



**Brexit: Key messages for
health and social care
professionals as the UK
prepares to leave the
European Union**

THE WELSH NHS CONFEDERATION
CONFFEDERASIWN GIG CYMRU



Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide members of the Welsh NHS Confederation and wider stakeholders with some standard communication lines to ensure consistent messages across the Welsh NHS and social care when questions are raised by front line staff or members of the public.

General messages

- Brexit continues to be a significant challenge for the NHS and social care in Wales, with no-deal presenting the biggest challenge.
- We are confident we have made all the preparations we can make to maintain a high standard of service, ensuring safety isn't compromised.
- The implications of no-deal will mean that the NHS and social care will need to ensure their preparations are right for contingency plans to be effective.
- The NHS, social care sector and the Welsh Government have worked closely together to make sure we are in as robust a position as possible for whatever Brexit comes our way.

Key messages to the public

- Do not stockpile medicines. It is important patients continue to order and take their medicines in the usual way. Stockpiling is unnecessary and could compromise the plans being implemented by the UK Government, reducing the availability of medicines for patients in other areas of Wales or the UK.
- Order medicines in plenty of time, but no more than 7 days before they are needed. Only order medicines you need – if you have unused medicines at home (which have not expired), use these first and don't order any extra.
- If there are any shortages of medicines after EU exit, your doctor or pharmacist will advise you of the best alternative to treat your condition, as they would for any medicine shortage. This may be a different brand of medicine. If patients have any concerns about their medicines or regular prescription, they should talk to their local pharmacist in the first instance.
- If there is an impact on food, this is likely to be on seasonal food and fresh food. To prepare for this, health and social care organisations have been asked to look at ways which meals could be adapted if some ingredients are not available and will ensure that nutritional standards are not compromised.
- If people are eligible for free flu vaccination, then they should receive it as they normally would.

Health and social care workforce

- We value all European Union /European Economic Area (EU/EEA) nationals working in the health service and the contribution they make, not just as professionals, but to the communities they live in.
- Due to Wales' demographics, EU nationals are a vital to the health and social care sector in Wales and their contribution cannot be understated. We want them to stay, and we would like an environment where they are encouraged to work and live in Wales.
- There are around 1,600 EU/EEA highly trained nationals working in NHS Wales, around 2% of the whole workforce.
- Under the proposals within the UK Government's Immigration White Paper, over 50% (900) of EU/EEA staff fall below the proposed £30,00pa salary threshold. These staff work in highly skilled areas as nurses, midwives and providing support to physiotherapists, pharmacists and supporting the ambulance service. It will impact more on social care providers.
- We want to encourage and support EU nationals working in health and social care to apply for the [settled status scheme](#). The scheme is free meaning there will be no charge for applications. For complex cases www.eusswales.com details a range of third sector organisations that can provide free assistance.
- We want an immigration policy which retains and attracts talented individuals from all over the world to work in our health and social care services. We have worked with the UK Government to ensure the necessary legislation is in place for the recognition of European professional qualifications.

Supply of medicines and vaccines

- Patients and Pharmacists should not stockpile medicines. The UK Government is working with the pharmaceutical industry so that supply of medicines is not affected and any increase in costs is minimised.
- The NHS in Wales have kept a six week additional stock above normal levels.
- If a medicine is not available, patients may be offered a different medicine. Alternatively, they may be given the same medicine but produced by a different manufacturer so tablets may look different. If patients have any concerns, speak to a pharmacist. Patient safety is a fundamental priority.
- In a no-deal scenario and the event of a shortage of medicines, pharmacists may be given the authority to dispense smaller dosages, a different strength or a different pharmaceutical form of a medicine ordered on a prescription. This would only ever be in exceptional circumstance.
- Frontline staff should continue to use our existing supply chains to order medicines and to highlight shortages. NHS organisations inform us that there currently isn't any issues with the availability of medicines as a result of Brexit. If a medicine is not available then pharmacists are trained to provide alternative medicines to patients.

Supply of Medical Devices and Clinical Consumables

- Work looking at the supply of medical devices and consumables is being done on a national level by each of the four countries.
- We have worked to understand the national risks in Wales and the local risks and developed plans in conjunction with the UK to make sure there is no impact to patient safety or people receiving social care in a no-deal scenario.
- Contingency supplies of medical devices and clinical consumables have been stocked in a warehouse in South East Wales. There are an additional 8 weeks supply of the most commonly used NHS items, and a smaller number of products for social care.
- It's important that any anticipated supply issues are considered fully at the local level using normal business processes before escalating.
- Where business as usual processes have been exhausted, NHS organisations local procurement team will have access to additional storage facility to ensure essential items for hospitals and social care are not disrupted e.g. syringes, gowns, gloves, food. If it needs to be escalated further it will go to the Supply Disruption Support Centre for Wales and then the UK-wide support and systems.

Supply of Non-Clinical Consumables, Goods and Services

- We are looking at the impact on IT services and equipment in the event of a no-deal Brexit. We would encourage people to view technical notices published by the UK government in order to make plans for a no-deal Brexit.
- Health and social care organisations should identify whether they have a need for additional equipment and spares at a local level, they should then relay this information to their organisations Procurement Services.
- Food supply is being considered at a UK level. Individual organisations should consider the management of food supply issues and highlight them to their local resilience team.

For more information

For a more detailed explanation of no deal preparations in place, please view our [Brexit Preparedness Toolkit](#) and our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Contact Details

Vickie Hage

Brexit Programme Support Officer, Welsh NHS Confederation

brexitfags@welshconfed.org | 02920 349850

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