

7 December 2021

Statement

[The Recruitment and Employment Confederation](#) (REC) has been working with medical recruitment businesses across Northern Ireland in relation to the Covid Special Recognition Payment (SRP) for agency workers. Unfortunately, the current terms and conditions set by Health and Social Care (HSC) prevent the majority of agency workers from qualifying for the additional payment.

HSC in Northern Ireland first announced HSC Staff Recognition Payment of £500 in January 2021 and most of the substantive staff have now received this one-off bonus. In November 2021, and after months of lobbying from agencies, HSC finally provided instructions for [Special Recognition Payment for Agency Workers](#). Having examined the details and requirements, it is deeply disappointing that the scheme only identifies a small portion of the agency workforce as “qualifying workers”, leaving the majority of frontline staff, who worked tirelessly in the fight against Covid-19, out of scope. The instructions provided by HSC exclude staff who worked unsociable hours and ad hoc shifts as well as those who didn’t work with one ‘host organisation’ for a continuous 12-week period.

Recruitment agencies have been doing all they can to seek clarification about these disappointing criteria set by HSC, but have yet to receive a satisfactory response.

As the professional body for the recruitment industry, the REC will write to HSC, BSO and the Department of Health again, to ask for an extended timeframe to respond, and to significantly broaden the eligibility criteria to include **all** frontline staff (substantive or agency) who have shown unreserved dedication and care for their patients in the last 18 months and kept the health service afloat.