

Groundswell

Out of homelessness



You have the right to feel OK



Understanding your rights to mental health support if you're homeless and having thoughts, feelings or experiences that are upsetting or overwhelming.

ENGLISH VERSION

This information may not apply if you are not a British citizen.
For more information, go to <https://migrantsrights.org.uk/resources/know-your-rights/mental-health/>

What are my treatment and support options for mental health?

There are many different treatment and support options. Different services will have different things available. These could include:

- **Talking therapy** - offered by the NHS and charities
- **Medication** - offered by the NHS
- **Peer support** - available from charities, religious groups or social groups
- **Alternative therapies** - like yoga, mindfulness or herbal remedies

A GP may need to see you before prescribing medication or referring you to NHS services.

Some NHS services and charities allow self-referring. This means you can contact them yourself for support.

Unfortunately, services in your area might not always have the kind of treatment that works for you. You can talk to your GP, support worker, or local charities to see what they can offer.

Can I still get NHS help if I don't have access to a phone, internet or an address?

Yes. You do not need a fixed address or ID to register with a GP or get NHS treatment.

If an NHS treatment, such as therapy, is offered over the phone or online you can ask for it in person instead. You have the right to get treatment that meets your needs.

Can I still get mental health support if I am drinking or using drugs?

Yes, but it will depend on the service and how much drinking or drug use is impacting you. If you are denied a service, you should be told why and be given options for what you can do instead. Some services might look at your mental health and substance use separately, and some might look at them together.

More information:

For urgent help call 999 or visit <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/>

I am on a waiting list for NHS treatment. What will happen if I move areas?

It depends.

If you were registered with a GP before moving, you can stay with that GP and stay on the waiting list.

If you were not registered with a GP, or if you register with a new GP in your new area, you may be removed from the waiting list and need a new referral. Your new area might have different services to your old area.

Can I say 'no' to a treatment I don't want?

Yes. You do not need to start or continue with a treatment that is not working for you. If the treatment is offered from the NHS, they should tell you what other options are available to you. If they don't, you can ask them.

In general, you can only be treated without your agreement in very special circumstances. Mind has more information about this online at www.mind.org.uk/information-support/legal-rights/consent-to-treatment/overview/

What can I do if my medication is lost or stolen?

A pharmacy can give you emergency medication. They will ask you questions about your prescription before they can do this. You can also visit a walk-in centre or contact NHS 111 for more information. If your medication was stolen, your GP or pharmacy may need to notify the police.

What if I don't like the way health professionals treat me?

You have a right to be respected and treated fairly. You can complain if this doesn't happen. You can ask for information on how to complain from the service provider. If you need help complaining you can get help from someone you trust- like a friend or a support worker. You can also get help from services that help people with their rights. These are called advocacy services.

Mind information: search 'healthcare rights'

If you do not have access to the internet but have access to a support service or support worker, you could ask them to print this information off for you.

What if I don't understand what a health professional has told me?

It is okay if you need things to be explained in a different way. You can:

- Ask them to explain things again, or speak to another doctor
- Contact NHS 111 or a walk-in centre
- Go to a pharmacy for questions about medication
- Bring someone you trust to appointments with you
- Ask for a translator if you need one

What can I do while waiting for treatment?

Waiting times for treatment can be very long. We asked some people with experience of homelessness what they found helpful for their mental health while waiting. Not all of these suggestions will work for you, and that is okay. Different things work for different people at different times.

- “I keep connected with people, preferably face to face. But if that isn't possible- talking on the phone, text, WhatsApp groups with various friends.”
- “Look and ask what other agencies there are around that can help while you wait”
- “Walking helps. Even if it's just around one block of the city. Moving my body, the rhythm of one step after another can be soothing. I often use my steps to count out a little beat in my head: “I'm ok, you're ok”.”
- “I attend AA meetings, which help to ground me and stay calm. I meditate and pray, I listen to calming music to help clear my head. All of this I have to make myself do. It doesn't come easy, but it helps”
- “I try to be patient and, in my mind, I hold a conscious space for the mental health teams. I know they are thinly stretched and often doing their best to manage high demand and few resources. I try to keep in mind that TODAY I am alive, I have breath in my body and the sky has not fallen in. I can hang in for one more day.”



This leaflet has been produced by Groundswell and Mind. Groundswell produce accessible health guidance for people experiencing homelessness. Mind provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. This information is based on insights from Groundswell research and volunteers with experience of homelessness.

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