

Easy Wins

The simplest thing you can do is to WhatsApp a link to the wellbeing guide to the refugee. Its available in 27 languages [here](#).

Accessing Mental Health Support

The first point of contact for mental health services is normally a GP. A general practitioner (GP) is a medical doctor who treats illnesses. Unless it is an emergency, a GP practice is the best place to go to see a doctor. A GP can refer you for mental health support services.

Generally you should be registered with a GP in your local area and this is where you should go. For information on how to get registered see [here](#).

What happens at the GP appointment?

Most often the GP will refer to NHS mental health services. NHS Mental Health Support and Psychological Therapy Community Mental Health Teams (CMHT) can vary enormously in what is offered. The Community Mental Health Team hubs bring together a range of health care professionals who have specialist skills in working with people who have mental health needs. Some are very 'medical' in orientation and separate from psychological therapy services, while others may work in partnership.

It is important to note:

- Access to mental health services has become particularly difficult during the COVID19 pandemic with some very long waiting times
- Some types of therapies are not available until Asylum Seekers are being housed in a more permanent accommodation.
- Asylum Seekers currently in Initial Accommodation (IA's) for example hotels, are not likely to start some types of therapy as disruption can be detrimental to mental health
- If an Asylum Seeker is moved to another location their details are moved with them and will be available when they sign up with a new GP Practice

Mental Health Support during times of Crisis

In a mental health emergency people can always go to the accident and emergency department at the local hospital, **call 999, 111** or the Single Point of Access (SPA) number. In most accident and emergency departments a psychiatric liaison nurse is available.

- Each locality has a **Mental Health Single Point of Access (SPA)** who can be contacted for a **crisis assessment**. This is for crisis situations, where the individual needs medical attention that would not warrant an ambulance. SPAs are there to provide an alternative to hospital admission.
- SPA's can give guidance as to what services are available, can arrange a visit to the person experiencing Mental Health Crisis and are usually able to find translators.
- The local NHS Mental Health Single Point of Access (SPA) numbers can be found via google search which will adjust results based on your location
- If appropriate, signpost to other local organisations such as Samaritans - Call 116123

Having contact details for help lines such as the Samaritans can be helpful if they have some basic English. Ask if they have any friends or family who can stay with them.

Other places to find support services for Mental Health

- Bernardo's Helpline has extended its offer to support the mental health and wellbeing of adult asylum seekers across the UK. The Helpline will offer advice, signposting, emotional support and 8 free sessions of therapy by qualified Barnardo's therapists. This project is funded by the Home Office until 31st March 2022. Call: [0800 151 2605](tel:08001512605)
[Email this service](#)
- [NHS Location Search](#) - Use this to find Mental Health support services in your area
- [NHS A-Z](#) - A directory of Mental Health helplines
- [The Refugee Council](#) - works directly with refugees to support them to rebuild their lives
- [Mind](#) - The Mental Health Charity (urgent help)
- [Mind](#) - Peer support Directory for finding local groups where you live
- [Samaritans](#) - Call, text or email for someone to talk to. They also have a self help app
- [Give us a shout](#) - Free 24/7 text support and resources
- [Hub of Hope](#) - A National Mental Health database bringing help and support together in one place
- [The Refugee Council - Infoline 0808 196 7272](#) connects refugees with organisations that can help - set up for the COVID19 pandemic
- [Freedom from Torture](#) - a medical foundation for the care of victims of torture
- [Helen Bamber Foundation](#) - works with survivors of cruelty
- [Rethink](#) - a mental illness charity
- [Chinese Mental Health Association](#) - provides a range of services and accepts referrals from GPs and health professionals
- [Royal College of Psychiatry](#) Mental Health Information translated into different languages
- Directory of Services & Organisations for Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Migrants
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hWQukpPmC4KuCAbQ3f4jmNSkOYuS0Ae5/view?usp=sharing>

Supporting someone experiencing Mental Health Problems

If you are supporting someone seeking asylum, you have helped them to take a first step towards forming new connections. Some may develop meaningful relationships through refugee community groups or English classes, churches, women's groups or, if they are parents, by connecting to parents of children's playmates or through schools. With the aid of modern technology, like the internet and mobile phones, some may be so connected back home, that they find it difficult to engage in new relationships. In situations of such isolation, referral to a befriending service, if available, may be very helpful.

As refugees and asylum seekers usually have limited resources, they have little money for travel or activities, so it is helpful to find out what local resources are available. There are many activities that can be therapeutic, such as gardening, walking, a cooking group, dancing, a reading group, doing sports, yoga, art, photography, making films or making jewelry.¹



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Assisting someone experiencing mental health problems can be difficult for volunteers. Please remember to take care of yourself and reach out to your Regional Lead or UK operations team for support.

Logging a Concern

A safeguarding concern should be logged through Migrant Help. This can be done through ringing the helpline (0808 8010 503 - you will need consent to log a welfare concern).

Migrant Help should then flag this with the safeguarding team and they should arrange a welfare check.

A safeguarding concern can also be raised directly with the accommodation provider where timely support is required.

Further Reading

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mental-health-migrant-health-guide>

<https://health.cityofsanctuary.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/47/2017/12/CoS-Mental-Health-Resource-Pack-digital.pdf>

Free Training

<https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/>