

Access to UK healthcare for undocumented migrants

GP's:

- All migrants, including undocumented migrants, can register with the GP ✓
- **You do not need proof of address or immigration status to register with a GP**
- Important way to safely document presence in the UK. Record of GP registration can be very helpful to immigration applications
- Call Doctors of the World's free National Advice Line for help with GP registration: 0808 164 7686 (10am-12pm Tuesday to Thursday)
- Some people don't have to pay for prescriptions, no matter what their immigration status is ✓ including:
 - Children under 16, or under 19 in full-time education.
 - People over 60.
 - People with certain medical conditions (with a valid medical exemption certificate).
 - Pregnant women and new mothers (with a valid maternity exemption certificate).

Community Health Services:

Community-based services and health visitors are **accessible to all migrants** ✓

Including:

- Midwives
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Health
- Health visitor support for babies and young children
- Health visitors check on the baby's development, feeding, safeguarding issues, and maternal wellbeing

Hospital treatment:

Hospitals should **never refuse to treat you for an urgent medical issue** or request payment for urgent treatment. Urgent treatment is treatment needed to save a life, prevent a condition from becoming life-threatening, or prevent permanent serious damage.

What hospitals can charge for:

Type of treatment	Treatment for undocumented migrants	Cost
A&E / emergency	Always provided immediately.	Free
Immediately necessary (e.g. maternity care, life-saving surgery)	Must be provided, even if you cannot pay in advance.	Can be charged afterwards but cannot be withheld.
Urgent (cannot reasonably wait)	Must be provided, even if payment cannot be made up front.	Can be charged afterwards.
Non-urgent / elective (e.g. planned operations)	Hospital can require payment before treatment.	Must pay in advance or treatment may not go ahead.

- For example, maternity care, chemotherapy, or dialysis that is clinically urgent must still be given without payment up front.
- The hospital will record the patient as chargeable and send an invoice later.
- If the person cannot pay, the debt can be passed to the Home Office and may affect future immigration applications.

Some groups are exempt from hospital charges:

- Asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers receiving Home Office support.
- Survivors of trafficking or domestic violence in certain circumstances.
- People receiving treatment for specific infectious diseases (e.g. TB, STIs).
- Family planning services are free to all

NHS debt:

Don't avoid accessing medical treatment because you fear NHS debt.

There are **no known cases** where someone was **raided or detained by immigration** just because the **Home Office saw NHS debt information**.

Don't Ignore NHS Debt Letters

- **Open all letters**, keep track of what you owe, and respond to any requests.
- Ignoring debt can lead to **extra charges, court action, or bailiffs** coming to your home.

Get Free Help – No Matter Your Immigration Status

There are charities and services, like Citizens Advice (citizensadvice.org.uk), that will help you for free and without judgment, even if you don't have legal status. They can:

- Help you understand your rights
- Talk to the NHS or debt collectors for you
- Stop any harassment from creditors

Will NHS Debt Affect Immigration Applications?

No – having NHS debt **won't stop you from getting leave to remain** in the future. You just need to explain and deal with it.

Discrimination in Healthcare

It is **illegal for the NHS to deny you healthcare** (except for non-urgent procedures) just because you're a migrant or based on your nationality. This could be racial discrimination, which is against the Equality Act. You can take action even if you don't have legal immigration status – though there may be a risk that the Home Office could be informed.