



CHANGES TO THE S1 SCHEME IN THE UK, AFFECTING THOSE WHO ARE NOT OF STATE PENSIONABLE AGE OR THOSE RECEIVING A QUALIFYING BENEFIT.

Introduction

This note outlines the changes to the issue of the S1 form by the UK for people who are not receiving the state pension, or other qualifying benefits.

Background

In July 2013 the Department of Health issued a consultation document entitled *Sustaining services, ensuring fairness: A consultation on migrant access and their financial contribution to NHS provision in England*

The consultation finished in August 2013, and the original consultation and the final response can be seen here.

http://consultations.dh.gov.uk/overseas-healthcare/migrant_access

The main objectives of the consultation were to examine who should be charged for care in the future, what services they should be charged for, and how to ensure the current system is better able to identify chargeable patients and recover costs.

The UK operates a residence based scheme, so people who are no longer resident and not state pensionable age or receiving a qualifying

benefit, do not qualify for treatment. People who qualify for an S1 through a state pension or other benefit are able to receive treatment when they visit the UK, but they have to use an EHC card issued by the UK, which also covers them when they visit other EU countries, except Spain.

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One of the proposals was to stop issuing the S1 form from the 1st April 2014 for those who retire early (i.e. before the state retirement age) and move abroad. Under the system in place, people could obtain an S1 form based on their previous national insurance contributions. This could be used in the EU to obtain healthcare for up to 2.5 years. According to the consultation, the UK was the only country providing this service to its former residents, and was costing circa £50m per annum.

Another proposal was to allow former residents, who had contributed a minimum number of years national insurance (e.g. 7 years) access to the NHS healthcare, even though they were no longer resident. This is done by a number of other countries, and they receive a reduction of 5% in the amount they pay to other countries where former residents are receiving healthcare under an S1 form (including pensioners).

OUTCOME

Following the consultation responses, there was general support for these proposals, but the implementation was delayed pending the development of the process.

The final outcome was published yesterday 30th April 2014. It confirmed that S1 forms for anyone not of state pensionable age are not being issued after 1st July 2014. Those already issued will remain in force until they expire. There is no impact on S1 forms issued to people over state pension age or receiving qualifying benefits. They will continue to be issued.

It was also confirmed that the UK system will continue to be a residence based scheme, and that people who are no longer resident, will not qualify for free healthcare. Nor will they be able to use a UK issued EHIC card abroad. This does not apply to UK state Pensioners and people who receive a qualifying benefit, who will continue to receive care, on production of a UK issued EHIC card.

So, for people who are not of state pensionable age or in receipt of other qualifying benefits, this means, as far as moving to Spain is concerned, that to register on the "Registro de Ciudadanos del Union" they will have to provide evidence of private health cover to meet the current requirements. This will have to be maintained for 1 year, following which they will be able to apply to join the Spanish Health Service "Convenio Especial" scheme, for a monthly

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payment. The details of this scheme are set out in the comprehensive note by Maria Cecilia Tacchi entitled “Ultimate Guide to getting into and thriving in the Healthcare System”. This can be viewed here

<http://citizensadvice.org.es/wp-content/uploads/ULTIMATE-GUIDE-TO-GETTING-INTO-AND-THRIVING-IN-THE-HEALTHCARE-SYSTEM.pdf>

Changes to the EHIC

In addition to the above changes, there were some changes in the use of the EHIC card, used by people who are still resident in the UK, but visit Spain regularly.

The Department of Health announced that as of the 1st July 2014, visitors to another EEA country will no longer be able to claim reimbursements where they pay part of the cost of their treatment. Under EU law, visitors with EHIC cards travelling to an EEA country, like Spain, should be treated under the same conditions as people who live in that country. So, if a Spanish state pensioner would normally pay part of the cost of their treatment, then the same would apply to a UK state pensioner.

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/citizensinspain/>

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