

HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM (UK) FOR TWELVE MONTHS?

What if I should need hospital treatment?

Under the current Regulations, anyone who has been living lawfully in the UK for twelve months immediately prior to receiving National Health Service (NHS) hospital treatment in England is fully exempt from charges for that treatment. Any temporary absence abroad during that period, of not more than 3 months, may be counted as part of the twelve-month qualifying period. This exemption applies to your spouse and children (under the age of 16 or 19 if in further education) if they are living with you in the UK on a permanent basis. When you go to hospital you can expect to be asked to show that you are entitled to live in the UK, as well as that you have actually been living here for the last year.

In common with those ordinarily resident in the UK, anyone who meets the criteria of ordinary residence or is exempt from charges for hospital treatment will have to pay statutory NHS charges, eg prescription charges, unless they also qualify for exemption from these, and will have to go onto waiting lists for treatment where appropriate.

If I should need hospital treatment what documents will I need?

The Regulations place a responsibility on individual hospitals to determine whether, in accordance with the Regulations, a patient is liable to be charged for treatment or not. In order to establish entitlement, hospitals can ask you to provide documentation that supports your claim that you have been living lawfully in the UK for twelve months. It is for you to decide what to supply, however examples of evidence could include:

- leave to enter documents issued by HO, visitors visa/work permit/student visa etc is still valid;
- utility bills, housing contracts, (note that you do not need to have been resident at the same address for the whole 12 months).

Am I entitled to access Primary Care Services?

Any person living here lawfully and on a settled basis is regarded as resident in the UK and therefore entitled to free primary medical services. On taking up residence in the UK it is advisable to approach a GP practice and apply to register onto its list of NHS patients. The practice may choose to accept or decline your application. An application may be refused if the practice has reasonable grounds for doing so, such as if you are living outside their practice area. A practice would not be able to refuse your application on the grounds of race, gender, social class, age, religion, sexual

orientation, appearance, disability or medical condition. If you experience problems finding or registering with a practice please contact the local Primary Care Trust.

Do I have to pay for emergency treatment if I have an accident?

Regardless of residential status or nationality, emergency treatment given at Primary Care Practices (a GP) or in Accident and Emergency departments or a Walk-in Centre providing services similar to those of a hospital Accident and Emergency department is free of charge.

In the case of treatment given in an Accident and Emergency department or Walk-in Centre the exemption from charges will cease to apply once the patient is formally admitted as an in-patient (this will include emergency operations and admittance to High Dependency Units) or registered at an outpatient clinic.

Am I entitled to help with the costs of non-emergency NHS treatment?

For information on help with health costs please see HC11 'Are you entitled to help with health costs?' that is available from main post offices, social security offices and NHS hospitals. HC11 is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/07/80/85/04078085.pdf>

Please note the above information gives general guidance only and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of law. In all cases the Regulations place the responsibility of deciding who is entitled to receive free hospital treatment with the hospital providing treatment.