



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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2 April 2019

To: Health and social care staff

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to all health and care staff to give you more information about the Government's ongoing preparations for leaving the European Union.

Leaving the EU with a deal remains the Government's top priority. However, a responsible government must plan for every eventuality, including a no deal scenario.

Protecting the rights of EU health and social care staff

We have been clear from the beginning of this process about the critical role EU citizens play in delivering our health and social care. We reiterate our unwavering commitment and support to the EU staff who make an invaluable contribution across the UK. We want you to know you have a secure future here, after the UK leaves the EU. We want you to stay in the UK and, if you arrive on or before the day we leave the EU, you will have broadly the same rights and benefits you currently enjoy. **This commitment stands whether the UK leaves the EU with or without a deal.**

EU Settlement Scheme

We invited EU citizens working in the NHS and in social care to take part in the testing phase of the EU Settlement Scheme in December 2018. We are grateful that thousands of staff took up this opportunity and helped to make sure the Settlement Scheme application process was ready to launch in full on 30 March 2019.

We continue to encourage all EU citizens who already live in the UK to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to secure either ‘settled status’, if they have been in the UK for five years, or ‘pre-settled status’ if they have lived in the UK for fewer than five years. Irish citizens are not required to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme, although there are some circumstances where they may wish to. Non-Irish family members of Irish citizens will need to apply. The process to register is simple and free to all from 30 March 2019.

We know that members of staff who applied during the testing phase paid a fee for their application and are waiting for information about when this payment will be refunded. Refunds started being made from 30 March. If you have paid for an application and not received a refund by 20 April, please contact the EU Settlement Resolution Centre on 0300 123 7379.

The Home Secretary and I wrote to NHS Chief Executives and Directors of Adult Social Care this week giving more detail about the scheme. If you are an EU citizen working in the NHS or social care, we really want you to stay.

There is more information on the [EU Settlement Scheme](#) on gov.uk.

Recognition of professional qualifications

Some staff have expressed concern about whether their professional qualifications from EEA and Swiss institutions will continue to be recognised in the UK, if we leave without a deal. On 7 March 2019, we put in place legislation that ensures the continued recognition of European qualifications by all professional regulators covering the health and social care sectors, including the General Medical Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council, General Pharmaceutical Council, General Dental Council and Health and Care Professions Council. This means **EU staff who are currently practising in the UK can continue to do so, and that professionals qualified in the EEA and Switzerland can continue to apply for registration after exit day, even if we leave without a deal.**

There will be no need for any change to existing employment contracts if the UK leaves the EU without a deal and therefore no question of EU staff needing to re-apply for their own jobs because of EU Exit.

For any professional registration queries, please contact your relevant professional regulator.

Medicines and prescribing

One of the most commonly asked questions in relation to no deal planning is about the ongoing supply of medicines. I wrote to the health and care sector in [August 2018](#), and again in [December 2018](#), about preparations for a no deal EU Exit, asking that providers do not stockpile additional medicines, beyond their business as usual stock levels. The advice has been consistent throughout contingency planning – the necessary stockpiling is being carried out by pharmaceutical companies and should not be undertaken by individual providers, or patients themselves.

We know your focus is on maintaining high standards of care and strongly urge you and your colleagues not to over-order or over-prescribe medicines. Local stockpiling is unnecessary and could cause shortages which would put those that need medicines at risk. It is important patients and service users only order repeat prescriptions when necessary and keep taking medicines as normal. We appreciate your continued commitment not to stockpile and your support with reassuring patients about this.

The Department is working closely with trade bodies, product suppliers and other key partners to ensure the continued supply of medicines and medical products in the event of a no deal EU exit. We have well established routine procedures to deal with medicine shortages, from whatever cause, and work closely with Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the pharmaceutical industry, NHS England and others to help prevent shortages. There is more information about this in a recent [written ministerial statement](#) to the House of Commons.

While we never provide guarantees, we are confident that, if everyone – including suppliers, freight companies, international partners and the health and care system – does what they need to do, the supply of medicines and medical products should be uninterrupted in the event of exiting the EU without a deal.

I want to thank everyone who has been contributing to this work for your ongoing support and involvement. In doing so, you and your colleagues will help make sure local areas are equipped to act appropriately and proportionately to any issues which may arise.

Thank you again to everyone who devotes their working life to caring for others. I truly value your hard work and dedication to our health and care services.

Yours ever,



MATT HANCOCK