



1. combined work, mutual assistance
2. cooperation, partnership

## Irish in Britain: Policy Bulletin – February 2019

This is the first policy bulletin under our new banner Comhar – pronounced ‘core’ – the Irish for cooperation. It joins our other projects Cuimhne, the Irish memory loss alliance, and the Green Hearts campaign.

The launch of Comhar marks our expanded policy brief to tackle the challenges facing the Irish community in Britain. Our policy work is undertaken in dialogue with our members. This bulletin is the first in a new series that will be published every two months. The topics it covers are:

- [Irish rights in the UK](#)
- [Social Security post-Brexit](#)
- [European Health Insurance Card](#)
- [No deal guidance](#)
- [NHS Long Term Plan](#)
- [Irish referendum on diaspora votes for Presidential elections](#)
- [Future policy events](#)

### Irish rights in the UK

The UK government published its [Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination \(EU Withdrawal\) Bill](#) in December 2018. In line with the government’s commitment to maintain the Common Travel Area (CTA), Clause 2 of the Bill states that an Irish citizen does not require leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, unless they are subject to a deportation order or have been banned by the Home Secretary. Bernard Ryan, Professor of Migration Law at the University of Leicester, has said that he believes this will provide Irish citizens in the UK with a “legislative guarantee” that was previously lacking.

The Bill follows on from the [Immigration White Paper](#), which states (at Chapter 13.18) that the current ‘point of departure distinction’ for Irish citizens arriving to the UK will be removed. The point of departure distinction refers to how, under the current arrangements, Irish citizens entering the UK from a third country have their rights provided under EEA regulations and so dependent on the country they are travelling from, rather than the CTA. The White Paper says that an Irish citizen’s rights in the UK will now be based on their (Irish) nationality.

The White Paper also reiterates that “Irish and British citizens will continue to enjoy the freedom to travel within the CTA without the need for immigration controls or residence/work permits. Irish citizens do not need to obtain settled status in the UK.”

## Social Security post-Brexit

More recently, the Department of Work and Pensions has declared [agreement](#) between the UK and Ireland on guaranteeing continued access to State Pension and benefits for UK and Irish citizens in the other's country. This means workers will only pay into one social security at a time. It also provides for the export of certain benefits between the UK and Ireland.

We welcome this progress after Irish in Britain raised concerns about social welfare payments in the autumn, although further detail on the text of the agreement is yet to appear. The [Irish Times](#) covered comments from our CEO Brian Dalton.

This progress has not been without some bumps in the road, such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council's [mistaken suggestion in November](#) that Irish nurses would need to apply for settled status. Irish in Britain is in close contact with the Home Office to work towards avoiding such incidents in the future.

## European Health Insurance Card

We have received queries recently about the post-Brexit entitlement to a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for Irish citizens resident in Britain. This is our understanding of future scenarios:

*Entitlement to an EHIC is based on residency and not on a person's nationality. If the UK parliament passes the Withdrawal Agreement, then the EHIC scheme will continue at least until the end of the transition period in December 2020. The transition period is contingent on the Withdrawal Agreement.*

*The UK government has [said](#) it wants both UK and EU citizens to be able to continue using the EHIC scheme after the transition period, but this will need to be agreed as part of any deal on the future relationship. This is due to be negotiated during the transition period.*

*If the UK leaves the EU without a deal, then it is our understanding that the scheme will cease to cover UK residents – including Irish citizens resident in the UK.*

## No deal guidance

The UK government has issued [guidance](#) for charities in the event of a no deal Brexit. It recommends that charities review the government's [technical notice on data protection](#) and points out that a government Economic Data Protection Taskforce is available for meetings to assist with preparations.

## NHS Long Term Plan

The Department of Health published its NHS Long Term Plan in January – available [here](#). It marks a shift to a more preventative service with a focus on early detection for major health conditions. For instance, it hopes to identify individuals in hard-to-reach areas with high-risk conditions for cardiovascular disease. This is an issue that has been raised by Irish in Britain's Green Hearts campaign. The British Heart Foundation has provided a useful breakdown of NHS ambitions for major health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, strokes and diabetes, [here](#).

Other areas of note to liB members are expanded mental health services for children and young people. The plan seeks to integrate the voluntary sector more closely with the NHS.



Major concerns have been raised, however, about the lack of a workforce strategy to accompany the plan and funding issues after years of cuts. The plan promotes the role of community organisations and carers, but again, these have faced cuts. Finally, there is very limited acknowledgement of the high-risk of major conditions in BAME groups and no mention of Irish people's high-risk of cardiovascular disease.

### **Irish referendum on diaspora votes for Presidential elections**

A referendum on whether Irish citizens living outside of Ireland will be able to vote in Presidential elections is now expected to be held in October 2019. Originally suggested for 24 May 2019, the Taoiseach has [stated](#) that Brexit and the fact that several other votes were to be held on that day would have taken attention away from the issue.

We know that is an issue of interest to many members and we will ensure that you are kept up to date with developments.

### **Future policy events**

As part of the expanded policy brief, we are planning on organising some policy events that will address Irish community issues. These events, every six months or so, will cover issues such as intergenerational collaboration, welfare reform, and diversity and equality in the community. They will also be an opportunity to showcase some Irish researchers and their work.

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