

Mr Malcolm Alexander
Chair
Patient Forum for the LAS
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Professor Keith Willett
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19th March 2019

Dear Mr Alexander

Thank you for your letter of the 11 March, raising concerns around whether NHS and care home staff may leave the country after the UK exits from the EU. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is leading the response to EU Exit across the health and care sector, and NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with them to help make the NHS ready for EU Exit. The Department is also working with MHCLG on matters relating to social care.

Whether we leave the EU under a “deal” or a “no deal” scenario we want to ensure that EU health care staff are able to come into the country as freely as possible, with limited barriers in terms of administration and cost in order to minimise the risks to NHS staffing levels. To do this, we have put a number of actions in place.

The government has launched the EU Settlement Scheme which will allow all existing NHS staff from the EU to stay in the UK with the same rights as they have currently. As of Monday 21 January, the Government decided to waive the £65 fee for settled status applications and will reimburse individuals who have already made this payment. We have asked all NHS providers to work with EU nationals in their workforce and encourage them to register for the settled status scheme.

Currently, recognition of professional qualifications from EU member states has enabled health and care professionals from the EU to come to the UK to work within the NHS. The Government has stated that health and care professionals with a qualification recognised under EU law and registered in the UK on 29 March 2019, will continue to be registered after the UK leaves the EU.

To support the recruitment of international staff the Government has announced an extension to the number of professions, including paramedics, that will be exempt from the proposed £30,000 minimum salary threshold on workers requiring a Tier 2 visa.

You may also be aware that the NHS published the Long Term Plan earlier this year. This Long Term Plan recognises the need to keep attracting and retaining a first class workforce so our patients receive the standard of care they deserve. As part of this, NHS Improvement, Health Education England and NHS England will be working with a national workforce group to develop a workforce implementation plan to be published later in 2019.

I hope that this response is helpful and provides reassurance that the issue of workforce is being taken seriously as part of ongoing plans for the delivery of NHS services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Willett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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