

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