

Haringey Welcome campaign for access to healthcare for migrant residents of Haringey

Report on a mini-survey: Access to primary healthcare – GP surgeries

Background

1. In late 2019, following reports that migrants in Haringey often struggle to access primary healthcare services via GP surgeries as they are wrongly¹ told they require ID and proof of address to register, Haringey Welcome initiated a survey of access to primary healthcare for migrants.
2. The aim of the survey was to ascertain the level of awareness of relevant guidance regarding registration among GP surgery staff, in order to inform future training to ensure respect for migrant health rights.

Method

3. A survey flyer was developed by members of Haringey Welcome for the use of volunteers (see Appendix B). Volunteers were recruited from within and outside Haringey Welcome to hold telephone interviews as 'secret shoppers'. Surgeries were allocated to volunteers based broadly on their residence or on their ability to devote time to the activity.
4. The flyer included the following sample script for volunteers to adapt as needed:

*I am calling for a friend who does not have UK residency status and who has no proof of address as she is staying with me for the moment.
I live in your catchment area - can she come over to register with you ?
If she has no ID can she still register?
If she has no formal proof of address but is definitely living in your catchment area can she still register ?
Can she use someone else's address to receive letters from the GP?
She is scared of being reported to the Home Office if she approaches a doctor. What should I tell her?
She does not speak English. How can she register?*

5. A checklist with nine questions was also provided for volunteers to fill out for each GP surgery surveyed:

Q	Date:	Time:	Y/N	Comments
1	Name of GP practice			
2	Role of person you spoke to			
3	Agreed to register?			
4	Agreed to register if no UK residency?			
5	Agreed to register if no formal ID?			
6	Agreed to register if no proof of address?			
7	Agreed to alternative address?			
8	Assured would not be reported to HO?			
9	Provision of language services?			

¹ NHS guidance does not consider these to be reasonable grounds to refuse registration: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-practice/>

6. There are 38 GP surgeries in Haringey CCG divided roughly equally among 4 Localities: West, Central, South East and North East (listed at Appendix A) and the initial intention was to survey all of them by 31 March 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 lockdown the survey was suspended after 17 of the 38 surgeries had been contacted for comment. The last surgery was contacted on 13 March 2020 and responded that it was suspending all new registrations for 3 weeks due to the public health crisis. This report therefore describes interim outcomes based on the results received from the 17 surveyed surgeries.
7. The 17 surveyed surgeries were distributed as follows amongst the localities:

Locality	Number of surgeries	Number surveyed
West	10	6
Central	8	3
Southeast	9	3
Northeast	11	5
Total	38	17

Results

8. Of the 17 practices surveyed, two were not reachable by phone and one of these would only accept registration online or in person. Results below relate to the remaining 15 GP practices.

Role of person spoken to

9. Calls were answered by a receptionist. In two cases when questions arose that the receptionist felt they could not answer, a practice manager or another colleague was consulted. In one case the practice surveyed was visited in person by a real patient and seen first by a receptionist and then by medical staff.

Registration with no formal ID

10. Of 15 GP practices, 10 practices refused to register a patient if they had no formal ID. Of these, the receptionist at one practice said that for migrants or people without formal ID they usually ask for a letter from what she called 'the world immigration agency'. A receptionist at another clinic who said she was in charge of registrations offered to see the patient privately for £75. One practice said that in any event they had suspended new registrations for 3 weeks due to coronavirus. Of the remaining five practices, one was unsure if they would agree to register such a patient but they were currently not registering anyone as they were short of GPs. Four agreed to register the patient.

Registration with no formal proof of address

11. Of the 15 GP practices, 8 either refused to register a patient who had no formal proof of address (5) or were not asked as they had already by that point in the conversation refused to register a patient without ID or residency status (3). One agreed to register the patient

only if their host's address appeared on a letter from the Home Office as the patient's address. One agreed on condition that the patient had a passport. One agreed on condition that the patient had a passport or ID as well as a letter from the host confirming she was staying in the catchment area. Four agreed on condition that they had a letter from the host confirming she was staying with them. One practice agreed unequivocally to register the patient.

12. Those practices that agreed to register the patient without proof of address also agreed to arrange to send letters to the address of the host or an agreed alternative. One of the practices that refused to register the patient said they would only send post to an alternative address if the address was on a Home Office letter.

Registration without UK residency status

13. Of the 15 GP practices, 7 refused to register a patient who had no UK residency status. One said 'maybe' they would register her, if she had 'a letter from the Home Office'. One said they would register her only if she had already applied to the Home Office for residency in which case her application letter would suffice. They added that if she had not applied she would be an illegal immigrant and they would not take her on as 'we don't deal with illegal immigrants'. One said they would wish to write to the NHS to find out if the country of nationality of the patient was 'on the list of countries which get free treatment' and would only register her if she was on this list, preferably with confirmation in writing. One was unsure if they would agree to register such a patient but they were currently not registering anyone as they were short of GPs. One agreed as long as the patient had proof of ID. Two agreed on condition that she arrived with a letter from the person hosting her confirming that she was living in their home. One agreed unequivocally to register the patient.

Data sharing with the Home Office

14. Many of the practices were not asked this question as by that point they had refused to register the patient. One practice when asked if they could assure the patient she would not be reported to the Home Office responded 'No, don't come until you have a passport'. The same practice also asked to know what country the patient was from. Another practice said they could not provide such assurances and would be legally liable if they encouraged illegal immigration. One practice said they don't report people to the Home Office but their registration form goes to the NHS and they don't know what the NHS does with it. One practice said yes, they would not report the patient and they don't deal with the Home Office.

Language services

15. Many of the practices were not asked this question as by that point they had refused to register the patient. Of the practices asked, two said the patient should bring an interpreter. Three said they had access to language services. Two of these mentioned Language Line and the third mentioned 'an interpreting machine' that could be set up if given advance notice.

Other observations

16. Where there was a website and it was surveyed, ID, proof of address and place of birth were required. There was no mention on any website of exceptions to this rule or any provisions for homeless people, asylum seekers and other migrants, or people without formal ID.

Conclusion and general comments

17. Approximately two-thirds of the practices surveyed refused to register a patient who had no UK residency status, no formal ID or no recognised proof of address. Only one practice agreed to register such a patient with no prior conditions.
18. Although these are partial results they point very clearly to an urgent need for training and awareness-raising activities among GP surgeries in all parts of the borough in order to encourage compliance with national guidance.
19. Further work may be needed to investigate why some practices appear to have more awareness than others of the needs and rights of migrants and other vulnerable patients in the borough. This does not appear to be determined by locality within the borough. However, five of the practices surveyed have engaged in the past with Doctors of the World and received materials from them in relation to migrant rights. Of these, three showed better awareness of the issues than others. This would suggest that similar activities across the borough would be beneficial. It would appear that such training is needed not only for medical staff but also and in particular for reception and office management staff.

May 2020

The survey and report were coordinated and written by Miri Weingarten with contributions from Lucy Nabijou, Dr Tricia Bohn, Julie Escott, Ruth Valentine and Annabel Gregory.



Appendix A – GP Surgeries in Haringey, by locality.

West Locality

1. Alexandra Surgery, 125 Alexandra Park Rd, London N22 7UN
2. The 157 Medical Practice (Dr Ramnani), 157 Stroud Green Road, London N4 3PZ
3. Christchurch Hall Surgery, 20 Edison Road, London N8 8AE
4. Crouch Hall Road Surgery, 48 Crouch Hall Road, London N8 8HJ
5. Muswell Hill Practice, 1 Duke's Avenue, London N10 2PS
6. Highgate Group Practice, 44 North Hill, London N6 4QA
7. Queens Avenue Surgery, 46 Queen's Avenue, London N10 3BJ
8. Queenswood Medical Practice, 151 Park Road, London, N8 8JD
9. Rutland House Surgery, 40 Colney Hatch Lane, London N10 1DX
10. Vale Practice, 50-66 Park Road, London N8 8SU

Central Locality

11. Arcadian Gardens, 1 Arcadian Gardens, London, N22 4RH
12. Bounds Green Group Practice, Gordon Road, London N11 2PF
13. Cheshire Road Surgery, 22 Cheshire Road, London N22 8JJ
14. Hornsey Park Surgery, 114 Turnpike Lane, London N8 0PH
15. Stuart Crescent Health Centre (High Road) , 8 Stuart Crescent, London N22 5NJ
16. The Old Surgery, 527 Green Lanes, London N8 0RP
17. The Staunton Group Practice, Morum House Medical Centre, Bounds Green Road, London N22 4HE
18. Westbury Medical Centre, 205 Westbury Avenue, London N22 6RX

South East Locality

19. Bridge House Medical Practice, 96 Umfreville Road, London N4 1TL
20. Grove Road Surgery, 1 Grove Road, London N15 5HJ
21. Havergal Surgery, 9-10 Havergal Villas, Green Lanes, London N15 3DY
22. JS Medical Practice, 107 Phillip Lane, London N15 4JR
23. JS Medical Practice, 104-108 Park Lane, N17 0JP
24. JS Medical Practice, 26 Westbury Avenue N22 6RS
25. Spur Road Surgery, 1 Spur Road, London N15 4AA
26. St Ann's Road Surgery, The Laurels Healthy Living Centre, 256 St Ann's Road, London N15 5AZ
27. West Green Road Surgery, 339-41 West Green Road, London N15 3PB

North East Locality

28. Broadwater Farm Health Centre, 2a Willan Road, London N15 6QP
29. Bruce Grove Primary Health Centre, 461-463 High Road, London N17 6QB
30. Charlton House, 582 High Road, London N17 6SB
31. Dowsett Rd Surgery, 57 Dowsett Road, London N17 9DL
32. Fernlea Surgery, 114 High Road, London N15 6JR
33. Lawrence House Surgery, 107 Phillip Lane, London N15 4JR
34. Morris House Group Practice, Lordship Lane Health Centre, 239 Lordship Lane, London N17 6AA
35. Somerset Gardens Family Health Centre, 4 Creighton Road, London N17 8NW
36. Tottenham Health Centre, 749 High Road, London N22 6RS
37. Tottenham Hale Medical Practice, Lebus Street, London N17 9FD
38. Tynemouth Medical Practice, Tynemouth Road, London N15 4RH

Appendix B – Secret Shopper flyer and checklist

Haringey Welcome GP ‘Secret Shopper’ Questionnaire:

6. Identify the address of your allocated GP surgery on a map
7. Phone the GP surgery and speak to the receptionist or to any other member of staff.
8. Ask for the staff member’s role if it is not clear from the conversation. There is no need to ask for a name.
9. Fill out the **checklist** overleaf, using the answers to the suggested questions below

Suggested scenario:

I am calling for a friend who does not have UK residency status and who has no proof of address as she is staying with me for the moment.

I live in your catchment area - can she come over to register with you ?

If she has no ID can she still register?

If she has no formal proof of address but is definitely living in your catchment area can she still register ?

Can she use someone else’s address to receive letters from the GP?

She is scared of being reported to the Home Office if she approaches a doctor, what should I tell her?

She does not speak English, how can she register?

Checklist

	Date:	Time:	Y/N	Comments
1	Name of GP practice			
2	Role of person you spoke to			
3	Agreed to register?			
4	Agreed to register if no UK residency?			
5	Agreed to register if no formal ID?			
6	Agreed to register if no proof of address?			
7	Agreed to alternative address?			
8	Assured would not be reported to HO?			
9	Provision of language services?			

10. Email the checklist to: refugeeswelcomeharingey@gmail.com

Thank you!

