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EU and EEA citizens working in
The NHS in Scotland

20 December 2018

EU AND EEA CITIZENS WORKING IN THE NHS IN SCOTLAND

As we move ever closer to the date of the UK's exit from the EU, I wanted to take this opportunity to write again directly to EU/EEA staff working in the health service in Scotland.

Even at this late stage, almost two and a half years after the date of the EU referendum, the outcome of the negotiations between the UK Government and the EU remains uncertain. Back in September I wrote to you to say that I knew this must be a very unsettling time for you. I know that is still the case now, if not more so. That is why I wanted to write again to reiterate just how much I value the contribution of everyone working in the sector, regardless of their nationality. As I said in September, Scotland is your home and we very much want you to stay.

After months of uncertainty, the UK Government's commitment to protect the rights of EU citizens in the UK in the event of a no deal, in the policy paper on Citizens' Rights published on 6 December, is welcome as far as it goes. But the Scottish Government has been calling for the UK Government to provide absolute certainty for EU citizens since the result of the referendum. Our priority now is to ensure that your rights and place in Scotland are genuinely protected, as well as offering you the information and assistance you need at this difficult time. That is why the Scottish Government has now made provision for an advice and support service, including information and support on the new Home Office 'EU Settlement Scheme', for EU citizens in Scotland.

In addition, the First Minister has made a clear commitment to EU citizens working in our devolved public services. The Scottish Government is doing what it can within its devolved powers to provide support to EU citizens and we will prioritise resources to meet the cost of settled status applications for those delivering frontline public services. We will be setting out further details of how the reimbursement arrangements will operate in the near future.

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This Government is clear that EU citizens should not be asked to apply to retain the rights that they already have and that they should not be being charged a fee for that application. We have consistently raised this issue with the UK Government and will continue to argue that there should be no fee for any EU citizen.

I know that EU Exit is causing uncertainty and anxiety for a whole number of reasons, including in relation to the ongoing supply of medicines and medical devices, workforce issues, continuity of reciprocal healthcare and medical research. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that, alongside work being led by the UK Government on a UK-wide basis, the Scottish Government is fully engaged with health boards, local authorities and other key partners in detailed civil contingencies planning around many impacts of an EU Exit which might have an immediate and direct effect on our citizens.

I hope this letter provides reassurance about how much we value your contribution and are working to protect your interests. I promise to keep you updated and informed about this issue over the coming months.

Best wishes



JEANE FREEMAN

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