

Brits make a welcome discovery about their healthcare rights in Spain and the rest of the EU

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Research findings published today by A Place in the Sun, in partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) show that British people buying a holiday home or making a permanent move to Spain are unnecessarily pessimistic when it comes to healthcare rights post Brexit.

Since the UK Government secured an agreement with the EU last year, reciprocal healthcare rights continue as before in Spain, and the rest of the EU. This reassuring news should be welcomed by the thousands of Brits who enjoy visiting their second home in Spain, as well as pensioners who are making that life changing decision to move out to Spain.

However, this research shows that some 46% of the people surveyed were unaware their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) continues to be valid enabling them free access to necessary healthcare when on holiday or visiting their home in Spain.

UK residents, including those with second homes, can still use their EHIC at state hospitals or clinics in Spain when required. On expiry, they should then apply for the new Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) which provides the same access. It's really important to purchase insurance too though, as the EHIC or GHIC doesn't cover every situation, such as any treatment in private facility or medical repatriation.

'Although British nationals can only now spend 90 out of 180 days in Spain before having to apply for a visa, this is welcome clarification to holidaymakers, homeowners and would be property buyers,' said Andy Bridge, the Managing Director of A Place in the Sun.

Equally there is good news for UK state pensioners planning to make a permanent move to Spain with confirmation they can have their healthcare costs covered by the UK, via the S1 scheme.

'There is a lot of confusion surrounding this issue, but the UK and the EU have agreed this reciprocal healthcare arrangement continues. But 73% of our audience surveyed were unaware of this key benefit and in some instances, this has put people off moving to Spain,' added Bridge.

A British state pensioner moving to Spain receives the same level of free healthcare as their Spanish counterpart, once registered correctly. This may exclude specialisms such as dentistry and orthopaedics that are not provided under the Spanish public system. They can also apply for a GHIC for use when visiting other EU countries.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said:

"The agreement we have made with the European Union continues the flexibility for travellers accessing healthcare in the EU and ensures the costs of healthcare for certain groups including eligible pensioners are covered when they move to those countries.

"As we cautiously return to a more normal life and begin travelling again, I would encourage people to keep up to date with all the latest travel information and advice, and crucially continue to cover every base by taking out travel insurance."

For more information visit www.aplaceinthesun.com or contact press@aplaceinthesun.com +44 (0) 20 3207 2920

Further details can be found at www.gov.uk/healthcareinspain and www.nhs.uk/ghic

A Place in the Sun's survey took place between 1st and 13th July 2021 and is based on 7,251 respondents.

Background:

- Reciprocal healthcare arrangements enable people to access healthcare when they live, study, work or travel abroad. They give people more life options, support tourism and businesses, and foster healthcare cooperation.
- The UK EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the EU and the UK came into force on 1 January 2021.
- The agreement reached between the UK and the EU means that the UK has a reciprocal healthcare agreement allowing people to access healthcare whilst travelling in the EU, and the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) continues to be valid. This means UK residents are covered if they need urgent healthcare when in an EU Member State.
- Eligible pensioners, and their family members, will continue to have their healthcare costs covered by the UK should they move to the EU.
- The UK funds healthcare through S1 forms for around 201,000 UK state pensioners and their eligible dependents living in the EU/EEA/Switzerland (principally in Ireland, Spain, France and Cyprus), with 76,000 in Spain alone.