

## Give EU citizens physical proof of Settled Status

Letter sent to Emily Thornberry MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP



1 September 2020

Dear Emily / Dear Jeremy,

We hope you are keeping well.

We're writing on behalf of the Islington in Europe campaign group to draw your attention to a very worrying issue, and to seek your help in entreating the Home Office to reconsider their current policy.

As you'll be aware, Islington is home to many EU nationals, who have applied for the new Settled Status, in order to continue to reside in the UK post Brexit. For some reason, the Home Office is only giving EU nationals a digital status, which is a source of great anxiety. We hope you will get behind the campaign for the government to issue physical proof of their right to remain.

The issue has been consistently raised by worried residents at the free immigration advice sessions Islington in Europe has run in conjunction with Islington Council at Islington Town Hall. Matthew Davies, partner and immigration solicitor at Wilson Solicitors is one of the immigration experts who has led these free sessions for us. We asked Matthew to sum up the problem, and he said the following:

*"Given how important it will become to prove your right to reside in the UK after Brexit it is puzzling why the Home Office is only giving EU nationals a digital status. Rather than being able to present a plastic residence card with their photo and biometrics in it they have to request employers and landlords to access a Home Office database by providing a code.*

*What happens when someone doesn't have access to the internet? Or can't remember their log in details? Biometric residence cards continue to be issued to non-EU nationals so why not EU nationals? The Home Office have already captured the required biometrics and photo for EU nationals when they applied for settled status so it will be easy and relatively cheap to issue them with a plastic biometric residence card which the EU national can then produce like a driving licence or passport to quickly and easily establish their right to reside.*

*The only argument I have heard from the Home Office justifying only issuing a digital status is that they intend to do that for all migrants at some unknown point in the future. So why not wait until then and in the meantime issue EU nationals with residence cards like everyone else. Failure to do so inevitably will lead to EU nationals not getting jobs, homes, or welfare benefits to which they are entitled because the computer wrongly said No or couldn't be accessed in the first place."*

Without being able to easily prove their residence, Europeans face being unable to do the most simple things, like change bank account, accept a job, rent a flat, or even return home after a family holiday. Unfortunately, we have already heard of individuals experiencing these issues., since technology does fail, and also there are employers and landlords who won't engage with this unfamiliar digital-only status.

Provisions could easily be made to modify the system when the forthcoming immigration bill comes to parliament later this year. Would you support making this small change that could bring reassurance to so many, who have already faced so much disruption?

Many thanks

Judith Palmer and Luisa Fulci, Islington in Europe