

# ACTION UPDATE

## GP Registration

Last year Groundswell spoke to nearly 100 people using homeless services here's what two of them told us:

*"People might well present looking a little bit rough, and all that sort of thing, and a bit incoherent or a bit aggressive or something. There are some issues there. You can't just take them at surface value. There are reasons why people are in this sort of situation and they need time, empathy, understanding. There's a hell of a lot of stuff going on underneath there."*

*"When you try to register with a doctor and they send you away because you are homeless you just end up stuck... Some of us have got mental health problems, some physical health problems and a lot of the time it might be those problems that have landed us in homelessness to begin with. When these problems aren't going to get looked at because you don't have an address then we are just going to be in a vicious cycle."*

Too often homeless people are told they can't register with a GP but the rules are clear ...

- You do not need a fixed address
- You do not need ID
- Your immigration status does not matter.

GP's may ask for these things to help them provide a better service but if you don't have them they should still register you.

We've sent 40 000 Rights to Health Cards to homelessness services across London.



### Homeless Health Peer Advocacy

Do you need help getting to health appointments in London?

Groundswell Peer Advocates, who have been homeless themselves, supported people to 2400 health appointments last year. Ask a key worker to refer you or get in touch with us yourself:

Phone: 03000 039 600

Email: [HHPA@groundswell.org.uk](mailto:HHPA@groundswell.org.uk)

Website: [www.groundswell.org.uk](http://www.groundswell.org.uk)



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# ACTION UPDATE!

## GP Registration



Groundswell recently spoke to almost 100 people who are homeless in London to find out about their experiences of using NHS services. One of the findings that really stood out was how difficult it can be to register and make use of a GP practice. This Action Update aims to make clear what your rights are to NHS treatment.

### What do NHS England tell GPs about registering people who are homeless?

- Anyone in England may register and see a GP **WITHOUT CHARGE**. This includes: **ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES, OVERSEAS VISITORS** and those who are **HOMELESS**.
- You **DO NOT** need to provide ID or proof of address to register with a GP (although you might still be asked).
- You can register using a temporary address such as a friend's, a day centre or the practice address.
- You just need to state that you are staying/sleeping within the local practice area.
- Prescriptions are free of charge for those claiming benefits. Those not entitled to benefits (No Recourse to Public Funds) can apply for help with prescription costs by completing a HC1 form find it here:

<http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcosts/pages/nhs-low-income-scheme.aspx>

### What reasons are GPs allowed to give for not registering somebody?

- The practice "list" is full and they aren't taking any new patients. If this is the case and you need treatment immediately then the rules mean that the practice has to provide you with treatment and continue to support you for 14 days, even though they won't be able to register you.
- The patient lives outside the area the GP works
- Other "reasonable" grounds, for example, if someone is violent or abusive to staff. **BUT NOT** because they don't have ID or proof of address.

### What to do if a GP practice says you can't register or offer you treatment?

- Show them this!
- Tell them to read "Patient Registration—Standard Operating Principles for Primary Medical Care (General Practice)" its easy to find online.
- If they still say no call Health Watch on 03000 68 3000

### What are Groundswell doing about this?

- We've created "My Rights to Healthcare" business cards and sent 40 000 of them to day centres and other homelessness services across London.
- We've emailed every GP practice in London to remind them of the rules.
- Last year our Homeless Health Peer Advocates helped 42 people to register with GP's and many more to maintain contact with health services.

