

PO00000246250

Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

Tel: 020 7210 3000

Dr Caroline Lucas MEP  
Suite 58  
The Hop Exchange  
24 Southwark Street  
London  
SE1 1TY

09 NOV 2007

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of 15 October about the recent changes to the French healthcare system.

As you are aware, the French have changed their rules on access to healthcare services for those people without French residency who are not working. According to the French Government's published statement, the position is that all non-working EU citizens already accessing *couverture maladie universelle* (CMU) coverage will be able to continue to do so until 31 March 2008. After this point, these people will be required to have their own personal medical insurance, unless their non-working status changes in the meantime. Entitlement to a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) issued by France will also cease.

People already in receipt of a state pension who are eligible for Form E121, remain eligible for healthcare under the French system. However, non-working citizens from any EU country who are under retirement age and are not entitled to healthcare reimbursement via the Form E106 or E109, will be required to have their own personal medical insurance until any state pension to which they are entitled becomes payable, at which point they will qualify for entitlement to the Form E121. This applies to those people already present in France and those planning to move there in the future.

Should obtaining private insurance in France remain difficult, those affected may like to contact the Association of British Insurers for information. The telephone number is: +44 (0) 20 7600 3333.

The NHS is a residence-based healthcare scheme and its services are available to everyone resident in this country, irrespective of the payment of UK National Insurance contributions or taxes. Once people go to live outside the UK, the NHS ceases to have responsibility for their healthcare costs under our national law. Entitlement to use a UK-issued EHIC during short visits to other Member States therefore depends on a person's intention to return to the UK.

It is important to be aware that the French are acting within the framework of EU Directive 2004/38/EC, which explicitly allows host Member States to require that non-working Union citizens are in possession of comprehensive sickness insurance. Whilst Ministers sympathise with those people who are left without access to healthcare as a result of the French Government's changes, the UK Government is not in a position to offer UK-issued cover to those people whose residence choices place them outside the scope of European regulations. Nonetheless, the British Embassy in Paris is planning to write to the French Minister for Health, explaining the position of the British citizens affected by these changes.

Should any of the British citizens affected by the changes choose to return to the UK to resume permanent residence, they would of course be immediately eligible for free NHS care, providing they can prove that long-term residence is their intention.

I hope this clarifies the situation.

*Yours ever,*

*Dawn*

**DAWN PRIMAROLO**