

Questions on the charging of maternity patients ineligible for NHS treatment free at the point of use.

These are the questions put:

1. In 2017 the NHS introduced charging regulation which require undocumented and destitute migrant and refugee women to pay up front charges for antenatal and maternity care. These charges are made at 150% of the tariff on CCGs and can exceed £6000. How many women have been charged for their care since the regulations were introduced at X and Y hospitals?

Summary:

- The Trust revealed that 541 women were actually charged for maternity care in 2017/18
- A further 1100 women received eligibility checks and were deemed eligible for free NHS care.

2. Can the Trust confirm that Overseas Visitor Managers are trained in the relevant Law and Regulations and do not charge women eligible for free care, or harass destitute women who are clearly unable to pay?

OVM's are trained in assessing immigration status. They also invite women to have a meeting with the OVM who are not entitled to free NHS care to set up payment plans to cover the cost of their care.

3. It should be noted that these charges are leading to vulnerable and destitute migrant and refugee women absenting themselves from care therefore putting themselves and their babies at risk.

Furthermore there is no requirement in fathers to pay the charges. Will the Trust exercise their discretion not to chare undocumented migrants in need of these services?

Unfortunately the Trust cannot exercise their discretion and not charge women who are deemed ineligible for free care as the regulation setting out charges for NHS care is now enshrined in UK statute, this means the Trust has a legal obligation to comply with the charging regulations.

It is important to mention that any pregnant women who cannot afford to pay for her treatment will always be treated by the Trust. The maternity department is currently reviewing the data of the women who were charged to understand how we can best support these women and improve their clinical outcomes.