



City and Hackney
Clinical Commissioning Group

City and Hackney GP Practices
By email only

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22nd November 2019

Dear Safeguarding Leads and Practice Managers,

We are writing to remind you of an important aspect of practice policy that should help ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable people, and provision of quality primary healthcare to all City and Hackney residents.

NHS England published Standard Operating Principles on GP Registration in 2015 (see Chapter 4, pg. 155 of the [Primary Care Policy and Guidance Manual](#)) which stated that if a patient says that they live in the practice area but cannot produce proof of address or ID, they shouldn't be refused registration on that basis. There is no contractual requirement for GP practices to verify identity or proof of address. Similarly, patients are not obliged to provide information on their immigration status if they do not want to. Patients can even register at a proxy address including the practice itself, or the address of a mosque, church, or community centre where post might reach them. In doing this, you are not breaching any NHS guidance or regulations, and may be able to help someone who is homeless or in a vulnerable situation seek the medical help they need and deserve.

Everyone living in England, regardless of their immigration status, is entitled to free primary care and to register with a GP.

The difficulty for vulnerable people registering at practices in City and Hackney has been brought to our attention by Doctors of the World, a humanitarian charity which has a clinic in Bethnal Green where people who are having difficulty registering with a GP can seek help doing so. They have collected data on where their service users come from and the difficulties they have in registering them. They see a lot of vulnerable adults including pregnant women, homeless people, undocumented migrants, trafficked persons and survivors of torture.

Between 2016 and 2018 Doctors of the World caseworkers **attempted to register 174 patients in City and Hackney** (who were already struggling to do it themselves), of whom **14% were wrongly refused registration**. It must be stressed that this is likely to be the tip of the iceberg, as these refusals were against English-speaking caseworkers who were advocating for people who had been lucky enough to find themselves to Doctors of the World for help.

City and Hackney CCG is collaborating with Doctors of the World to endorse their project called [Safe Surgeries](#). [Signing up to Safe Surgeries](#) will help your practice align with NHS Guidance, improve access to primary health care for the most vulnerable, and help your practice demonstrate to the care Quality Commission (CQC) that your service is effective, caring, and responsive to patients' needs.

We sincerely ask for your help in making City and Hackney a more welcoming and inclusive area for vulnerable people to register.

Practices that want to join the Safe Surgeries network sign a declaration regarding their inclusive registration policy, receive useful resources (including posters and leaflets to advertise their open-door policy to potential patients), and most importantly are offered training for clinical and frontline non-clinical staff to understand healthcare entitlement and how they can support patients in vulnerable circumstances. They are also offered ongoing support, (for instance for queries on free secondary care eligibility) and become part of a growing network – and it is FREE.

[Signing up is easy](#) – this can be done by clicking on any of these links – but if you would like to speak to someone at Doctors of the World or hear more about the scheme before registering, we have set up a [specific page on the City and Hackney GP website](#) with links to the Doctors of the World website and a webinar on the issue of migrant access to primary care produced as part of a CCG grant scheme with the voluntary sector in 2018.

Many practices across London are already signed up to the scheme, and we hope City and Hackney practices will soon be following suit.

Thank you for considering this important aspect of Primary Care provision.

Kind regards



Dr Mark Rickets
CCG Chair



Dr Nikhil Katiyar
CCG Governing Body GP and
Safeguarding lead



Jenny Singleton
CCG Head of Quality