

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF



29 September 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

IMMIGRATION AND THE LONDON ECONOMY

On behalf of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), may we welcome your decision to review immigration policy to meet the needs of our economy and the businesses who create jobs and prosperity in London and across the United Kingdom.

LCCI is the capital's largest independent networking and business support organisation. We represent the interests of London businesses, enabling them to collaborate, creating thousands of connections and offering our members a comprehensive range of business services to see them prosper.

It is in that context that we positively view your decision to review immigration policy. We respect the democratic decision that was reached for our country to leave the European Union. We have been concerned, however, as to how immigration restrictions were beginning to stifle the London economy.

One of the reasons that London contributes over 20% towards national GDP is the openness of the capital towards skilled and entrepreneurial people from around the world. Thanks to immigration, London provides a significant amount of wealth generation which boosts our national economy. We cannot have an immigration system which stifles this economic growth especially at a time when we have severe skills shortages in the capital.

Therefore, the uncertainty that has surrounded some aspects of immigration policy has had a knockon impact on the London economy. For instance, we understand that earlier this year, the Home Office was reviewing Government Authorised Exchange schemes and, consequently, the Home Office was not in a position to consider scheme expansions or new proposals until the review was completed. We would be grateful if your review enabled businesses to submit new proposals or requests for scheme expansions.

We also believe that entrepreneurship and job creation in our country would be benefitted by a visa for entrepreneurs who may not necessarily have an innovative business (therefore do not qualify for the innovator or start up visa) but do have a successful business and the investment to contribute to the economy.

In addition, there are a series of business sectors across the capital which has suffered from severe skills shortages following the end of the EU transition period. This has included a range of technical skills roles in hospitality, construction and environmental businesses.

To take green businesses as just one example, the skills shortages for this sector in London is profound. Savanta ComRes were commissioned by LCCI to question a cross section of large firms and SMEs across inner and outer London as to the skills and training needs of London businesses. When it came to the skills gaps that firms were enduring this included the following:



Firms who said they did not have access to all the skills necessary to reduce their carbons emissions (n=338) – What types of skills does your business need to help reduce carbon emissions?

Recycling collection/ treatment	27%
Green finance	19%
Energy economics/ management/ conservation	18%
Monitoring of energy processes	17%
Power/ energy engineering	16%
Green procurement	14%
Building maintenance/ services	11%
Pollution/ pollution control	11%
Building construction/ operations	10%
Environmental protection/ conservation	8%
Green social sciences	6%
Mechanical engineering	2%
Other	6%
Don't know	23%

We would recommend that your officials meet with London businesses on a sectoral basis to ascertain the key occupation shortages which is holding back the capital's economic recovery. We can arrange these roundtable events quickly and under Chatham House rules.

London businesses have also expressed concern at what they see as red tape to seek permission for skilled workers to fill gaps in our labour force. We believe that independent and trusted organisations, such as chambers of commerce who represent businesses on a local and regional basis, can act as trusted intermediaries to address these administrative requirements rather than create a new administrative burden for hard pressed SMEs.

We would be happy to meet with you to explore these issues further for the benefit of the London and national economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Burge', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Richard Burge
Chief Executive

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