



PLEASE READ THIS NOW - AND THEN ACT!

All of us on this march oppose some or all aspects of this Government. The Government, seeking to divert blame for austerity and other ills, has taken the traditional step of whipping up hostility to migrants with its policy of the 'Hostile Environment'. What many are unaware of is that this extends even into the **National Health Service** – with tragic and sometimes lethal consequences.

Individuals are being charged 150% of the price of care, or denied treatment when this is unaffordable, purely due to their immigration status. These new discriminatory rules fundamentally undermine the principles upon which our NHS is founded. They are also told their details may be shared with the Home Office or other Government departments, enabling checks on their immigration status. As a result, many needing treatment simply do not seek treatment they need.

Greater Manchester Patients Not Passports asks you to join us in opposing this!

Please sign our Open Letter to Greater Manchester NHS Trusts asking them to take a stand against this, at:

<https://gmiau.org/patients-not-passports/>

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) has published a statement calling for the abolition of all NHS charging, becoming the first Royal College to call for more than a temporary suspension of these discriminatory and harmful Hostile Environment policies.

In the statement the RCPCH calls on the UK Government to:

Abolish the legislation that provides for NHS charging in all four nations of the UK

Ensure that patient data remains confidential within the NHS, is not shared with the Home Office, and cannot be used for immigration enforcement purposes

Stop any expansion of NHS charging and protect universal access to primary care and public health services

What this all means in practice:

The new rules mean the NHS is now legally obliged to charge upfront for 'non-urgent' medical treatment for overseas visitors. So people are being refused preventative healthcare because they cannot afford the inflated prices. This often necessitates more costly, invasive treatment when their healthcare needs reach the point of 'urgent', which they are then charged for retrospectively. Such cruelty is encapsulated by Simba's story, who was landed with a staggering £93,000 debt when he woke from a coma.

Simba's family moved to the UK from Zimbabwe in 2004. In 2009 his dad Victor had to apply for asylum after his criticism of Robert Mugabe's government led to a warrant being issued for his arrest. When Simba turned 18, he applied for asylum himself but his claim was unjustly refused.

It's likely Simba would not have had a stroke if he had been able to access the NHS services he needed. He was known to have a blood clotting condition and had been receiving treatment, but after his first few appointments, Simba got a call from the finance department demanding payment of over £6000 for his treatment.

The hospital was forced to make Simba pay upfront for his appointments - policies being enforced by the Home Office. He could not afford it. He did not see his specialist team for months, when he suddenly had a stroke and was taken to A&E. It was then that he received his bill for £93,000, for the life-saving treatment he received.

Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit has seen the consequences first hand when they worked with someone who was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He was refused treatment for this serious health condition because his immigration status did not entitle him to receive healthcare and the asking costs were outlandish. He had lived in the UK for a substantial length of time and GMIAU successfully argued his Human Rights claim, finally achieving access to treatment for him. No one should have to experience the delay and unnecessary stress suffered in this case, where your health is dependent on a Home Office decision. Upfront charging embeds discriminatory practices within the NHS, turning healthcare workers into immigration officers asking for passports.

Data Sharing

Another example of the hostile environment seeping into the NHS is the policy of data sharing. The NHS are now encouraged to report patients to the Home Office if they have a debt of over £500 for over 2 months. This can be used by the Home Office as a reason to reject future applications to stay in the UK. People are once again deterred from accessing the healthcare they need due to these fear-inciting policies.

The purported rationale behind these harmful policies is to prevent so-called 'health tourism'. However, the Home Office's own figures show that deliberate health tourism amounts to only 0.3% of the NHS budget. This insignificant issue has been heavily exaggerated to justify introducing borders into our health service, under the guise of 'protecting the NHS'. On the contrary, the implementation of these rules and the existence of the Overseas Visitor Teams are a waste of NHS time, money and resources. NHS Trusts are now using bailiffs to track down and intimidate vulnerable people with healthcare debts that they cannot afford to pay, meaning very little is recovered. The detrimental impacts created by these counter-productive policies far outweigh the non-issue they seek to address.

Contact us at gmcrcnp@gmail.com

For more information see:

<https://neweconomics.org/2020/06/migrants-access-to-healthcare-during-the-coronavirus-crisis>

and Medact's publication (search engines find it)

[MigrantCharge/Patients-Not-Passports-Challenging-healthcare-charging-in-the-NHS-October-2020-Update.pdf](#)