

10. Migrant charges & racism

The Government's Hostile Environment scapegoats undocumented people for crumbling public services. They use this disgraceful lie to deflect their blame by fuelling racism. Universal access to healthcare free at the point of need has ended – so many migrants are being charged for NHS care. NHS staff do not want to withhold care or witness its denial. We must oppose charges for undocumented people and defend universal access to healthcare *for all people living in Britain* who need help.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

- Universal access to health care is no longer available to over one million undocumented people living in Britain, including 215,000 children
- GP and emergency care in A&E are not charged, but people who can't prove their right to free care pay 150% of NHS prices for other hospital or mental health care, even in life-threatening emergencies
- Asylum seekers and refugees are exempt from charges, but the *Illegal Migration Act* bars almost all new arrivals from seeking asylum; so, over 160,000 more people will be forced to live here undocumented by 2026
- Over 80% of asylum claimants eventually win the right to stay
- 60% of migrant charges are to women: mothers charged £7500 for having a baby, and up to £15,000 for more complex delivery if things go wrong
- Charges have terrified the family of a child with cancer (£76k) and a young man whose stroke was preventable (£99k); NHS Trusts regularly use debt collectors to chase patients for bills they cannot pay
- Fear of being reported to the Home Office can be fatal – during the pandemic, people were put off being vaccinated or seeking healthcare, despite Covid treatments being free
- The Government divides migrants from other public sector workers, claiming to fund pay 'rises' by almost doubling the Immigration Health Surcharge (giving access to the NHS) and raising visa fees
- Without migrants the NHS could not function: one in six NHS staff are non-UK nationals, including 32.6% of doctors; 48% of new UK nurse registrations have trained overseas
- The BMA, Academy of Royal Colleges, and several Royal Colleges oppose charges for undocumented people; the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health calls for abolition of all charges

WHAT MUST HAPPEN NOW?

- Abolish NHS charges for undocumented people
- End the use of NHS staff in implementing border control in the NHS
- Address systemic racial health inequalities in the NHS affecting patients and staff