

Exiting the Eu: Sectoral Impact Assessments

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

In response to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point, may I formally request that these documents be released not only to the Exiting the European Union Committee, but to all relevant Select Committees, as requested by the Select Committee on Health yesterday?

Keir Starmer Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union

I will come to that, because we gave some thought to the process, and if the principle of disclosure is agreed, we are open to a discussion about exactly how that works. The Brexit Select Committee seemed the obvious Committee, but there is clearly interest in other Select Committees in the subject matter, not least medical services and social care, which I know will be of great interest to the hon. Lady.

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

The Health Committee will shortly begin an inquiry entitled "Brexit's medicines, medical devices and substances of human origin". We will be considering, among other issues, how we can guarantee safe, effective and timely access to medicines and substances of human origin; the future of medical research and development; how we will co-operate and collaborate across Europe after we leave the European Union; and access to the appropriate workforce. The stakes could not be higher. The Committee does not want to damage the national interest; we want to do our job on behalf of patients, this House and the public.

We know that there are sectoral analyses of life sciences, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, medical services and social care. I did discuss with the Committee, in advance of our hearing yesterday, whether we wished to call for these papers, and we discussed many of the issues that have been raised in the House today. The Committee was unanimous in giving me the authority formally to request those papers from the Secretary of State, and I did so. Therefore, although there has been much comment this afternoon about there being a discourtesy in not raising this with the Committee, the Committee has considered it and would like the papers, on behalf of our patients, in order to allow us to do our job better.

I believe in transparency. I understand the concerns that have been raised and so would be prepared to see the documents in a private setting, if it is believed that that is the right way forward. But I and my Committee believe that we can do a better job on behalf of this House if we have access to the information. I therefore call on the Secretary of State to release it to us.

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Would it be helpful for you to inform the House what you feel a reasonable timeframe would be for the Government to respond?

John Bercow Speaker of the House of Commons,

I do not think I am obliged to do that, and I am not sure how much difference it would make. The issues are important but I do not think I may be contradicted by senior procedural experts, to whose wisdom I should defer that the matters are particularly complicated. One can take a view about this, one can consult "Erskine May" and one should reflect in a sober and considered fashion, but if the hon. Lady is asking me whether I envisage this being something that needs to be deliberated on over a period of several days, the answer is no.

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