



Patient Registration Policy

Version History

Version	Date	Description	Name
1.0	15/12/2015	First draft	Louise Gregory
	01/02/2018	Reviewed	Louise Gregory
	21/04/2020	Reviewed Added information about checking a patient's history if they have been registered before in Section 3: Patient Refusal	Rachel Williams
1.1	19/02/2021	Added travellers into vulnerable patient section	Louise Gregory

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1 INTRODUCTION

Patients have a right to register with a Practice of their choice **providing that they live within the catchment area of the Practice** and that the Practice has an 'open list'. Where a Practice has an 'open list', it is a requirement to accept the registration of a new patient unless it has fair and reasonable grounds for not doing so.

Practices are assumed to have open lists unless they have complied with the procedures for list closure as detailed in The National Health Service (General Medical Services Contracts) Regulations 2004 (Schedule 6, Part 2, paragraphs 29 – 31). There is the facility to have a "full" list which is not officially closed, for example where staffing difficulties result in suspension of registrations being necessary. Practices should discuss these situations with the Commissioners prior to taking action.

Practices should ensure that their registration process and practice boundary is clearly outlined on their practice leaflet, relevant NHS Choices section or website if applicable).

Practices should ensure there is equitable access for all patients by making registrations available to all patients every day. Anyone who is in the UK may receive NHS primary medical services at a GP practice. This includes people recently released from prison or is in contact with the criminal justice system and service men and women leaving the armed forces.

Nationality or immigration status is not relevant in giving people entitlement to register. This means that overseas visitors, whether lawfully in the UK or not, are also eligible to register with a GP even if those visitors are not eligible for secondary care services.

A summary of the guidance outlined in this Policy can be found in Appendix 1 and used as a desk aid to new patient registrations.

2 NEW PATIENT ACCEPTANCE

To register at the Practice, new patients should complete a new patient registration form (GMS1) and a Health Questionnaire. Where possible it is good practice for Practices to provide pre-registration documentation prior to the patient attending to register in person, e.g. GMS1 form and health questionnaire available to download on Practice website.

Practices are not obliged to ask patients for official documentation in order to prove ID or proof of residence and there is no requirement in the regulations for them to do so. However seeing some form of ID will help to ensure the correct matching of a patient to the NHS spine to ensure previous medical notes are passed onto the new practice.

Patient ID does not have to be photographic, i.e. passport or driving license. The following are examples of some of the types of documentation which patients may provide:-

- Utility bill (gas, electricity, community charge etc.)
- Phone bill stating address
- Credit card/Bank statement
- Rent book or tenancy agreement.
- Pension book
- Benefit/family credit book
- Home office permit to stay
- Bank card
- Document showing University/college hall of residence
- TV License
- Driving License (with address)
- HM Revenue and Customs Statements
- Council Tax Bill/Council Rent Book
- Home Insurance Policy
- Documentation from a reputable source, for example a letter from a voluntary organisation or a refuge

Although the majority of patients will not find it difficult to produce ID, there will be exceptions where sensitivity needs to be applied. Examples of this may be:-

- People fleeing domestic violence staying with friends or family;
- People living on a boat, in unstable accommodation or street homeless;
- People staying long term with friends but who aren't receiving bills;
- People working in exploitative situations whose' employer has taken their documents;
- People who have submitted their documents to the Home Office as part of an application;
- People trafficked into the country who had their documents taken on arrival;
- Children born in the UK to parents without documentation.

In any event that a patient is unable to provide any proof of ID you should accept the registration but ask the patient to bring this with them as soon as it is made available.

Any practice that does request such documentation must do so for every patient. Inconsistent application of policy could lead to legal action against the Practice under the 2010 Equalities Act.

Registration and appointments should not be withheld because a patient does not have the necessary proof of residence or personal identification

If a Practice suspects a patient of fraud (such as fake or multiple ID) then they should register and treat the patient but hand the matter over to their local counter fraud specialist or report on-line via <https://www.reportnhsfraud.nhs.uk/>

3 NEW PATIENT REFUSAL

Patients will not be unreasonably refused registration. Unreasonable includes refusal based on:-

- Medical condition
- Race
- Gender or sexual orientation
- Disability
- Age
- Religious group or religious beliefs
- Political beliefs
- Appearance or lifestyle

The Practice will however refuse registration if:-

- The list is officially “Closed”;
- The patient resides out of the publicised Practice area

If the Practice list is closed, the Practice will only accept registrations of immediate family members of patients who are already registered and only if such relatives reside permanently at the registered patient’s address. Proof of residency will be required.

The Practice will normally refuse registration if:-

- The patient has been previously removed from the list
- The patient has a known history of violence
- (please can all staff that are registering patients make sure to check that if the patient has been registered here before that there is no history of the patient being violent at this practice, and that the practice has not removed the patient from our list for a given reason)

If a practice refuses any patient registration then 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 (see Appendix 2). This information should be made available to the Commissioner on request. The Commissioner may ask Practices to submit the numbers of registration refusals, age, ethnicity and reasons as part of their quality assurance process.

4 TEMPORARY PATIENTS

The length of time that a patient is intending to reside in the UK dictates whether a patient is registered as a temporary or permanent patient. Patients should be offered the option of registering as a temporary resident if they are resident in the Practice area for more than 24 hours but less than 3 months. This includes asylum seekers and refugees, overseas visitors, students, people on work visas and those who are homeless.

5 HOMELESS & VULNERABLE PATIENTS

Homeless and vulnerable people, for example those with chaotic lifestyles or travellers, often experience difficulty trying to register with a GP, therefore Practices are expected

to register these patients. People who are homeless or vulnerable face an increased risk of mental illness, physical illness, of contracting infectious disease and drink and drug abuse and it is therefore essential that Practices provide primary care services to such patients.

Please note, if a homeless or vulnerable patient that is already registered with us, inform us of a change of address which is outside of our catchment area, they should continue to be a registered patient with us if they so wish.

Homeless patients are entitled to register with a GP using a temporary address which may be a friend's address or a day centre. The Practice may also use the Practice address to register them if they wish. Practices should try to ensure they have a way of contacting the patient if they need to (for example with test results). Some areas have special services for homeless patients and Practices may refer homeless patients into those services in line with local arrangements where it is in their best interests and with the agreement of the patient.

6 NECESSARY IMMEDIATE TREATMENT

General Practices are bound over by legislation to provide emergency or immediately necessary treatment, irrespective of nationality, immigration status, homelessness or vulnerability. The Practice is also required to provide 14 days of further cover following provision of immediate and necessary treatment.

7 APPENDIX 1 - DESK AID TO NEW PATIENT REGISTRATIONS

When dealing with new patient registrations, remember that:-

- A patient is entitled to join a Practice list if they live within the Practice catchment area. This includes overseas visitors, whether lawfully in the UK or not. Practices should not enquire about a patients' immigration status;
- Practices should register those who live in their practice area unless they have reasonable non-discriminatory grounds for refusing.
- Practices should endeavour to allow patients to register every day that they are open and not on selected days of the week.
- In order to register with a Practice, patients need to complete a GMS1 form (or equivalent) and a new patient questionnaire;
- Practices may request some form of proof of ID and address but these requests must be asked of all patients and consider it necessary to apply this sympathetically to an individual's particular circumstances;
- All individuals working within the NHS have a duty to protect NHS resources. If a practice suspects a patient of fraud (such as fake or multiple ID) then they should register the patient but contact their local counter fraud specialist for advice.
- Patients should be invited to participate in a new patient health check, but appointments to see the doctor should not be withheld because of the delayed availability of a new patient check, nor should appointments be withheld because the patient isn't able to provide proof of ID.
- Practices must keep a record of patients that they refuse to register and make this available to the Commissioners on request. The practice must have reasonable non-discriminatory grounds, and they should inform the applicant in writing of their refusal and reason for it.
- Patients who are temporarily living within our Practice boundary for less than 3 months, can register as a temporary resident;
- Homeless and vulnerable patients are also entitled to register at the Practice;
- General Practices are bound over by legislation to provide emergency or immediately necessary treatment for any person, whether they are a registered patient or not.

APPENDIX 2 - SAMPLE REFUSAL LETTER

Dear [Insert Patient's Name],

Thank you for your application to register with the Practice. We are writing to advise that we are unable to accept your application to register for the following reason:-

[insert justifiable reason for refusal to register]

Other Practices in your area include:-

Practice 1
Address
Address
Town
Postcode

Practice2
Address
Address
Town
Postcode

In the event that you find difficulty in obtaining a new GP you may contact:-

[insert name and address of local NHS England office]

You are also able to carry out a search on-line for GP Practices in the area that are taking on new patients on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk

Yours sincerely

On behalf of [Practice Name]