SAFE SURGERIES

A GUIDE FOR PCN HEALTH INEQUALITIES LEADS

About this guide

This guide has been developed by Doctors of the World to support Primary Care Network (PCN) Health Inequalities Leads in their efforts to improve access to equitable and quality care for inclusion health populations. It provides an overview of the Safe Surgeries programme, highlights how PCNs can enable local GP practices to build Safe Surgeries, and provides a set of practical tools and recommendations to help address barriers to GP registration and ongoing access to primary care.

About Doctors of the World

Doctors of the World UK (DoTW) is a charitable organisation working to reduce health inequalities by improving access to healthcare through our volunteer-led clinic and advocacy programme.

As well as providing direct medical support through our clinics and advice line, we also work with GP practices across the country to address barriers to registration and ensure everyone is able to access high quality primary care.

Understanding Inclusion Health

Inclusion health is an umbrella term used to describe people who are socially excluded, who typically experience multiple overlapping risk factors for poor health, such as poverty, violence and complex trauma. This includes people who experience homelessness, drug and alcohol dependence, vulnerable migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, sex workers, people in contact with the justice system and victims of modern slavery.

People from inclusion health groups tend to have much poorer health outcomes than that of the general population and face complex barriers to care.

While everyone in the UK is entitled to free primary care, research shows that individuals from inclusion health populations struggle to access these services. This can be for a number of reasons including lack of knowledge on entitlements, language or cultural barriers, discriminatory practices or difficulty navigating health service bureaucracy.

Despite NHS England guidelines, some GP practices still refuse to register people because they don't have proof of address, ID or because of their immigration status. Beyond registration, these patients may require additional support to sustain their engagement with primary care services.

Understanding who and where your local inclusion health groups are, their distinct health needs, and potential barriers to care is critical in order to meaningfully address inequalities and build healthier communities.



Role of Primary Care Networks in addressing health inequalities

> **"While we cannot treat our way out of inequalities, the NHS can ensure that action to drive down health inequalities is central to everything we do."**
>
> NHS England Long Term Plan

PCNs have a critical role in addressing local health inequalities and improving access to care. The PCN Directed Enhanced Service (DES) Contract outlines the duty of every PCN to assess their local population risk of inequalities and develop strategies in response to this.

The population in your area will include people from inclusion health groups, and it is likely that they will face additional barriers to accessing and getting support from primary care. PCNs should understand who their local inclusion groups are, the barriers that these groups face, as well as the intersectional barriers for people that belong to more than one group.

The PCN Health Inequalities Lead serves as a champion for this work and plays an important role in identifying local inclusion health populations and supporting GP practices in their catchment area to better understand and meet the needs of these groups.

About Safe Surgeries

NHS Guidance states that everyone living in the UK is entitled to register and consult with a GP, free of charge. It means we can prevent and treat illness early and create a healthier society for everyone.

Safe Surgeries is a network of GP practices committed to tackling barriers preventing access to primary care and to promoting the health of everyone in their community – regardless of immigration status, language or proof of ID and address. There are currently over 2,000 practices signed up as Safe Surgeries across England.

The Safe Surgeries network, facilitated by DoTW UK, provides free **resources** and training to support practices to make their services more accessible.

Any GP practice can sign up to become a Safe Surgery by filling out this **online form**. Once you sign up, DOTW will follow up with a welcome email outlining some next practical next steps including signing a declaration, completing training, reviewing registration policies and displaying posters for patients.

What can Safe Surgeries do for your area?

1. Advance local PCN priorities including implementation of the Health Inequalities DES
2. Promote healthy communities and improve access to equitable and quality primary health care
3. Respond to the needs of diverse local communities and promote non-discriminatory practice
4. Support GP practices to implement national NHS England guidelines on patient registration
5. Support GP practices to score highly in CQC inspections as Effective, Caring and Responsive surgeries



How can PCN Health Inequalities Leads help to build Safe Surgeries?



IDENTIFY

Work with GP practices as well as your local public health team, Healthwatch, third sector organisations and community representatives to identify barriers to accessing primary care which need to be addressed, engage with local inclusion health populations and ensure that this is reflected in local needs assessments and health inequalities strategies.



SPREAD THE WORD

Encourage all GP practices in your PCN to become Safe Surgeries and signpost to useful resources to ensure their registration policies are in line with NHS England guidance. Share our poster and QR code with information on the initiative and how to get involved.



INFORM

Ensure that both clinical and non-clinical practice staff are supported to attend and explore other avenues for learning and development. Use our Peer-to-peer resources to deliver Safe Surgeries training or disseminate the e-Learning module to all practice staff.



CONNECT & COLLABORATE

Disseminate the Safe Surgeries toolkit and resources to stakeholders in your area. Connect with other PCN Health Inequalities Leads to share learning and good practices and highlight inclusion health priorities through the local Integrated Care System.



EVALUATE, LEARN & IMPROVE

Seek out regular feedback on the accessibility of GP practices across your PCN. Highlight good practices to and across GP practices and explore how population health management tools such as data-linkage and patient coding may help direct efforts and resources towards those facing the greatest exclusion from primary care.

Useful resources

Safe Surgeries Toolkit
This toolkit is the key guidance document for Safe Surgeries. It lays out seven steps for practices to help ensure that everyone in their community can access the healthcare they're entitled to.

PCN Health Inclusion Self-Assessment Tool
This online tool will help your Primary Care Network to assess its engagement with Inclusion Health groups and identify areas for further action.

Social Prescribing Toolkit
This toolkit is intended to support Social Prescribing Link Workers operating within primary care and VCSE organisations. These materials, put together with input from social prescribing link workers and migrants, provide practical steps and information to recognise and address healthcare barriers.

Translated Resources Hub
This is a repository of translated health information resources in over 60 languages, developed by DOTW. These cover coronavirus and other health topics, and are available to download for free in a variety of formats, including video.

Patient health questionnaires
These translated questionnaires have been developed by DOTW and NHS England and are designed to be completed by new migrants to help to prioritise health needs in initial consultations.

DOTW UK is here to provide support to PCNs working towards inclusive primary care services and healthy communities.

Sign up for updates and resources. More information on the Safe Surgeries programme can be found at **www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/safesurgeries**

Contact: **safesurgeries@doctorsoftheworld.org.uk**

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