



NHS, Pharma and Biotech Industries call on Government to protect patients in future UK-EU relationship

19 November 2018

A coalition from the UK's health sector say Brexit negotiators have a responsibility to protect 500 million patients on both sides of the Channel. The group is calling on both sides to make patients and public health central to the Political Declaration for the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

The current draft Political Declaration includes references to 'cooperation on matters of health security'. However, it does not make it clear how it will guarantee that patients are protected as they are today on issues including medicines safety, public health disasters and infectious disease control.

The coalition say that current systems which align the UK and the EU in the interest of patient safety are in jeopardy, including:

- Preventing fake or fraudulent medicines from entering the legal supply chain
- Sharing data and 'signals' between EU countries that flag potential problems with medicines
- Preventing and controlling infectious diseases across Europe, as billions of people travel between ports and airports
- Ensuring the safety and supply of almost 1 billion packets of medicines between the UK and Europe every year

So that patients can continue to benefit from this cooperation, the organisations are calling for the following to be included in the text of the final Political Declaration on the future UK-EU relationship:

- To make specific reference to the importance of cooperating on the regulation of medicines.
- To make clear that the UK and EU will cooperate on protecting citizens from infectious disease and counterfeit medicines.
- To make clear that the UK and EU will agree closer collaboration on science and innovation

ABPI Chief Executive, Mike Thompson, said: “Brexit negotiators have an opportunity to take decisions today which will protect patients in the future.

“While there are positives in the political declaration, the detail is missing. We are asking Government to give explicit commitments on issues of public health and medicines safety which we think is the minimum that patients across Europe should expect.”

BIA CEO, Steve Bates, said: “The draft Political Declaration has missed an opportunity to prioritise patients across Europe and the UK. It is vital that patients are included in the next Political Declaration and are a priority for discussions to ensure public health and patient safety are not negatively affected by Brexit – both day 1 post-Brexit and in the future.”

Niall Dickson, chief executive of the NHS confederation, which represents organisations across the healthcare sector, said: “Time to influence this historic agreement is fast running out but clarity is vital about how patients will be protected as now.

“The publication of the agreement on the terms of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, and outline political declaration are welcome. The detailed nature of the long-term relationship still needs to be decided, and many health-related issues will not be fully addressed until the negotiations on the details of the future relationship.

“The best way to protect patients is through Europe-wide surveillance systems and regulatory alignment for medicines and devices, monitoring public health, controlling epidemics and managing infectious diseases. This was reflected in the welcome proposals made in the Government’s White Paper on the UK-EU future relationship, and the commitment made to maintain the highest standards of health protection as the UK leaves the EU.”