

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol

Minister for Health and Social Services



**Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government**

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Chair,
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

SeneddLJC@senedd.wales

16 October 2023

Dear Huw

I am writing in response to your letter to the First Minister of 29 September, concerning the UK-Norway-Liechtenstein-Iceland Convention on Social Security Coordination (“the Convention”). The letter has been passed to me for response, as discussions with the UK Government concerning the content of devolved aspects of international reciprocal healthcare agreements, and the impacts and implementation of such agreements, sit within my portfolio.

My officials meet monthly with UK Government officials and officials from the other Devolved Governments to liaise on reciprocal healthcare matters. These meetings include discussion of the development and impact of new international healthcare agreements, as required by the Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding in Respect of the Consultation Process for International Healthcare Agreements and their Implementation Regulations.

Since EU exit, the UK Government has been negotiating new social security agreements with Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein, the aim of the UK Government being to place all these countries on the same basis as the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (“TCA”), which re-instates the majority of the reciprocal health arrangements that prior to EU Exit were provided for by the various EU reciprocal healthcare provisions. The UK-Switzerland Convention on Social Security Coordination came into force on 1 November 2021.

The UK Government’s broad intent regarding the reciprocal healthcare provisions within the Convention has thus been clear and the Welsh Government has been consulted and commented on the content of both this agreement and the previous, similar UK-Switzerland Convention. The UK Government has provided updates on progress on the negotiation of the Convention by UK Government, including assessments of potential impacts and updates on timings.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Although signed by all parties, the Convention is not yet in force. UK Government officials expect the Convention will be brought into force before the end of 2023 with regard to Iceland and Liechtenstein, and in early 2024 with regard to Norway, once the necessary procedures have been undertaken by their relevant national bodies.

Ahead of the coming into force date the Welsh Government will amend the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 1989 (“the Charging Regulations”) to add Iceland and Liechtenstein to the countries covered by those Regulations. Norway is already listed in the Charging Regulations as there is a pre-existing limited bi-lateral agreement with the UK (the 1991 Convention on Social Security between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway and subsequent supplementary protocol). The amending regulations will be accompanied by an impact assessment including the expected impact to the NHS of the Convention.

All relevant Welsh Government guidance documents and NHS websites will also be updated to reflect the new arrangements with the three countries. Welsh Government officials have informed the Local Health Boards of the signing and provisions of the Convention and will further update once the coming into force date is known.

I trust this answers your questions.

This letter has been copied to Russell George MS, the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

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Minister for Health and Social Services