



**Craig Whittaker MP**

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## **Charging Foreign Nationals to Use the NHS**

Thank you for contacting me about the treatment of foreign nationals on the NHS.

I believe that overseas visitors should be able to access our NHS as long as they make a fair contribution, just as the British taxpayer does. The NHS is a national - not an international - health service and I commend the Government's determination to stamp out misuse of the system to ensure it remains free at the point of need in this country.

I have received reassurances from Ministerial colleagues that the most vulnerable groups of overseas visitors to whom we have international welfare obligations or some who are supported by the State will continue to access free NHS care. We will also protect public health by ensuring that services like the diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases remain free to all.

I welcome the recent announcement that new regulations will be introduced which require all hospitals to check upfront whether patients are eligible for free NHS treatment. Under plans to recover the cost of health treatments provided to patients not ordinarily resident in the UK, hospitals will be required to establish whether patients are eligible for free treatment, and to charge upfront those who are not eligible, for any non-urgent, planned care.

These changes, which came into force in April, will play an important role in meeting the Government's ambition to recover up to £500 million a year for the NHS from overseas visitors who are not eligible for free care. The new measures will also require hospitals and NHS bodies to identify and flag a patient's chargeable status so as to facilitate the recovery of costs from overseas visitors where charges apply. This money can then be reinvested into patient care.

You may be aware that the Government last year [sought views on extending charging rules to areas of NHS care](#) and more information can be found at the below webpage:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/overseas-visitors-and-migrants-extending-charges-for-nhs-services>

I understand that support and guidance will be provided to the NHS in implementing these changes.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP