

BREXIT BRIEFING

Securing a future relationship that protects health



Brexit: Securing a future relationship that protects health

To protect and improve health and healthcare the UK must negotiate a future relationship with the EU that:

Protects employment rights – current regulations protect the wellbeing of staff and ensure that the NHS provides safe care to patients. It is therefore vital that, as a minimum, the UK government maintains worker’s rights at their current standard. This would include retaining current regulations within the EWTD (European Working Time Directive) such as the limit of a 48-hour working week, rest breaks and statutory paid leave. The government must also maintain existing equalities protections derived from EU legislation and should fully incorporate the right to equal pay (in Article 157 of the EU treaty) into UK law.

Supports the medical workforce – to facilitate the continued sharing of medical expertise between the UK and EU member states the UK government must ensure a continued system of mutual recognition of professional qualifications (MRPQ), allowing doctors who qualified in other EU countries to readily work in the UK.

Maintains cooperation on health protection and security – to maximise the ability to respond to emerging health threats the UK must seek to negotiate a partnership agreement with ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) that facilitates information sharing, coordination and access to alert systems. This should include continued access to the Early Warning Response System (EWRS), which is vital for coordinating pandemic preparedness and response.

Safeguards the NHS – it is imperative that a future agreement does not restrict – via liberalisation of the healthcare sector or investor protection mechanisms – future Governments’ freedom to develop the NHS towards a more collaborative model and regulate to protect public health.

Ensures access to medicines – this should include a formal agreement for continued participation in European Medicines Agency (EMA) assessments for medicines approvals, and for mutual recognition schemes for medical devices. Additionally, the UK should negotiate a formal agreement within the Euratom framework to facilitate a secure and consistent supply of radioisotopes which have a range of important applications in medicine. It is also important that the implementation of the Northern Ireland/Ireland Protocol does not result in delays to the importation of vital medicines to Northern Ireland from Great Britain.

Promotes medical research – to maximise collaboration between researchers in the UK and EU the UK should negotiate a formal agreement to maintain access to EU funding programs, ensure alignment with clinical trials regulations and secure the participation of the MHRA in clinical trials that cross the EU and UK.

Maintains reciprocal healthcare arrangements – to ensure continued access to healthcare for both EU and UK citizens the government must secure the UK’s continued participation in existing EU/EEA reciprocal healthcare arrangements, or the establishment of comparable alternatives.

Facilitates cross-border healthcare – this is of particular importance on the island of Ireland, where ensuring that EEA nationals living in an EEA country can deliver care in the UK is essential for the continued provision of cross-border healthcare between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

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