

Access to NHS for mission partners during their stays in England - registering with a GP

GP Contract Regulations state that NHS England **must** remove a patient from a practice's list if the patient intends to be away from the UK for a period of at least three months, but as there is no obligation on practices to inform NHS England if a patient is absent from the UK, there is some discretion on the GP practice. However, the removal is to ensure the practice does not receive payments for patients to whom they are not responsible for providing primary medical services, so there is some rationale behind it. **Do not be either surprised or alarmed if you are removed from a GP practice list whilst you are overseas.**

The most recent guidance for GP practices can be found in the *Primary Medical Care Policy and Guidance Manual* which is freely available [online](#), and can be referred to if mission partners find that their GP practice has removed them from its list and are finding it difficult to re-register now they are back in the UK. The relevant section is **4.4 Who can register for free primary care services?** which can be found from p145 onwards.

If you have difficulty finding a GP practice who will accept you onto their list, you can contact [NHS England](#) who can assign you to a practice.

Please note some changes you need to be aware of when registering with a GP:

- GPs are now expected to help identify patients with a non-UK issued EHIC or S1 form, or who may be subject to the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015.
- The new guidance states that practices are required to provide all new permanent patients with the revised [GMS1 form](#), which includes optional supplementary questions for those people not ordinarily resident in the UK to help determine a patient's eligibility to free NHS secondary healthcare.
- GPs have been given [guidance](#) for patients filling in the GMS1 form, but please note that it clearly states on page 3 of the guidance that *"no-one should be denied NHS primary medical care or refused registration at a GP practice because they do not complete the supplementary questions on the new GMS1 form"*.
- The supplementary questions are only to be completed where the patient is not ordinarily resident in the UK. If you consider yourself definitely or likely to be deemed ordinarily resident there is no need for you to complete these. (But if you are clear that you are an overseas visitor, please complete.)
- There is no requirement to be ordinarily resident in the UK to register with a GP practice as an NHS patient. The patient **MUST** be registered by the practice, unless the practice has reasonable grounds to decline (not related to their residency status).
- GP practices are not required to make a decision on a patient's chargeable status, nor are they required to assess if charges apply to overseas visitors. This responsibility remains with the NHS Trust/Overseas Visitor Managers working within secondary healthcare providers - should the patient find that they need to access secondary healthcare.

Please note that if you are staying in the UK for under three months your GP practice might ask you to register as a temporary patient (using form [GMS3](#)). Whilst this could lead the practice to assume you are potentially chargeable, do be assured that if you need secondary healthcare your chargeable status would need to be verified by the NHS Trust/Overseas Visitor Manager at that stage – at which point you can make your case that you are ordinarily resident. You could request to be registered as a permanent patient using the GMS1 form if you wish to.

Further information, and downloads covering ordinary residence, guidance on meeting the ordinary residence test, and FAQs, are all available from our [webpage](#).