

Guidance for community pharmacy teams supporting refugees and people seeking asylum in Greater Manchester

Background

The 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention describes a person seeking asylum who is outside of the country of their nationality “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” and “is unable to, or owing to such fear is unwilling to, avail himself of the protection of that country”. Their claim for refugee status has not been determined legally. In the UK this means that they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen. Following the change in legislation in 1999, asylum seekers arriving after April 2000 are provided with support through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

Eligible asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute may be provided with accommodation. Due to a lack of appropriate accommodation, this is often in hotels.

Greater Manchester local arrangements

The Home Office has engaged with 13 hotels across Greater Manchester in 6 localities (Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Trafford and Wigan) to provide contingency hotel accommodation. These arrangements are managed by Serco who work with local authorities in respect of these placements. There are also refugees and people seeking asylum in other localities across Greater Manchester.

The [GPhC Equality Guidance](#) published in December 2022 states “we expect you to take whatever steps you need to run your pharmacy in a way that encourages equality of opportunity and respect for diversity. You are responsible for creating and supporting an environment in which pharmacy professionals can:

- demonstrate their professionalism, and
- deliver person-centred care that takes account of the diverse needs and cultural differences in the communities you serve”

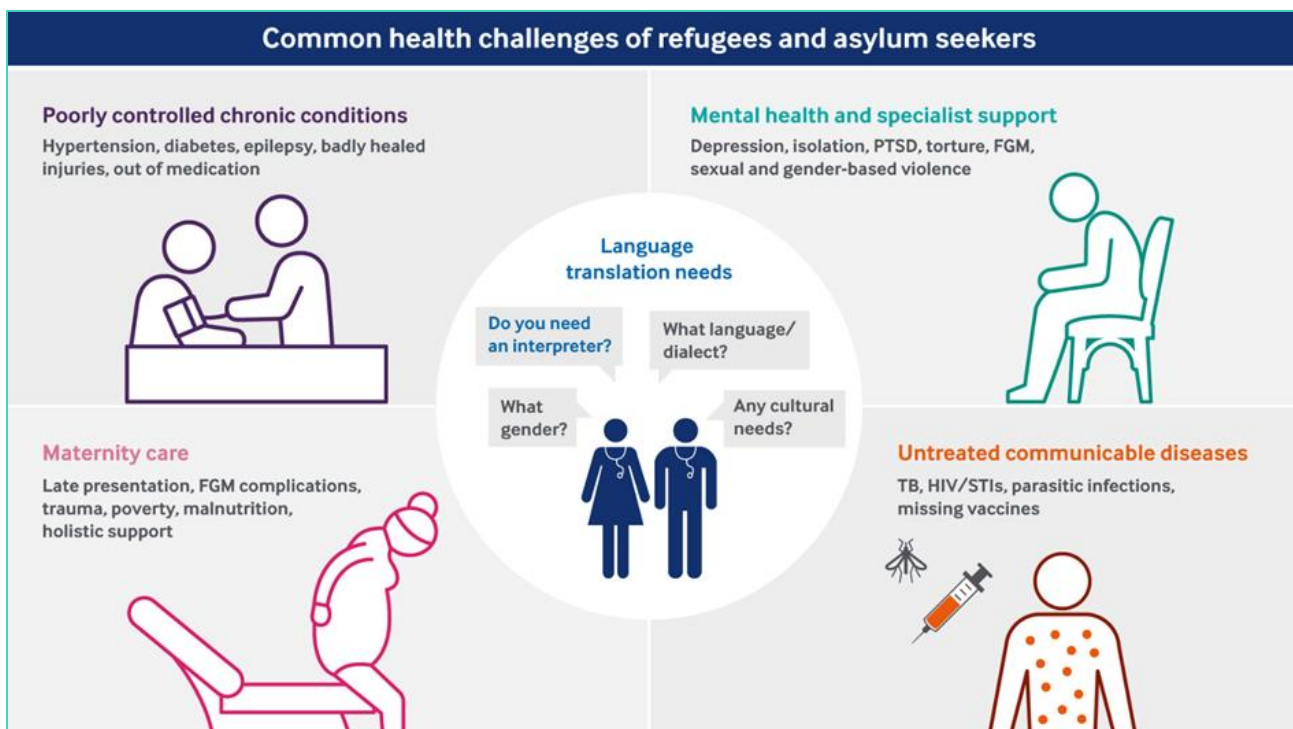
and that “when possible your approach to equality should include everyone, including people who may face disadvantage because of their socioeconomic background, their caring responsibilities, language barriers or other challenges.”

You should consider how your pharmacy may be impacted and, if appropriate, review your day-to-day practice and what changes may be needed to ensure that you meet the guidance.

Asylum seekers and healthcare

Asylum seekers and refugees can have complex health needs. As well as the health conditions found in their country of origin they may also have an increased incidence of poor mental health, cardiovascular events, complications in pregnancy, diabetes and hypertension.

The British Medical Association (BMA) have produced a handy infographic to illustrate the common health challenges of refugees and people seeking asylum.



Access to NHS services

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to the NHS even without ID, confirmation of address or immigration status, and the government has a migrant health guide available with

a language interpreting and translation guide (see migrant health toolkit in the 'Other resources' section of this guide).

As a resident within the local community, people seeking asylum are eligible to access primary care services and will be registered with a local GP service. They can also access both nationally and locally commissioned services, e.g. CPCS and Minor Ailments Service (MAS).

If you receive any queries about registering with a GP, access to NHS services and the HC2 charges certificate, you can provide this [leaflet](#).

Collection of NHS Prescriptions

People seeking asylum are usually supported by the National Asylum Support Service (NAAS). Those who are will automatically be sent a 6 month HC2 certificate. They will need to speak to their case worker for renewal before it expires. If they are not supported by NAAS then they will need to complete a HC1 and apply for exemption from charges.

When collecting prescriptions, if the patient is unable to provide you with a HC2 certificate or other proof of exemption, you should first check to see if they are RTEC exempt. If there is no evidence of RTEC exemption then there are two options:

1. The patient can declare the exemption they believe they are entitled to. The pharmacy team would mark on the prescription that evidence had not been seen and the patient would then receive their prescriptions free of charge. The BSA may then carry out their own checks to assess if the patient was entitled to free prescriptions. A patient may be issued with a Penalty Charge Notice if they have been found to have fraudulently claimed for exemption from charges.
2. Alternatively, the pharmacy would collect the prescription charge(s) as usual and provide the patient with an FP57 refund form. Once the patient receives their HC2 certificate the patient can then request a refund.

We would advise you to follow option 1 as, given that they only receive £47.39 per week to cover food, clothing, and toiletries (those that have meals provided receive less than £10 per week), it is unlikely that they would have the funds to pay the prescription charge(s). You must ensure that the complete guidance is provided.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding issues may be complex and are often linked to health needs. Refugees and people seeking asylum, including children, may have experienced significant trauma and be at high risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, human trafficking, or modern slavery both pre and post migration. If you have any safeguarding concerns you should follow your usual local process regardless of the person's immigration status. You can access guidance for all localities in Greater Manchester [here](#).

The NHS have produced rapid read guidance on [health and safeguarding refugees and people seeking asylum](#).

Language barriers

Refugees and people seeking asylum speak many languages, some with specific dialects. It is important to understand the correct language for them. Once you know it, you should record this in their PMR. The Refugee Council has designed a [language identification chart](#) which can help.

Where language is a problem in discussing health matters NHS England guidance stipulates that a professional interpreter should always be offered, rather than using family and friends to interpret. Working with professional interpreters will:

- ensure accuracy and impartiality of interpreting
- minimise legal risk of misinterpretation of important clinical information (for example informed consent to undergo treatment and procedures)
- minimise safeguarding risk (for example for victims of human trafficking while the trafficker may introduce themselves as a family member or friend and speak on behalf of the patient)
- allow family members and friends to attend appointments and support the patient (emotionally and with decision making) without the added pressure of needing to interpret
- foster trust with the patient

It is inappropriate to use children as interpreters. An interpreter should be present in all situations where there are concerns about child safety or gender-based violence.

Automated online translating services (for example Google translate) should be avoided in healthcare situations as there is no assurance of the quality of the translations.



Remember that not everyone can read or write in their preferred language or have the level of literacy required to understand health related written information, You should check this before offering translated written materials. Images, pictograms or diagrams may be more helpful when a person has low health literacy.

Local support

[Migrant Help](#) is a national charity that provides independent advice and guidance. They also have a free asylum helpline 0808 8010503 which is available 24 hours a day every day of the year, including Bank Holidays. Their [asylum advice guide](#) is available in 10 languages.

The main organisations are in Manchester but cover the whole of GM. There may be local groups near your pharmacy that can also provide support.

British Red Cross, Greater Manchester Refugee Services help asylum seekers and refugees to adapt to a new country. You can make a referral by emailing GMRS@redcross.org.uk

[Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit](#)

[Manchester City of Sanctuary](#)

[Manchester Refugee Support Network](#)

[Refugee Action in Greater Manchester](#)

Bolton - [Befriending Refugees and Asylum Seekers \(BRASS\)](#)

Manchester – [Boaz Trust](#). For people who have become homeless after seeking asylum

Manchester and Salford - [Revive](#). Drop in services cover whole of GM

Manchester and Salford – [Rainbow Haven](#)

Wigan – [Support for Wigan Arrivals Project \(SWAP\)](#)



Other resources

[CPPE Health Inequalities e-learning](#)

[CPPE culturally competent communication in person-centred care e-learning](#)

[Migrant Health Toolkit](#)

[BMA guidance – refugee and asylum seeker patient health toolkit](#)

[Doctors of the world Safe Surgeries Toolkit](#)

[Health information in other languages](#)

[Workforce wellbeing support](#) – free and confidential resources for healthcare professionals

[Maternity action](#) – support for maternity and parental rights at work and benefits for families

[Micro Rainbow](#) – support for LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees

[Hibiscus](#) – support for migrant women with immigration and criminal justice issues

Mental Health Support organisations

 <p>Text 85258 www.giveashout.org</p>	 <p>0300 123 3393 www.mind.org.uk</p>	 <p>0300 7729844 www.nopanic.org.uk</p>	 <p>0800 58 58 58 www.thecalmzone.net</p>
 <p>0808 808 4000 www.nationaldebtline.org</p>	 <p>116 123 www.samaritans.org.uk</p>	 <p>0808 808 1677 www.cruse.org.uk</p>	

Mental Health Support organisations for young people

<p>YoungMinds</p> <p><i>Are you a young person in crisis?</i></p> <p>Text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger for free 24/7 support if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.</p> <p>text YM to 85258</p> 	<p>The Mix</p> <p><i>Do you need help now?</i></p> <p>Crisis messenger text service provides free, 24/7 crisis support</p> <p>text THEMIX to 85258</p> 	<p>Papyrus</p> <p><i>If you are having thoughts of suicide or are concerned for a young person who might be you can contact HOPELINEUK for confidential support and advice.</i></p> <p>Call 0800 068 4141</p> <p>9am – midnight every day of the year</p> 	
<p>Samaritans</p> <p><i>Whatever you're going through, you can call anytime from any phone for FREE.</i></p> <p>Call 116 123</p> 	<p>YOUTH INSPIRED</p> 		<p>CALM</p> <p><i>A helpline for people in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason, who need to talk or find information and support.</i></p> <p>Call 0800 58 58 58</p> <p>5pm – midnight every day of the year</p> 

Embedded links full website addresses

Regulation and training

GPhC Equality Guidance for pharmacies

https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/document/gphc-equality-guidance-for-pharmacies-december-2022_0.pdf

CPPE health inequalities training <https://www.cppe.ac.uk/programmes//health-e-01>

CPPE culturally competent communication in person centred care training

<https://www.cppe.ac.uk/programmes//culture-e-02>

Healthcare

How to register with a GP <https://assets.nhs.uk/prod/documents/how-to-register-with-a-gp-asylum-seekers-and-refugees.pdf>

NHS migrant health toolkit <https://www.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/health-protection-migrant-health-guide>

BMA Refugee and asylum seeker patient health toolkit https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/refugees-overseas-visitors-and-vulnerable-migrants/refugee-and-asylum-seeker-patient-health-toolkit?_gl=1*bkcuy0*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTA2NTUwMTgyLjE2OTgyMzQ2NjI.*_ga_F8G3Q36DDR*M TY5ODIzNDY2MS4xLjAuMTY5ODIzNDY2MS4wLjAuMA..

Doctors of the world safe surgeries toolkit <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Safe-Surgeries-Toolkit-2021.pdf>

Workforce wellbeing support for HCPs working in GM

<https://greatermanchester.communitypharmacy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/118/2023/08/GM-Workforce-Wellbeing-Support-Poster-v2-August-2023.pdf>

Maternity action <https://maternityaction.org.uk/>

Safeguarding

GM Safeguarding contact details <https://gmintegratedcare.org.uk/about/how-it-works/keeping-you-safe/>

NHS rapid read health and safeguarding refugees and people seeking asylum

<https://thrivedn.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Health-Safeguarding-Migrant-Refugees-and-People-Seeking-Asylum-Rapid-Read-March-22-one-page-v0.8.pdf>

Language barriers

Refugee Council language identification chart https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Language_ID_chart.pdf

NHS health information in other languages <https://www.nhs.uk/about-us/health-information-in-other-languages/>

Voluntary, charity, community, and social enterprise support

Befriending Refugees and Asylum Seekers (BRASS) <https://brassbolton.org/wp/>

Boaz Trust <https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/>

Greater Manchester immigration aid unit <https://gmiau.org/>

Hibiscus <https://hibiscusinitiatives.org.uk/about-us/>

Manchester City of Sanctuary <https://manchester.cityofsanctuary.org/>

Manchester refugee support network <https://mrsn.org.uk/>

Micro Rainbow <https://microrainbow.org/>

Migrant Help <https://www.migranthelpuk.org/>

Migrant Help asylum advice guide <https://www.migranthelpuk.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/translated-advice>

Rainbow Haven <https://www.rainbowhaven.org.uk/>

Refugee Action in Greater Manchester <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/refugee-action-greater-manchester/>

Revive <https://www.revive-uk.org/drop-in-services/>

Support for Wigan Arrivals Project <https://www.swapwigan.org/>