



Out of Area Patients

Department Title

New Registrations

Since 5 January 2015 all GP practices have been able to register new patients who live outside the practice area without any obligation to provide home visits or services out of hours when the patient is unable to attend their registered practice. Changes made to the GP contract mean those obligations may be set aside and do not apply when the GP practice decides, at the point of registration, that it is **clinically appropriate** and practical to register the individual patient in this way.

All primary medical services contracts (GMS, PMS and APMS) have consistent contractual terms that provide practices the option to register out of area without obligations to provide:

- i. Home visits;
- ii. Immediately necessary treatment following accident or emergency when the patient is at home;
- iii. Access to out of hours services (if not opted out) when the patient is at home (and it is not reasonable to expect the patient to attend); or,
- iv. Other such services provided by the contractor, which for clinical or practical reasons it is not reasonable to expect the patient to attend their registered practice, e.g. this could include follow up care following hospital discharge.

When patients who live outside a practice's area requests to register with the practice, the practice will need to decide whether to:

- i. Register as an out of area registered patient with no obligation on the practice to provide home visits etc, assuming it is satisfied it is clinically appropriate and practical to register the patient in this way; or,
- ii. Register as any other registered NHS patient. This will continue to provide access to the full range of services and will involve no change in the obligations on the practice to provide home visits etc. This will continue to be appropriate, for example, for patients who live just outside the practice area.
- iii. Not register the patient. The ability for GP practices to refuse registration on the grounds the patient lives outside the practice area remains unchanged and thus ensures the new arrangements for out of area registration apply on a voluntary basis.

Existing patients who move out of area

Existing registered patients who move home from inside the practice area to outside the practice area may be granted continued registration by GP practices (and must if the move is within any outer boundary area). However, continuing registration would mean no change in their status, that is, home visiting duties would still apply. This is because out of area registration with no home visiting duties can only be applied to new patient registrations.

If the GP practice wishes for the new out of area registration arrangement to apply the GP practice will first need to remove the patient from the practice list (on the grounds they have moved out of area) and then invite them to register under the new arrangements (assuming the patient wished to be registered this way and it was clinically appropriate and practical) making clear the implications of these in respect of home visits etc.

Where out of area registration without home visiting is offered in such circumstances GP Practices will need to support the patient to make an informed choice. This will mean making clear they remain free to register with a practice close to where they live who would be responsible for providing home visits if needed.

Existing Patients who already live outside of the practice boundary

Existing registered patients who live out of area (i.e. those registered with the practice prior to 1 October 2014 as any other registered patient with access to home visits when needed) will continue to be registered in this way and the new arrangements do not apply retrospectively to such patients.

NHS England's interpretation of the regulations is that it would be unreasonable grounds for removing such patients from the practice list if that is with the aim of the practice seeking to release itself of home visiting duties for them and reregistering them as a new patient under these new arrangements.

Detailed Guidance and Communicating with Patients

The NHS England Document, "Choice of GP practice Guidance on the new out of area patient registration arrangements" provides detailed information. The link to the full document is:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Guide-out-area-reg-1214.pdf>

The LMC would advise that you read the document in full and would particularly draw your attention to:

Section 3 (starting on Page 7)

Exit Arrangements (page 19)

Summary of Key Points (page 22)

You should ensure that your practice has considered and, where appropriate, is addressing all the items listed in the summary of key points.

In terms of communicating with your patients, you might find the template letters in Annexes D, E and G useful.

Outer Boundaries

Several years ago, NHS England asked practices whether they wished to define an 'outer boundary'. The aim was to help patients who move a short distance outside the current practice boundary to stay with their existing practice.

Existing patients who move from within the inner boundary into the outer boundary area of a GP practice and remain registered with that practice are eligible for the normal range of services, including clinically necessary home visits. Therefore at the time of setting the outer boundaries, practices were asked to bear in mind the feasibility of home visits, and any possible impact on their patient population as a whole.

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