



Living in the UK

Social security for Belgian citizens living in the United Kingdom



Federal Public Service
Social Security

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After the Brexit, the situation of Belgians in the United Kingdom has changed somewhat, also in terms of social security. In order to provide an initial response to certain questions raised by this situation, the Belgian Social Security Federal Public Service has drawn up an information sheet.

The Social Security FPS coordinates, in Belgium and concerning social security, the consequences of the Brexit. Furthermore, we also are a contact point for Belgian citizens residing abroad.

If you have any questions concerning your specific situation, you can contact us by e-mail: international@minsoc.fed.be.

1. The functioning of the British social security system

There are 2 main social security schemes in the United Kingdom: the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), and the National Health Service (NHS). There are several ways to be covered by the social security in the United Kingdom:

- People who are working pay social contributions (“National Insurance Contributions” or “NICs”) and receive access to contributory benefits: for example, unemployment benefits, maternity benefits, state pension (see point 2).
- And, simultaneously, all persons legally resident in the United Kingdom have access to universal benefits financed by taxation: for example child benefit, healthcare (see point 3).

2. Paying your social contributions in the United Kingdom

As soon as you work in the United Kingdom¹, you must register with the *National Insurance* Scheme to obtain a national insurance number.

You will then need to give this number to your employer and you will then be able to receive benefits under the *National Insurance*.

If you need to make a new benefit claim, you should contact the *Jobcentre* Plus of your place of residence.

3. Getting healthcare treatment in the United Kingdom

Once you reside in the United Kingdom, you may also register with the National Health Service of your place of residence. To do this, you will need to visit a General Practitioner². You will then get an NHS number. More on registering with a GP here: [How to register with a GP surgery](https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4)

¹ You can also apply for a National Insurance number before you have a job. You just need to prove that you have the right to work (so EU Settlement Scheme status or a valid visa).

² <https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4>

Characteristics of the NHS

- The way the NHS operates varies from one United Kingdom country to another. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have different health policies. Moreover, each country funds the NHS in its own territory.
- The NHS is accessible to every UK resident³ and to European citizens who present their European Health Insurance Card or their S1 document. When paying for healthcare, the third party payment is applied. Therefore, you do not need to advance any money: all care is paid for directly by the NHS.

In principle, to be recognised as resident in the United Kingdom, you must prove that you have comprehensive health insurance: however, this is not necessary to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme⁴. Applications can be made until 30 June 2021⁵. You will then be granted either settled status⁶ or pre-settled status⁷ and will then be able to continue to benefit from the NHS.

- Currently, the NHS has long waiting times for hospitalisation, surgery, medical examinations, follow-up of treatments due to staff reductions⁸. This very much depends on the area of medicine, the hospital and department concerned and does not concern emergencies.

In order to benefit from the third party payment in the United Kingdom, you will need to consult doctors who have been accredited by the NHS. You must also consult your General Practitioner⁹ before going to a specialist doctor to obtain a referral.

You can find an NHS affiliated hospital nearby on this website: [Hospital search](#). Transport by ambulance is free, if necessary.

Medicines are available from pharmacies on a prescription basis on payment of a non-reimbursable lump sum (£8.60 per prescribed medicine)¹⁰.

³ <https://www.expatassure.com/fr/nhs>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/what-youll-need-to-apply>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/applying-for-settled-status>

⁶ For people who, at the time of application, have completed 5 consecutive years of permanent residence in the UK.

⁷ For people who were living in the UK on 31.12.2020 and who, at the time of application, have had less than 5 consecutive years of permanent residence in the UK

⁸ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/04/February-20-DTOC-SPN-JQU3J.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4>

¹⁰ <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/help-with-health-costs/get-help-with-prescription-costs/>



For any **short stay in the European Union**, in order to be covered by the NHS in case of necessary treatment, it is recommended to have :

- an existing European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) issued by the UK for persons who enjoy settled or pre-settled status
- a UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) for persons who have established their residence in the United Kingdom after 31 December 2020.

All existing European Health Insurance Cards issued by the UK before the 01/01/2021 remain valid until the expiry date on the card. UK residents should only apply for a new Global Health Insurance card once their existing EHIC expires.

More on EHICs and GHICs here: [Global Health Insurance Card](#)

4. General practical information

If you have any questions or problems applying your rights as a European citizen in the United Kingdom, whether in relation to social security or immigration, please contact the Independent Monitoring Authority¹¹¹².

For further information, please find below some useful links you may wish to consult:

Topic	Link
Obtaining a National Insurance Number	https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number
Healthcare	https://www.nhs.uk/
National Insurance	https://www.gov.uk/national-insurance
Apply for a European Health Insurance Card	https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/cra/start
Apply for a UK Global Insurance Card	https://www.ghic.org.uk/Internet/startApplication.do
Practical advice	https://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/brexit/conseils_pratiques
EU settlement Scheme	https://eu-settled-status-enquiries.service.gov.uk/start
Independent Monitoring Authority	https://ima-citizensrights.org.uk/

¹¹ This complaints system is effective from 1 January 2021.

¹² For information, the United Kingdom left the SOLVIT European network for handling complaints about non-compliance with European law by administrations on 31 December 2020. Cases involving the UK that could not be dealt with before that date have been withdrawn.



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