

This booklet answers the questions you may have about registering with your local GP



# Why you should register with your local GP

## Do you have difficulty understanding the English language?

If you have a problem reading or understanding the English language, this document is available in a language of your choice. Please ask an English speaking friend or relative to phone, write or email Nigel Firth, Equality and Diversity Manager, NHS Grampian. His contact details are:

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## Do you have a visual impairment?

This document is also available in large print, as a CD and in other formats, upon request.

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## This booklet answers the questions:

- What is the National Health Service (NHS)?
- What is a General Medical Practitioner (GP)?
- What services do GPs provide?
- Why should I register with a GP?
- How do I register?
- Will I be able to communicate with my GP if I speak little or no English?
- How do I get to see my GP?
- What if I need non-emergency health care when my GP surgery or health centre is closed?
- Do I and my family qualify for free NHS health care?
- What if I need emergency health care?



## What is the National Health Service (NHS)?

The National Health Service, known as the “NHS” is a state run national health service which provides free health care in the UK for UK nationals and citizens from other countries who also qualify for free health care in the UK. Details of who qualifies for free NHS health care are shown in the [Do I and my family qualify for free NHS health care?](#) section on pages 11 - 18.

The NHS is funded by taxation. It comprises the General Practitioner services of:

- General Medical Practitioners (GP).
- General Dental Practitioners.
- General Ophthalmic Practitioners.
- General Pharmaceutical Practitioners.

and community based services and hospital services, which are provided in every area.

## What is a General Medical Practitioner (GP)?

A GP is your local personal NHS doctor. If you are ill or worried about your health or the health of anyone in your family, you should go and see your local GP. The place where you go to see your GP is called either a surgery or a health centre. GPs often work together in a small group called a practice. The benefit of GPs working in small groups is that if for any reason your own GP is not available, you may ask to see another GP in the same practice.

Many practices have both male and female GPs. If your faith, religion or culture requires that you or a member of your family are treated by a GP of the same sex, please let the GP receptionist know this when you first go to register.

Most surgeries and health centres are accessible by wheelchair, have doors that open electronically and have toilet facilities designed to meet the needs of disabled patients.

## What services do GPs provide?

GPs are usually the first medical point of contact with the NHS. They are responsible for the comprehensive and continuing care of patients registered with them. GPs provide advice and treatment. If further treatment or investigation of a problem is required, the GP will co-ordinate this and ensure that it is provided. Further treatment might be provided by your GP, or by a member of their team such as a practice nurse, midwife or health visitor, or if required, by referral to a specialist doctor called a consultant or to other specialist services.

GPs are also keen to promote good health amongst their patients. They and their staff give advice on diet, exercise, healthy living and disease prevention.

Most patients are looked after by the same GP for many years. This builds up a bond of trust between the GP and patient and enables the GP to build up a good knowledge of you and your health care needs.

## Why should I register with a GP?

By asking to register with your local GP, you are simply asking your local GP to be responsible for your ongoing medical care. If you are accepted, the GP is confirming that he or she will accept this responsibility. You will then know where to go for local medical care.

If for any reason, no GP in your local practice is able to accept your registration, you can approach other GP practices.

## How do I register?

First, locate your nearest GP practice. If you are unsure where this is and you are non-English speaking, ask an English speaking friend or relative to look this up in the telephone directory for you. Alternatively, they can go to the NHS 24 website at [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com) and under the "Find Your Local Services" heading, click on "Search by postcode". Ask them to telephone the GP practice to find out when would be a good date and time for you to go along and register. The person making the call for you should also advise the practice staff if you are non-English speaking and let them know what your main language is. This will enable the practice staff to arrange either a "face to face" interpreter, or set up the Language Line telephone interpretation system, for your visit. When you visit you should take with you details of:



- Your name.
- Age.
- Date of birth.
- Birth certificate.
- Proof of address (even if this is temporary).
- Phone number (if you have one).
- Your passport or other evidence of your free entitlement to NHS health care, for example your:
  - European Health Insurance Card.
  - If you are an asylum seeker, your HC2 Certificate and ARC Card.
  - If you are a refugee, your Immigration Status Document and UK Residence Permit.
  - If you are unsure whether you and your family are entitled to free NHS health care, please see the [Do I and my family qualify for free NHS health care?](#) section on pages 11 - 18 which will provides guidance.
- Any health records you may have such as vaccination records or immunisation records.

If you are also registering other members of your family, you should also take long the same information for them.

At the surgery or health centre, the GP receptionist will fill out the registration form, shown on pages 8 and 9, with you and then you are registered. A similar form will be filled out for each member of your family you wish to register.



## Will I be able to communicate with my GP if I speak little or no English?

All GP practices in Grampian are equipped with the "Language Line" telephone interpretation service, and have staff who are trained in its use. Language Line gives access to expert interpreters for 170 different languages, on the telephone, in 60-90 seconds, so if you are non-English speaking or if your English is not very good, you will still be able to communicate easily with your GP and their staff. You can also use Language Line to inform your GP or the receptionist, that you would prefer the presence of a "face to face" interpreter, if possible, for future appointments.

Some GPs ask all new patients to have a full health check. This will usually be carried out by a nurse. It is important that you and your family members go to this appointment, even if you/they are well.

The health check will give the doctor a good indication of your/their general health and will enable the GP to provide the most appropriate advice and future treatment.

## How do I get to see my GP?

You can make an appointment either by telephone or by visiting the surgery or health centre. If you want to make an appointment by telephone but you do not speak English, you can ask an English speaking friend or relative to telephone on your behalf and make an appointment at a time which is convenient to you. If your need to see your GP is urgent, ask your friend or relative to ensure that this information is clearly stated to the receptionist. Patients with more urgent health care needs are seen as quickly as possible. If the doctor thinks that you are too ill to come to the surgery, then he or she may visit you at home. If your appointment is for a non-urgent problem, you may wait one or two days for an appointment.

## What if I need non-emergency health care when my GP surgery or health centre is closed?

In these circumstances, you should telephone the NHS 24 helpline on **08454 24 24 24**. If you are non-English speaking say in English the language you speak and they will get an interpreter on the line to help, or you can ask an English speaking friend or relative to telephone on your behalf.

## Do I and my family qualify for free NHS health care?

This is a short summary which gives the basic information to establish if you and your family are entitled to free NHS health care. If you are in doubt, please ask the GP receptionist for guidance, or ask an English speaking friend or relative to contact Nigel Firth, whose details are shown on page 2.

### EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA (EEA) COUNTRIES AND COUNTRIES WITH RECIPROCAL HEALTH CARE AGREEMENTS

All nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA) countries (and Switzerland) and those countries with reciprocal health care agreements, are eligible to receive free NHS health care, the "treatment the need for which arose during the visit". The list of EEA countries and those countries with reciprocal agreements are shown below.

For EEA nationals, the entitlement to free NHS health care is certified by the European Health Insurance Card and a valid passport.

### The EEA countries are:

Austria	Greece	Norway
Belgium	Hungary*	Poland*
Bulgaria***	Iceland	Portugal
Croatia****	Ireland	Romania***
Cyprus*	Italy	Slovakia Republic*
Czech Republic*	Latvia*	Slovenia*
Denmark	Liechtenstein	Spain
Estonia*	Lithuania*	Sweden
Finland	Luxembourg	Switzerland**
France	Malta*	United Kingdom
Germany	Netherlands	

#### Key

- \* EEA Accession countries that joined in May 2004.
- \*\* Not part of EEA but included in health care provisions.
- \*\*\* Joined EEA on 1st January 2007.
- \*\*\*\* Joined EEA on 1st July 2013.

## Countries with Reciprocal Health Care Agreements

The undernoted non-EEA countries have reciprocal health care agreements with the EEA countries. Their nationals are entitled to receive free NHS health care for "treatment the need for which arose during the visit".

Anguilla	Isle of Man	Serbia, Montenegro and successor states
Australia	Monserrat	Bosnia, Macedonia and Croatia
Barbados	New Zealand	Turks and Caicos Islands
British Virgin Islands	Russian Federation	
Falkland Islands	St Helena	
Gibraltar		

### ASYLUM SEEKERS

An asylum seeker is someone who has submitted an application for protection under the Geneva Convention and is waiting for that claim for asylum to be decided by the Home Office.

As an asylum seeker, you are entitled to free NHS health care on the same basis as a person who is ordinarily resident in the UK. You should produce your HC2 certificate when you go to register with a GP. HC2 certificates are issued on behalf of the Department of Health, each one is valid for a six month period. They are issued to the main applicant but details of dependants are included on the certificate in order to enable the whole family to access free NHS services.

In addition, as an asylum seeker you may also have been issued with an Application Registration Card (ARC card), for identification and other purposes. Again, if you have an ARC card, this should be taken with you when you go to register with a GP. The ARC card is proof that you have lodged an application for asylum in Britain.



### REFUGEES

A refugee is an asylum seeker whose application to remain in the UK has been approved.

As a refugee, you are entitled to free health care on the same basis as a person who is ordinarily resident in the UK. You should produce your Immigration Status Document and UK Residence Permit when you go to register with a GP. You should also take your HC2 certificate, if you have one.

## FIVE TIER ENTRY SYSTEM

The UK operates a points based Five Tier Entry System for non-EEA nationals wishing to enter the UK for work or study purposes. Each tier has a different eligibility criteria and different proof requirements to establish entitlement to free NHS health care. The appropriate entry tier is stamped on an individual's passport at their point of entry into the UK. The five tiers and the proof required to establish entitlement to free NHS health care are:

### Tier One

Is for highly skilled people such as entrepreneurs, investors and people who have undertaken advanced studies in the UK and wish to remain. The proof required to establish entitlement to free NHS health care is:

- A passport with a Tier One stamp.

and one of the following:

- Proof of employment.
- Proof of being self-employed.
- Proof of being on the Scottish Fresh Talent Scheme and being employed or looking for work.
- Evidence of being on the International Graduate Scheme and being employed or looking for work.

### Tier Two

Is for skilled workers with a job offer, employed to fill a gap in the workforce that cannot be filled by a settled worker. The proof required to establish entitlement to free NHS health care is:

- A passport with a Tier Two stamp.

and one of the following:

- Proof of employment.
- Proof of a job offer.
- Proof of looking for work.

### Tier Three

Is for low skilled workers filling temporary labour shortages. **However, tier three is currently suspended and not in use.**

### Tier Four

Is for students. The proof required to establish entitlement to free NHS health care is:

- A passport with a Tier Four stamp.

and:

- Proof of full-time study at an academic institution.

### Tier Five

Is a youth mobility category. Participants must be over 18 years of age and under 31. The proof required to establish entitlement to free NHS health care is:

- A passport with a Tier Five stamp.

and:

- A sponsorship document from their home Government.

## EXAMPLES OF EXCEPTIONS AND SPECIAL CASES

There are many exceptions to the regulations governing free access to NHS health care. Here are a few examples of the main exceptions and special cases, which allow anyone, regardless of status, to have free access to NHS health care services. This list is not exhaustive, almost every rule or guidance on this topic is extremely long and full of further exemptions and special cases. If you require more information, please ask the GP receptionist, practice manager or contact Nigel Firth, whose contact details are shown on page 2 of this booklet.

### • **TEMPORARY RESIDENTS FROM NON-EEA COUNTRIES AND COUNTRIES THAT DO NOT HAVE RECIPROCAL HEALTH CARE AGREEMENTS**

A temporary resident is someone who has been in an area served by a Practice, for more than 24 hours, but less than 3 months. A GP has the discretion, if they wish, to register a non-EEA national or a national from a country that does not have EEA reciprocal agreements, as a temporary resident with their practice and thereby provide free primary health care services to them and their family, regardless of their status.

If a temporary resident has been in the UK for more than 3 months, A GP has the discretion, if they wish, to register a non-EEA national or a national from a country that does not have EEA reciprocal agreements, with their practice and thereby provide free primary care services to them and their family, regardless of their status.

It should be noted that other NHS services such as hospital care, might not necessarily be free to temporary residents from countries outwith the EEA and countries that do not have reciprocal health care agreements with the EEA.

### **OTHER MAIN EXCEPTIONS AND SPECIAL CASE EXEMPTIONS ARE:**

- Emergency treatment in an A&E department or provided by a general practitioner.
- Family Planning Services.
- Treatment for certain infectious diseases, (including sexually transmitted diseases).
- Involuntary psychiatric treatment.
- HIV/AIDS. Diagnostic test and counselling associated with the test.
- Treatment provided as a result of a Court Order.



- Anyone who has been in the UK legally and lawfully for more than six months.
- If the primary purpose of being in the UK is for employment and they are currently employed.
- A student who is pursuing a full time course of study, their dependents are also exempt from charges.
- Accredited diplomatic staff.
- Off shore employees working in UK territorial waters, or in the UK sector of the North Sea.
- Crew members employed on UK registered vessels.

### **AU PAIRS**

In terms of NHS regulations, au pairs are defined as:

“...persons who come to the UK to learn the English language and to live for up to 2 years as a member of an English speaking family. Au pairs are unmarried, aged between 17 and 27, without any dependents in terms of these arrangements...”

If an au pair comes from an EEA country or a country with a reciprocal health care agreement, they enjoy the same rights to free NHS health care as any other national of that country.

If an au pair comes from a non-EEA country or a country that does not have a reciprocal agreement, they have no entitlement to free NHS health care, until they have been resident in the UK for one year.

### WHAT IF I HAVE NO PROOF OF ENTITLEMENT TO FREE NHS HEALTH CARE?

If you cannot prove your entitlement to free NHS health care for non-emergency treatment, then you cannot receive free NHS non-emergency treatment.

In this situation, you can either:

- Ask a GP to consider accepting you and your family as temporary residents, as described at the [Examples of exceptions and special cases](#) section on pages 16 and 17.
- Ask a GP to accept you and your family as private patients.

If the GP accepts you and your family as private patients, you will be required to pay for any treatment received. The GP will also give you an estimate of cost before each treatment commences. The standard of care you will receive will be exactly the same standard as that provide to NHS patients.

If the GP refers you or your family for further treatment, this will also be chargeable.

### What if I need emergency health care?

Everyone has an entitlement to free emergency health care, whether this is provided at an Accident and Emergency department or by a GP, regardless of their status.

If you or your family have a serious accident or a medical emergency, contact the ambulance service by dialing **999**.



