

# Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK: Guide for Supporting Migrants During Coronavirus

Many migrants, refugees, and people with insecure immigration status in the UK will be particularly at risk during Coronavirus, due to lack of or restricted access to council services, healthcare, and housing. [JCWI](#), [Migrants Organise](#), and [Medact](#) have put together a short guide for Mutual Aid groups to consider how best to support at risk migrants. **Please share this far and wide!**

*This document is a working document, and will be updated as more information becomes available.*

## Supporting migrants to access healthcare:

No-one should suffer due to fear of seeking medical attention. Families with insecure immigration status are charged by the NHS for certain hospital treatment - but this does not apply to coronavirus.

- What you should know to support people affected by NHS charging:
  - Advice from NHS 111, and treatment in a GP surgery or A&E department, are always free.
  - There is no charge for examinations or tests to find out if a person has coronavirus.
  - There is no charge for hospital treatment for confirmed coronavirus.
  - You can print [Health Rights Cards explaining entitlements to care here](#).
  - You can also [print COVID-19 specific info cards here](#).
  - However - please note that if migrants are chargeable, they will still be charged for care unrelated to coronavirus. If they test negative but still need treatment, they'll be charged for all treatment they are given after this result.
  - Sometimes the NHS shares the name, address, and date of birth of a patient with the Home Office. This can happen if the hospital is trying to determine a person's eligibility for care, or if a person has a debt to the NHS.
  - For more information, contact [docsnotcops@gmail.com](mailto:docsnotcops@gmail.com) and [jameskinnner@medact.org](mailto:jameskinnner@medact.org).
  - *This information was put together by Docs Not Cops. Please [share this info](#), and [follow Docs Not Cops](#) for more advice.*
- Doctors of the World have a clinic advice line - providing free healthcare advice to people, regardless of immigration status - on 0808 1647 686 (freephone) that is open from 10am to 12 midday, Monday to Friday, and they provide a translation service for people who do not speak English. [For more information click here](#).

## Translations and languages:

Access to healthcare for migrants is extremely complicated but is available for those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Doctors of the World have created guidance for migrants who need to access the NHS during the outbreak of COVID-19. [You can find the guidance translated into many languages here](#). Please share and spread widely in your local communities.

- If you are producing advice or providing support locally, try and get any leaflets, documents or posters translated into the languages local to your area. Your council will have info on which main languages are spoken locally.
- *If you are a qualified translator, Doctors of the World would really appreciate help translating the website- please contact Yusuf Ciftci [YCiftci@doctorsoftheworld.org.uk](mailto:YCiftci@doctorsoftheworld.org.uk).*

## Providing support with groceries and supplies:

Some groups of migrants are only allowed to shop at specific stores due to the fact that they have an electronic card provided to them by the Home Office. This card only has a small quantity of money on it. This means that if the accepted stores run out of supplies or if they have a family to provide for, they may not be able to acquire the goods they need. Offering to do a food shop, or supporting people directly with cash, would go a long way in these circumstances.

- Many migrants do not have any access to welfare benefits, and asylum-seekers and undocumented people are not allowed to legally work. This means that some migrants may struggle to provide for their families if they are unable to work, or if they are reliant on work which is not included in the traditional economy. Again, either providing food or financial assistance would be of great benefit.

## Home Office and Immigration Status:

Some migrants are required to regularly attend appointments with the Home Office, often this requires them to travel some distance and out of the region that they live in. If someone you know is on 'immigration bail', it is important that they know that the Home Office have suspended their requirement to report for at least one month from 19 March. This means they do not have to travel to report to the Home Office.

- **Encourage anyone who is anxious to contact a local migrant support group or their legal representatives or to access legal advice if they don't already have it.** The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants has a telephone line where all migrants can access free initial legal advice and/or be directed to the right services - [click here to be directed to it](#). The helpline is on 020 7553 7470, and is open on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10am and 1pm. The helpline is free and confidential.



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- [Right to Remain](#) are regularly updating this document with the changes to the asylum and immigration process during COVID-19.

### Donations:

Some migrants are reliant on food banks which are very quickly running out of supplies or are not able to function without volunteers. Access to food/medicines is vital. Please consider donating to your local foodbank, or donating supplies to your mutual aid group who can distribute them to people that need them.

- Some migrants, particularly young, unaccompanied migrants, do not have access to the internet or to smartphones. Over the coming months, we will all be more reliant on technology to access education, work and to sustain our mental health in order to interact with other human beings! Consider donating an old (but working!) smart phone, tablet, laptop or computer to a local migrant support group who can share these with those who are in need.
- **Local migrant support groups are reliant on donations to be able to function.** Please consider donating to your local group or to a migrants' rights charity so that they can continue to provide support and access to services for those who need it.

### Protecting migrants against unjust immigration controls and the hostile environment:

Be aware of what information your group is sharing with the police, or with local authorities and other organisations / institutions that may pass this information on to the Home Office.

- If someone with an unclear migration status approaches you for help or support, do not report them to the police as this could lead to them being arrested and placed in detention. Instead, provide them with the support they need or contact your local migrant support group so they can access the services they need safely.
- You will not get in trouble for helping someone through the coronavirus outbreak, regardless of their immigration status. Providing people with food or medicine and helping them to access services is not illegal. Please contact [aliya@migrantsorganise.org](mailto:aliya@migrantsorganise.org) if you have questions about safeguarding policies.
- For more information on safeguarding in Mutual Aid groups, check out [this resource by the National Food Service](#).

### Migrants in precarious employment:

Migrants, such as domestic workers and care workers who may be living with their employers could find themselves in a very difficult situation, without income or support if they get ill. You can help by looking out for them and if you suspect that they are in a difficult situation, please call the Modern Slavery Helpline **0300 303**



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8151. Also look at [Kalayaan](#) or [ATLEU's](#) websites, who can also provide help with immigration status. You can also look at [the Salvation Army website for more information](#). Please be discrete and sensitive.

## Signposting

- [Student Action for Refugees](#) has also put together a guide for Mutual Aid groups supporting refugees and asylum seekers - [check it out here](#).
- Mutual Aid for Refugees have put together a [useful signposting document here](#) - which has information about migrant centres, legal advice, foodbanks, housing and accommodation, and more.
- Crisis has launched an emergency grants programme as a response to the covid-19 situation. The purpose of the fund is to support local organisations who are financially affected by additional demands on their resources and who have changed or expanded their provision to respond. You can [access all the information here](#).
- Refugee Action Good Practice have created a Coronavirus Guide which has information on the immediate provision of essential services (food, shelter, access to information and healthcare) for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, as well information on medium-term provision of legal advice and community events and services, plus tips for organisations continuing to provide services. [Check it out here](#).

## For more information...

Please get check out the resources of the following organisations:

There are some Facebook Mutual Aid groups that have been set up, designed for refugees and asylum seekers, and for people and organisations supporting them:

- [North East England](#)
- [London](#)

JCWI: <https://www.jcwi.org.uk/>

Doctors of the World: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/>

The Red Cross: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/>

NACCOM: <https://nacom.org.uk/>

Migrants Organise: <https://www.migrantsorganise.org/>

Modern Slavery Referral Helpline: 0300 303 8151, open 24/7.

If you have suggestions for links and resources to include, or would like further information, please email [aliya@migrantsorganise.org](mailto:aliya@migrantsorganise.org).

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