely. Residence is an attractive offering to encourage specified professions to work in New Zealand.
15. Health workers can seek residence immediately once they have a job offer if their profession is on the Tier 1 Green List. This applies to a wide range of health professions (refer **Appendix 3**) after an expansion in May 2023.
16. Other health workers can qualify for residence over time after gaining a temporary work visa (AEWV). This usually occurs under the Skilled Migrant Category which determines eligibility based on a combination of qualification level, earnings, and time spent working in New Zealand (**Appendix 4**). Care workers have an alternative residence pathway under the sector agreement for the care workforce.

### **We can provide you with further advice to build on the existing immigration settings**

17. We understand you wish to proceed with work to enhance the recruitment of the health workforce from other jurisdictions. Given the already permissive settings, there are likely to be limited opportunities to increase migrant volumes significantly.
18. We are well placed to further advise you on the Government's Coalition Agreements, as well as your manifesto commitments and other potential opportunities which may include:

- a. changing earnings criteria for the Skilled Migrant Category residence visa (National/Act Coalition Agreement)
  - b. liberalising rules to make it easier for family members to work in New Zealand (National/Act Coalition Agreement)
  - c. investigating an “Essential Worker” workforce planning mechanism (National/New Zealand First Coalition Agreement)
  - d. automatic short-term visas for international nurses and midwives, and their immediate family members, looking for work in New Zealand (your manifesto commitment)
  - e. relocation grants for nurses and midwives (your manifesto commitment)
  - f. adjusting immigration criteria for health professions, such as the age cap
  - g. other adjustments that would make improvements in processing times.
19. We will work with your office to confirm the scope and timing of advice. We will also work closely with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment to understand implications for the Immigration portfolio.

### **There is also an opportunity to consider registration pathways as part of a review of the HPCA Act**

- 20. Registration processes can be time-consuming for migrants. Many professions need to be registered with a professional body before receiving a formal job offer to begin work visa or residence processes.
- 21. Professional registration bodies have independence from central government, with the level of independence varying depending on whether the body is established under legislation. There are limited levers for you to influence registration processes in the short-term.
- 22. There is an opportunity to consider registration’s impact on recruiting the international workforce when reviewing the HPCA Act. You will receive advice on this review shortly.

### **Most existing support in the system focusses on providing information**

- 23. It can be difficult for migrants to understand and navigate the varied pathways for health workers. Recent changes to immigration settings have simplified the system but are still relatively new.
- 24. Most health sector support focusses on information. HNZ have established the International Recruitment Centre, which provides information on immigration pathways, recruitment advice to match jobs and locations with career aspirations, and advice on relocating to New Zealand tailored to each district.
- 25. HNZ also provide financial support to migrants offered a HNZ role. Shipping, travel, and temporary accommodation and transport costs are covered for specified roles.
- 26. We do not hold information on the support available for non-HNZ roles. This information is difficult to access because of the variety of employers and their non-government status.

27. Other support focuses on encouraging registration bodies to streamline and standardise processes. Clinical staff from the Ministry of Health | Manatū Hauora meet regularly with these bodies to support them to make pathways easier to navigate for international workers, particularly across allied health professions.

### **Data on immigration is limited**

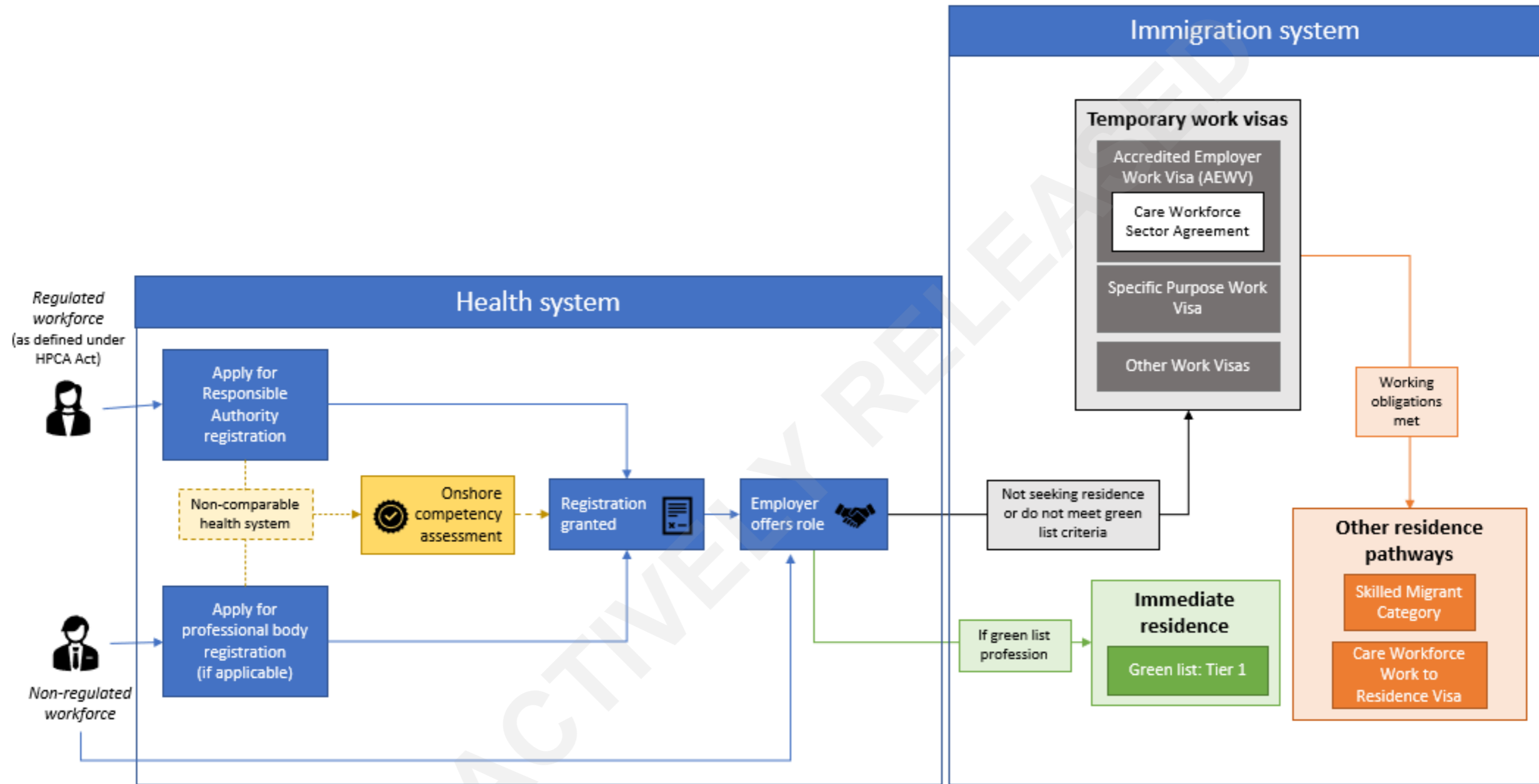
28. Since July 2022, when the AEWV opened, over 10,000 health workers have been approved for a work visa and more than 2,600 have been approved for residence. Given the scheme is new, it is difficult to identify trends.
29. Nurses are the top occupation for Green List residence approvals. Doctors and physiotherapists are the next most accepted healthcare professions.
30. There are data gaps for the health workforce. This occurs particularly in the non-regulated workforce because there are limited legislative requirements to collect and share information for registration. There is also no central repository of workforce information for the workforce outside of HNZ employment. This limits our ability to build an understanding of workforce mobility.
31. Should you wish for further data, we can work with MBIE officials and your office to provide further updates.



Maree Roberts

**Deputy Director-General  
Strategy, Policy and Legislation**

# Appendix 1: Immigration Pathways



## Appendix 2: Detail on visa types and residence pathways

Temporary working visas		
Base requirements	Pathway	Additional requirements and length
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health requirements for work visa</li> <li>Character requirement for work visa</li> </ul>	Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Median wage, unless exempted on care workforce sector agreement</li> <li>Employers need to advertise the role domestically first and have an approved job check, unless the role is included on the Green List and the employer requires the same or greater skills as the Green List</li> <li>Full-time (30+ hours per week) job offer</li> <li>Qualifications, registration, experience requirements as specified by employer</li> <li><i>Length: up to five years</i></li> </ul>
	An AEWV under the Care Workforce Sector Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available for specified care sector occupations only – must meet all AEWV requirements except there is a lower wage requirement.</li> <li>Wage at either Level Three (paid at least \$26.16 per hour) or Level Four (paid at least \$28.25 per hour) of the Support Workers (Pay Equity) Settlements Act 2017</li> <li><i>Length: 3-5 years depending on pay rate</i></li> </ul>
	Open Work Visas	<p><i>There are a variety of visas for working holiday makers, partners of those with rights to live and work in New Zealand, and those looking to work post study.</i></p> <p><i>Requirements differ by visas but generally include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial requirements to support oneself</li> <li>Age requirements apply for working holiday visas (18-30, or 18-35 in select countries)</li> <li>Employment conditions (these vary for length of employment and choice of work in relation to what was studied)</li> <li>Some character requirements apply (for partnership visa)</li> <li><i>Length: 1-2 years (possibly longer depending on study visas)</i></li> </ul>
	Specific Purpose Work Visa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work for a specific employer and for a specified purpose</li> <li><i>Length: depends on purpose (up to 3 years)</i></li> </ul>
	Occupational Registration Visitor Visa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligible for New Zealand occupational registration</li> <li>Nurses from the Philippines who have been accepted for the Nursing Council's Competence Assessment Programme</li> <li><i>Length: 3 months</i></li> </ul>
Residence		
Base requirements	Pathway	Additional requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age requirements (below 55)</li> <li>Health requirements for residence</li> <li>Character requirements for residence</li> <li>English language requirements</li> <li>Job offer</li> </ul>	Green List: Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profession listed on Green List: Straight to Residence</li> <li>Paid at least median wage</li> <li>Qualification, registration and experience requirements as specified on the Green List</li> <li>Can apply for residence offshore</li> </ul>
	Green List: Tier 2 <i>NB: no health professions on Tier 2 list</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profession listed on Green List: Work to Residence OR paid twice the median wage</li> <li>Qualification, registration and experience requirements as specified on the Green List</li> <li>Worked in New Zealand for two years in the relevant role</li> </ul>
	Skilled Migrant Category (SMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must meet required points through Skilled Migrant Category criteria</li> <li>Qualification, registration and experience requirements</li> </ul>
	Care Workforce Work to Residence Visa (sector agreement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employed in a role specified on the Care Workforce Sector Agreement</li> <li>Employed in New Zealand at the Level 4 rate for two years</li> <li>Standard age, health, character and English language requirements for residence apply</li> </ul>

# Appendix 3: Green List Tier 1 health professions

Addiction practitioner/alcohol & drug clinician	Medical imaging technologist	Orthotist/prosthetist
Anaesthetic technician	Medical laboratory pre-analytical technician	Osteopath
Audiologist	Medical laboratory scientist	Paramedic/emergency medical technician
Audiometrist	Medical laboratory technician	Perfusionist (cardiac)
Chiropractor	Medical physicist	Pharmacist
Clinical dental technician	Medical practitioner	Physiotherapist
Clinical physiologists (sleep, renal, exercise, respiratory, neurology, and cardiac)	Nuclear medicine technologist	Play therapist (hospital)
Counsellor	Midwives	Podiatrist
Dental technician	Nurses (enrolled nurse, nurse practitioner and all registered nurses)	Psychologist
Dental therapist	Occupational therapist	Psychotherapist
Dentists and dental specialists	Optometrist	Radiation therapist
Dietician	Oral health therapist	Social worker
Dispensing optician	Orthotic and prosthetic technician	Sonographer
Genetic counsellor		Speech language therapist
		Sterile processing technician



# Appendix 4: Skilled Migrant Pathways

