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Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
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Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your question, asked in today's Urgent Question debate on 'no deal Brexit preparations', regarding UK nationals' access to healthcare in a 'no deal' scenario . I set out a full answer below.

We continue to believe that the comprehensive agreement reached on citizens' rights, as part of the overall Withdrawal Agreement, is the best way to give confidence to citizens that their rights, including in relation to healthcare, will be protected.

We have a duty to ensure that any potential harmful impacts on our citizens in the EU, and on EU citizens residing in the UK, are minimised as much as possible.

To protect EU citizens who are residing in the UK, the Government has set out a unilateral offer to protect EU citizens' healthcare rights in the event the UK leaves the EU without an agreement. Under this offer, EU citizens and their family members lawfully residing in the UK by 29 March 2019 will be able to continue to access in-country benefits and services on broadly the same terms as now. This means that they will retain their entitlement to healthcare on the same basis as now. These entitlements will be subject to any future domestic policy changes which apply to UK nationals.

We welcome action from those EU Member States who have prepared their own legislation for a 'no deal' scenario. Encouragingly, Spain and Ireland have, for example, finalised legislation which extends existing healthcare arrangements in a 'no deal' scenario for a transitional period on a reciprocal basis. Several other Member States have published draft legislation which seeks to extend healthcare arrangements in a 'no deal' scenario for a transitional period, subject to certain caveats; these Member States are Greece, Slovakia, Portugal, Belgium, Latvia, Bulgaria and Hungary.

There are other Member States who have either finalised or published legislation which extends existing healthcare arrangements, however, these measures place additional

requirements on UK nationals and we will continue to engage with these Member States to ensure that UK nationals' rights are adequately protected in a 'no deal' scenario.

Aspects of current healthcare arrangements require reciprocity from the EU or individual Member States and cannot be protected unilaterally. That is why we have proposed that we should agree arrangements that maintain the existing healthcare arrangements in a 'no deal' scenario until 31 December 2020. This would mean that we will continue to pay healthcare costs for current or former UK residents for whom the UK has responsibility and who are living or working in or visiting the EU, and vice versa.

We have brought forward the Healthcare (International Arrangements) Bill to implement new reciprocal healthcare arrangements and provide us with the power to fund and implement comprehensive reciprocal healthcare arrangements after we leave the EU. The Bill passed Third Reading in the House of Lords on 19 March 2019 and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has also laid three Statutory Instruments which will give us the specific legal basis to implement our proposal.

I wanted to thank you for your question and reassure you that we are continuing our extensive lobbying efforts to ensure that UK nationals are able to avail themselves of healthcare arrangements that mirror our commitment to EU citizens.

Yours sincerely,



**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
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