

Overcoming Barriers to Health Access for People Seeking Sanctuary

Caroline Norman and HARP Volunteers

Health Access for Refugees Programme (HARP)

Refugee Council

Today we will cover



- The work we do
- Barriers to health care for refugees
- Solutions we have found
- The future for health access for refugees
- Hear from Experts by Experience



Health
Access for
Refugees
Programme

The HARP Model



We have 3 overarching objectives which all aim to reduce health barriers and tackle inequalities:

- 1. For asylum seekers - raise awareness of their healthcare rights and entitlements and know how to access NHS services appropriately**
- 2. For our clients to become health advocates and support their peers, using their language skills and own experiences**
- 3. Raise awareness with health professionals and instigate systems change**

Who do we work with?



Barriers we have observed

- Knowledge of how the health system works
- Lack of understanding and fear of health treatment
- Language and lack of interpreters
- Awareness amongst healthcare professionals
- Specific health needs of refugees
- Fear of having to pay or provide documentation
- Cultural barriers
- Lack of money e.g. to travel to the GP or buy medicines
- Mental health

Specific barriers to accessing GP

- Unable to make the appointment due to needing to call on the phone e.g. no phone, no credit, unable to understand the options menu, English not proficient enough, may not know what to ask for.
- Unable to provide date of birth
- Not wishing to explain issue to woman/man or in front of others
- Unsure of different roles such as GP, practice nurse, physio etc.
- Does not know what to ask for e.g. told to go to reception and book a test or give a sample
- Using touch screen check-in
- If interaction with reception is difficult it adds to fear of seeing the GP and deters them from returning.

Our solutions



We run **drop-in sessions** at hotels on a weekly basis. At these sessions we answer questions and sort out issues, including:

- Booking health appointments
- 111
- Translating letters
- Ordering and collecting prescriptions
- Referrals
- Test results
- Accompanying to health appointments
- Ensure interpreters are booked for appointments

Complex health advocacy



B

B is a torture survivor and he is also visually impaired. Due to his experience of torture he found it very difficult to enter medical buildings and consequently his visual impairment was not fully diagnosed for two years. HARP went to appointments with him to give support and reassurance. We supported him to access services such as the Blind Institute and sensory impairment team. We read and explained his letters.

B is now much more able to attend his appointments and is slowly trusting more people and growing a social life again.

The key person who helped this support to happen was a HARP volunteer who spoke B's language and recognised his difficulties. The volunteer eventually moved away from Sheffield but still stays in touch specifically to support B because continuity of support is so important when clients find it hard to trust people. It also means that B does not have to explain all of his issues to a new person.

Health information briefings

We deliver briefings in different languages in the hotel settings.

Examples include

- Accessing the NHS
- Covid 19 myth busting and Covid vaccination
- First aid



Health and wellbeing activities



Awareness Raising for Professionals



“Thanks so much for having me on Monday, such an incredibly moving session. They were all absolutely astoundingly powerful speakers. I wish the whole country could have heard those stories then we'd be in a very different place right now!”

Volunteering



How you can support our work

- Follow Refugee Council on Social Media
- Learn the facts and challenge the myths
- Donate to Refugee Council through our website
- Donate to other local refugee organisations such as City of Sanctuary Sheffield
- Volunteer with us

For more information contact
caroline.norman@refugeecouncil.org.uk