

THE IMPACT OF A NO-DEAL BREXIT ON CHARITIES

NCVO BRIEFING

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The National Council for Voluntary Organisations is the largest representative body for voluntary organisations and volunteering in England, with over 14,000 members. NCVO champions voluntary action: our vision is a society where we can all make a difference to the causes that we believe in. Volunteering and a vibrant voluntary sector deserve a strong voice and the best support. NCVO works to provide that support and voice.

NCVO has worked closely with charities over the course of Brexit negotiations, to ensure that issues of importance across the sector are reflected to government, and those discussions inform this briefing.

Overview

A no-deal Brexit would present significant challenges to charities, both in terms of the potential economic impact on the country, and charities' role in addressing issues that may arise, and the legal uncertainty that will impact the work of a range of charities.

Given the very real consequences for those we serve, we are calling on politicians of all parties to come together and secure a way forward. If we are to take the opportunities promised during the referendum, our country and its people need clarity and certainty, not the imminently greater need and hardship that we now face.

Protections, rights and standards

Charities have been at the forefront of arguing for protections across a number of areas, many of which have been strengthened through EU legislation.

A no-deal scenario runs the risk of regression on the many social, environmental and labour standards our country prides itself on. Maintaining these commitments is vital to the rights of the people and communities that charities work amongst, yet no such guarantees have been provided in a no-deal eventuality. The requirement for the UK to create an independent body to enforce environmental commitments and to maintain effective enforcement of its commitments on labour and social standards is vital to the rights of those in the voluntary and charity sectors, and no such guarantees have been provided in a no-deal eventuality.

Migration

A no-deal Brexit throws up a great deal of uncertainty around the status and rights of EU citizens to live and work in the UK. This risks deepening the inequality which has hurt so many in our country. The referendum of 2016 exposed serious divisions in our society: we should be focusing our efforts on addressing these divides, not allowing the eventuality that could further entrench them.

Around 4-6% of staff working for charities in the UK are EU nationals, and some charities working in areas such as health and social care could face particular challenges if it becomes more difficult to recruit staff from the EU. It is important for charities that they are still able to recruit the skills they need in their organisation. A lack of clarity over the recognition of professional qualifications and access to university education for non-UK nationals in a no-deal scenario only heightens the damaging uncertainty.

A recent [IPPR report](#) suggests that charities could lose 25,000 staff after Brexit, with little ability to replace them or insufficient resources to train replacements. The uncertainty regarding the rights of EU citizens – which must be addressed in any Brexit deal – could become a cliff-edge of rights in a no-deal scenario.

International volunteers also make an important contribution to UK society, so it is important that the importance of volunteering is recognised in the immigration system. This is particularly important in the context of anecdotal concerns about the inconsistent approach currently being applied to Tier 5 visas.

Other information about the impact of no-deal on charities

A number of organisations have raised concerns about the specific impacts of a no-deal Brexit, including:

[Greener UK on the environmental impact](#)

[Association of Medical Research Charities on medicines and the regulatory framework for research](#)

[Charity Finance Group on the economic impact](#)