

From the Permanent Secretary
Sir Chris Wormald



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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To: All Adult Social Care Providers

Dear Colleagues,

Government's preparations for a March 2019 'no deal' scenario for adult social care

I am writing to provide an update on the Government's ongoing preparations for a March 2019 'no deal' Brexit scenario and what the adult social care system needs to consider as we step up preparations in the period leading up to March 2019. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has written a number of times to the health and social care system, and this letter should be read alongside those communications. This letter covers:

- business continuity plans;
- workforce and the EU Settlement Scheme;
- supply of medicines and clinical consumables; and
- supply of non-clinical consumables, goods and services.

As you will be aware, the Government and the EU have now agreed the basis upon which the UK will leave the EU in March 2019. 'No deal' exit is not the Government's policy, but it is our duty to prepare for all scenarios. Since the Secretary of State's [letter](#) in August, and with the assistance of our arm's-length bodies and industry, the Department for Health and Social Care has strengthened its national contingency plans for 'no deal'. With just over three months remaining until exit day, we have now reached the point where we need to ramp up 'no deal' preparations. This means the Department, alongside all other government departments, will now enact the remaining elements of our 'no deal' plans.

Delivering the deal remains the Government's top priority and is the best 'no deal' mitigation. But in line with the Government's principal operational focus on national 'no deal' planning, actions must now be taken locally to manage the risks of a 'no deal' exit.

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To ensure you are as prepared as possible, we encourage all social care providers to have fully up to date and robust contingency plans for the possible implications for a 'no deal' EU Exit. This letter outlines some of the key areas where providers should focus plans including workforce, supply of medicines and consumables, and supply of non-clinical consumables good and services.

On 7 December 2018, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care [wrote](#) to health and care providers to update them on the government's preparations for a potential 'no deal' EU Exit. While health and adult social care face similar issues, there are some issues specific to social care that need be addressed. The Department is therefore working to ensure that the system as a whole is prepared, recognising the complex inter-relations between health and care. This letter updates you on our preparations.

While we recognise that the majority of planning will be for individual providers and local authorities, the government is committed to supporting the adult social care sector nationally. Today, we have published EU Exit Operational Readiness Guidance which I have included alongside this letter. Adult social care providers are advised to use this guidance as a prompt to test contingency plans. We will also work with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Directors of Adult Social Services and Directors of Adult Social Services Regional Networks, and the NHS to ensure support is available as needed.

Business Continuity Plans

I would like to encourage all social care providers to ensure they have up to date contingency plans for the possible implications a 'no deal' EU Exit scenario. These plans should have a particular focus on:

- People – whether your staff, customers, users, third party suppliers and delivery partners will be ready for a potentially new environment. EU nationals may require reassurance and support, or advice on applying for the settled status scheme;
- Devices and consumables – what would need to be developed or purchased and tested in order for the organisation to be ready to deal with any disruption;
- Data flows – the Secretary of State has requested all NHS bodies to follow the guidance set out in the government's [technical notice](#) on data protection to prepare for 'no deal'. Social Care providers may wish to do the same;
- Processes – whether your organisation and its partners have a full and common understanding of any process changes that might be needed to be ready to do business after exit day;
- Policies and procedures - what would need to be in place for your organisation to be ready;

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- Commercial – identify any contracts that may be impacted by potential changes to trading relations with the EU, and develop mitigations.

Workforce and the EU Settlement Scheme

EU nationals play a crucial role in our care system, and the Government wants them to know that they have a secure future here after the UK leaves the EU. As the Prime Minister reiterated recently, regardless of whether we leave the EU with or without a deal, the rights of EU citizens will be protected here.

Through the EU Settlement Scheme, which will launch in early 2019, EU nationals will be able to register for settled status if they have been here for five years, or pre-settled status if they have been here for less than five years. The process to register is simple and largely digital, and will cost £65 per adult and £32.50 per child. I am aware that some employers are planning to meet this cost, and this is something that you may wish to consider.

We strongly encourage providers to fill in the Skills for Care Workforce National Minimum Data Set for Social Care and update it more regularly than they might otherwise do. This data set provides an important source for our national workforce risk assessments and we will be drawing data from it on a regular basis throughout the first six months of next year.

Supply of medicines and consumables

In previous letters to the health and care system, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care highlighted that the government is taking a national approach to the supply of medicines with pharmaceutical companies.

UK health and adult social care providers – including hospitals, nursing homes, care homes, GPs and community pharmacies – should not stockpile additional medicines beyond their business as usual stock levels. There is also no need for clinicians to write longer NHS prescriptions.

Local stockpiling by UK health and adult social care providers is unnecessary and could cause shortages in other areas, which would put patient care at risk. Any incidences involving the overordering of medicines will be investigated and followed up with the relevant Chief or Responsible Pharmacist directly. The Department and NHS England and Improvement are developing arrangements to allow local and regional monitoring of stock levels of medicines. NHS organisations should continue to report shortage issues through existing communication channels.

Furthermore, if asked, clinicians should advise patients that the Government is working with industry to ensure a continued supply of medicines from the moment we leave the EU; patients should not store additional medicines at home.

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We are also taking similar action with the suppliers of medical devices and clinical consumables, and there is no need for UK health and adult social care providers to stockpile additional medical devices and clinical consumables beyond their business as usual stock levels.

Our plans are kept under review as new information becomes available, and we will communicate further guidance if necessary.

Supply of non-clinical consumables, goods and services

For both NHS providers and social care providers, the Department has identified categories of national suppliers for non-clinical goods and services that it is reviewing and managing at a national level.

The supply chain reviews conducted by my Department cover all areas of the health and care system, and work is in progress to identify risk areas specific to health and care providers in the primary care and social care sectors. Where necessary, we will be writing to social care commissioners and providers to outline the scope of the Department's work in these areas and advising on actions that need to be taken locally.

Further Information

All information published by the Department – and other parts of Government - on EU Exit can be viewed [here](#), and this will be updated regularly so that the care system can be aware of ongoing preparation and actions to undertake. For any other queries, I would encourage you to use your established points of contact within Local Authorities, Directors of Adult Social Services and where appropriate Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department of Health and Social Care.

Yours sincerely,

**SIR CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**