

From the Leader of the Council

Our Ref: **Leader/2019-08/021**

Rt. Hon. Priti Patel
Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Home Office
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Wednesday, 21 August 2019

Dear Home Secretary

I am writing to you regarding the UK government's EU settlement scheme and the recent announcement that free movement for EU nationals to live and work in the UK would cease at the end of October in the event of "No Deal".

In Lambeth, there are over 40,000 EU citizens, who are an integral part of Lambeth's communities and make an invaluable contribution to our businesses, the delivery of our public services, and to wider public life. We are extremely concerned about the operation of the Home Office's EU Settlement Scheme. Those concerns are significantly enhanced in light of the news that the government would end freedom of movement without putting legal provisions in place for those EU citizens who have not yet successfully applied through the settlement scheme. The recent announcement that 1 million EU citizens have completed the settlement scheme leaves over 2 million EU citizens who have not yet been able to do so and who would be left in limbo if the government proceeds in this reckless and unnecessary manner.

The experience of the Windrush scandal exposed the serious consequences of being left with unclear citizenship status. Lambeth council and our partners are concerned that the EU settlement scheme and the policy of ending freedom of movement in a little over 10 weeks' time would leave our EU residents in a state of similar uncertainty and disruption as many residents faced due to the appalling treatment of the Windrush generation.

While rectifying this must be an urgent priority for the government, I also urge you to act to resolve significant concerns that we, and other local authorities, have with the EU settlement scheme. While we are taking a highly proactive approach to supporting residents to register for the scheme, we have concerns that up to 4,000 residents will require additional support to register for the scheme and the resources provided for such additional support are wholly inadequate.

In addition, we have concerns about a number of groups who we believe are less likely to apply independently to the EU settlement scheme. These include:

- People with a disability, illness or mental health issue that may prevent them from easily being able to engage with the application process
- People providing unpaid care who do not have HMRC records or other evidence of their residency

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

- People who have separated from an EU partner or are in abusive relationships and cannot access proof of their or their partner's residency
- Rough sleepers and people without secure accommodation
- Long-term UK residents who are lacking documentation
- People who may experience language barriers
- People who are not IT-literate or own a smartphone/tablet
- People who do not hold bank accounts and/or who get paid cash in hand for work
- People who do not routinely engage with services
- Those with criminal convictions – those with 'serious criminal convictions' will be rejected under the scheme. However, there is no definition of 'serious', and this may be deterring some applicants

We consider that the support currently offered by central government is unlikely, in either scale or reach, to be sufficient to engage people in these groups. Community organisations and public services are already gathering feedback that suggests a significant level of misinformation and mistrust in the scheme. We are also deeply concerned that the Home Office's funding to support vulnerable people is not sufficient and will likely require a significant increase to deal with demand. This indicates that localised, community specific engagement is likely to be required, which will require investment and partnership working.

The UK government must recognise that a failure to address these issues will not only cause significant concern and uncertainty for hundreds of thousands of EU citizens, but it will send a signal about how open and welcoming this country is to those who seek to live and work here. I urge you to act on these issues and to provide certainty for our EU friends and neighbours.

Yours sincerely



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