



3rd March 2019

Dear Mr O'Brien,

Re: Continuity in the NHS in the event of a disorderly exit from the European Union

In recent weeks, I have become increasingly concerned about the prospect of a disorderly, or "no deal" exit from the European Union and I am writing to seek assurances from you, in your capacity as my MP and member of Government benches.

There can be little doubt that Brexit has been a contentious issue for our country. For my own part at the time of the referendum I voted for the UK to remain within the European Union. Of course, I understand that a slender majority took a different view and accept that Theresa May's Government has promised, via manifesto pledges, to deliver on what is commonly referred to as 'the will of the people'. I remain disappointed that the future of our country will not be as a member state of the EU, but I do not personally advocate for a re-run of the referendum nor do I necessarily wish to see the 2016 referendum result overturned in Parliament. I am, however, in favour of the Government taking all the steps required to ensure that the UK is able to leave the EU in a smooth, orderly and safe fashion.

I am deeply concerned about the timing and manner of our leaving the EU, and grow more concerned by the day. It cannot be in keeping with one of the central functions of any government - to keep its citizens safe and secure - to allow the UK to leave the EU on the 29th March, or at a later date should Article 50 be extended, without the necessary and important legislative changes being debated and approved by Parliament in a timely fashion. More pressingly, it cannot be in keeping with this same core function for any Government to allow our EU membership to end without first, as a bare minimum, ensuring that adequate security in the complex medical supply chains the UK depends on is guaranteed from day one and long into the the future.

On this final point, I must confess to having a personal interest as I have recently been diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer. My treatment began on the 24th December last year and will, all being well, conclude by the end of 2019. As you may be aware triple negative breast cancer is difficult to treat, and has a lower survival rate relative to other types of breast cancer - currently the greatest risk to my health would be any lengthy or sustained delay in my treatment as this could allow the disease to metastasise. Metastatic breast cancer is almost always incurable. It is therefore truly vital for my own personal future that the NHS is able to access the same drugs, equipment, staffing levels and medical expertise following our departure from the EU, and crucially, without any delays.

I have read, with interest, the official Government guidance notes on the supply of drugs and medical equipment in the event of a 'no deal Brexit'. From this document I understand that "if" all the relevant parties and suppliers do as the UK government have asked them to there "shouldn't" be any break in the supply chain for vital drugs and medical equipment. I am sure you will appreciate that for those of us who are reliant on such drugs and equipment that this is scant little reassurance indeed. I have also read with growing dismay the warnings from various doctors, professional bodies and industry experts. Just last month, the Royal Society of Radiographers warned that there were still no adequate arrangements for ensuring the uninterrupted supply of life-saving isotopes post-Brexit and that this may require the NHS to prioritise the patients who are able to receive radiotherapy. Again, speaking personally, I find this incredibly alarming because, once I have completed my chemotherapy and surgery, I will require further radiotherapy to prevent the disease from returning and metastasising in the

future. In the event radiotherapy were not to be prioritised for me, the likelihood that I would survive for five years or longer would be significantly reduced. I am currently 39 years old.

I am afraid that I, and many others like me, will die unless the Government takes urgent action either to protect the supply chain of vital drugs and medical equipment in the event of a disorderly Brexit, or failing this, to ensure that a disorderly Brexit is simply no longer an option – either now, or after any further extension to Article 50.

I am afraid that the consequences of a disorderly Brexit could lead me, and many others to lose our lives unnecessarily: I cannot stress this point highly enough.

In recent weeks and months, I have made every effort to read the official guidance on this matter in the hope it might put my mind at ease, but unfortunately I have found no comfort there. I am therefore writing to you, as my MP, in the hope that you can provide some reassurance that the vital interests of myself and people like me are being considered as we edge closer to the end of our EU membership? It seems reasonable to assume that no matter when, or indeed how the UK's membership of the EU comes to an end that people diagnosed with cancer and other life threatening illnesses, will receive exactly the same treatment, in the same timely fashion as they would have done while were an EU member state.

I hope, therefore that you will be able to provide me with an assurance that unless and until the Government can ensure that lifesaving NHS treatments will continue undisturbed and uninterrupted after our departure from the EU, we will remain within the EU until such a time as contingency planning is complete and adequate.

Yours sincerely

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