The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
Cabinet Office  
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13 September 2019  

Dear Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  

No deal Brexit and implications for people affected by cancer  

As the UK prepares to withdraw from the European Union, we welcome the recognition across the UK Government that people with and affected by cancer must be protected whatever the outcome. The increased focus on preparations for a no deal exit, with associated funding, is a pragmatic move to minimise the disruption and manage associated risks such an event would cause. However, while work is ongoing we remain gravely concerned that a no deal exit risks adversely impacting research, patients and people affected by cancer. We urge you to consider and provide assurance on the following key points:  

1. **Supply of medicines:** We recognise that the Government, the NHS and the Life Science companies have taken positive steps to protect the continuity of supply for medicines and medical products. As plans evolve in coming weeks, we would welcome further transparent communication to patients and healthcare professionals on this issue. This is particularly important for patients who rely on those products which cannot be easily stockpiled, such as medical isotopes. We would appreciate an update on how this specific issue of isotopes is now being resolved. Likewise, patients receiving their treatments through clinical trials must also know access to the investigational medicinal products (IMPs) on which these trials rely will not be interrupted.  

2. **Clinical Trials:** It is vital that the Government protects clinical trials that are currently running between the UK and the EU. Such international trials are particularly crucial for rare and paediatric cancers, where patient populations are often too small to run trials in the UK alone. It is vital Government ensures trial Sponsors are aware of the need for legal representation in the EU in the event of no deal, and that they are aware of and prepared for any new requirements around the international transfer of data, so that participants can continue to benefit from these trials. We are also happy to discuss how we can support communications to patients.  

3. **Workforce:** A no deal Brexit has the potential to negatively impact on the UK’s ability to attract and retain health and social care workers from the EEA, as well as medical researchers. Recent clarification from the Home Secretary that freedom of movement will not end immediately after we leave the EU is welcome but we are seeking further clarity on this - the current level of registration under the EU Settlement Scheme indicates that a large number of EU citizens remain unregistered. Given current pressures facing the workforce, changes to the immigration system risks undermining the NHS Long Term Plan’s ambition to increase overseas recruitment to support the workforce. We would therefore welcome an update on workforce contingency planning.  

We understand the Government is aware of these issues and has sought to manage risk. It is essential this activity continues apace, and that progress is communicated to those who work in, and rely on, the NHS as well as those working in the wider research community.
Despite these preparations, there can be no guarantees that medicines and services will be unaffected by a no deal exit on October 31.

We look forward to your reply and assurance on these matters. We are keen to work with you as closely as possible to ensure people affected by cancer, and those committed to their care and support, are not adversely impacted, whatever the Brexit outcome.

A copy of this letter has been sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and the Minister for Health at the Department for Health and Social Care.

Yours sincerely

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