

Monetary and subsistence support

- The Foreign Secretary is considering a proposal for the FCO to act as a lender of last resort to stranded British nationals in urgent need who have no access to other sources of funds by creating a new COVID-19 Emergency **Subsistence Loan scheme**. Officials are finalising details. If the Foreign Secretary (and CST, as this is novel and contentious expenditure) agree the proposal, the scheme will be aimed at British nationals who are unable to return to UK on charters or remaining commercial flights and who have insufficient funds to pay for e.g. accommodation, food.
- Benefit claimants travelling abroad under temporary absence rules can continue to receive their benefits for between one and three months. DWP is seeking HMT approval to **continue payments on an ex-statutory basis for longer**.
- Expanding an existing **FCO partnership with third sector organisations** to deliver assistance to vulnerable stranded British Nationals. The Salvation Army has confirmed that they would be willing to provide basic food, accommodation, medicines in extreme cases, in places where they have an operation, on the basis of a new grant agreement.

Healthcare support

- **The FCO is lobbying countries** to offer Coronavirus tests and treatment gratis to all foreign nationals as the UK is doing for foreign nationals here.
- DHSC is planning to write to Australia and New Zealand to **confirm that existing reciprocal healthcare arrangements we have with both countries are operating as we expect and will explicitly cover COVID-19 and stranded individuals**. These points will also be raised during bilateral discussions as the opportunity arises.

Repatriation, lobbying and consular support

- **Passport renewal**: HMPO and FCO are working together to provide essential passport services or fixes in countries where the office which normally processes applications has closed due to Coronavirus.
- **G7/G20**: We have lobbied to include a statement of 'mutual support' in the proposed G7 action plan for the Coronavirus 'Global Travel' work stream and coordination mechanism. This is challenging as not all G7 partners share all these policy positions.

Possible options to go further

It should be noted that such further measures could raise expectations for reciprocity beyond those already in place for foreign nationals in the UK (Annex B).

Reciprocal welfare and healthcare agreements:

- DWP and DHSC are operating within existing, but limited, legal frameworks to support UK national stranded abroad. **New reciprocal welfare arrangements** would take time to develop and negotiate and require legislative changes and/or ratification. We do not, therefore, recommend this route;
- In addition, the Home Office say **lifting "no recourse to public funds" conditions** as part of any reciprocal welfare arrangement is not recommended as it would risk giving access to public funds to a significant number of migrants, including illegal migrants, and could be open to legal challenge if lifted on the basis of nationality.

Other measures

- There has been some discussion of whether **insurers should extend their terms of coverage** to cover issues (such as accommodation) that are not provided for under existing policies. HMT's view is that any further cover is industry-led and that the