

Health and wellbeing needs of individuals seeking asylum



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Definitions

Asylum seeker

- *Person who has departed their country of origin and officially applied for asylum in another country but is awaiting a decision on their request for refugee status*

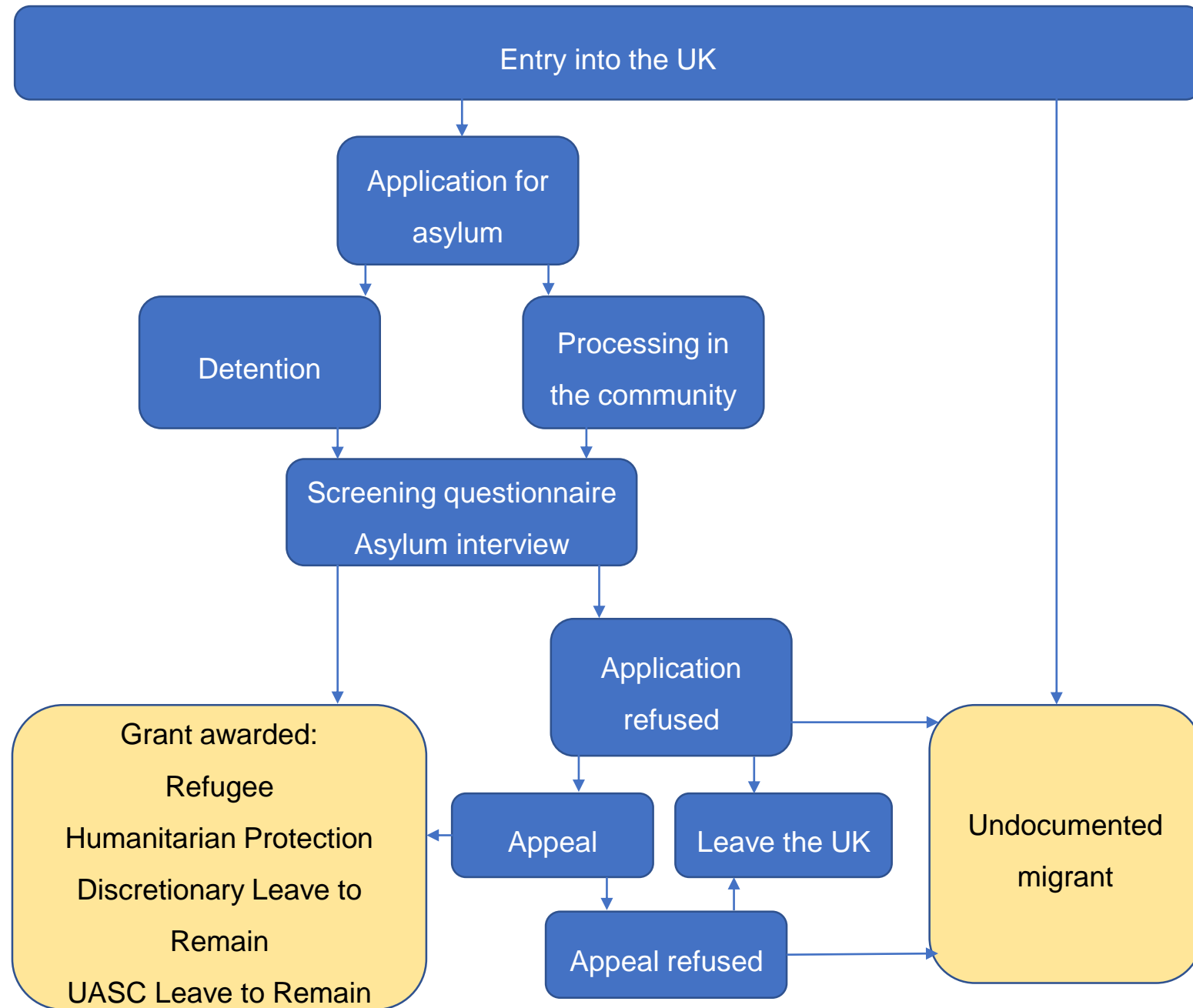
Refugee

- *a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country*

Undocumented migrant

- *Foreign born nationals who do not have the right to remain in the UK*

The asylum-process



Pre-migration context



Source: Nudelman&Tasch. Business Insider UK. 2015. Available from: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/map-of-europe-refugee-crisis-2015-9>





Health Needs

- Communicable diseases
- Incomplete immunisation history
- Non-communicable diseases
- Malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies
- Obesity
- Anaemia
- Musculoskeletal complaints
- Oral disease
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Pregnancy
- Female genital mutilation
- **Psychological disturbance**



Post-migration context

- Long and complex legal immigration process
- Detention
- New culture and language
- Unable to work
- Delayed access to education
- Loss of identity and status
- Lack of family and community support
- Integration challenges
- Poverty and poor housing
- Racism and discrimination
- Digital exclusion
- Barriers to healthcare



Political and economic landscape

- Rise in the populist radical right
- Negative media portrayal
- Austerity and deficit reduction policy
- COVID-19 pandemic

Treaties ratified by the UK

- The Refugee Convention
- The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The European Convention on Human Rights and Human Rights Act 1998
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Hostile Environment policies



ID checks and upfront charging of undocumented migrants for hospital treatment and NHS-funded community health services



No recourse to public funds for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants



Banks and building societies prohibited from opening accounts for undocumented migrants



Criminalisation of letting to undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers awaiting a decision on their case as they are disqualified from renting



Criminalisation of employing undocumented migrants for whom it is illegal to work



Data sharing for immigration enforcement purposes between the Home Office and public services



Poverty and health

- **Policies precipitating poverty:**
- No recourse to public funds
- Not allowed to work
- Housing and £39.63 pp/pw

Health consequences:

- Physical problems
- Psychological problems
- Behavioral changes



Housing and health

- **Housing policies:**
- Dispersal policy
- “substandard, poorly maintained and, at times, unsafe”
- IAC, hotels and barracks

- **Health consequences:**
- Respiratory illness
- Accidental injury
- Poor early childhood development
- Poor mental health



Education and health

- Implicit legal entitlement
- Access barriers
- Delayed and inadequate provision
- Deterrence due to information sharing for immigration purposes

Health consequences:

- Stable social support
- Facilitate integration
- Empower to communicate in English
- Recognise children-in-need
- Access to school nursing service
- Provision of skills and qualifications for future employability and financial security
- Lack of access: deterioration in mental health



Healthcare contact

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children: Initial Health Assessment within 28 days of registration with the local authority
- Every asylum seeker arriving in initial accommodation (including hotels) should have a health assessment (**Appendices 2&3**)
- GP new patient checks
- Opportunistic

Health policy and practice

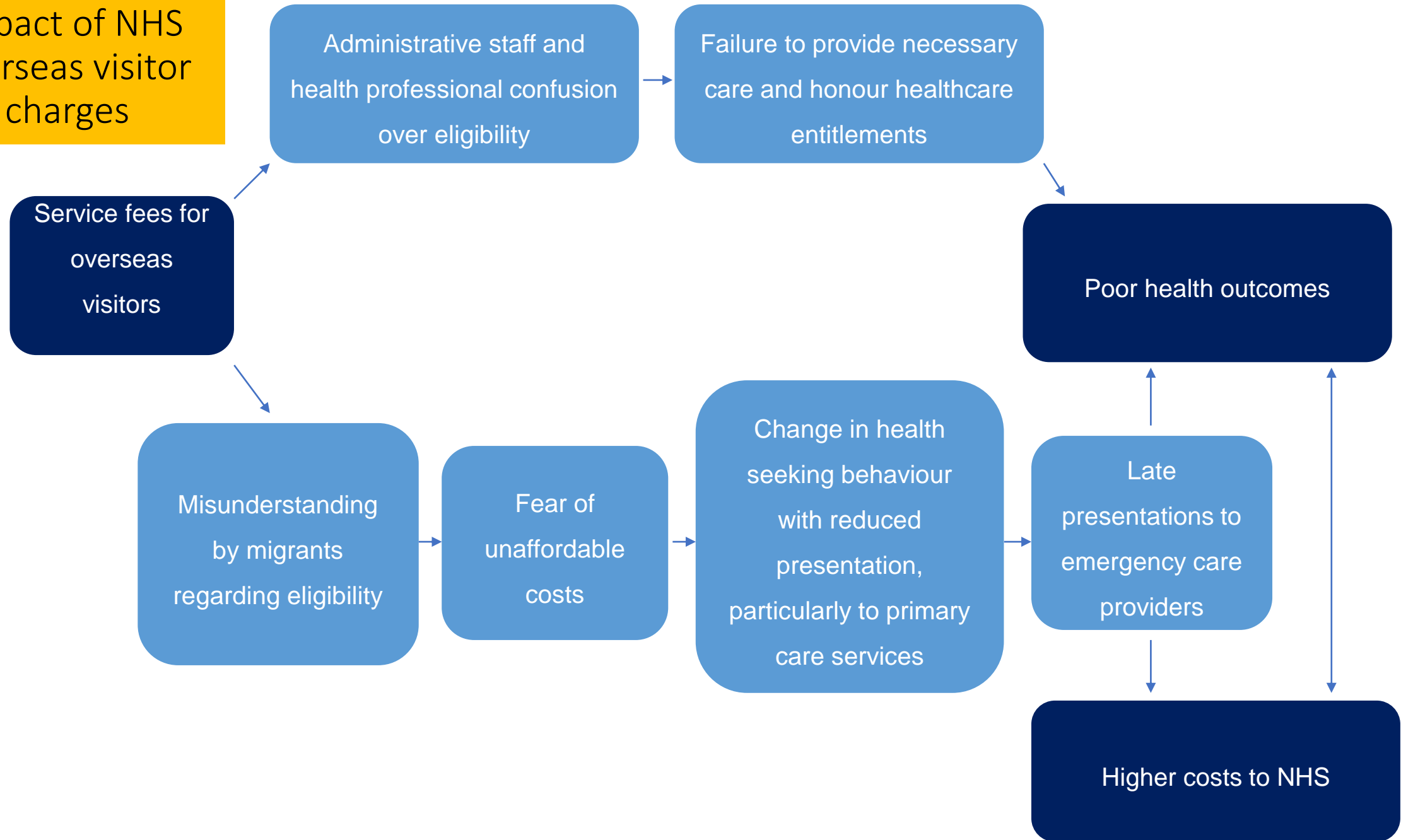
Universal entitlement

- Primary care
- Accident and emergency (A&E) services
- Diagnostic and treatment services for some communicable diseases (e.g. HIV, TB) and sexually transmitted infections
- Family planning services (not termination)
- Treatment of a physical or mental condition caused by torture, female genital mutilation, domestic or sexual violence
- Palliative care

Charged for NHS services

- Charged for hospital treatment at 150% NHS tariff
 - Refused asylum seekers and their dependents not entitled to s95 or s4 support
 - Undocumented migrants

Impact of NHS overseas visitor charges

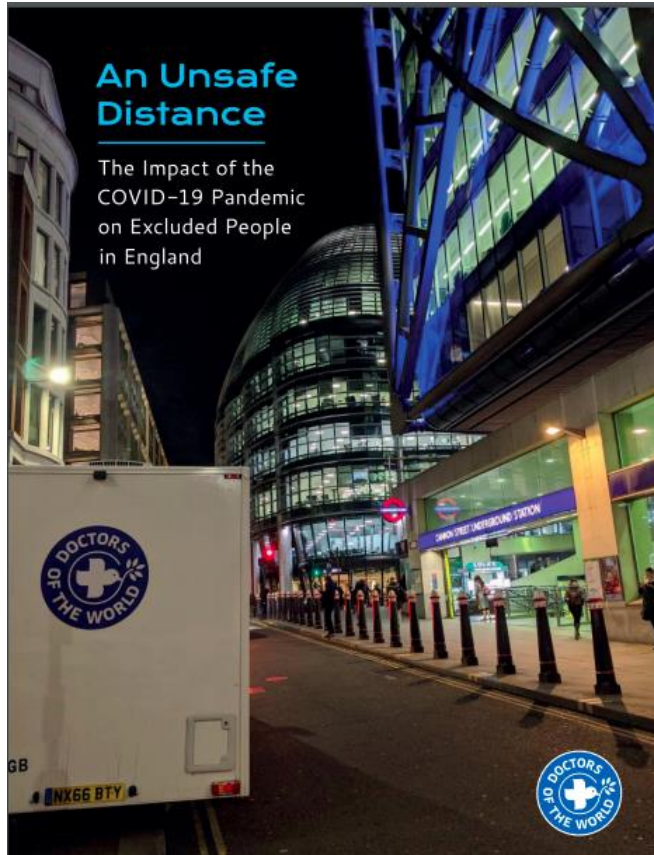


Healthcare challenges

- NHS Overseas Visitor Charge
- GP registration
- Language
- Culture
- Digital exclusion
- Health provider knowledge
- Access to specialist services



COVID-19 Pandemic



“As asylum seekers the first thing we felt was left out by the government. I know the government is facing crazy moments, but being a leader of a country facing coronavirus it's not just about thinking about citizens and residents, it's about all human beings that live in the UK.”
Asylum seeker

“How is it possible to self-isolate in a shared house with three mums and six children where you share a toilet and bathroom? And if we have to self-isolate there is no way of us getting food.”
Newly recognised refugee

“We don't have enough credit to call the GP and sometimes the call can take really long.”
Asylum-seeker

<https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/covid19-brief-rna-report.pdf>

Obstacles to COVID-19 vaccine



- Be identified as eligible;
- Receive the vaccine invitation;
- Have the language, literacy and digital skills to understand invitation and engage with the booking system;
- Be able to access the vaccination centre;
- Feel confident that accessing the vaccine is free and independent of immigration control activities;
- Believe they would benefit from having it.



GP Registration · Inclusive policy & practice · Partnerships · Outreach

Addressing health and wellbeing needs

- Enable access to meaningful primary care
- Wellbeing and mental health support
- Joint commissioning to address health inequalities for migrants in all key sectors
- Partnership working
- Investment in migrant VCSE organisations ([Appendix 4](#))
- Training and support for frontline service providers ([Ch. 8-Resources, tools and guidance](#))
- Inclusive local policy and practice
- Establish policy surveillance to investigate the impact hostile environment policies have on migrant health, facilitate evidence-based policy review
- Advocate for immediate suspension of hostile environment policies