

UK and Guernsey strike landmark reciprocal healthcare deal

- Minister of State for Health Maria Caulfield signs the arrangement with Guernsey's Chief Minister in central London
- People planning to travel to Guernsey next year are encouraged to take their UK Global Health Insurance Card which is being expanded and improved post Brexit

UK residents visiting the Bailiwick of Guernsey will benefit from free necessary healthcare, and vice versa, after a landmark deal was signed today (Wednesday 31st August).

The reciprocal healthcare arrangement – which comes into force on 1st January 2023 – will mean UK residents can access emergency and necessary healthcare services for free in Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, or Herm, when on a temporary visit lasting up to six months.

Attendance at Accident and Emergency and urgent GP appointments will be included in the new arrangement, while those with a pre-existing condition will be able to receive necessary treatment, like kidney dialysis or chemotherapy, if this is arranged and agreed prior to travel. Small charges may apply for services that people routinely pay for in the UK, such as prescriptions.

The UK's new reciprocal healthcare eligibility card – the Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) – will be the main eligibility document used to access healthcare in Guernsey. Those planning to travel to Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, or Herm next year are being encouraged to take their GHIC with them.

Around 200,000 UK residents visit the Bailiwick of Guernsey each year, and they are currently individually liable for the full cost of medically necessary or emergency care while visiting the territory.

Minister of State for Health Maria Caulfield said:

Post Brexit we are focussed on delivering deals which mean UK travellers can use their GHIC in more places, including in the Bailiwick of Guernsey where UK visitors will receive free healthcare should they need it during their visit.

None of us can plan for unexpected medical emergencies, and I want to encourage anyone planning to travel to Guernsey next year to take their GHIC so they get all the benefits of this deal.

This arrangement will help both residents of the UK and those across the Bailiwick of Guernsey, and is testament to the strength and close cooperation across the British family.

Residents from the Bailiwick of Guernsey will also be able to access necessary healthcare when visiting England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland on the same basis as someone living in the UK.

Health authorities from the Bailiwick will also be able to refer patients to the NHS for pre-authorized treatment at cost, allowing them to source vital and urgent healthcare not available locally.

Chief Minister of Guernsey, Deputy Peter Ferbrache said:

I'm very pleased to have today signed a new reciprocal health arrangement with the UK on behalf of the Bailiwick of Guernsey. It has been a priority for our community for some years, due to the social and economic links between the UK and the Islands of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm.

When it comes into effect early next year it will benefit both island residents and visitors from the UK, making travel easier whether it's for leisure, business or to see family and friends.

Following our departure from the European Union, the UK is now negotiating reciprocal healthcare arrangements with countries outside of the EU. This includes expanding the GHIC to countries outside of the European Economic Area and Switzerland, like the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

The GHIC was introduced to gradually replace European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC), and gives UK residents' rights to emergency and medically necessary healthcare in multiple territories, including across the whole of the European Union and Switzerland

The GHIC is free to obtain from the official GHIC website. People should apply at least 2 weeks before they plan to travel to ensure their card arrives on time. Those with an existing EHIC can use it up to expiry, and should someone forget either card alternative arrangements can be made.

The government is still advising people travelling abroad to take out travel insurance which includes medical cover. This is because the GHIC may not provide cover for all events, like medical repatriation back to the UK, ski or mountain rescue, or for any treatment in a private facility

[Tax avoidance promoter directors named for the first time](#)

Tax avoidance bosses have been named for the first time in the latest move to help protect the public.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has used new powers today (31 August 2022) to publicly name [directors of tax avoidance promoting companies](#), with customers being warned to leave the firms' schemes or risk large tax bills.

Adam Fathers is the director of tax avoidance promoter Saxonside Ltd while Stuart John Brooke is behind tax avoidance promoter The Umbrella Agency Ltd.

Naming the directors behind these schemes will alert the public to steer clear of any avoidance schemes promoted by other companies with the same directors.

Mary Aiston, HMRC's Director of Counter Avoidance, said:

Naming the people behind tax avoidance schemes is a crucial step in helping customers stay clear of current and future schemes they promote.

Our recent action should serve as a stark warning to promoters who think they can get away with peddling avoidance schemes. We will continue to use all the powers at our disposal to crack-down on promoters.

Customers who think they're involved in a tax avoidance scheme, should withdraw from the scheme and contact us for help as soon as possible.

The Umbrella Agency Ltd and its director have been exposed for the first time today. HMRC has also exposed the director of the previously named promoter Saxonside Ltd, with users of both schemes warned to withdraw or risk large tax bills.

Both schemes' users enter an employment contract with the promoter and are then paid the National Minimum Wage. Scheme users then receive the remainder of their income disguised in a bid to avoid paying Income Tax and National Insurance. Schemes such as these often wrongly promise their users can avoid National Insurance and Income Tax.

This latest step in HMRC's crack-down on tax avoidance promoters comes as a [stop notice](#) was issued earlier this month. This prevents the promoter from selling their scheme or face penalties of up to £1 million.

A total of 15 companies involved in promoting tax avoidance schemes have been named by HMRC. This is not a complete list of all tax avoidance schemes currently being marketed, nor a complete list of all promoters, enablers, and suppliers.

HMRC also provides people with a range of tools to help them steer clear of avoidance schemes, as a part of the [Tax Avoidance – Don't Get Caught Out](#) campaign. These tools include an [interactive risk checker](#), [payslip guidance](#), and [case studies](#) demonstrating the risks of becoming involved in a tax avoidance scheme and the warning signs the public should look out for.

People who believe that they are involved in a tax avoidance scheme are advised to contact HMRC as quickly as possible by calling 03000 534 226. HMRC is also urging people who have been encouraged to get into a tax avoidance scheme or have come into contact with someone selling tax avoidance schemes to report this by using their [online form](#).

Further details about both Saxonside Ltd and The Umbrella Agency Ltd can be found on HMRC's regularly updated list of [named tax avoidance promoters](#).

New powers granted to HMRC under Section 86 of the Finance Act 2022 now enable HMRC to name directors, shareholders and company officers of companies suspected of promoting tax avoidance. They also enable HMRC to share the details of the schemes being promoted much faster than before. This is the first time that HMRC has used these new powers.

Further information about our [strategy on tax avoidance schemes and promoters](#).

[Ministers meet to continue work on tackling winter pressures](#)

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Kit Malthouse has led a meeting of ministers and officials from across government to drive forward preparatory work for tackling pressures this winter.

The meeting follows work over recent weeks to identify key pressure points that will affect the public, including the global rise in energy prices, the cost of living and pressures on the NHS.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has been chairing these meetings throughout the summer to discuss the key operational decisions that can be made to reduce these risks once a new administration is in place.

Ministers and officials have discussed priority areas, such as health, energy, cost of living, supply chain disruption, labour market shortages, and industrial action, that have the potential to compound together over the coming 18 months.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Kit Malthouse said:

My chief priority has been to make sure that we are prepared for the significant challenges we expect to face this autumn and winter, and I have held regular meetings to make sure departments maintain pace and grip on this essential work now, and in the coming months, as this will be a marathon not a sprint.

The cost of living, driven in part by higher energy prices, is biting for individuals, families and businesses, and the NHS is already under pressure – and that's ahead of the flu season. These risks have potentially severe impacts, stacking up on the most vulnerable people in society, and it is vital that we develop robust plans urgently to mitigate their impact and come up with solutions.

I've tasked departments with identifying the key operational decisions that should be taken without delay across priority risks such as health, energy, cost of living, supply chain disruption, labour market shortages, and industrial action, that have the potential to compound together. They will also map out the key moments over the next 18 months where specific groups of society may be significantly impacted, including the clinically vulnerable, socially and economically deprived, the elderly, the young, and the disabled, and produce further options so that decisions can be made quickly once a new administration is in place.

Over the coming weeks, the Cabinet Office will work with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to continue ensuring that gas and electricity system operators have the right tools to respond to fluctuations in supply and demand. Work is also underway with key international partners to monitor and share information on energy supply and demand.

The Treasury and BEIS will also prepare options for the new administration on possible energy market interventions to lower prices, bringing down bills and helping manage overall supply.

Today's meeting included ministers and officials from HM Treasury, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department for Transport, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The meeting also builds upon the work already in train ahead of the new administration next week, and the increase of the energy price cap. This work includes:

- Allocating £37 billion of help for households, including the £400 discount on energy bills this winter, and £1,200 of direct support to help with the cost of living
- The Department of Health and Social Care and the UK Health Security Agency are further developing their plans for health resilience, including to boost the NHS and Adult Social Care workforce, including a new taskforce for international recruitment
- The Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy is continuing to strengthen its contingency plans for winter energy security – Equinor and Centrica recently signed a major agreement to shore up Britain's gas supply over the next three winters, adding around one billion cubic metres of gas per year to our supply

The meeting also follows the recent announcement by Kit Malthouse reforming emergency planning and response in the Cabinet Office. A National Resilience Framework Team in the Planning and Analysis Secretariat will take a deeper look at the government's approach to risk and how it is mitigated, as well as collecting and analysing live data to improve future responses to emergencies. While the Cabinet Office's COBR Unit will continue to oversee preparedness and response to emergencies and other moments of acute pressure which might arise this winter.

[Scottish Secretary responds to Scottish GDP](#)

The latest Scottish GDP figures have been published this morning for [June 2022](#) and [Q2 2022](#).

Responding to the statistics, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

We are facing unprecedented global challenges, but our economy showed huge resilience emerging from the pandemic and I feel sure we will come through these uncertain times too.

Supporting families and businesses is our priority. A quarter of all UK households will receive £1200 of direct help as part of our £37 billion package to assist the most vulnerable, with the first cost of living payments already paid out to over seven million people.

Our steps to support businesses include slashing fuel duty, reducing employer National Insurance and freezing alcohol duty which helps pubs and our hospitality industry. All this is in addition to the Scottish Government receiving a record £41 billion per year settlement for the next three years.

Background:

The extra bank holiday for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June had a one-off effect in reducing economic activity that month. When we've had similar Jubilee bank holidays in the past, we have seen falls in GDP within that month but have then seen a 'bounce back' in the following month.

We have taken action to help households with £37 billion worth of support, which includes targeted support to help people through the difficult winter ahead phased throughout the year.

As well as direct cost of living payments, there has also been a record fuel duty cut. The National Insurance cut is worth up to £330 a year for the typical employee and changing the Universal Credit taper rate saves a typical low-income working household £1,000 per year in tax. In April, we raised the minimum wage to £9.50 – meaning a pay rise of £1,000 a year for a full-time worker.

The Scottish Government has been provided with an extra £82 million to help vulnerable families at their discretion. This is in addition to the significant income tax and welfare powers they already have.

According to the Quarterly estimate (April to June), Scotland's GDP remained unchanged (0.0% growth) in real terms during the second quarter of 2022 and is still 0.1% below pre-pandemic levels (2019 Q4). Over the same period, GDP in the UK as a whole fell by 0.1% and is now 0.6% above pre-pandemic levels.

Scotland's onshore GDP is estimated to have fallen by 0.8% in June, after growing by 0.6% in May, and is now 0.4% above the pre-pandemic level in February 2020.

[Avian influenza prevention zone declared in south-west England](#)

Following a number of detections of avian influenza in poultry and wild and captive birds across Devon, Cornwall and parts of Somerset, the UK's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer has declared an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) across the region to mitigate the risk of further outbreaks of disease occurring.

This means that from midday today (Wednesday 31 August) it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers in Devon, Cornwall (including the Isles of Scilly) and parts of Somerset to follow strict biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks, of whatever type or size. A [map of the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone](#) is available on gov.uk.

Backyard owners with small numbers of poultry including chickens, ducks and geese must take [steps to limit the risk of the disease spreading to their animals](#).

Additionally, keepers with more than 500 birds will need to restrict access for non-essential people on their sites, workers will need to change clothing and footwear before entering bird enclosures and site vehicles will need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

The UK Health Security Agency continue to advise that the risk to public

health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency advice remains unchanged, that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

The UK has faced its largest ever outbreak of bird flu with over 130 cases confirmed across the country since late October. The introduction of this regional AIPZ comes after the disease was detected in captive birds at nine premises across the south-west region since last month, as well as several cases in wild seabirds.

UK's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer Richard Irvine said:

Following a number of detections of avian influenza we have declared an Avian Influenza Prevention Zone across Cornwall, Devon and parts of Somerset. This means that all bird keepers in the region must take action now to both prevent disease getting in to flocks and it spreading any further.

Whether you keep just a few birds or thousands, you are now legally required to introduce higher biosecurity standards on your farm or small holding. It is in your interests to do so in order to protect your birds from this highly infectious disease.

The introduction of an AIPZ follows the recent increase in cases of bird flu in poultry and other captive birds in the area and increased reports of mass mortality in wild birds.

The AIPZ now in force across Devon, Cornwall and parts of Somerset does not include a requirement to house birds. However, this is being kept under constant review. Further disease control measures will be based on the latest scientific evidence and veterinary advice.

The Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) means bird keepers across the south-west region of England must:

- cleanse and disinfect clothing, footwear, equipment and vehicles before and after contact with poultry and captive birds – if practical, use disposable protective clothing
- reduce the movement of people, vehicles or equipment to and from areas where poultry and captive birds are kept, to minimise contamination from manure, slurry and other products, and use effective vermin control
- thoroughly cleanse and disinfect housing on a continuous basis
- keep fresh disinfectant at the right concentration at all farm and poultry housing entry and exit points
- minimise direct and indirect contact between poultry and captive birds and wild birds, including making sure all feed and water is not accessible to wild birds
- prevent access by poultry to ponds and watercourses and ensure that birds are kept in fenced or enclosed areas

The prevention zone will be in place until further notice, and will be kept under regular review as part of the government's work to monitor and manage the risks of bird flu.

Poultry keepers and members of the public should report dead wild birds to Defra's national dead wild bird helpline on 03459 33 55 77 (please select option 7) and keepers should report suspicion of disease in their birds to APHA on 03000 200 301. Keepers should familiarise themselves with our [avian flu advice](#).

Defra has also set out practical guidance to support land managers, the public and ornithological and environmental organisations in their response to the growing threat of avian influenza to wild birds. The '[Mitigation Strategy for Avian Influenza in Wild Birds in England and Wales](#)', also announced today, sets out how these groups, together with the government and its delivery partners, can mitigate the impact of avian influenza on wild bird populations whilst protecting public health, the wider environment and the rural economy.