

SUPPORTING REGISTRATION WITH A GENERAL PRACTICE

Everyone living in Scotland is entitled to register and consult with a general practice. It means we can prevent and treat illness earlier and create a healthier society for everyone.

Access to healthcare is often most challenging for those most in need of healthcare.

Being registered with a general practice is the 'gateway' to accessing the rest of the healthcare system, if and when it is required.

People who are not registered with a general practice are more likely to present to out of hours general practice and emergency departments for their routine care. This is both more expensive and less efficient.

There is still confusion about what paperwork, if any, is required to register with a general practice. This creates distress for patients seeking care, and for practices seeking to provide it.

[Guidance](#) was issued from Scottish Government in 2018 explaining that there is no legal requirement for patients to provide proof of address, or photographic identification when registering with a practice (although it can be requested, if it is available).

Feedback from patients who have had negative experiences around this issue would suggest that reassurance always needs to be explicitly given, for example:

"It would help us for administrative purposes if you were able to provide proof of address. However if you don't have that, we will still register you".

While most people have no problems providing proof of address, some people, such as those living in unstable accommodation or those who are street homeless, do not have any documents with their name and address on them.

While many people carry some form of proof of identity, many people in vulnerable circumstances don't have any photographic ID. This can include British citizens, but particularly applies to people who are migrants.

Template letters have also been created by some practices to support patients seeking to register with a general practice. Navigating the current online process of registration is not equally straightforward for everyone, and this has the potential to worsen access for some, and widen health inequalities. Patients also struggle to know what to do when practice lists in their local area are closed and it can be helpful to provide advice on this. An example of this letter is also shared in case you wish to adapt for your own purposes.

Key Points:

- Don't insist on proof of address documents, or proof of identification
- Explicitly reassure patients that they can still be registered without this
- Never ask to see a Visa or proof of immigration status
- Use an interpreter if needed
- Empower staff with training and an inclusive registration policy

Suggested template letter for practices to share with patients who require additional support to register with a new General Practice

Dear [Patient],

We know that registering with a new general practice can feel stressful, so we've put together this short guide to help.

To find a list of the practices near you, there is a link on the [NHS Inform](#) website: [Registering with a GP practice | NHS inform](#). When you enter your postcode, it will give you a list of practices in your area.

On the website you will also find a [national registration form](#) which can be downloaded, completed and emailed to your new practice. Practices can also give you a paper version of this form if preferred.

Most practices have a website that you can look at first to see which one you would like to register with. They will often have information on registration and links to the form above too.

General practices will have agreements in place to accept patients from certain areas. It is not always the case that all nearby practices will accept patients from your particular address. This information should be provided on the website of the individual general practice, or in their practice leaflet.

Sometimes general practices are unable to take on new patients. This is known as 'closing their lists' and is usually temporary. If you are struggling to find a local practice that is taking on new patients, you can get help by emailing nss.psdenuiries-general@nhs.scot.

[Citizens Advice Scotland](#) can also help you to register with a new general practice.