

Mr Kevin Foster MP

By email: Kevin.foster.mp@parliament.uk & MinisterforImmigration@homeoffice.gov.uk

13 November 2020

Dear Kevin Foster MP,

Digital Status Accessibility

On 21st October 2020, while debating an amendment to the Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill which would give EU citizens the right to request physical proof of their status under the EU Settlement Scheme, Baroness Williams of Trafford said on behalf of the government¹:

“We are committed to working with this House and with stakeholders to ensure that measures are in place to support those who may find the transition to digital services difficult.”

and

“I am aware that many noble Lords are worried about the impact of digital by default on the elderly and the vulnerable, but I reassure them that we are taking steps to ensure that those individuals are not disadvantaged by the move to digital services, particularly in accessing public services. System-to-system checks with other government departments and the NHS will mean service providers, such as healthcare and benefits, will check status directly with the Home Office at the point at which the person seeks to access them.”

and

“we recognise that there are people who cannot access online services and will need additional support. We are committed to delivering a service that reflects the diverse needs of all users. Help on how to use the online service and share status information is already available through our telephone contact centre, and we provide a free-to-use assisted digital service where those applying to the EU settlement scheme, or others making online applications in the UK, are able to get support.”

How does the Government intend to fulfil its commitment to “delivering a service that reflects the diverse needs of all users”?

¹ <https://bit.ly/3mGqC84>



The examples given cover situations where the NHS and other government departments check status - they do not cover situations where third party private individuals wish to check status (most notably with Right to Rent and Work checks as with all others e.g. banks, accountants, solicitors, travel companies, and other potentially unforeseen private actors).

Furthermore, the assisted digital service as mentioned is for those **applying** to the scheme, not for those wishing to **prove their status** under the scheme.

What impact assessments have been undertaken, and what evidence base do you have to conclude that digital status will be accessible for all, and that everyone who needs to can prove they have rights protected under the Withdrawal Agreement?

Please provide a response by **no later than 5pm on Friday 27 November 2020**.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Piper
Head of Policy
the3million