

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 a refugee living in Scotland, this factsheet tells you how you can get health care from the NHS while you are here.

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 you are appealing against the decision.

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.

I have been refused asylum. Can I get health care from the NHS in Scotland?

- If you have been refused asylum, and any appeals against the decision have also failed, you can still get health care from the NHS while you are in Scotland.

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, practices or health centres.

The GP will decide if you can register as an NHS patient and if you can get NHS treatment free.

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 getting support from the UK Border Agency, they may ask you to register with a particular GP surgery.
- If you are not getting support from the UK Border Agency, Scottish Refugee Council may be able to help you find a GP surgery where you can make an appointment for you to register. See page 6 for how to contact Scottish Refugee Council.

- You can also phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.com) to find a GP surgery. The 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.

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
 - your travel document, or
 - 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 won't be able to register you as an NHS patient.

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

If you are a refugee

- A lot of your health care will be free. But you may need to pay for some things – for example, some dental treatment.
- 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 find it on the internet (www.scotland.gov.uk/healthcosts).

If you are seeking asylum and you get asylum support from the UK Border Agency

- The UK Border Agency will give you an HC2 certificate. This shows you don't need to pay for your health care.

If you are seeking asylum and you don't get asylum support from the UK Border Agency, or if you have been refused asylum

- You will need to fill in an HC1 form to apply for an HC2 certificate. This shows you don't need to pay for your health care.
 - You can get an HC1 form from a Jobcentre Plus office, an NHS hospital, or by phoning 0845 850 1166.
- Scottish Refugee Council may also be able to help you with this. See page 6 for how to contact Scottish Refugee Council.

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
- treatment for some infectious diseases and sexually transmitted infections.

How can I find out more?

- Phone Scottish Refugee Council on 0800 085 6087 or look on the internet (www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk).
- Phone the UK Border Agency on 0141 555 1200 or look on the internet (www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk).
- Phone the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88) for information about health conditions and services. The helpline can provide an interpreting service.
- Contact your local citizens advice bureau for free, confidential, impartial and independent advice about almost anything, including NHS services and your rights. To find your nearest branch, look in your phone book or on Citizens Advice Scotland's website (www.cas.org.uk).

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 in another language or format from:

- anywhere you get NHS care
- www.nhsinform.co.uk
- www.hris.org.uk
- the NHS inform Helpline on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 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.com).
- Visit the NHS 24 website at www.nhs24.com 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 08454 24 24 24 or look on the internet (www.nhs24.com) 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 the information in this factsheet is correct. However, the factsheet is for guidance only so you should not rely on it as a complete statement of the law. If you are thinking about taking legal action, you should contact a solicitor, a citizens advice bureau or any other advice agency.

Email ask@hris.org.uk to ask for this information in another language or format.

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