

From the Permanent Secretary
Sir Chris Wormald



Department of Health & Social Care

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To: All Providers and Commissioners of NHS Services

Dear Colleagues,

EU Exit Operational Readiness Guidance for the health and care system

Earlier this month, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care [issued](#) information on the Government's revised border planning assumptions to industry and the health and care system. These letters focused on supply chain implications in the event that the United Kingdom (UK) leaves the European Union (EU) without a ratified agreement on 29 March 2019 – a 'no deal' exit.

As you will be aware, the Government and the EU have now agreed the basis upon which the UK will leave the EU in March 2019. 'No deal' exit is not the Government's policy, but it is our duty to prepare for all scenarios. Since the Secretary of State's [letter](#) in August, and with the assistance of our arm's-length bodies and industry, the Department for Health and Social Care has strengthened its national contingency plans for 'no deal'. With just over three months remaining until exit day, we have now reached the point where we need to ramp up 'no deal' preparations. This means the Department, alongside all other government departments, will now enact the remaining elements of our 'no deal' plans.

Delivering the deal remains the Government's top priority and is the best 'no deal' mitigation. But in line with the Government's principal operational focus on national 'no deal' planning, actions must now be taken locally to manage the risks of a 'no deal' exit.

To inform preparations, I have included the EU Exit Operational Readiness Guidance alongside this letter, which has been developed and agreed with NHS England and Improvement. This guidance sets out the local actions that providers and commissioners of health and adult social care services in England should take to prepare for EU Exit. The guidance will also be shared with colleagues in the devolved



administrations to assist them with their preparations as part of UK-wide contingency plans.

This guidance will be sent to all health and care providers, including adult social care providers. I recognise that, while health and social care face similar issues, there is some variation. I am therefore sending a letter in parallel to local authorities and adult social care providers.

The Department, with the support of NHS England and Improvement, and Public Health England, has set up a national Operational Response Centre. This will lead on responding to any disruption to the delivery of health and care services in England, that may be caused or affected by EU Exit. The Operational Response Centre will co-ordinate EU Exit-related information flows and reporting across the health and care system.

The Operational Response Centre will also work closely with all of the devolved administrations to ensure a co-ordinated approach across the UK. The Operational Response Centre will not bypass existing regional reporting structures; providers and commissioners of NHS services should continue to operate through their usual reporting and escalation mechanisms.

NHS England and Improvement will also establish local, regional and national teams to enable rapid support on emerging local incidents and escalation of issues into the Operational Response Centre as required.

NHS providers and commissioners will be supported by NHS England and Improvement local teams to resolve issues caused or affected by EU Exit as close to the frontline as possible. These issues will be escalated to regional level, as required. Where issues are impacting across the health and care system at a national level, the Operational Response Centre will co-ordinate information flows and responses.

In addition to operational support, I recognise the uncertainty that you face, and the Government will therefore continue to update you, as necessary, to inform your preparations for EU Exit.

I encourage you to view the relevant gov.uk [page](#) which contains all the relevant information published by the Department, as well as other government departments. This page will be updated regularly so that everyone is aware of developments and actions to take.

Finally, I would like to thank you and your teams for your continued hard work and for the efforts that lie ahead. I would also like to thank the many national organisations who are contributing to the Department's EU Exit work. Your dedication to

*From the Permanent Secretary
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Department
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implementing readiness plans for EU Exit and maintaining a world-leading health and care service are greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Wormald".

**SIR CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**