

**Factsheet 44 September 2009**

## **Local NHS services**

### **About this factsheet**

This factsheet looks at NHS primary care services – the ones you would approach when you first have a health problem; at staff and services to help you manage conditions that, although they cannot be cured, can be treated and managed at home; and at screening and other NHS services designed to keep you well.

The information given in this factsheet is applicable in England. Different rules may apply in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Readers in these nations should contact their respective national Age Concern organisation for information specific to where they live – see section 10 for details.

For details of how to order other Age Concern factsheets and information materials go to section 10.

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## 1 Recent developments

- Launch of the Darzi NHS Next Stage Review – *High quality care for all*.
- The NHS Constitution was launched in January 2009.

## 2 Modernising the NHS

Lord Darzi's report, *High quality care for all*, was launched in July 2008. It followed a year-long review of the NHS during which he directly engaged with staff, patients and the public in the 10 Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) in England.

A key part of the review was the preparation by each SHA of a locally developed vision for improving health and local services over the next 10 years. They concentrated on eight life stages: maternity, child health, staying healthy, long-term conditions, urgent and emergency care, planned care, mental health and end of life care.

The Darzi Report sets out plans for an NHS that offers patients choice and involvement when treatment and care decisions are made and supports staff to deliver high-quality care. It gives further support to recent initiatives including:

- Choose and Book – the electronic referral system that offers patients a choice of place, date and time for their first out-patient appointment
- personalised support for people with illnesses they will have for the rest of their lives such as diabetes, heart disease and arthritis
- placing greater emphasis on promoting health and wellbeing – supporting people to make changes and choose healthier lifestyles.

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**To read Lord Darzi's report** go to:

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_085825](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationPolicyAndGuidance/DH_085825)

**To read your SHA's vision document** call NHS Direct for your SHA's contact details so that you can request a copy of its 'vision' document (see section 5.1).

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### 3 NHS Constitution

The Darzi report refers to the NHS Constitution. This was launched in January 2009 and establishes the **principles and values** of the NHS in England. It sets out **rights** of patients and staff and the **responsibilities** they owe to each other to ensure the NHS operates effectively and fairly.

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**To read the NHS Constitution in various formats and languages**

go to:

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_093419](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_093419) You can order a hard copy from DH publications (see section 9).

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### 4 Local NHS organisations and services

There are **10 Strategic Health Authorities** in England. They focus on long-term planning and make sure that national and local priorities, including those described in their locally developed 'vision' document referred to in section 2, are included in plans produced by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in their area.

There are **152 Primary Care Trusts** in England. Their role is to improve the health of local people and make sure NHS services in the community and in hospitals reflect the characteristics and meet the needs of the local population. PCTs commission and pay for NHS services provided by GPs and other community-based services, by **acute hospital trusts, mental health trusts and ambulance trusts. Foundation trusts** (part of the NHS but with greater financial freedom than other trusts) and **independent hospitals** can also be contracted to provide NHS services.

#### 4.1 Primary and secondary care services

Health services may be referred to as 'primary' or 'secondary' care services.

**Primary care services** are delivered by the health professionals you contact when you first have a health problem or when you seek advice on how to stay healthy. They include your GP and practice team staff, nurses at the local NHS walk-in centre, district nurses, pharmacists, dentists, opticians, NHS family planning or smoking cessation services.

**Secondary care services** are usually provided in hospital as a result of an emergency admission or following an out-patient appointment.

## 5 Primary care services

### 5.1 Getting help when feeling unwell (including NHS Direct)

In addition to seeing your GP, there are other services that can help you directly or put your mind at rest. These include:

- your local pharmacist
- NHS Direct
- NHS walk-in centre
- minor injuries unit.

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**Note:** You can look for your nearest late-opening pharmacy, walk-in centre or minor injuries unit on the NHS Choices website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or find it by calling NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

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#### Local pharmacist

Pharmacists can give advice if you have a sore throat, cold, aches and pains, can suggest non-prescription medicines to ease symptoms and can help you decide if you need to see a doctor. As experts on medicines, they can answer questions about prescription items you are taking.

#### NHS Direct: 0845 4647

NHS Direct is a national, confidential 24-hour telephone advice and health information service staffed by nurses and professional advisers.

You can call NHS Direct if you or, a family member, are unwell. You will be transferred to a nurse who will ask a series of questions and advise you on the most appropriate course of action. You may be told how to look after yourself at home or they may recommend you see a pharmacist. If the problem is more serious, you may need to see your GP or go to hospital. If your problem is very serious you can be connected to the ambulance service.

NHS Direct also offers:

- a confidential interpretation service. (If you let them know the language you prefer to speak you will be connected to an interpreter who will help NHS Direct staff give you the help you need.)
- a 24-hour textphone service on 0845 606 46 47
- details of local pharmacies including late opening pharmacies, emergency dental services, NHS walk-in centres and minor injuries units. They also have details of GP practices and dentists offering NHS treatment.

### **NHS walk-in centres**

There are around 93 walk-in centres open seven days a week from early morning until late evening. They are often located in town centres or hospital grounds. As the name suggests, no appointment is needed. Run by experienced nurses, they provide a range of services to treat minor illnesses and injuries.

### **Minor injuries units**

There are over 200 units for patients with non-life-threatening injuries that do not need the attention of accident and emergency (A&E) staff. They are often located in hospital grounds and can treat broken bones, minor burns, head and eye injuries as well as insect and animal bites.

### **Accident and emergency**

If you believe your illness or injury may be serious, seek help by calling 999 or go to your nearest A&E department. Arriving at A&E by ambulance does not mean you are seen more quickly. All patients are assessed on arrival and the most serious cases given priority. The expectation is that you should be seen, diagnosed and treated within four hours of arrival at A&E with a suspected serious illness or injury.

Life-threatening situations include:

- loss of consciousness
- persistent chest pain for 15 mins or more
- heavy blood loss
- medicine overdose

- signs that indicate a stroke – weakness on one side of your face making your eye or mouth droop, inability to lift both arms simultaneously, speech difficulties in speaking or understanding what is said.

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Remember FAST – Face-Arms-Speech-Test all three – an acronym to help you recognise the symptoms of a stroke.

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### **Emergency dental services**

NHS Direct has details of where you can access NHS treatment in an emergency or out-of-hours.

## **5.2 GP services**

### **A range of services and health professionals**

GP practices offer a range of services to prevent and treat illnesses and support people with long-term conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or emphysema. Nurse consultants, nurse practitioners and specialist nurses frequently work alongside GPs and practice nurses. Their additional training means they can diagnose, treat, and manage a variety of health conditions and some can prescribe from a list of medicines. See section 5.6 for more information about supporting people with long-term conditions.

### **Registering with a practice**

Everyone living lawfully in the UK has the right to register with a GP practice. This right is based on residence and not on nationality, payment of tax or national insurance contributions.

You can find details of local practices on the NHS Choices website or by calling NHS Direct and asking for a list. See section 5.1.

GP practices often work within a 'catchment' area that covers certain streets or postcodes. To identify those you may join, call several and tell them where you live.

If a practice is accepting new patients call in and collect a practice leaflet. This will tell you:

- the name and qualifications of health professionals and support staff

- the services provided by the practice, such as special clinics for diabetics, health promotion activities and whether it is a practice supporting trainee GPs
- opening hours, how to make an appointment to see or speak to staff
- criteria for a home visit
- how to request a repeat prescription
- how to contact a doctor out of hours
- contact details for NHS Direct and local walk-in or minor injuries units
- information for patients with disabilities or special language needs
- how to comment or complain about services
- rights and responsibilities of patients and action that may be taken if patients are abusive or violent.

You will need confirmation of your address to be accepted onto a practice list and should be asked if you want to name a '**preferred practitioner**'. This is someone you would like to receive services from generally or in relation to a particular condition. This can be a doctor or a nurse and your preference should be noted.

You should be invited to visit the practice or, if necessary, offered a home visit to discuss your general health, within six months of joining the practice.

If you have been registered with another practice, your medical records can be transferred from your previous practice.

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**Note:** Contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 if you cannot find a practice to accept you. The PCT has a duty to assign you to a practice if you cannot find one yourself. NHS Direct can explain the process.

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### **Registering with a practice if you live in a care home**

If you move permanently into a local care home your GP may be willing to continue to care for you. If you move too far away, you will need to register with a new practice. There is likely to be one or more practices that visit your care home. You should receive the same range of services that you received when living in your own home. You should not be asked to pay for GP services or any NHS services your GP says you need.

## **Making an appointment**

Most practices have an appointment system and may offer early morning, late evening and Saturday morning surgeries.

You should be able to see a GP (not necessarily your preferred GP) within two working days, or a primary care professional within one working day. Your practice should try and meet any reasonable request to see your 'preferred practitioner'. The system should be flexible and allow booking of routine or non-urgent appointments outside the above 'target' times. A typical appointment slot is about 10 minutes. If you have several issues to discuss you may like to ask if you can have a double appointment.

There is usually a system that allows you to see a GP in an emergency if there are no available appointments. You may also be able to speak to a GP or nurse by telephoning at an agreed time.

## **Making the most of your appointment**

- You may like to remind your GP if you have hearing difficulties or English is not your first language so they can be sure to speak clearly.
- If you need information in large print or another language be sure to let the GP know.
- You may like to make notes beforehand so you have a reminder of what you want to tell the doctor or ask about.
- If you are worried about new symptoms, try to remember when you first noticed them? Does there seem to be a pattern or certain times when they are better or worse? Could they be linked to any change in medication?
- Don't miss anything out, thinking it's minor or trivial. GPs can only work with what you tell them so let your GP decide what's significant.
- If you don't understand the answer to your questions or some of the words used, ask for an explanation or for the answer to be written down so you can read it again later.
- If you are going to hear the results of tests and discuss treatment, you may want to ask whether there is more than one treatment, what the pros and cons of each are and whether there are any common side effects.

## Seeking a second opinion

If following a consultation and discussion with your GP you have doubts about a diagnosis or suggested treatment, you can ask your GP to refer you for a second opinion. Although you have no legal right to a second opinion, GPs rarely refuse unless there is sufficient reason and they do not think it necessary. The referral may be to another GP in your practice or a consultant.

If your case is complicated or diagnosis unclear, your GP or consultant may want a second opinion to ensure all possible treatment options are explored.

## Home visits

Your practice leaflet should give information about criteria for home visits. Giving a full description of your condition when you phone the surgery helps the doctor make an informed decision about the need for a home visit. While having a general policy, decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. If possible, call in the morning if you think you need a same day visit.

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**Note:** If you are ill and have a partner with medical problems that make it difficult for them to be left alone, let the practice know. You may be able to have a home visit, if arranging for a sitter is difficult. Your GP can understand your needs better and help you take care of your own health if you let them know you are a carer. See section 9 for information about Carers UK and Carers Direct.

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## Out-of-hours services

Each PCT is responsible for providing an out-of-hours service that meets Department of Health standards. Out-of-hours usually means from 6.30 pm to 8am on weekdays, all weekend and bank holidays. If you call your practice out of hours you are redirected to the out-of-hours service. NHS Direct can give you the number or suggest a suitable alternative. See section 5.1.

## Changing your practice

You do not need to tell your practice if you are moving house or have found another practice to accept you but you may, as a courtesy, wish to tell them. Once you are accepted by another practice, your medical notes can be forwarded.

## GP services when away from home

If you are to live away from your usual address for up to three months, you can apply to be a 'temporary' resident at a local practice. If their list is not full they are likely to accept you.

If you become ill while staying with friends, approach their local practice to see if they are willing to treat you. If staying in a hotel, it may have an arrangement with a local practice. In other circumstances call NHS Direct who will recommend the most appropriate action to take. See section 5.1.

## Help with hearing difficulties

Visit your GP if hearing difficulties are causing you practical problems. If your GP cannot find a medical reason such as build up of wax or an ear infection, you can be referred for a hearing test. If the test indicates a hearing aid in one or both ears would be helpful, staff will discuss options with you.

You should not wait longer than 18 weeks from being referred for an investigation and diagnosis of your hearing difficulties to the start of treatment /dispensing of a hearing aid. This is known as 'the 18-week target'.

NHS hearing aids are provided on loan; batteries are supplied free of charge.

RNID provides information about hearing loss and aids and you can also check your hearing using their confidential online or telephone hearing check. Hearing Concern LINK helps people manage hearing loss. See section 9.

## 5.3 Chiropody, physiotherapy and other services

Your GP can refer you to other health professionals to diagnose or treat specific aspects of your condition. They may visit you at home or hold clinics at a local practice, health centre or hospital.

**Marie Curie and Macmillan nurses** support those with cancer and their families to manage the physical and emotional aspects of their illness, particularly as people approach the end of their life. See section 5.7

To receive **chiropody** (also known as podiatry) as an NHS patient, you must meet local eligibility criteria. This usually means you must have a medical foot problem or health condition – such as diabetes, arthritis and circulatory problems – that puts you at risk of foot-related problems.

Your GP or PCT Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can tell you about local eligibility criteria for NHS chiropody. See section 9.

Routine care such as nail cutting is unlikely to be offered as NHS treatment but may be offered by local voluntary organisations. Contact your local Age Concern for further information. See section 10.

**Physiotherapists** help with back pain and muscle strains, as well as conditions such as osteoporosis and asthma.

**Occupational therapists** (OTs) advise on home modifications or equipment that could make living at home easier. You can be referred to an OT by your GP or social services.

**Speech and language therapists** help with speech and communication. They can also help with eating and swallowing difficulties that can occur following a stroke or in people with dementia.

**Dietitians** may work with speech and language therapists to help patients with swallowing difficulties. They are experts in nutrition and can advise on meals or supplements for people with poor or small appetites.

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**Note:** If you wish to approach a health professional to treat you privately, contact the Health Professions Council to check that they are registered to practice. See section 9.

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## 5.4 Complementary therapies

These include therapies such as acupuncture, chiropractic, osteopathy, homeopathy and herbal medicine. They are not usually available as NHS treatment but your GP will know if they are.

If you are considering any of these therapies on a private basis, you should mention this to your GP. This is particularly important if you take prescription medicines and might be recommended to take medication or herbal remedies by the therapist.

Always check that the therapist has appropriate qualifications and insurance to treat you. Osteopaths and chiropractors must be registered with their own regulatory bodies in order to practise legally in the UK. Acupuncturists and herbal medicine practitioners have their own professional bodies but do not have a regulatory body. See section 9 for further details.

## 5.5 Services at your local pharmacy

Pharmacists are experts on medicines and have always been willing to help patients who need assistance taking their medicines.

Speak to your pharmacist if you find labels hard to read **or** the usual packaging hard to open **or** tablets difficult to swallow **or** if you take many tablets at different times of the day and find it difficult to take them as prescribed. Your pharmacist may offer a simple solution or be able to decide if you are eligible for special help under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*.

In some areas the following services are available:

- prescription collection service – at your request, the pharmacy collects a repeat prescription from your GP practice to save you the journey
- home delivery service – this may be combined with the above service and allows prescription medicines to be delivered to you. However this does limit contact between you and the pharmacist.

### **Electronic Prescription Service (EPS)**

The EPS system aims to improve efficiency and safety when dispensing medicines. When it is available in your area, your GP or pharmacy will let you know and a special NHS logo will feature in the pharmacy window. It is particularly useful if you need repeat prescriptions.

Through the EPS system, you nominate the pharmacy you would like to dispense your prescription on a regular basis. When you contact your practice for a repeat prescription, it is sent electronically, quickly and securely, to your chosen pharmacy. Your prescriptions are ready to collect or be delivered, an hour or two after you request them.

The EPS system is optional – you do not have to choose it. You can also amend your nominated pharmacy or amend it temporarily if you are going away and are likely to need a prescription during that time.

## Medicine Use Review (MUR)

Your pharmacist may invite you for a MUR or you can ask for one if you take several medicines regularly. It offers you a chance to raise any problems you have taking your medicines, discuss any unwanted side effects you think they may be causing and get advice on how to take them in the best way. This review helps you to make sure you are getting the most benefit from the medicines you take.

If you take non-prescription medicines, take them with you so the pharmacist gets a complete picture.

## Reporting unwanted side effects from medication

The Yellow Card Scheme allows health professionals and patients to report unwanted side effects from prescription or non-prescription medicines or herbal remedies. The yellow card form for patients is available in most pharmacies or by calling the yellow card hotline. See section 9.

## Health promotion/lifestyle advice

Many local pharmacies offer cholesterol testing, blood pressure checking and advice to help you give up smoking.

## 5.6 Supporting people with long-term conditions

Millions of people have one or more 'long-term' conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, asthma or other lung diseases. These are conditions that cannot be cured but can be managed with the help of medication and other treatment.

You have a right to be involved in discussions and decisions about your healthcare and to be given information to enable you to do this. This is one of your rights described in the NHS Constitution. See section 3.

Information, practical support and regular reviews with a health professional can help you better understand and manage your own care. This support might be in the form of an **information prescription**. This can help you and your carers find reliable sources of information about your condition and the financial and practical support available at a national and local level to help you maintain your independence. Your GP or specialist health professional can tell you more about information prescriptions.

Many patients become expert in managing their condition with the help of the **Expert Patients Programme (EPP)**. This is a self-management course that gives patients the confidence, skills and knowledge to play an active role in managing their condition on a daily basis. It is a six-week course led by trained volunteer tutors who themselves live with long-term conditions. Ask your GP about local courses or see section 9.

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**Note:** You can learn more about your condition and the experiences of others who live with it in two sections on NHS Choices website: 'Health A-Z' and 'Your Health'. See section 9.

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## 5.7 End of life care

Many people die in hospital and yet most people, when asked, say they would prefer to die at home.

The *End of Life Care Strategy* published in July 2008 aims to:

- ensure that in the coming years, high-quality care is available to people as they approach the end of their life, wherever they are cared for
- make it easier for people to die at home, if that is their preference. PCTs are to receive funding to help with the development of services.

Services must be able to meet the needs of patients with any terminal illness, not just cancer, and be available to people in their own home, a care home, or a hospice as well as in hospital.

For the long-term goals of the strategy to become a reality, PCTs and their respective local authorities must identify what services and additional staff need to be in place to provide 24-hour support for patients. They must then take steps to introduce them. Currently services are better developed in some parts of the country than others.

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**Note:** If you are diagnosed with a terminal illness or are admitted to hospital as an emergency and then told you have limited life expectancy, you and your carer or family members should be offered the opportunity to discuss your preferences with the NHS team caring for you, including where you would like to be cared for. These preferences should be considered and accommodated where possible in your care plan.

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If you would like to know more about the *End of Life Care Strategy* and read the leaflet produced for patients and carers, go to:  
[www.dh.gov.uk/en/End of Life/IntegratedCare/Endoflifecare/DH\\_299](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/End_of_Life/IntegratedCare/Endoflifecare/DH_299)

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## 6 **NHS services for older people**

### 6.1 **Over-60s – free prescriptions**

NHS prescriptions are free for people aged 60 and over.

### 6.2 **Over-60s – free NHS sight tests**

Anyone aged 60 or over is entitled to an NHS sight test. A sight test checks not only your vision but your eye health and can pick up conditions, such as glaucoma, in the early stages before long-term damage is done.

Younger adults should have a test every two years and those 70 and over, every year. Opticians can use their professional judgement in individual cases when deciding the frequency of the test.

If you find it difficult to visit an optician, contact your PCT PALS for a list of opticians funded to offer NHS tests at home or in local care homes. See section 5.1.

For more information about sight tests and eye conditions contact the RNIB. See section 9.

### 6.3 **Over-75s health check**

If you are over 75 and have not needed to see a member of your GP practice for a year or more, you can ask for an appointment to discuss your health or any health concerns you have. If, for medical reasons, it would be difficult to visit the practice, you should be offered a home visit.

## 6.4 Over-75s medication review

The National Service Framework for Older People recommends a free yearly medication review for all those over 75, increasing to every six months if taking four or more medicines. If you have a chronic condition that requires medication for the rest of your life, a medication review is likely to be part of a regular review of your health with your GP or specialist nurse.

## 6.5 Over-65s – free flu jab

Complications such as pneumonia or severe bronchitis can follow a dose of flu. An annual flu jab is therefore offered to people aged 65 and over. It is also offered to younger people with specific long-term conditions, who take steroid medication or who have a lowered immune system following cancer treatment. Invitations to have a flu jab are sent out by your GP practice in the late summer/early autumn.

## 6.6 Over-65s – free jab against pneumonia

This jab, commonly called the pneumo jab, is offered to people aged 65 and over. It is not necessary to have this jab every year and most people will have it only once. Available through your GP practice, it protects against pneumonia, septicaemia and bacterial meningitis.

## 6.7 Screening for cancer and other conditions

The **NHS breast screening programme** invites women aged between 50 and 70 for screening every three years. This age range is being extended gradually over the next three years, so that women aged 47 to 73 are invited.

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**Note:** Until the extended programme reaches your area, if you are over the age of 70, you have a right to be screened every three years on request and should contact your local screening centre. Once the extended screening programme arrives in your area you continue to be eligible for screening every three years on request. NHS Direct has details of your local screening unit. See section 5.1.

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Women between the ages of 50 and 64 are invited every five years for **NHS cervical cancer screening**.

An **NHS national bowel screening programme** invites men and women between 60 and 69 to take part every two years. The screening kit, with instructions, is sent to your home and you send the sample to a laboratory for analysis. People over the age of 70 can request a screening kit by calling the bowel screening helpline. See section 9.

### **Other screening**

Anyone over the age of 12 who has diabetes, regardless of whether it is treated by insulin, tablets or diet, should be invited for screening for **diabetic retinopathy** every year. Speak to your GP if you are not invited annually.

The best way to roll out a screening programme for people aged between 40 and 74 to identify their risk of developing coronary artery disease is being considered at the moment.

Screening of men at the age of 65 for **abdominal aortic aneurysm** is being planned and details of this will be announced locally once available.

There are no plans at present to screen men to detect **prostate cancer** but an informed choice programme – Prostate Cancer Risk Management – is available. If you would like to know more about it, speak to your GP.

## **7 Help with health costs – NHS Low Income Scheme**

Most NHS services are free but for people over the age of 60 some, such as dental treatment and the purchase of glasses or contact lenses after an NHS sight test, are not. If you are on a low income and have savings of less than £16,000 you may be entitled to help with these costs through the NHS Low Income Scheme. See Age Concern Factsheet 61, *Help with health costs*.

## **8 Resolving problems and making a complaint about the NHS**

Each PCT, GP practice, opticians and dental surgery providing NHS services must have a senior staff member responsible for resolving problems and concerns raised by patients.

Some problems can be resolved satisfactorily without the need to make a formal complaint; others require a more formal investigation. For information about what should happen if you raise concerns or wish to make a formal complaint see Factsheet 66, *Resolving problems and making complaints about the NHS*.

All NHS trusts and independent providers of NHS services must also follow the procedures outlined in this factsheet.

## 9 Useful organisations

### ● Bowel screening programme

Call this number if you are over 70 and would like to request a bowel screening kit.

Tel: 0800 707 6060 (free call)

### ● Carers Direct

Free and confidential advice for carers.

Tel: 0808 802 0202 (free call)

Website: [www.nhs.uk/carersdirect](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect)

### ● Carers UK

Provides information, advice and support to carers, including local support groups, and campaigns on carers' issues.

Tel: 0808 808 7777 (free phone)

Website: [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

### ● Department of Health (DoH)

For DoH publications use the telephone number or email address below. When ordering publications it can be helpful to have the reference number as well as the title.

Tel: 0300 123 1002

Email: [dh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dh@prolog.uk.com)

- **Expert Patients Programme (EPP)**

EPP runs courses to help people with any long-term condition maintain their health and improve their quality of life.

Website: [www.expertpatients.nhs.uk](http://www.expertpatients.nhs.uk)

- **Government policy on services for older people**

Information can be found at:

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/socialcare/deliveringadultsocialcare/olderpeople/index.htm](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/socialcare/deliveringadultsocialcare/olderpeople/index.htm)

- **Hearing Concern LINK**

Hearing Concern LINK is the newly united charity providing information and support to people with a hearing loss and their families.

Tel: 01323 638230

Tel (text): 01323 739998

Website: [www.hearingconcernlink.org](http://www.hearingconcernlink.org)

- **NHS cancer screening programmes**

This website contains information about all the cancer screening programmes and booklets produced to explain the programmes to the public. Your invitation for screening is usually accompanied by an explanatory booklet.

Website: [www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk](http://www.cancerscreening.nhs.uk)

- **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices is a comprehensive web information service to help you find and use NHS services, make choices about your health and learn more about the prevention and treatment of hundreds of health conditions.

Website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

- **NHS Direct**

NHS Direct has contact details for your PCT and local services such as doctors, pharmacists, dentists and support groups. It can also give information on range of health topics and advice on looking after your health.

Tel: 0845 46 57

Website: [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

**NHS Direct Interactive TV channel** is on Freeview channel 108 and also available to Sky digital viewers. It offers a directory of NHS services and health information.

- **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

There is a PALS service operating in each NHS trust – PCTs, hospital trusts, foundation trusts, ambulance trusts and mental health trusts. They can tell you about services that operate in the trust and are keen to hear from patients who wish to make complimentary comments or express concerns about the services they receive.

Early intervention by PALS staff can help resolve problems before they become major issues or they can put you in contact with the complaints manager if you wish. Trust staff or NHS Direct can provide contact details of your local PALS.

### **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)**

Contact RNIB for information and advice about sight problems and products or publications available to support people who are blind or partially sighted.

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Shop by phone: 0845 702 3153

Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

- **Royal National Institute for Deaf People**

RNID campaigns and lobbies to raise awareness of deafness and hearing loss, provides services and does social, medical and technical research. You can check your hearing using their online or telephone hearing check.

Tel: 0808 808 0123 (free call)

Textphone: 0808 808 9000 (free call)

Tinnitus helpline: 0808 808 6666 (free call)

tinnitus textphone: 0808 808 0007 (free call)

Telephone hearing check number: 0844 800 3838

Website: [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)

- **Yellow Card Scheme**

This scheme allows you to report unwanted side effects or reactions to prescription, non-prescription or herbal medicines. You can use the form available in pharmacists; call their hotline: 0808 100 3352 (10am – 2pm weekdays, free call) or complete the online form at <http://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>

### **Health professional organisations**

- **Health Professions Council (HPC)**

The HPC is the independent UK-wide regulatory body for 13 healthcare professions including chiropodists/podiatrists, dietitians, OTs, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists. You can check their online register or call and they will check if the professional you would like to use is on the register.

Tel: 020 7582 0866

Website: [www.hpc-uk.org](http://www.hpc-uk.org)

- **General Chiropractic Council (GCC)**

The GCC regulates the practice of chiropractic profession in the UK. By law chiropractors must be registered with the GCC to practise. You can use their website to find a chiropractor near you.

Tel: 020 7713 5155

Website: [www.gcc-uk.org](http://www.gcc-uk.org)

- **General Osteopathic Council (GOC)**

The GOC regulates the practice of osteopathy in the UK. By law osteopaths must be registered with the GOC in order to practise. You can use their website to find an osteopath near you.

Tel: 020 7357 6655

Website: [www.osteopathy.org.uk](http://www.osteopathy.org.uk)

## 10 Further information about Age Concern

Visit the Age Concern website, [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk), or call our national Information Line on 0800 00 99 66 (free call) if you would like:

- to order copies of any of the Age Concern information materials mentioned in this factsheet;
- to request information in large print;
- further information about our full range of information products;
- contact details for your nearest local Age Concern.

### **Books from Age Concern**

Age Concern publishes a wide range of books for older people and those who care for and work with them. The following title may be of particular interest:

*Your rights to money benefits 2009/10. All you need to know about the full range of benefits for the over 60s.* £5.99 (available June 2009)

To order this book, or to view our full range of books, please visit our website [www.ageconcern.org.uk/bookshop](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/bookshop) or call our book order line 0870 44 22 120.

### **Age Concern and Help the Aged**

Age Concern England and Help the Aged have joined together to form Age UK, a single charity dedicated to improving the lives of older people.

### **Age Concern and Help the Aged across the UK**

To find out more about Age Concern and Help the Aged's work in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, contact:

Age Concern Northern Ireland  
Tel: 028 9032 5055  
Website: [www.ageconcernni.org](http://www.ageconcernni.org)

Scottish Helpline for Older People (Age Concern Scotland)  
Tel: 0845 125 9732  
Websites: [www.olderpeoplescotland.org.uk](http://www.olderpeoplescotland.org.uk)  
[www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk)

Age Concern Cymru & Help the Aged in Wales

Tel: 029 2043 1555

Website: [www.accymru.org.uk](http://www.accymru.org.uk)

## **Support our work**

Age Concern is the largest provider of services to older people in the UK after the NHS. We make a difference to the lives of thousands of older people through local resources such as our befriending schemes, day centres and lunch clubs; by distributing free information materials; and through our national freephone helpline – the Age Concern Information Line 0800 00 99 66.

If you would like to support our work by making a donation please call Supporter Services on 020 8765 7527 (Monday to Friday 9.15am–5pm) or visit [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)

## **Legal statement**

Age Concern England (charity number 261794) has merged with Help the Aged (charity number 272786) to form Age UK, a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England: registered office address 207-221 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9UZ, company number 6825798, registered charity number 1128267.

Age Concern and Help the Aged are brands of Age UK. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age Northern Ireland, Age Cymru.

## **Disclaimer and copyright information**

This guide is not a comprehensive statement of the law in this subject and Age Concern and Help the Aged cannot give individual legal or financial advice. Some rules may have changed since the publication of this guide. If you have any queries that this guide does not answer, seek further advice from one of the organisations suggested.

Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Concern and Help the Aged. While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, Age Concern and Help the Aged cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions.

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