

The Access to Healthcare Team

The Access to Healthcare Team is responsible for identifying Patients that may not be entitled to free NHS treatment and may be chargeable. It is the responsibility of the team to examine the legislation and make an assessment based on the information provided as to whether charges apply. Patients will be required to provide proof of entitlement by completing a questionnaire and provide documentary evidence to prove their circumstances.

Some visitors may be able to receive a limited amount of free treatment. A visitor is any person who is not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland.

The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 sets out how health services shall be available to visitors to Northern Ireland at a charge and sets out the services and categories of visitor that are exempt from charges.

The Health Service is primarily for the benefit of people who live in Northern Ireland. Eligibility for health services relates to whether a patient is ordinarily resident and living lawfully in Northern Ireland. Nationals of countries outside of the EEA must have indefinite leave to remain in the UK in order to be considered ordinarily resident or have a special exemption to be here, otherwise charges will apply. All Health & Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland have a responsibility to establish whether an individual seeking hospital treatment is eligible to access publicly-funded treatment.

Patients Visiting from Europe and Switzerland/ Regulation (EC) 883/2004 and 987/2009

If you are visiting from Europe you must provide a valid European Health Insurance Card, (EHIC) or you obtain get a provisional replacement certificate (PRC) in place of an EHIC card, which covers immediately necessary care during your visit for treatment that cannot wait until you return home.

Patients Visiting from a Non EEA Country

If you are visiting from Non-EEA countries you usually need permission to be here and have a visa. You may have to pay for your treatment, unless you have paid the health levy to the UK Home office, or qualify under a reciprocal agreement between your home country of residence. It is vitally important that you obtain holiday insurance in advance of your visit.

Cross Border Workers

If you travel from another EEA Member state to Northern Ireland to work on a regular basis and are registered with HMRC as a worker, you are considered a cross border worker or a frontier worker and are exempt from charges and entitled to access services in Northern Ireland on the same basis as a person who is ordinarily resident here. Family members of cross border workers are not entitled to the same exemption.

Visiting Patients under the Provision of EU Directive 2011/24/EU

The Directive covers planned and emergency care. Under the terms of the Directive, patients are required to pay the cost of any healthcare they receive in advance and apply to their health authority of residence for reimbursement. However, Trusts may not accept a visiting patient for planned healthcare if this would be to the detriment of patients resident here on a waiting list for NHS treatment.