

**From the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Mrs Cathy Harrison**



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

By Email To

Chief Executives, HSC Trusts
HSCB Chief Executive (for onward transmission to Family Practitioner Services),
BSO Chief Executive,
PHA Chief Executive,
NIBTS Chief Executive,
RQIA (for onward transmission to all independent providers including independent hospitals)

From: Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
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Dear Colleague,

UK: EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the end of the EU transition period

The UK Government has reached a [Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) on the UK's future relationship with the EU. The approval of the European Union Future Relationship Bill will see the agreement in place on 1 January 2021.

This letter provides information about the agreement and its impact on health and social care service organisations and providers, including information relating to the end of the transition period and the Northern Ireland Protocol. Updates on key areas are set out as follows:

Reciprocal Healthcare

The agreement ensures that UK residents will continue to have access to emergency and necessary healthcare when they travel to the EU, operating like the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) scheme, from 1st January 2021.

A new UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) will be available from the New Year, replacing the existing EHIC. However, current EHIC cards will remain valid until their expiry date. Those travelling to the UK from the EU will also be able to continue to use their EHICs.

Planned healthcare arrangements will continue under similar arrangements to the current S2 process; and eligible pensioners, frontier workers and certain other groups – and their family members - will continue to benefit from reciprocal healthcare arrangements covering their healthcare costs.

With the ending of free movement, EU citizens who move to the UK from 1st January 2021 for more than six months will be subject to immigration control and will be required to pay the immigration health surcharge as part of any visa application. However, certain groups, where a Member State continues to cover their healthcare costs in full, will be able to seek reimbursement of the surcharge.

These new future arrangements are in addition to those that will be maintained for people who have continued rights under the EU Withdrawal Agreement which may provide broader rights. However there may be some short-term visitors to the UK who are not covered by any-EU agreements on reciprocal healthcare, including former UK residents, and they may be charged for treatment.

The agreement between the UK and Ireland on an enduring reciprocal healthcare agreement is in place but in many instances will be superseded by the new UK/EU agreement. More guidance will be provided as soon as it is available to operational colleagues, however in the meantime providers should continue to use the processes already in place to allow access to treatment and to facilitate recovery of costs from Member States.

Health Security and Science

The agreement with the EU will support effective arrangements and information sharing between the UK and the EU in the event of a serious cross border threat to health, which is particularly important in the context of Covid-19. The agreement enables the UK to request access to the EU's Early Warning and Response System in respect of a serious cross border health threat so that the UK, the EU institutions and EU Member States can exchange information and coordinate measures to protect public health. The agreement also makes provision for cooperation on scientific and technical matters between the UK and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

The UK Government has also put in place measures to manage the other potential implications of EU Exit for the health and care sector, including the continuing of research funding, and support for pan-European clinical and research collaborations.

Data

The agreement includes a provision for the continued free flow of personal data from the EU and EEA EFTA States to the UK while work on adequacy decisions is completed. This is expected to take no longer than six months.

The UK has, on a transitional basis, already deemed the EU and EEA EFTA States to be adequate to allow for data flows from the UK.

This arrangement will supplement and strengthen the mitigation work by HSC organisations that ensured contracts and service agreements were reviewed and appropriate alternative transfer mechanisms (such as Standard Contractual Clauses) were put in place.

Professional Qualifications and other preparatory activity

Finally, the agreement provides a framework for professional regulators (e.g. the General Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Council) to cooperate with their EU equivalents to agree a process for recognising professional qualifications in one another's territories and form a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). This allows regulators the flexibility to negotiate MRAs or use existing third country recognition routes to recognise EU qualifications.

Continuity of Supply

In advance of the agreement extensive work was undertaken across the UK to ensure the continuity of medical supplies for the health and social care service and patients. This includes multi-layered national contingencies involving the holding of additional stock within supply chains, extra ferry capacity, an express ferry service, re-routing plans and enhanced shortage

management arrangements. HSC organisations and providers have been advised not to stockpile medicines and other medical goods unless authorised to do so and patients have been advised to continue to order their prescriptions as normal. Adult Social Care providers should also continue to order medicines, medical products and any non-clinical goods as normal, allowing more time (up to 72 hours) for non-clinical goods to arrive where they rely on 'just in time' supply chains from Great Britain.

Northern Ireland Protocol and Trader Readiness

It is important to note that the Trade and Collaboration Agreement does not alter the need to comply with the terms of the Northern Ireland Protocol which require import declarations on goods moving from GB to NI from 1 January 2021. Goods moving from GB to NI will require import declarations and who completes these declarations are based on the Incoterms agreed between the receiver and supplier.

The UK Government set up the Trader Support Service (TSS) to offer free support, advice and raise declarations on behalf of businesses for goods moving from GB to NI. All businesses and service providers who receive goods from GB are recommended to register with TSS. Information on how to register with TSS can be found via: <https://www.tradersupportservice.co.uk/tss>

An XI EORI number will be required for any business that needs to complete an import declaration. To find out more information on how to obtain an XI EORI number, please follow the link: <https://www.gov.uk/eori>

Further Information

For updates on this, and other health-related issues, please visit www.gov.uk or www.health-ni.gov.uk where key information will be collated. Further information will also be available on www.nidirect.gov.uk

Thank you for your work in preparation for EU transition and for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer