



Tahmid Chowdhury and Isabella Mosselmans
Here for Good

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Sent via email

9 April 2020

Dear Tahmid and Isabella,

EU Settlement Scheme

Thank you for your letter of 26 March to the Home Secretary on behalf of Here for Good and other organisations about the impact of the Coronavirus on the operation of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). I am replying as the Minister for Future Borders and Immigration.

In line with the latest Public Health England advice, in order to protect the NHS and save lives, some of our EUSS support services and application routes have temporarily changed. I will set out further details in addressing the issues you have raised in turn.

The Home Office is keeping this situation under constant review and will endeavour to reinstate the support services and application routes to their original capacity in line with Public Health England advice. We will continue to keep applicants and stakeholders updated, including through the EUSS guidance available on gov.uk.

Settlement Resolution Centre

1. Paper applications are essential for many vulnerable applicants who are unable to apply online. Please explain how our service users will access paper application forms while the Resolution Centre is closed.

The Settlement Resolution Centre will continue to respond to email enquiries and provide a call back function when required. However, it is following all the latest Public Health England advice to work from home where possible and will no longer be answering inbound telephone calls. Emails from support organisations will be prioritised where possible. Paper application forms can continue to be requested via email.

2. Please explain whether the Home Office intends to put provision in place so that the Resolution Centre's advice line can operate remotely.

The Home Office is considering a variety of options, including the possibility of running a telephone enquiry service remotely, when all the dependencies required to do so make this a viable option.

The [57 voluntary and community sector organisations](#) across the UK which are helping vulnerable or at-risk people to apply to the EUS can offer assistance online, over the telephone or by email. Further details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/help-eu-settlement-scheme>.

Additional support is available for those who do not have the appropriate access, skills or confidence to apply online through [Assisted Digital](#), which can offer assistance over the telephone. More information can be found at: www.gov.uk/assisted-digital-help-online-applications. [Communications materials](#) have been translated into 26 languages and are available online at: www.gov.uk/eu-settlement-scheme-translated-information-materials. Alternative formats can also be requested.

Processing of EUSS applications

- 3. Please explain whether, and to what extent, Home Office caseworkers will continue to process EUSS applications at this time. Please provide details of the Home Office's business continuity plans that set out how sufficient personnel will be made available.**

Applications to the EUSS continue to be processed, but during this challenging time they will take longer than usual to process. The Home Office has a core number of caseworkers continuing to process EUSS applications and is extending the number of caseworkers with the facility to work remotely as the situation develops.

EUSS application deadline

- 4. In the event that a decision is made not to extend the transition period, that the 30 June 2021 deadline will be extended to take into account the period of time that the EUSS Resolution Centre has been closed or at a substantially reduced level of service.**
- 5. In the event that a decision is made not to extend the transition period, that the 30 June 2021 deadline will be extended to take into account the interrupted services of the Grant Funded Organisations.**

The transition period will end on 31 December 2020. More than three million grants of status under the EUSS have already been made, and there is still well over a year to go before the deadline of 30 June 2021, for applications to the EUSS by EU citizens and their family members resident in the UK by the end of the transition period. We will keep the situation under review, but where someone has reasonable grounds for missing the deadline for applications to the EUSS, we have always been clear they will be given a further opportunity in which to apply. As with all aspects of the scheme, we will take a flexible and pragmatic approach. We intend to publish guidance for caseworkers in due course on what constitutes reasonable grounds for missing the deadline to ensure consistency of approach.

Recourse to public funds

- 6. During the period of interruption to the EUSS SRC, please confirm that you will liaise with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that 'Pre-Settled Status' would be considered a right to reside for benefit purposes.**

As you know, having pre-settled status under the EUSS does not confer a right to reside for social security purposes. As was the case before we left the EU, those who do not have settled status (indefinite leave to enter or remain), or the equivalent right of permanent residence here under EU law, do not have full access to the benefits system on the same basis as a UK national.

Pre-settled status (five years' limited leave to enter or remain) is a form of immigration leave granted by the Home Office. The right to reside for social security purposes is a status which arises out of the particular circumstances of the individual, such as having

undertaken economic activity in the UK or being the family member of a person who has such a right to reside. DWP decisions makers consider each case on its own merits in deciding whether the claimant has established a right to reside for social security purposes.

I thank you for raising these important issues with us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Foster', with a large flourish at the end.

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Future Borders and Immigration