

Chris Philp MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
(Minister for Immigration Compliance and Justice)

25 August 2021

By email only: immigrationminister@homeoffice.gov.uk

Dear Mr Philp,

Digital Right to Work Checks

I wanted to write before the end of August to ask you, even at this late moment, to consider an extension to the emergency digital right to work (RTW) checking system, which is due to take end next week.

Removing this efficient and safe measure is counterproductive, particularly in the face of the largely unprecedented worker shortages in many sectors which recent ONS data has confirmed, especially in rural areas. Over the course of the pandemic, the switch to digital RTW has been a resounding success, allowing thousands of workers to quickly and safely get into work. Maintaining the momentum that digital RTW checks enable is crucial to helping alleviate worker shortages in the short to medium term. This is particularly important in rural areas that may have been hit harder by the crisis, and where the additional time and effort it takes for a job seeker to attend an in-person check could be critical.

We appreciate the clear commitment that the Home Office has shown to developing a long-term digital answer to identity checking for RTW purposes. In a world of online passport photo acceptance and Covid vaccination certification, it is obviously right that the RTW system moves the same way. And we acknowledge, of course, that the current digital approach was released as a temporary measure, not a permanent solution.

We also recognise that the government is working on the development of a permanent digital process, and that the implementation of this may require legislative change. This is a project that will take time and cannot be rushed but given the unprecedented situation that the labour market finds itself in, and the costs that two changes rather than one will impose, it makes sense to retain the temporary measures whilst the permanent solution is developed. Reverting to face-to-face checks is an unnecessary step backwards.

The balance and shape of the UK's labour market has been changed by the pandemic. Many companies have adapted to hybrid or agile working and will not be returning to a traditional office based set up. New technology has been introduced and embraced by businesses across the UK which has also created new working opportunities for people who need to work from home or live in rural areas to access job opportunities they could not previously have considered. These changes are not going away, and the recruitment process needs to reflect the current market.

The REC is always happy to discuss this further and engage with the Home Office to ensure digital RTW checks can remain in place safely and effectively. We appreciated the opportunity to have our members meet with civil servants recently. Their views are reflected in this letter.

Yours sincerely,



Neil Carberry
Chief Executive