

Health care

for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland

› In Scotland, most health care is provided by the National Health Service (NHS). Everyone who lives legally in Scotland has a right to some NHS care, no matter what nationality they are.

If you are an asylum seeker or refugee who has applied to the Home Office to live permanently in the UK, this factsheet tells you how you can get health care from the NHS while you are in Scotland.

I am seeking asylum. Can I get health care from the NHS in Scotland?

- You can get health care from the NHS if:
 - your application for asylum is being considered, or
 - you have been refused asylum and are appealing against the decision, or
 - you have been refused asylum and are waiting for the Home Office to make arrangements for you to return home.

I have been granted asylum. Can I get health care from the NHS?

- You will continue to get health care from the NHS if you have been:
 - given the right to stay in the UK as a refugee
 - granted humanitarian protection, or
 - granted discretionary leave to stay in the UK.

What do I need to do to get health care from the NHS?

- You need to find a family doctor as soon as possible after you arrive in Scotland, and ask them to register you as an NHS patient. You will not have to pay for this.
 - In Scotland, family doctors are often called General Practitioners or GPs. They work in GP surgeries, medical practices or health centres.
 - The GP will decide if you can register with their practice to receive NHS treatment, which is free. They will not be able to register you if their patient list is full and you may need to try more than one GP practice in the area until you find a practice that can register you.
 - The GP will help you look after all your health needs. They will decide if you need to see another health professional – for example a hospital doctor, or someone in mental health or maternity services. If you do, the GP will make the appointment for you.

- If you are an asylum seeker getting support from the Home Office (UK Government) they may ask you to register with a particular GP surgery.
- If you are an asylum seeker Scottish Refugee Council or Asylum Help may be able to help you find a GP surgery where you can make an appointment to register. See page 4 for how to contact them.
- You can also phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.scot) to find a GP surgery that can register you. The NHS helpline can provide an interpreting service.
- When you have found a GP surgery, contact them and make an appointment to register as an NHS patient.
- If you need an interpreter, ask the GP surgery to arrange this for you. When you make an appointment, tell them what language you prefer to use.
- If you need dental treatment you must first of all be registered with a GP as you will be asked to provide your GP's details by the dental surgery. You should then find an NHS dentist that works for the NHS. You can phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.scot) to find a dentist.
- If you need eye care you need to find an optician that provides NHS services. Most opticians who have shops in town centres provide NHS services. You can also phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 if you are have difficulties finding a local optician.

What happens when I register as an NHS patient?

- When you go to the GP surgery, the staff will ask you for some personal information – for example, your name, address and date of birth.
- The staff will ask to see some documents to help them decide if you can register as an NHS patient. If you need hospital care, staff at the hospital will also ask to see these documents.
 - **If you are seeking asylum,** NHS staff may ask you to show:
 - your Application Registration Card (ARC) – you may have been given this card at your asylum screening interview, or
 - documents from the UK Border Agency saying that you have applied for asylum.
 - **If you are a refugee,** they may ask you to show:
 - your passport, travel documents, or Biometric Residence Permit
 - a letter from the Home Office that says you are allowed to stay in the United Kingdom.
- If you don't have the documents they ask for, staff at the GP surgery may not be able to register you as an NHS patient right away.

When I am registered as an NHS patient, is all health care free?

If you are a refugee

- **Most of your NHS health care will be free.** But you may need to pay for some things like many people living in Scotland – for example, some dental treatment or eye care.
- For more information about help with health costs, see the leaflet ‘A quick guide to help with health costs’ (HCS2). This leaflet tells you if you can get free treatment or help with the costs. It is available from citizens advice bureaux and Jobcentre Plus offices. You can also find it on the internet (www.gov.scot).

If you are seeking asylum and you get asylum support from the Home Office (UK Government).

- You won't need to pay for your health care.
- The Home Office will give you an HC2 certificate. This shows you don't need to pay for some things – for example dental treatment or eye care.
- You can also use your HC2 certificate to get help with the cost of travelling to NHS hospital appointments.

If you are seeking asylum and you don't get asylum support from the Home Office, or if you have been refused asylum.

- A lot of your health care will be free.
- You will need to fill in an HC1 form to apply for an HC2 certificate. This shows you don't need to pay for some things – for example dental treatment and eye care.
- You can get an HC1 form from a Jobcentre Plus office, an NHS hospital, or by phoning 0845 850 1166.

- You can also use your HC2 certificate to get help with the cost of travelling to NHS hospital appointments.

Can my family get health care from the NHS?

- **If you are registered as an NHS patient, your husband, wife or civil partner, and any of your children who live in Scotland with you, can also get health care from the NHS.** The children must be aged under 16, or under 19 and in full-time education.

Staff at the GP surgery will ask you to complete a form for your husband, wife or civil partner and for any children. You may need to show your marriage or civil partnership certificate, and birth certificates for your children.

- **Any other members of your family** may be able to get health care from the NHS, but they will need to prove that they have their own right to NHS care.

What happens if I am not registered as an NHS patient?

- If you are not registered as an NHS patient, you can still get some health care from the NHS.

Services that are free for everyone include:

- emergency care in a hospital (in the accident and emergency department, casualty department or minor injury unit)
- emergency care at a GP surgery
- emergency transport in an ambulance
- sexual health services (family planning)
- treatment for some infectious diseases and sexually transmitted infections in the best interests of the public

How can I find out more?

- **Contact Scottish Refugee Council:** phone 0141 248 9799, email info@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk or look on the internet (www.scottishrefugeecouncil.co.uk).
- **Phone Asylum Help** on 0808 8000 630 or look on the internet (asylumhelpuk.org).
- **Phone the UK Visas & Immigration Agency** on 0141 555 1200 or look on the internet (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration).
- **For information about health conditions and services**, phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88; the helpline also provides an interpreting service). The helpline is open every day between 8am and 10pm.
- **Contact the Patient Advice & Support Service (PASS)** at your local citizen's advice bureau (find your nearest bureau on the internet at www.cas.org.uk or in your local phone book). PASS is independent and provides free, confidential information, advice and support to anyone who uses the NHS in Scotland.

Other factsheets in this series

- Health care for people coming to Scotland to work
- Health care for people coming to Scotland to study
- Health care in Scotland for former UK residents now working abroad
- Health care in Scotland for UK passport holders living abroad
- Health care for UK pensioners visiting Scotland
- Health care in Scotland for holidaymakers from overseas.

You can get these factsheets from:

- anywhere you get NHS care
- www.nhsinform.scot
- the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

Feeling unwell?

- **Go to a pharmacy** and ask for advice. To find your nearest pharmacy, phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.scot).
- **Visit the NHS 24 website** at www.nhs24.scot for health information and advice.
- **Contact the GP surgery** where you are registered. If you need an interpreter, ask the GP surgery to arrange this for you.
- **Phone NHS 24 on 111** or look on the internet (www.nhs24.scot) if the GP surgery where you are registered is closed, or if you are not yet registered as an NHS patient. NHS 24 can provide an interpreting service.

In an emergency (if your condition is very serious), phone 999 and ask for an ambulance.

We have tried our best to make sure that this information is correct. However, the information is for guidance only so you should not rely on it as a full statement of the law. If you are thinking about taking legal action, you should contact a solicitor, a citizens advice bureau, or other advice agency.

Check www.nhsinform.scot for versions of this information in other languages or formats.

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