

Westminster Rough Sleeping Pathway

GP Registration Toolkit

The aims of this toolkit are:

- To provide information about clients' right to get access to a GP.
- To promote awareness of challenges clients may face when trying to get access to a GP.
- To give guidance on how to deal with complaints about treatment by GPs practices.

Key Points

- At the moment anyone in England may register and see a GP without being charged. This includes the homeless, asylum seekers and refugees, overseas visitors.
- Clients do not need a fixed address or ID or British citizenship/permanent residence to register at and receive treatment from a GP practice.
- A Practice can refuse to register someone if it is full or the patient lives outside the Practice boundary, but they must provide the reason in writing within 14 days.
- 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 from: <http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcosts/pages/nhs-low-income-scheme.aspx>

Registering with a GP

What resources can I give clients to help them to register at a GP?

Groundswell and Healthy London Partnership have produced the “My right to access to healthcare” card to help those who are homeless to access GP treatment. You can either print the card from Healthy London Partnership’s [website](#), or contact anna.midgley@mungos.org for a supply of cards.

Front of card:



Back of card:



In addition to showing their “My right to access to healthcare” card, clients can quote from the NHS England’s Patient Registration Standard Operating Principles for Primary Medical Care below:

“Inability by a patient to provide identification or proof of address would not be considered reasonable grounds to refuse to register a patient.”¹

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/11/pat-reg-sop-pmc-gp.pdf>
[Accessed February 2017]

What steps should a Practice take if a patient is unable to provide identification of a fixed address?

When a practice has a policy in place to ask for identification for practical reasons, it should have a clear policy in place for what to do when a patient is unable to provide any form of ID.

If a patient cannot produce proof of identification or address, but states that they reside within the practice boundary then practices should accept the registration. If necessary, the practice address, or a day centre, can be used as the address to register a patient.

When can a GP practice refuse registration?

A practice can refuse to register someone:

1. If it's waiting list is full,
2. Or the patient lives outside of the practice boundary, **but they must provide reason for refusal in writing**. They must record the name, date and reason for the refusal and write to the patient explaining why they have been refused, within a period of 14 days of the refusal.
3. Other "reasonable" grounds, for example, if someone is violent or abusive to staff.

A practice cannot refuse a patient on discriminatory grounds, such as their age, sex, race, social class.

Making a complaint and seeking medical help

If the GP practice still refuses to register a patient, they can get advice from [Healthwatch](#) by calling **0300 68 3000**. Healthwatch will inform them of their rights and advise them of what to say to the Practice.

If the Practice still refuses to register them, they will need to call the **NHS Complaints Helpline** on **0300 330 5454**. The NHS complaints can provide the patient with resources and advice on how to draft a letter to the GP Practice. Advocates would then review the letter and suggest amendments before sending the letter to the Practice. The Practice would need to respond to the patient within 7 days to confirm that they have received the letter, and respond within one month of receiving the letter with information about the action that will be taken next.

The NHS complaints line also have a community advocacy service which can support someone with more complex needs (e.g. housing and benefits).

If the client is waiting for a response from the NHS advocacy service or the Practice, they can receive care from a walk-in clinic.

Further information

To find out more about the 'My right to access healthcare' card email lhhp@nhs.net

Groundswell GP Registration action update – another useful information sheet to explain GP registration rights: <http://groundswell.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Action-Update-GP-registration.pdf>