

Prioritising health in our future relationship with the EU

The Brexit Health Alliance believes that health must be a priority in the future relationship negotiations between the UK and the EU.

Key points

- It will be important to define the key elements of our future relationship with the EU as early as possible, not only to end the current uncertainty, but also to make sure the UK remains an attractive place to work and live and that we are able to take advantage of global opportunities.
- For health, the key elements include protecting citizens' rights to reciprocal healthcare; supporting collaboration in medical research and membership of associated framework programmes; allowing alignment of standards and trade arrangements for medicines and medical devices; and protecting access to shared public health networks and alert systems.
- The short timescales currently envisaged to agree a future trade deal with the EU present a challenge, and there is a risk that issues affecting the safety and health of patients and citizens could be overlooked during negotiations.
- The Brexit Health Alliance is calling for:
 1. health to be made one of the top priorities in the UK's negotiating mandate and for the health community to have a seat at the table, alongside business, in the development of trade policy and negotiations
 2. early agreements to protect patient safety, citizens' rights to healthcare, access to medicines, and the furthering of medical research.

The UK-EU future relationship in health

As the withdrawal agreement has been ratified and the Brexit transition period has started, the UK can now open talks with the EU and other countries. This is the opportunity to define our future relationship with the EU, our largest trade and collaboration partner. We currently have until the end of December 2020 to conclude not only a free-trade deal, but a deal on security, science, education and international development.

Given that the health of citizens, both in the UK and EU, is so critical, and that the negotiations provide an opportunity to provide clarity, certainty and security for patients, the Brexit Health Alliance is advocating that the following be made a priority in the first stage:

Patient safety

Shared regulatory frameworks to continue for medicines and medical technologies across the UK and the EU so that patients are guaranteed a high level of safety, rapid access to new treatments, and public health and wellbeing are protected. Particularly for smaller patient groups, such as children and rare disease patients, where a critical mass across several countries is required.



Access to medicines and medical devices

Continued cooperation in import and export of medicines and medical technologies for frictionless trade of health products across UK/EU borders.



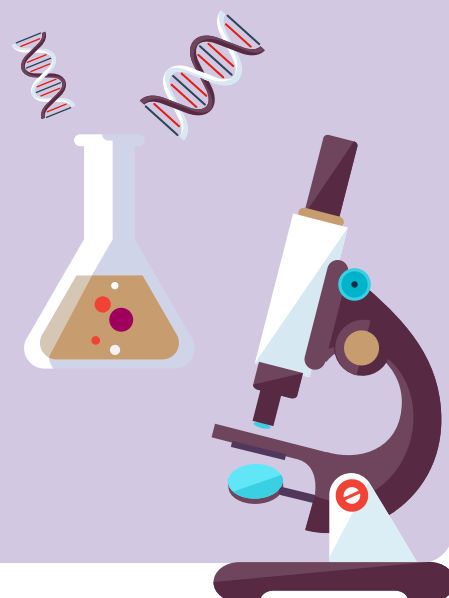
Citizens' right to treatment

UK and EU citizens to continue to benefit from rights to healthcare in any of the EU member states ensuring simple and safe access to treatment when working, living or travelling, at local, affordable cost.



Furthering medical research

Continued participation in a Europe-wide system that encourages cooperation, innovation and research to continually improve patients' options for treatment. The UK has a very strong science base but working together with the EU, our capacity is greater than the sum of the parts and enables researchers to deliver game-changing breakthroughs. In the face of global competition, continued close UK-EU collaboration is vital to retain Europe's reputation as an attractive destination for cutting-edge research.



Public health

Continued close coordination between the UK and EU on public health and wellbeing through sharing data and alerts about cross-border threats. Participation in key EU data-sharing platforms and alert systems, such as the Early Warning and Response System, for timely sharing of information about health threats and ensuring maximum preparedness to tackle them.



Priorities for the negotiations

There is recognition on both sides of the benefits of the UK remaining closely linked with the EU. The key risks are the short timescale and the danger that safety and health of patients and citizens could be overlooked during negotiations.

The Brexit Health Alliance is asking for agreements as early as possible in the transition period to address the five areas highlighted above. These should cover medical research and membership of associated framework programmes; protecting and ring-fencing citizens' rights to reciprocal healthcare; the alignment of standards and trade and customs arrangements for medicines and medical devices; and access to shared public health networks and alert systems.

We recognise that many of these protections will need to be part of a wider trade deal. Agreeing this in the time available will be a challenge, hence the need for early assurance and agreements in these areas.

"Time is of the essence to ensure that once the UK and EU enter their post-Brexit relationship, citizens can continue to enjoy safe, simple and rapid access to high-quality healthcare and the latest treatments."

Niall Dickson, Chief Executive, NHS Confederation

Summary

In summary, we are calling for:

1. [health to be made one of the top priorities in the UK's negotiating mandate and for the health community to have a seat at the table](#), alongside business, in the development of trade policy and negotiations
2. [early agreements to protect patient safety](#), citizens' rights to healthcare, access to medicines, and the furthering of medical research.

In practice, this means that the UK's post-Brexit trade agreements should embed the UK government's commitments to 'do no harm' to the public's health and a 'health in all policies' approach is taken to make sure health implications are factored into all decisions in the negotiations.

Brexit Health Alliance

The Brexit Health Alliance was established to make sure that the interests of those who use health services, as well as healthcare commissioners and providers, educators, researchers and the healthcare industry are reflected in the Brexit negotiations. The alliance includes members from across the Devolved administrations and as such its work applies across the whole of the UK, including where health is a devolved matter.

For further information about the work of the Brexit Health Alliance, please visit:
www.nhsconfed.org/BrexitHealthAlliance

Brexit Health Alliance members

Co-chairs: Niall Dickson CBE, Sir Hugh Taylor

Secretary: Kate Ling

Members: Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, Association of Medical Research Charities, Association of British Healthcare Industries, Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry, Association of UK University Hospitals, BioIndustry Association, Faculty of Public Health, Medical Schools Council, National Voices, NHS Confederation (including the Independent Healthcare Providers Network, Mental Health Network, NHS Clinical Commissioners and NHS Employers), NHS Providers, Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care, Richmond Group of Charities, Scottish NHS Chief Executive Group, Welsh NHS Confederation.