

Refugee Women Digital Empowerment and Connect Project

Guide to accompany workshop 4



Women's Health

This guide has been developed as a supporting tool for women taking part in the Digital Refugee Women Empowerment and Connect project workshops. It is targeted at women who have refugee status, humanitarian protection or refugee family reunion and live in the UK. The project is funded by the Home Office Resettlement Asylum Support and Integration Directorate.

We would like to thank the members of the VOICES network and Voices Ambassadors who have supported the creation of these legacy documents. Materials are available in English, Amharic, Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish (Sorani) Somali, Tigrinya and Urdu. It is hoped that refugee women who were not able to take part in workshops may still find it of use to work through and explore the information here at their own pace.

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Preface

This tool is unable to fully explore and explain health services and entitlements in the UK but hopes to provide key information about how health systems can be accessed and your rights within this. This guide does not provide medical information and is not a legal document. We refer to relevant health services and specialist organisations who can provide tailored information for individuals where possible.

Throughout this guide you will find embedded links within the text, which if you click on these will take you to the website mentioned. For example, if you click [here](#) you will be taken to the British Red Cross website. Where possible, we have tried to include links to translated resources, but many of the links in this guide are for information which is in English. Whilst we acknowledge the limitations of automated translation, we have given information about how to use this function in guide two.

It is also important to state that information in these guides may vary depending on whether you are living in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. Where possible we have tried to reference devolved contexts where information is different.

Key terms

General Practitioner (GP) - a GP is a family medical doctor and main point of contact to access general healthcare.

National Health Service (NHS) – publicly funded healthcare systems of the UK

Public Health – the health of the population, including prevention of infectious diseases.

Sexual Health - a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. It is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity.

Statutory services – services regulated by laws, usually because they must uphold specific duties



Who do I go to for help with health questions or problems?

The National Health Service (NHS) provides health services to people living in the UK. These are devolved systems in the four different countries of the UK – NHS England, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales, and Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. We will use NHS as an umbrella term throughout this guide, referring to the overall health system, and specify where something is particular to a country.

Everyone has the right to access the following services **for free** regardless of their immigration status. This includes:

- Registering with a General Practitioner (GP) service
- Attending a Walk-In Centre (NHS) clinic
- NHS dental services and ophthalmic services (sight test)
- Diagnosis of infectious and contagious diseases (TB, HIV, Covid-19)
- Family planning services
- Palliative care
- NHS 111 advice
- Accident and emergency services
- Treatment of any physical or mental condition that is due to sexual or domestic abuse, FGM or torture.

Whether you can get other free NHS services depends on the length and purpose of your residence in the UK, not your nationality. You still have access to NHS healthcare even if you have a visa that says you have no recourse to public funds.

Some people are considered “exempt” from paying for most NHS services because they fall into a special category of visa holder. Refugees, asylum seekers and their dependents are one such category. More information on this can be found from **Doctors of the World** in their **Migrant Right to Healthcare** document, [here](#).

Even if you are for example a refugee and entitled to free NHS healthcare, you may have to pay for some NHS services like prescriptions or glasses or dental treatment depending on your income, age or where you live.

All women in the UK are entitled to NHS maternity care regardless of immigration status – however some women may have to pay for that care, depending on their immigration status. As already noted, refugees and asylum seekers are exempt, but if you are another category of migrant and have more questions, information on your entitlement to free NHS maternity care (in England) can be found on the [Maternity Action](#) website.

Prescriptions are free for under 16s and those over 60 in England and are free regardless of your age if you live in and are registered with a GP in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

Rights to access health services

- You have the right to register with a GP practice regardless of your immigration status and proof of address
- You have the right to request a female doctor and interpreter
- You have the right to see a GP alone
- You have the right to expect your treatment and diagnosis will be treated confidentially by the GP, nurses and staff. There are some reasons where information must be shared (such as for public health), but this will usually be discussed with you first.

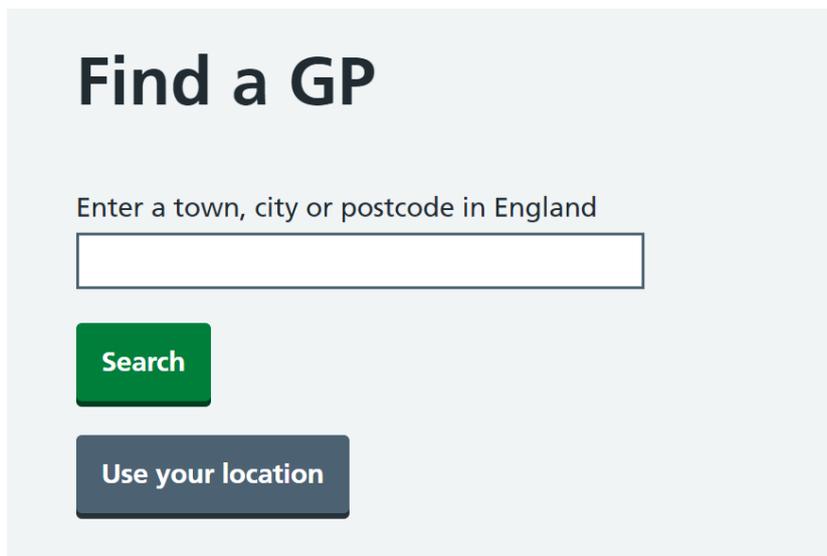
- You have the right to NHS Maternity care
- It is essential to register all children with a GP practice.
- The right to access healthcare and the right to access **free** healthcare are different. Some people have to pay for care. Refugees and their dependents are exempt from paying for NHS healthcare.
- What you have to pay for may vary depending on which part of the UK you live in.

Accessing Health Services

How to find and register with a GP

A GP is the first doctor you will see when accessing healthcare, they provide general medical care and make referrals on to other specialist medical services. Even if you are not currently ill it is important to register with a GP and keep your GP updated about any changes in your contact details.

Searching online can be an effective way to find a GP, whether you have moved to a new area or wish to change GP. GP surgeries usually accept patients within a geographical boundary, such as a within a certain number of miles from the relevant surgery. To find a GP near you, you can search local GP practices on the relevant [NHS website](#) by entering your postcode.



Find a GP

Enter a town, city or postcode in England

Search

Use your location

The example above shows the NHS England website. You can find the same search function here for [HSC Northern Ireland](#), here for [NHS Scotland](#), and here for [NHS Wales](#).

The results should allow you also to check information such as opening times and patient reviews, which may be helpful in your decision to register with a specific practice.

To complete registration with a GP the [NHS England website](#) gives the below options:

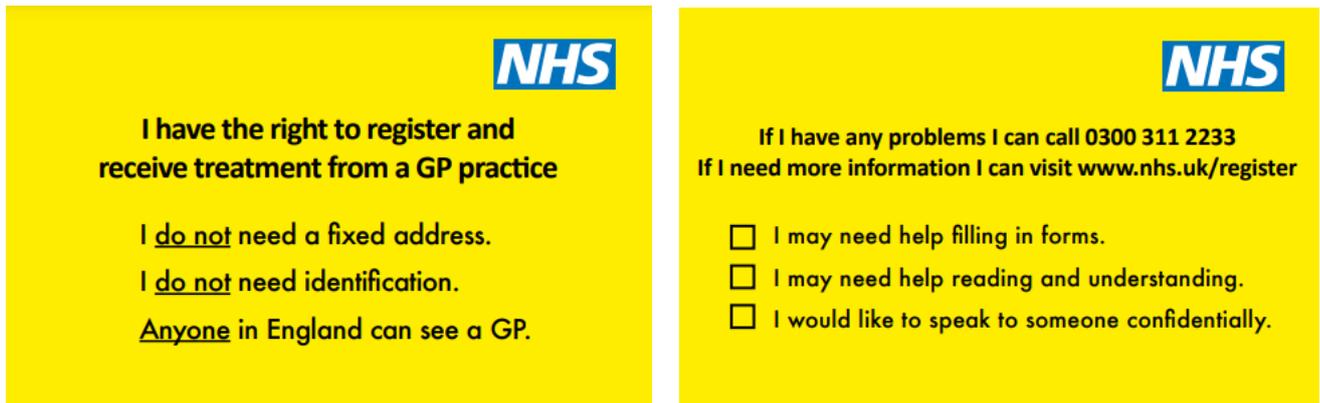
- Check the GP surgery website to see if you can register online
- Download a [GMS1 registration form](#) on www.gov.uk
- Pick up a registration form from the GP surgery

Due to COVID-19 many more GP surgeries are offering online registration, but it is still important to check your preferred GP surgery website to see if you can do this or whether you need to visit the surgery to complete registration.

You **do not need proof of address or immigration status** to register with a GP surgery, however there can sometimes be a difference between rights and practice, so it is not uncommon to be asked to show evidence of these.

The NHS says that anyone having problems registering with a GP surgery can phone the **NHS England Customer Contact Centre** on **0300 311 22 33**.

Together the NHS and Doctors of the World have produced [GP access cards](#) which can also be shown in a GP surgery if a person is having difficulties registering.



NHS

I have the right to register and receive treatment from a GP practice

I do not need a fixed address.
I do not need identification.
Anyone in England can see a GP.

NHS

If I have any problems I can call 0300 311 2233
If I need more information I can visit www.nhs.uk/register

I may need help filling in forms.
 I may need help reading and understanding.
 I would like to speak to someone confidentially.

Doctors of the World can help advocate to register you with a GP if you face problems.

0808 1647 686 or clinic@doctorsoftheworld.org.uk

Once registered with a GP surgery, you may be able to use online access to do the following:

- contact your GP for advice and support.
- order repeat prescriptions
- see parts of your health record, including information about medicines, vaccinations, and test results.
- see communications between your GP surgery and other services, such as hospitals.
- book, check or cancel appointments with a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional.

How to find an NHS Dentist

Dentistry is one of the few services which has an upfront charge for all NHS patients. You can find information about costs here for [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

To register with a dentist, find a dental surgery that accepts NHS patients and is convenient for you, whether it's near your home or work, and phone them to register. Use the above links to search online for Dentistry Services where you live. Once registered see if there are any appointments available.

If after contacting several dental surgeries, you still cannot find a dentist accepting NHS patients you can:

- call NHS England's Customer Contact Centre on **0300 311 2233** if you live in England.
- contact the [local Health and Social Care Board](#) in your area if you live in Northern Ireland
- contact your [local Health Board](#) if you live in Scotland. The [Scottish Dental website](#) also has some useful information, including videos translated into other languages.
- contact your [local Dental Helpline](#) if you are in Wales which will give you information for your local Health Board.

Health Services information and NHS 111

If you have an urgent medical problem and do not know what to do, you can call **111**. This service is available 24hrs a day, 7 days a week and operates across most of the UK (see below) using the same phone number. Calls to 111 are free from mobiles and landlines.

When calling, you will be asked to answer questions about your symptoms and depending on this assessment you will be connected to a nurse, emergency dentist, pharmacist or a GP who will then give you advice on what to do next. **You can also ask for an interpreter or translator if you need one.**

The [111 NHS England website](#) gives the following information about accessing the 111 service in languages other than English:

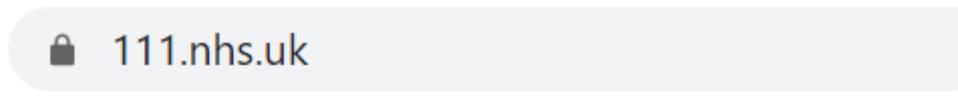
If reading English is hard for you

Call 111. The 111 phone service can get an interpreter to help you.

If speaking in English is hard for you

If you're told to book a nurse call back, you can tell the nurse what language you'd like an interpreter to use.

If you need to contact a hospital or a GP surgery, interpreter help will usually be available.



If you need urgent health information for people aged 5 and over only you can also use an online function on the NHS111 website to answer questions about your main symptoms, find out when and where to get help, and be contacted by a nurse if needed.

www.111.nhs.uk (England)

www.nhs24.scot (Scotland)

www.111.wales.nhs.uk (Wales) The website notes that NHS 111 is currently only available in [certain areas of Wales](#) and gives an alternative phone number for other areas.

There is no website for the 111 service in Northern Ireland, but the 111 phone number can still be used for information on public health concerns like COVID-19. Information about out-of-hours GP services in Northern Ireland can be found [here](#).

Accidents and Emergency Situations

If you are in, or witness, a medical emergency call **999** or **112** for Emergency Services. If you need an interpreter, you can tell the operator what language you need, and an interpreter will be connected to the call.

You can also search for the closest Accident and Emergency (A&E), or Emergency Department (ED) Services to you on the NHS website in [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and **Wales**.

Each website will only bring up search results for A&E or ED services in that country.

Walk-in centres, Minor Injuries and Urgent Care Units

The NHS recommends that you can go to an urgent treatment centre if you need urgent medical attention, but it's not a life-threatening situation e.g. cuts, bruises, burns and stings or broken bones, sprains, or ear, eye or throat infections. Follow these links for information for walk-in services in [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

First Aid

Knowing what to do when someone has an injury is important. The British Red Cross First Aid app is free may be useful to download and familiarise yourself with. While you should always **call 999** in an emergency, knowing first aid could help you save a life while you are waiting on professional help.



You can obtain training on first aid from British Red Cross, St John Ambulance in England Wales and Northern Ireland or St Andrews First Aid in Scotland, and other providers.

British Red Cross – www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk

St Johns Ambulance – www.sja.org.uk

NHS Help with Health Costs

Depending on where you live, your age, and other factors, you could be entitled to help with some common healthcare costs, such as free prescriptions, eye tests or dental treatment. This includes support based on your income, whether you are in full-time education, or if you are pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months.

To show eligibility for help with health costs you will be provided with a document called a **HC2 Certificate**.

In England and Wales an [online tool](#) can be used to check eligibility for help with health costs. There is also [translated information](#) about how to access telephone advice about entitlements in other languages.

Information about help with health costs such as dentistry, eye tests and glasses in Northern Ireland can be found [here](#).

Information on health costs and help with these in Scotland can be found [here](#).

Useful Websites

[Doctors of the World](#) provide information translated into a range of languages about access to health services, wellbeing, COVID-19 and other public health issues.

Your **GP Surgery website** may also have information available online about issues such as minor illnesses, contraception, preventative healthcare, self-care and out-of-hours services.

As well as supplying information about accessing health services, the **NHS websites** for [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) provide information about a range of health conditions.

Health A to Z

[A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#) [R](#) [S](#) [T](#) [U](#) [V](#) [W](#) [X](#) [Y](#) [Z](#)

The NHS website also has a page with links to lots of other [health resources in different languages](#).

[Patient](#) is a website providing evidence-based information from doctors relevant to the UK medical practices, including a symptom checker.

[When should I worry?](#) is an online booklet providing information for parents about common health issues in children and is translated into several languages.

What to expect in a medical appointment

A health professional may ask you background questions about your health. All the answers will be confidential and the only reason they are asking is to diagnose your needs. Medical history can often be helpful for diagnosis, so a medical professional will likely need to take this in to account when they see you for the first time. If this is difficult for you to share, because of bad feelings or trauma, a letter can sometimes help provide some of this information so that you don't have to.

If you have any other specific requirements, such as mobility or disability access, you have the right to make these known to the clinic so that they can ensure they take this into account when arranging an appointment.

Some GP surgeries will assign the same doctor to see you each time, but this is becoming less common. If you feel that continuity of care is important to you, you can ask to access the same GP or Nurse again.

Lots of people find that they can struggle to communicate their health needs for a variety of reasons. For more tips on how to prepare for a medical appointment try [Easy Health](#), the [NHS](#) website or [Healthwatch](#).

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements in **bold**? (answers are below)

It doesn't matter if I am a few minutes late for a GP appointment – they will see me because they have to, as I am unwell.

Most health services run to **fixed appointment times**. For GPs, Dentists, and other clinics there is often a strictly allocated time to see a patient and missing this time means you might be required to arrange another appointment. It is recommended to turn up around 15 minutes early for any health appointment and to let the reception know that you are there.

My GP can only see me for one matter at a time.

GP appointments are usually booked to **last for 10 minutes**. This allocated time is to discuss one health issue. If you have more than one medical issue that you need to speak to your GP about you can tell the GP that you have several health issues and together you can assess which issue is most urgent for that appointment. A GP should check with that you agree which issue is most urgent.

My elderly mother also has an issue she wants to see the doctor about; I can bring her to my appointment, and we can both be seen at the same time to avoid making two trips.

Appointments will be made for **one person at a time**, so if a family member also needs an appointment this will be made separately, so that each person can discuss their medical issue and get individual attention from the medical professional.

I should take someone with me who speaks English to my appointment.

All statutory services, including health services, are required to **provide an interpreter**. It is best to request an interpreter in advance for routine appointments, where possible, and the surgery will book a double-length appointment. You can also specify the gender of the interpreter.

Even prior to COVID-19, interpreters usually would not be present in the same room as the patient and any health professionals but will facilitate the conversation via phone. Because of this, any physical or visible communication will be lost to the interpreter, so it is helpful if all parties can bear in mind that some information might get lost in translation.

Barriers to accessing health services

Some people in unstable or vulnerable circumstances, can experience barriers in accessing the health care they are entitled to.

Health inequality is defined by the NHS as unfair and avoidable differences in health across the population, and between different groups within society which arise because of the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age.

As a statutory service the NHS must ensure its services are accessible to everyone, and GP surgeries are required to ensure their registration policy and practice ensures equality of access to health care. Below are some common issues:

Can a GP surgery refuse to register me?

A GP surgery can refuse to register you because:

- they are not taking any new patients;
- you live outside the practice boundary and they are not accepting patients from out of their area;
- you have been removed from that GP surgery register before;
- it's a long way from your home and you need extra care, for example home visits.

If a GP refuses to register you because you do not have proof of address, or identification or because of your immigration status, you should ask the GP receptionist to provide you with the reasons for refusal in writing. The NHS have produced a leaflet for when this occurs, it may help if you take the NHS leaflet with you when you first go to register. This can be downloaded [here](#).

Changing GP surgeries

You can change your GP surgery if you need to. This might be because:

- you have moved.
- you have had problems with your current practice.
- you were removed from the patient list.

You don't have to give a reason to either your current or new GP for wanting to change surgery.

Communication

A key principle of the NHS is that it should be accessible:

You can ask for an interpreter for medical appointments and request their gender. Although it is a statutory duty, health professionals may not always remember to offer this or know that interpreting is available. There is guidance available for NHS staff and some of these resources may also be useful as a [patient](#).

An interpreter should be supplied so that family members don't have to rely on each other for interpreting. This is because sometimes it can be hard to interpret medical words, or because family members are closely emotionally involved it can be hard to interpret sensitive or upsetting information accurately.

You can also request the gender of the medical professional you want to see. If you want, you can also ask for someone (called a **chaperone**) to come to appointments with you. This can be someone you know, or another professional.

Equally you have the right to confidentiality and to be seen by a medical professional without anyone going with you.

The NHS advises that if you have a disability which affects your ability to communicate to let them know before an appointment. They will be able to provide support such as a British Sign Language Interpreter and provide information in an alternative format if this is required; however usually these would be in English language.

Deciding whether to seek help or not

Sometimes it can be hard to know whether what we are experiencing is a health issue. It might be a condition that a person has become used to living with or is downplayed or explained away by other people. Our social network and support from friends and family can also affect whether we recognise a health issue or not.

Even after identifying that we may have a health problem it is not always a straightforward decision whether to seek help. This decision could be changed by factors such as the need to care for others, feeling that a health condition can be managed independently, because of feelings of shame or embarrassment, or being worried about the consequences of seeking medical help.

Health professionals are bound by strict codes of conduct, including confidentiality, and often seeking medical help early can prevent a health condition becoming more serious. Your health treatment, as an adult, should always involve your consent, and any further treatment or health investigation should be your decision, with information from a medical professional about the risks and benefits.

Raising issues and complaints

Healthwatch is a national body in England that was created to obtain the views of people, their needs for and experience of local health and social care services to be shared with those with the power to make change happen. You can share your views about services with your local [Healthwatch](#).

The [Patient Advice and Liaison Service \(PALS\)](#) offers confidential advice, support and information on health-related matters, including the NHS England complaints procedure.

In Northern Ireland, the [Patient and Client Council](#) represents the interests of the public in health and social care, including providing confidential advice to health service users.

In Scotland, independent advice and support about individual healthcare concerns or treatment can be raised with support from the [Patient Advice and Support Service](#).

In Wales [Community Health Councils](#) have a complaints advocacy service and are responsible for supporting with raising concerns about NHS care and treatment.

Women's Health Services

Most women's health issues are dealt with by their GP. Additionally, contraceptive and sexual health services will also be accessible via a specialised Sexual Health clinic for the local area; there is more information about this further below.

Sexual Health Services

Sexual health services, also known as GUM clinics, provide information about all aspects of sexual health and relationships including your wellbeing, and support and treatment for sexual health conditions or illnesses. The [World Health Organisation](#) defines sexual health as "about wellbeing in sexual health and relationships, not only the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity"; it is also about respect, safety, knowledge and freedom from discrimination and violence.

Access to free services that help you get information and help about your sexual health is a right. All your medical history and any advice you receive is confidential and stays between you and your doctor. If you access a Sexual Health clinic and do not wish for this information to be shared with your GP, you can request this. You can find more information [here](#) about what to expect at a sexual health clinic.

Sexual Health services are funded by the Local Authority Public Health budget, so this information may often be on a localised website. An example below is for the service in Sheffield, South Yorkshire.



You can search for your local sexual health service by using "sexual health" and your city/area as search terms. The NHS also has search options here for [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

Contraception

It is very common for women and men to use contraception to help plan pregnancies and have choice over the size of their family. You can go to your GP, a sexual health or family planning clinic to talk about this confidentially and get a method of contraception that suits you, free of charge.

Contraceptives can also be used to treat and manage some medical conditions.

There are 15 methods of contraception available for free from the NHS. These range from contraception which needs to be actively used each time intercourse takes place to long-acting reversible contraception through to sterilisation.

Although both men and women are responsible for contraception, it is worth noting that most contraceptive responsibility tends to fall on women, therefore it may be important to be informed of your options and rights.

Different types of contraception will suit women differently, depending on several variables. Contraceptive care should always involve your consent. If you are offered a particular type of contraception by a medical professional, the reasons for recommending any option should be explained and time given for you to consider whether this is right for you. The below websites give information about contraception options and can be helpful.

The Brook clinic has an [online tool](#) which helps to assess contraceptive options based on answering a series of questions.

[Contraception Choices](#) is a website that acknowledges that many contraceptive options have challenges and provides honest information to help weigh up the pros and cons of different options.

The [LDown](#) is a website where women can leave reviews about their own experiences of different types of contraception.

The **NHS England website** has a lot of information about [different types of contraception](#) and common concerns.

Sexwise have a YouTube channel with [information videos](#) about common misinformation about contraception.

Unity Sexual Health have an [online quiz](#) which answers questions about some common beliefs about contraception.

One particularly important factor is that most contraception options do not protect against Sexually Transmitted Infections. Condoms are the only method of contraception that help protect against both pregnancy and STIs.

Sexual Transmitted Infections

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are passed on from one person to another through unprotected sex or genital contact.

STIs can have a range of unpleasant symptoms, but they can also be present without any symptoms for many years. For more information about STIs and their symptoms check your local sexual health clinic website (type your town/city + “sexual health” into a search engine). For translated information, Leeds Sexual Health service has a [tool which translates](#) the

information on its website. Please note that this is powered by an automated translation tool so may not be fully accurate.

The NHS advises:

- If you're worried you have an STI, go for a check-up at a sexual health clinic as soon as you can.
- Don't have sex, including oral sex, without a condom until you have had a check-up.
- You can have an STI without knowing it and infect your partner during sex.

Regular sexual health screening is also recommended for people who are sexually active. **STI Screening** is a test for people who do not have symptoms, but who want to check that they do not have an infection. Most sexually transmitted infections are treatable or manageable, particularly if diagnosed early.

It is also possible to order a [free home-testing kit](#) for screening of some infections depending on where you live in the UK.

Unintended pregnancy and abortion

If you are a woman who is pregnant and you don't know whether to continue with the pregnancy, you have options. An abortion is a procedure to end a pregnancy. It's also sometimes known as a termination of pregnancy. The pregnancy is ended either by taking medicines or having a surgical procedure.

In the UK, abortion is legal and free up to a certain time, but there are regional differences in how to access services. The NHS has more information about abortion [here](#). Women can also find out more, by contacting:

The [British Pregnancy Advisory Service](#) if you are in England Scotland or Wales. The BPAS website has a button at the top where you can select language for the webpage to be translated.



If you are in Northern Ireland, you can contact [Informing Choices NI](#) online or by phone: **028 9031 6100**

Gynaecology

In the UK health system gynaecological services are usually mainstreamed within General Practice.

As part of this regular **Cervical Screening** (sometimes called a "Smear test") is offered to all women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 64.

- Cervical screening checks the health of the cervix.
- It is to check the health of the cells in the cervix for any changes and abnormalities, to prevent any abnormal cells becoming cancerous.
- All women and people with a cervix aged 25 to 64 should be invited by letter, and retested every 3-5 years, depending on their age.
- During the appointment, a small sample of cells will be taken from the cervix.
- Results are provided by letter, usually in about 2 weeks. It will explain what happens next – whether the screening was clear or if further investigations are needed. It is important to make sure your GP has up to date contact details for you to make sure the results reach you.
- Contact your GP surgery online or by phone if you think you are due to have cervical screening but have not been sent an invite.
- Try not to put off cervical screening. It's one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

You can find more information about what to expect in a cervical screening appointment [here](#). Cervical screening will only be done with your consent. You're in control of the screening and can ask the nurse to stop at any time.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the term used for all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genital organs or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM is most often carried out on young girls aged between infancy and 15 years old. It is often referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision', 'initiation', 'Sunna' and 'infibulation'.

The age at which FGM is carried out varies enormously and may be carried out shortly after birth, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during a woman's first pregnancy.

It is often a traumatic and violent act for the victim and can cause harm in many ways. The practice can cause severe pain and there may be immediate and/or long-term health consequences, including mental health problems or difficulties in childbirth, causing danger to the child and mother and/or death. It's illegal in the UK and if carried out on children is child abuse.

Effects of FGM

- constant pain
- pain and difficulty having sex
- repeated infections, which can lead to infertility
- bleeding, cysts and abscesses
- problems peeing or holding pee in (incontinence)
- depression, flashbacks and self-harm

- problems during labour and childbirth, which can be life threatening for mother and baby

Performing or arranging FGM is a criminal offence: This means that it is a criminal offence to carry out FGM.

- If you (the victim) live in the UK, then it is a criminal offence whether the procedure/FGM happens in the United Kingdom or abroad.
- It is also a criminal offence to help or encourage a girl or a woman to perform FGM on herself.
- A person found guilty of an FGM criminal offence may face up to 14 years imprisonment.

When is an operation not a criminal offence?

- It is not a criminal offence for a medical professional who is registered in the United Kingdom to perform an operation which is necessary for the health of a woman or girl.
- If the medical professional is registered outside the United Kingdom, the court will decide on the facts of that case whether it is a legitimate medical operation or whether a crime of FGM has been committed.

Duty to report: From October 2015 teachers, healthcare professionals and social care workers in England and Wales will be under a legal duty to report to the police if they discover that a girl under the age of 18 has experienced FGM. The professional must notify the police either orally or in writing within 1 month of discovering that the FGM has taken place.

If someone is in immediate danger, contact the police at once by dialling 999.

If you're concerned that someone may be at risk, contact the **NSPCC helpline** on **0800 028 3550** or fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk. You can also complete an [online form](#).

If you're under pressure to have FGM performed on your daughter, ask a GP, your health visitor or another healthcare professional for help, or contact the NSPCC helpline.

If you have had FGM, you can get help from a specialist NHS gynaecologist or FGM service – ask a GP, your midwife or any other healthcare professional about services in your area.

More information, including [translated leaflets](#) on FGM can be found on the NHS website.

The [FGM Support Network](#) and [Womankind Worldwide](#) list organisations in the UK that can provide support to survivors.

Pregnancy

The NHS website has information about [signs and symptoms of pregnancy](#).

If you are pregnant you are entitled to **FREE NHS maternity care** if at the time you receive that care you have been granted refugee status, or humanitarian protection or temporary protection.

Even if you are not entitled to free care, you cannot be refused care if you cannot pay at the time you receive care. It is very important for your health and your baby's health that you attend for maternity care even if you are unable to pay.

There is a lot of information on the NHS website about [pregnancy care](#) including:

- Advice about planning a pregnancy and how to tell if you are pregnant
- What happens and things to think about when you're first pregnant
- The scans, tests and antenatal care you can have
- How to look after yourself and your baby while you're pregnant
- What to expect from your pregnancy week-by-week
- What to do about common symptoms, complications and existing conditions
- How to tell if you're in labour and what happens during labour and birth
- Advice for things you might need support with during pregnancy.

Birthrights are an organisation which provide [information](#) about your rights and the law in pregnancy and childbirth on their website.

City of Sanctuary have produced a film guide to [Child Birth in the UK; Guide for Refugees](#) in several languages.

Maternity Action are a specialist organisation providing advice on Maternity Rights in the UK. They provide specific information on maternity support rights and benefits for refugees [here](#).

Some women also find that [Community Doulas](#) can be a useful source of support throughout pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal. A Doula ensures pregnant women and people receive continuity of care, education to support informed choice and companionship.

Pregnancy loss:

If you have experienced pregnancy loss, there are also sources of help. The [Miscarriage Association](#) provides information and it may also be important to speak with your GP.

Mental Health Services

Alongside physical health, mental health is recognised as equally essential to overall health and wellbeing. In the UK people use the term mental health to describe the way they think, feel or react to things in their lives. Mental health problems could be the worries we all experience as part of everyday life, or more serious, long term problems. 1 in 6 adults in the UK have experienced troubles with their mental health and it is common for people to get help and nothing to be embarrassed about.

Mental health services are free on the NHS. GPs can give advice and treatment for emotional and mental health for free and this is as important in their job as advising on physical health. There are some mental health services that allow people to refer themselves, such as [Improving Access to Psychological Therapies](#), but in some cases, you'll need a referral from your GP to access mental health and psychological therapy services.

You may also find that mental wellbeing is a term that is often used in the UK to talk about how we feel, how well we're coping with daily life or what feels possible at the moment. Good mental wellbeing doesn't mean you're always happy or unaffected by your experiences. But poor mental wellbeing can make it more difficult to cope with daily life.

Doctors of the World have produced [resources translated](#) into several languages with tips to improve wellbeing.

Mind are a national mental health charity. They have a range of information on their website including [a guide on where to start](#) in seeking help for a mental health problem.

The NHS has a special website designed to provide tips on [looking after mental health](#).

In some areas **Refugee Council (England)** deliver mental health support and therapy services. You can check these [here](#).

It can be difficult to access mental health services and not all services are well provisioned to provide support for refugees. Sometimes there can be long waiting lists for assessment or therapeutic services, and pathways to access support can be complicated.

If you find you need mental health support in a crisis you can:

- Contact your local [Mental Health Crisis Team](#) (England only)
- Call 116 123 to speak with [Samaritans](#)
- Call 111 if you need help urgently for your mental health, but it's not an emergency
- **Call 999 if someone's life is at risk** – for example, they have seriously injured themselves or taken an overdose or you do not feel you can keep yourself or someone else safe.

A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a physical one. You will not be wasting anyone's time.

