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News story

New law proposed to safeguard UK citizens' healthcare abroad after Brexit

The Healthcare (International Arrangements) Bill has been introduced to give the government legal powers to fund and implement healthcare deals after Brexit.

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Department of Health and Social Care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care>)



The Bill seeks to safeguard healthcare for 190,000 expats and 50 million people who travel abroad every year, through agreements with the EU or member states.

The Bill, brought before Parliament by Health Minister Jackie Doyle-Price, will establish the legal basis to fund and implement reciprocal healthcare schemes and share necessary data after we leave the EU.

Reciprocal healthcare arrangements have benefits that include:

- reducing the cost of insurance
- making travel more viable for older people and high-risk groups
- providing a boost to the travel economy

It will establish the basis for a new arrangement allowing the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) scheme to continue after 2020, subject to an agreement with the EU. EHIC grants UK nationals access to free healthcare abroad, and pays for 250,000 medical treatments each year.

For the 190,000 expat state pensioners who have chosen to live in the EU and those intending to retire to the EU, it will help by safeguarding reciprocal healthcare if there is no EU deal.

Lord James O'Shaughnessy said:

Whether on holiday, working or retiring abroad, British people want to know they can access the same high quality healthcare that they enjoy in the NHS.

This Bill will allow us to implement new healthcare arrangements with other countries – in the EU and elsewhere – so that UK citizens can travel with confidence.

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