



Brexit: What does it mean for reciprocal healthcare arrangements?

S1 and S2 Registration

These provide authorisation for different types of access to treatment. If a citizen is planning to stay in another EU country for an extended period of time, the individual is required to register for an S1 certificate of entitlement to healthcare. If a citizen is planning to travel specifically to obtain medical treatment in another EU state, they have to apply for an S2 certificate of authorisation. This certificate entitles individuals to receive care on the same basis as in their country of origin. Under both registrations, the UK provides reimbursement for the cost of care.

EHIC

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is part of the system of social security cooperation that provides access to healthcare for all EU citizens travelling within the EU and staying in another state temporarily. The EHIC provides treatment that is 'medically necessary' and therefore its removal will have significant impact on emergency treatment to British citizens travelling in EU states.>>>

Accessing treatment in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

The healthcare systems in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland work particularly closely in the delivery of care. The frictionless border and reciprocal healthcare arrangements are essential to the delivery of many services. In particular specialised services on the island of Ireland are delivered on such a basis. For example, the network for children's heart disease relies on free movement.

The RCP's recommendations

If the S1 and S2 scheme ends and access to treatment is not provided, British citizens may be obliged to return to the UK or prevented from travelling to the other 27 EU states for treatment. If this is the case, the UK will need to ensure that it has the capacity within the NHS to safely care for them. Caring for these additional patients in the current system would put patient safety at risk and therefore participation in the S1 and S2 scheme should be continued.

Access to treatment is considered in terms of a geographical region, rather than political boundary and ensures that patients living in Northern Ireland are able to access treatments which may not otherwise be available.

For those living on the island of Ireland, the UK and EU should come to an agreement to ensure continued close collaboration between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's healthcare system. This will ensure that patients are able to access the necessary treatments they require on the island of Ireland.

What this means for patients

In many instances patients need to access treatment in a country in which they are not a citizen. The EU works to facilitate this collaborative care across the member states as required by patients. When treatment is provided in another country, it is reimbursed by the patient's country of citizenship. Unless sufficient guarantees are provided, patients will no longer have access to necessary treatment and care outside the UK.

