

## Health guide GP services: your rights, how to register and how they can help



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Everyone has the right to good health and to access healthcare. People experiencing homelessness face health inequalities, they are often excluded from information and services. That's why Groundswell produces accessible health guidance for people experiencing homelessness, so they can make informed decisions about their health.

All our health guides are created alongside people with experience of homelessness and reviewed by relevant professionals.

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### What is a GP?

- A General Practitioner (GP) or a 'family doctor' is a doctor based in the community.
- Some GP practices have more than 1 GP and other medical staff like nurses.

### What does a GP do?

- GPs can treat minor issues.
- Identify any more serious health issues.
- Refer you for further treatment to a hospital or other specialist health service.

### How can I get help?

If you have any problems registering with a GP, have questions about health care charges or concerns about data sharing please contact **Doctors of the World (0808 164 7686), Monday - Friday 10am - 12pm**

### How to register with a GP

- Sometimes GP practices ask for identification or documentation. If you are asked for documentation or identification, and you do not have any, explain that you are currently homeless, and they should still register you.
- Either online, in person or on the phone. You can find a local GP by searching <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp> or asking your support worker.
- GPs may have different processes for registering with them. If you do not have access to the internet or a phone, explain this to the receptionist, they should help you register another way.

### Who can register?

- Anyone in England may register and see a GP for free.
- You do not need a fixed address, you can register with a GP if you are rough sleeping, sofa surfing or in temporary accommodation – you have the right to see a GP.
- Your immigration status does not matter.
- You do not need identification, documentation, or an NHS number.

### What services are provided at my GP?

- Physical health problems, including minor illnesses, minor injuries and the management of all ongoing more serious health problems.
- Mental health issues.
- Substance misuse issues.
- Preventative care e.g. health screening and vaccinations (see other leaflet).
- Wound dressings.
- Support with your pregnancy.
- Contraception and sexual health.
- Referral to termination of pregnancy services (alternatively you can call the British Pregnancy Advisory Service in confidence on 034 5730 4030).

If the GP cannot support you to manage your condition, they will refer you to a specialist.

If you have a physical or mental health emergency go to the Accident and Emergency (A&E) at your nearest hospital or call 999.



# Using GP services



## I need to book an appointment

- Many GP's offer an initial appointment on the phone or online before they see you in person. If this is difficult to you, let the receptionist know you need to see someone in person.
- You can book, cancel or change your GP appointment by contacting your GP surgery by phone or through their website's booking system.
- Speak to support staff or an advocacy agency if you have any issues registering.
- GP appointments are usually 10 minutes long, but you can always request longer appointments if you need.

## I need an interpreter

- If English is not your first language NHS services must provide telephone interpreting services.
- You can ask a receptionist or health care provider for an interpreter to help you register and you can also ask for an interpreter for your appointment with the GP or nurse.

## Specialist GP practices

- There may be GP practices in your area that are especially for people who are currently homeless or migrants, asylum seekers or refugees.
- Advocacy and support services should be able to tell you if there is a specialist GP practice in your area.



## Will I be charged?

- Health care provided within a GP surgery is free. However, you may have to pay for prescribed medicines depending on what benefits you receive and what health conditions you have. See section below about help with health costs.
- If you have no current immigration status or your application is in process you can be charged for hospital care and some community services. See section below about help with health costs.
- If you cannot pay in advance you might not be able to get treated. However, if a clinician thinks the treatment is urgent you will be given the treatment. You may receive a bill after treatment.

## I need help with the costs of medicines, dental treatment and sight care

- Depending on which benefits you receive and your medical conditions you might also be required to pay for prescriptions, dental care, eye tests and glasses.
- However, if you have a low income, you may be eligible for an NHS HC2 certificate which entitles you to free prescriptions, dental treatment, sight tests and vouchers for glasses. If you are not entitled to benefits you can still apply for this.
- An HC1 form is used to apply for this certificate.
- Your health provider should be able to give you an HC1 form. If not, this form can be downloaded from the internet. And you can also apply online <https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/apply-for-help-with-nhs-costs/apply-online>.
- Ask for help to fill in the form if you need it.



## Will my GP share information about me?

- GP practices and other NHS services will NOT share your information with any other Government department
- GP practices do not share information with the Home Office currently
- The only situation in which a GP might have to share information about you is if you are at risk or there is risk to others