



Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
By email only: witthamp@parliament.uk & public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

CC: Mr Kevin Foster MP
Kevin.foster.mp@parliament.uk

CC: Coronavirus Immigration Health Centre
CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk

26 March 2020

*****URGENT*****

Dear Home Secretary,

Re: The EU Settlement Scheme during the COVID-19 pandemic

We are a group of organisations that work closely with vulnerable applicants, assisting them to make applications under the EU Settlement Scheme ('EUSS'). We write to raise concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operation of the EUSS and to urge the Home Office to clearly set out its plans to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on EU citizens and their family members.

It is for these reasons that we would like to know the following information:

1. Closure of the EUSS Resolution Centre

On 24 March 2020, the Home Office closed the EUSS Resolution Centre. We understand the need to protect the health of Home Office personnel at this time. However, the Resolution Centre's closure will have a significant impact on our service users who need to make EUSS applications.

We need urgent clarification regarding:

i) Paper application forms

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.

ii) The telephone advice line

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

2. Processing of EUSS applications

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.

3. Extension of EUSS application deadline

The COVID-19 pandemic is having adverse impacts on day-to-day life for people across the country, particularly including, vulnerable and at-risk communities who need to engage with the EUSS as we continue to move towards the 30 June 2021 deadline. At present, it is not practicable for many of our service users to apply to the EUSS. Like the EUSS Resolution Centre, grassroots services have had to cease, or be substantially reduced, and this may be the state of play for the weeks and months to come.

Therefore, please could you confirm whether:

- i) 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, and;
- ii) 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.

4. Recourse to public funds

It is vital that everyone can access the safety net of State support during this crisis.

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.

It is essential that the Home Office urgently provides clarity on these issues. Please provide a substantive response by **no later than 5pm on Friday 03 April 2020**.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Here for Good

Bindmans LLP

Seraphus

Paragon Law

Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)

the3million

Settled

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)

The Law Centres Network (LCN)

South West London Law Centres (SWLLC)

Public Interest Law Centre (PILC)

Wesley Gryk Solicitors

Migrant Voice

Europaia

Unlock, for people with convictions

Coram Children's Legal Centre

New Europeans

UKCEN

Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre

The AIRE Centre

Praxis

Refugee & Migrant Forum of Essex and London (RAMFEL)

Migrants' Rights Network

Just Right Scotland

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)

Latin American House

East European Resource Centre (EERC)

Refugee Rights Europe

Samphire

Glass Door Homeless Charity

Hibiscus Initiatives

Project 17

Polish Social and Cultural Association (POSK)

Newfields Solicitors

Refuge

The Clement James Centre

Transition Advice Fund