

Funding support for non-UK EU citizens ahead of Brexit

The Welsh Government's Supporting EU Citizens Grant Scheme will provide short-term funding for projects in Swansea, Merthyr, Newport and North Wales.

Third sector organisations currently supporting EU citizens in their local communities will benefit, meaning they can safeguard key services and prepare for new systems which are expected as part of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

It is estimated the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on 29th March will affect 80,000 EU citizens living in Wales.

The organisations receiving funding are:

- Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council – support for staff who specifically deal with issues facing non-UK EU citizens and workshops/advice surgeries to allow non-UK EU citizens to gain practical advice
- Merthyr Valleys Homes (in partnership with Polish Community of the Valleys Association) – information
- blitz including sharing information online and running drop-in advice days. Training sessions for the public and organisations about the rights of EU nationals in relation to settlement status
- Newport Mind – produce a formal report based on outcomes from focus groups and events summarising the main issues identified in both promoting the Settlement Scheme and the barriers encountered in engaging with the Scheme.
- North Wales Regional Equality Network (in partnership with BAWSO) – support for a specialised advice worker to provide advice and guidance to non-UK EU citizens in North Wales.

Announcing the funding at the Equality and Human Rights Commission's event in Conwy yesterday (Thursday 7th), the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt, said:

“With the continued and growing uncertainty those from European Union countries living in Wales are facing, it is imperative the correct information and support about rights and the Settled Status system are shared.

“We recognise that, in preparation for the EU Withdrawal, communities need additional and tailored support – that's why our excellent third party organisations and services are best placed to assist.

“We have a responsibility to every member of our communities, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. Wales will

continue to need migration from EU countries to sustain our economy and public services. We need to utilise every tool at our disposal to ensure these people are reassured that we value their contributions to our country.”

Additional to the grant scheme, the Welsh Government has already agreed £1.3million funding for an EU Citizens’ Rights Project to provide: additional resources to existing advice service providers, establish specialist exploitation in the workplace advice, deliver training to local authorities about eligibility for services for non-UK nationals, undertake research to identify inequalities and provide a website about the rights and entitlements of migrant communities in Wales. The EU Citizens’ Rights Project will become operational in March.