

Overseas visitors factsheet - March 2025

This information is for people who are visiting England from abroad.

The NHS provides free hospital treatment to people who are 'ordinarily resident' in the UK. You must live here lawfully and on a settled basis to receive free treatment.

If you're visiting us from another country and you use our services, you may have to pay for your care, even if you're a former UK resident.

There are a few circumstances when you might still be entitled to free healthcare. These are listed on the Department of Health & Social Care's website.

NHS hospitals have a legal obligation to identify patients who are not entitled to free NHS treatment and to charge them for the treatment they receive.

There is no charge for certain types of treatment such as:

- Urgent or emergency healthcare treatment in an Emergency Department (A&E).
- Some infectious diseases, sexually transmitted infections and family planning services.

If you have to pay for your treatment, please contact our Overseas Visitors' Team who will be able to help and answer your questions: OverseasVisitors@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Chargeable Urgent Treatment

We are legally required to charge you for:

- Maternity Care
- Intensive Care Unit (ICU) treatment
- Critical Care Unit (CCU) treatment
- All treatment that you may need following a visit to the Emergency Department, where you are admitted to hospital or need to return for a follow up appointment.

In the above circumstances you will always be treated promptly and you won't be turned away. We will always provide treatment that is immediately necessary or urgent. In some cases we may need to check with a clinician to confirm that treatment is immediately necessary. Where treatment is judged to not be immediately necessary, we reserve the right to cancel the appointment or to take an upfront deposit, which you will have to pay before attending.

Chargeable Non- Urgent Treatment

You will need to pay for treatment, if you are referred to the hospital, usually via a GP, to attend as an 'outpatient' or 'day case', or for diagnostic or investigative treatments, which could also lead to an 'inpatient stay'. This includes virtual non face-to-face appointments.

We are legally required to collect a deposit before any elective (non-urgent) treatment takes place.

Proving you're entitled to free NHS treatment

If you have received a request to provide your identification documents, you should provide these as soon as possible.

To help us to check if you are entitled to free healthcare, you will need to provide four separate documents – one to prove your identity and three to prove your address. See below for which documents you can bring:

Proof of Identity

- Current signed passport.
- Residence permit issued by the Home Office.
- EU or Swiss national identity photo-card.
- Valid UK photo-card driving license.
- Valid armed or police forces photographic identity card
- Citizen card

It's best to bring proof of your right to reside in the UK. This will help us to determine your eligibility more quickly and avoid delays to your treatment. For example, this could be a:

- UK or Irish passport.
- Proof of settled/pre-settled status.
- Visa or residence permit issued by the Home Office.
- Biometric residence card or permit.
- Asylum registration card.
- Share code to digital Visa.

Proof of Address

- Recent original utility bill (gas, electric, water, telephone - mobile not acceptable).
- Council tax bill (current year).
- Bank, building society or credit union statement or passbook.
- Recent original mortgage statement from a recognised lender.
- Current council or housing association rent book or tenancy agreement.
- Notification letter from Department for Work and Pensions or HM Revenue and Customs confirming your right to benefit payments or state pension.

Please note this list is non-exhaustive and other documents may be considered. All details need to be in the patient's name.

Further information

For more detailed information please see the Department of Health & Social Care's latest guidance on how NHS healthcare charges apply to overseas visitors.

You can also contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service: PALS@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

The following charities can also provide more information and advice:

- Acre - alliance for cohesion and racial equality
- Citizens Advice
- Communicare - information, advice and support for people in Reading
- Refugee Support Group
- Stepchange

We've worked with Healthwatch on this factsheet to try to make it as simple as possible to understand. However, if there's anything that you need help understanding, please contact our Overseas Visitors' team. Healthwatch is an independent champion for people who use health and social care services.