

Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

16th November 2018

Dear Prime Minister,

New British Medical Association survey- impact of Brexit on EU doctors

I am writing to you today to share the results of a significant new survey from the British Medical Association on the impact of Brexit on EU doctors working in the UK. I am also writing to ask you for two further reassurances on EU citizens' rights, which we believe are vital to securing the ongoing commitment of these highly skilled doctors to living and working in the UK.

Your government has said on numerous occasions that EU citizens will be welcome to stay in the UK after Brexit. Unfortunately, this message is not having the desired effect on those whose lives will be most affected. More than three-quarters (78 per cent) of the 1527 doctors who responded to our survey said they were not reassured by commitments from your government to protect their rights in the UK in the event of a no-deal Brexit. This, when coupled with our findings that more than a third of EU doctors (35 per cent) are considering leaving the UK, could have serious implications for the NHS.

These European doctors form a significant proportion of our NHS workforce, and many have dedicated years of experience to the health service, providing high quality care to patients. At a time of chronic understaffing across our health services, the loss of these highly skilled doctors would present a real risk to the NHS workforce and its ability to provide safe care for patients.

It is clear that more needs to be done to show these doctors, and indeed all EU citizens in the UK, that they are valued, welcome to stay in the UK, and that their rights will be protected after Brexit. I am therefore asking you for action in two areas. First, urgent clarity from your Government on how the rights of EU citizens will be safeguarded in a 'no deal' scenario. While the Government has published over 100 'no deal' technical notices on a range of issues, the lack of information on citizens' rights is notable by its absence. I am asking you to publish this guidance at the earliest opportunity.

Secondly, I am seeking explicit commitments from you that the Government will honour the 'Settlement Scheme' in the event of a no deal Brexit. We know most EU doctors are committed



to working in the NHS and want to stay in the UK, but they need absolute reassurances and guarantees about their future rights to live and work here.

More must also be done to raise awareness of the Settlement Scheme. Our survey found 37 per cent of EU doctors were not even aware of the Government's Settlement Scheme. This is a deeply concerning statistic just weeks ahead of the Home Office pilot for all EU nationals working in the health, social care and higher education sector, and just four months before the scheme is to be opened up to all EU nationals in March 2019. If the scheme is to be a success, the Home Office must significantly step up its communications to EU nationals.

Finally, as doctors, our primary responsibility is to our patients, a role that requires us to be honest and to speak out on matters that concern us. No one who cast their vote in the EU referendum was voting for an impoverished or weakened health service or for a situation in which thousands of highly skilled EU citizens would feel compelled to consider leaving the NHS. It is unlikely that any Brexit deal could ever deliver the kinds and range of benefits which the UK's current membership of the EU confers on patients, the medical workforce and health services across the UK and Europe.

Now that more is known of the impact that Brexit will have on the UK, and as the Brexit negotiations reach their final, critical stages, the BMA believes it is essential that the Government gives the public the final say on a decision that will determine the country's future for decades to come.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chaand Nagpaul'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Dr Chaand Nagpaul CBE

BMA Council Chair

Cc Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Home Secretary
Dr James Kent, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister