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Your Health and Healthcare Rights

Talking about your health in the Screening Interview



The screening interview or "little interview" is usually conducted very soon after you have arrived in the UK. Sometimes it is on the same day you arrive. You are likely to be tired and stressed. Most people do not have an opportunity to speak to a lawyer before the interview. **Be prepared.** If you feel too unwell to do the interview, say this at the start.

During the little interview, you will be asked whether you have any medical conditions, disabilities or infectious diseases, and whether you are taking any medication. You will also be asked if you would like to share any other information about your health. **It is very important that you tell the interviewer about any health problems that you have when you are asked this in the screening interview.**



Why share this information?

You should tell the Home Office about any health problems that you are experiencing, so that you can receive the right medical care. If the Home Office thinks that your health makes you vulnerable, then they may need to give you extra support.

The information that you share about your health will not have an affect on the outcome of your application for asylum in the UK.



Talking about your Physical Health

You should tell the interviewer everything that you can about any physical health problems that you have. This includes any:

- **diagnosed medical conditions** that you have, such as asthma, arthritis, heart disease, or diabetes
- **diagnosed illnesses** that you have, such as Covid-19, shingles, or tuberculosis
- any physical symptoms you feel, even if you don't know their cause. For example, if you regularly experience headaches, a sore throat, fatigue, body aches or pains, vomiting, rashes or any other symptoms
- **allergies**, or think that you might have an allergy
- if you are **pregnant**, or suspect you might be pregnant
- **disabilities** you have, for example if you are deaf, blind or have a physical impairment (eg due to a stroke, cancer). If you are not sure, you should share your symptoms.
- if you are taking any **medication**. You should also share if you took medication in the past but no longer take it.



Talking about your Mental Health

You should also tell the interviewer everything that you can about any mental health problems that you have. This includes:

- any mental health diagnoses that you have, either now or in the past, such as depression, anxiety or post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- any intense or hard to control emotions that you experience or have experienced in the past, which could be a sign of a mental health problem, such as feeling sad a lot, feeling very helpless all of the time, getting angry at small things, feeling like you can't control your emotions, or feeling anxious a lot
- if you take or have previously taken any medication for your mental health.



Talking in the Interview

- Remember to speak in short sentences, to make it easy for the interpreter.
- Do not rush - it is important that you give as much detail as you can.
- If you find a question hard to answer, you should take a deep breath. If you need more time to answer a question, you should tell the translator.

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Your Healthcare Rights as an Asylum Seeker



As an asylum seeker, you are able to receive free healthcare from the **National Health Service**, which people in the UK often shorten to the **NHS**. This information sheet provides more information on your healthcare rights. It also explains practical tips for accessing medical care, including if you are detained.



Your Rights to Healthcare

As an asylum seeker, you have a number of important rights:

- You have a right to healthcare from the NHS. This includes both 'primary care', such as visiting a doctor when you are sick, and also 'secondary care', which is medical help from a specialist.
- You have a right to ask for an interpreter when you get medical care. You should ask for an interpreter so that you and the people looking after you understand each other properly.



How to Access Healthcare

Usually, you can begin to receive healthcare by visiting a doctor known as a **General Practitioner** or '**GP**'. A GP is a doctor who treats most common medical conditions and refers patients to hospitals and other medical services.

In an emergency, you can also go to an **Accident and Emergency Department** or '**A and E**'. These departments are found in most hospitals. If you cannot get to A and E yourself, then you should call 999 and ask for an Ambulance. For non-emergency support you can call 111.



How to Register with a GP

You should register with a GP as soon as you can once you arrive in the UK.

To register with a GP you should telephone them or go to the clinic reception and ask for a registration form. You have a right to register with a GP even if you have no documents or no permanent address.



Your Rights if you are Detained

If you are detained, you have the right to healthcare that meets your needs. Your detention centre must have a healthcare team available, and this healthcare should be of the same standard that you would receive if you were not in detention.

If you are in detention, then you have some special rights:

- You should be seen by a GP within 24 hours of detention. If you say no to this at the time, you can ask to see the GP later instead.
- If you are a woman, you have a right to be seen by a female doctor.
- Your medical records must be treated confidentially.
- If your medication is taken from you when you arrive, then you have a right to be given the same medication. If this does not happen, you should tell someone immediately.
- If you want to make a complaint about your healthcare treatment in detention, you should talk to the doctor about it first. If that does not help, you can also talk to the centre's healthcare manager, your solicitor, a volunteer visitor, the Independent Monitoring Board in your centre, or write to the Home Office.