

Factsheet

1. The UK government is introducing an immigration health surcharge on 6 April 2015. The health surcharge will be paid by non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who apply to come to the UK to work, study or join family for a period of more than 6 months. It will also be paid by non-EEA nationals who are already in the UK and apply to extend their stay after 6 April 2015. There are some exempt groups who fall within the above categories but do not need to pay the surcharge.
2. The surcharge is:
 - £150 per year for students.
 - £200 per year for all other temporary visa and immigration applications made overseas and in the UK. Dependents will generally pay the same amount as the main applicant.
3. Those who have paid the surcharge or are exempt will be able to access the National Health Service (NHS) in the same way as a permanent UK resident. Payment may be required for some services such as dental treatment and eye tests.
4. When you make your immigration application you will be asked some questions to see if you need to pay the health surcharge or if you're exempt. You must pay the health surcharge before you finish your immigration application. If the surcharge is required, but not paid, the application will be refused or treated as invalid and rejected. If an immigration application is unsuccessful the surcharge will be refunded.
5. Tier 2 inter-company transfers, Australian and New Zealand nationals must still complete the process through the surcharge web site. They will be informed the payment is nil but receive a unique surcharge reference number. This number is needed for their immigration application to confirm their exemption from the surcharge.
6. The surcharge payable will cover the entire period of permission to stay in the UK. For example, a person coming to the UK as a sponsored skilled migrant (Tier 2) will be required to pay the charge in full and upfront for the three year period.
7. Anyone coming to the UK on a visitor visa, for example as a tourist, or as an EEA national, does not need to pay the surcharge. However they will remain directly chargeable for hospital treatment.
8. Customer guidance will be available on www.gov.uk/visas-immigration from 6 April.

Related changes for those who are **not** required to pay the surcharge

- Those who are directly chargeable for their NHS care (for example visitors) and fail to pay and incur debts of £1000 or more, will normally be refused permission to re-enter or remain in the UK until that debt is paid.
- The UK Department of Health is also strengthening the existing arrangements for identifying and invoicing chargeable overseas visitors. Regulation changes will mean that from April 2015, non EEA visitors who use the NHS will be charged 150% of the cost of any medical treatment they receive. It is therefore recommended that this group possesses adequate travel and health insurance.

Questions and answers

Customer Q&A

1. When is the health surcharge being introduced?

The surcharge will be introduced on 6 April 2015. It will apply to applications where payment is made on or after 6 April.

2. How much will it cost?

The health surcharge will be set at £200 a year for temporary migrants and £150 a year for students. Dependants will generally be charged the same amount as their main applicant. The total surcharge amount for the whole period of leave granted will be payable upfront.

3. Why is the surcharge being introduced?

The immigration health surcharge will ensure that temporary, non-EEA migrants coming to the UK for more than six months contribute to the NHS in a manner in line with their immigration status.

The surcharge is not a visa fee. The payment will be collected by the Home Office and it will go directly into the National Health Service (NHS) and will give migrants access to the NHS on the same terms as a permanent UK resident. The surcharge will be set at a competitive rate and will be a lower cost over the period of stay than the cost of even basic private medical insurance.

Private medical insurance for students and working migrants is a common requirement in many of our competitor nations, such as Australia and the USA and the costs there are higher. Private medical insurance in the UK, which is comparable with healthcare provided by the NHS, is likely to be significantly higher than the proposed surcharge. Basic medical insurance will generally not cover the full range of treatment offered by the NHS, including pre-existing and chronic conditions and treatment for pregnancy. Furthermore, in the case of a medical emergency, it is still the NHS which will be providing treatment.

4. Who has to pay?

The health surcharge will be paid by non-EEA nationals who apply to

come to the UK to work, study or join family for a time-limited period of more than 6 months. It will also be paid by non-EEA nationals who are already in the UK and apply to extend their stay. Some exemptions to this rule will apply – see below.

5. What healthcare will the surcharge provide?

Health surcharge payers will be able to access the National Health Service in the same way as a permanent resident, i.e. they will receive NHS care generally free of charge but may be charged for services a permanent resident would also pay for, such as dental treatment and prescription charges in England.

6. Can I take out private healthcare insurance instead?

The health surcharge is mandatory for affected migrants. Some individuals may decide to take out private healthcare insurance in addition. However, that is a personal decision and they will still need to pay the surcharge.

Private medical insurance in the UK, which is comparable with healthcare provided by the NHS is likely to be significantly higher than the proposed surcharge. Basic medical insurance will generally not cover the full range of treatment offered by the NHS, including pre-existing and chronic conditions and treatment for pregnancy. Furthermore, in the case of a medical emergency, it is still the NHS which will be providing treatment.

7. Do I have to pay the surcharge in full up front?

Yes. The health surcharge is payable in full at the time of the immigration application. The amount of the charge will be calculated based on the amount of time a migrant would be permitted to stay in the UK under the relevant category in the Immigration Rules.

8. How is the surcharge calculated?

The amount payable will be based on the maximum period of time for which permission could be granted under the relevant application route, or according to the length of time stipulated in the certificate of sponsorship or certificate of acceptance of studies. Where the maximum period includes part of a year, a pro rata payment will be applied. Where this is for six months or less, the amount payable will be half the annual surcharge. Where the period is for more than six months, the full surcharge will be payable.

9. How do I pay the surcharge?

The surcharge will usually be paid online at the point of application. Local guidance will be provided where other payment arrangements exist.

10. When do I pay the surcharge?

The payment is made at the same time as the immigration application is made. It's very important that you ensure have paid the surcharge before

you submit or send your immigration application. If you choose to attend in person at one of our Premium Service Centres (UK only), please ensure you have paid your surcharge prior to your appointment.

11. Do Australian and New Zealand nationals have to pay the surcharge?

No, but the applicant must still go through the process on the surcharge web site. The UK has reciprocal healthcare agreements with Australia and New Zealand whereby visitors and temporary migrants from those countries are entitled to some treatment free of charge on the NHS.

In turn, this is reciprocated when our citizens visit there. Australian and New Zealand nationals do not have to pay the surcharge, but must still go through the payment process where you will be informed your payment is nil but you will receive your unique surcharge reference number which you will need for your immigration application to confirm your exemption.

12. Do Tier 2 inter-company transfers have to pay the surcharge?

No, but applicants must still go through the process on the surcharge web site. You will be informed the payment is nil but receive a unique surcharge reference number. You will need this for your immigration application to confirm your exemption from the surcharge.

13. If my application is not granted, will I get a refund on my surcharge payment?

Yes. If an application is refused or rejected you will be automatically refunded without having to take any further action.

14. What if I pay the surcharge and get a visa but then decide not to travel?

Your surcharge payment will not be refunded.

15. If I leave the UK earlier than planned will I get a partial refund on the surcharge?

The surcharge will not be partially refunded when someone departs the UK before the expiry of their permission to be in the UK, including in cases in which the Home Office cuts short permission to be in the UK.

16. If I pay the surcharge, but do not use the National Health Service, will I get a refund?

The surcharge payment is not refunded if the applicant does not use the National Health Service.

17. Will introducing the surcharge increase the time it takes to process my application?

There is no change to our existing customer service standards and processing times. However, in the event that the correct surcharge is not paid when the immigration application is made, this will be delayed while the Home Office contacts the applicant and the correct payment is made.

18. Do dependants of the main applicant also have to pay the surcharge?

Yes. The surcharge applies per person and each dependant (including children) generally pays the same amount as the main applicant.

19. Will those entering the UK on a tourist visa have to pay the surcharge?

No. Anyone coming to the UK on a tourist visa will not pay the health surcharge. They complete their immigration application as usual and do not need to go through any additional process in relation to the surcharge. They will remain directly chargeable for hospital treatment as is the case now. The Department of Health is working on changes to their charging regulations which will mean that from April non-EEA visitors who use the NHS will be charged 150% of the cost of this treatment. For this group, possession of adequate travel and health insurance is highly recommended.

20. Is the surcharge payable by European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who are coming to the UK for more than six months?

No. The surcharge is only paid by non-EEA nationals who require a visa to enter the UK and are coming to the UK in a non visitor visa category for a time limited period of more than six months.

21. Will the surcharge be reviewed?

Yes. We will review the operation of the surcharge, including the exemptions, later in 2015.

22. Will the surcharge apply to those who are coming to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Yes. The health surcharge applies to those whose intended destination is Scotland, Wales and NI if they are applying under a visa category to which the health surcharge applies.

23. Who is exempt from paying the surcharge?

A summary of exemptions is listed below.

- Visitors, and where the grant of entry clearance (permission to stay in the UK) is for 6 months or less.
- Intra-company transfers (Tier 2 - skilled workers).
- Children under 18 years taken into care or in the care of a local authority.
- Migrants making an application for asylum, humanitarian protection, or a claim that their removal from the United Kingdom would be contrary to article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Victims of human trafficking.
- A migrant who applies under the Home Office concession known as the 'destitute domestic violence concession'.

- Dependents of a member of Her Majesty's Forces.
- As a dependant of a member of another country's Forces who is exempt from Immigration Control.
- Those making an immigration application related to an EU obligation, such as an application under the Turkish European Communities Association Agreement, are exempt.
- Nationals of Australia or New Zealand.
- A British Overseas Territory citizen who is the resident of the Falkland Islands.

Impact on Business and Students Q&A

1. Migrant workers already contribute to the UK economy through taxation. Why should they have to pay twice?

The intended effect of the surcharge is that a person's access to healthcare should be in line with their immigration status in the UK. Temporary migrants have not built up the long-term contribution to the UK that a British Citizen will have built up and will build up over the course of their lifetime.

2. Will tourists have to pay the health surcharge?

No. Tourists travelling on a visitor visa [or EEA nationals] will not be liable for the surcharge. The Department of Health is working to ensure that those persons are correctly identified as directly chargeable for NHS services, so that from April 2015 those entering the UK on a visitor visa will be charged 150% of the cost of any medical treatment they receive from the NHS. This reflects the additional cost burden that the NHS carries when managing the administration for visitors to the UK.

3. What impact will these measures have on foreign students coming to the UK?

This surcharge is not targeting overseas students and will instead ensure that they have adequate health cover for the duration of their studies. The surcharge will be set at a competitive level and offers far better value than private medical insurance where the premiums are considerably more expensive when compared to the National Health Service. Both Australia and the USA require students to purchase private medical insurance and the costs there are far higher.

4. Do the students who have already studied in the UK need to pay when they start their new term?

No. The surcharge will not be applied retrospectively. However, it will be charged when a new immigration application is made in category to which the surcharge applies, assuming that person is not otherwise exempt.

5. How does the surcharge compare with our competitors and with the alternative of private medical insurance?

The surcharge will be set at a competitive rate and will be a lower cost over the period of stay than the cost of even basic private medical insurance. Private medical insurance for students and working migrants is a common requirement in many of our competitor nations, such as Australia and the USA and the costs there are higher.

A student applying to Harvard in the USA would in most cases have to pay a payment of around £600 per year to access basic health services. To access Harvard's more comprehensive health insurance plan would cost an additional £1500 per year.

In contrast, the surcharge would cost a foreign student applying to study in the UK only £150 per year. Private medical insurance for a student in the UK, which is comparable with healthcare provided by the NHS is likely to be significantly higher than the proposed surcharge.

Basic 'travel' type medical insurance is a limited product. It is intended to provide emergency cover only rather than on-going care. It will have a higher excess charge (the sum payable by the insured) and a lower financial ceiling (the maximum sum payable by the insurer) than a more comprehensive product. A product of this type will also generally exclude treatment for pre-existing conditions and treatment for pregnancy, a chronic condition or which is expensive.

6. Is the government targeting overseas students?

The surcharge is not targeting overseas students, instead it ensures that they have adequate health cover for the duration of their studies. The surcharge is a fair and reasonable cost for those who are coming to study or work in the UK and lower than what international students would have to pay for similar healthcare services in the USA and Australia. The proposed surcharge amount for students is just over 1% of the total cost of studying in the UK for international students.

Genuine students are welcome in the UK and those with the right qualifications, sufficient funds to cover their course fees and maintenance costs and a good level of English can study here, and there is no limit on numbers. University students may work part-time and do work placements during their studies. When they finish, they may stay in the UK, providing they gain employment and earn £20,300 a year or more, or as a Graduate Entrepreneur, under the first scheme of its kind in the world.

Health Q&A

1. What if UK has an existing reciprocal healthcare agreement? Will those covered by those agreements have to pay the surcharge?

The UK has agreements with some other countries, whereby visitors

from those countries are entitled to some treatment free of charge on the NHS. This is reciprocated when our citizens visit there.

Generally, a reciprocal agreement only covers short term visitors to the UK, and the surcharge therefore has no impact. However, the terms of the UK's current reciprocal agreements with Australia or New Zealand are wider than this, and nationals of these countries will not pay the surcharge whilst discussions continue on the scope of the agreements.

2. Which nationals are exempt from the surcharge?

The surcharge is not paid by EEA nationals. Nationals of Australia or New Zealand will not pay the charge, whilst discussions with those countries continue on the scope of the agreements. British Overseas Territories citizens who are resident in the Falklands Islands are also exempt, in line with our commitments to the Islands and will also continue to access the NHS without charge.

3. Will the surcharge recover all the costs of healthcare for temporary migrants?

The surcharge represents a proportionate contribution to the NHS and is not designed to recoup the full costs of NHS care. Setting the surcharge at a full cost recovery rate would make the UK uncompetitive and not recognise the contribution which temporary migrants already make to the UK through other means.

4. Will the health surcharge help prevent 'health tourism'?

The surcharge aims to ensure all temporary migrants make a contribution to the cost of healthcare in the UK in line with their immigration status. A 'health tourist' usually refers to a person who accesses the UK as a visitor with the intention of either not being identified as chargeable or of not paying back the debt for any charges received. These people are already chargeable for NHS services.

The Department of Health is taking separate action to ensure that those who are chargeable for NHS care are appropriately identified and charged for the healthcare they've received. The Immigration Rules provide that those who incur debts of £1,000 or more to the NHS will normally be refused permission to re-enter or remain in the UK until the debt is paid. The NHS shares information with the Home Office.

5. How much income will be collected through the surcharge?

The Home Office's impact assessment has estimated that the total value of the surcharge will provide an additional £1.7 billion over a ten year period.

6. What happens to the money raised by the health surcharge?

The proceeds will be distributed directly by the Home Office to the four health ministries within the countries of the United Kingdom.

7. How will the NHS know if someone has paid the surcharge and is entitled to free treatment?

The Home Office will provide data on persons who have paid the surcharge and exempt groups to the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC). Basic information, including the person's name, date of birth, nationality, the duration of their permitted stay and their biometric residence permit number will be instantly available to administrators on the National Health Service patient record system. This will enable the NHS to identify people who have paid the surcharge or are exempt and therefore qualify for treatment without further payment. The Home Office will also notify HSCIC where a person's immigration status comes to an end so the NHS will be aware that they are now chargeable for secondary health services. There are currently no charges for treatment in NHS Accident & Emergency facilities.

Vulnerable groups Q&A

1. Which vulnerable groups will be exempt from the surcharge?

Certain vulnerable groups will be exempt from paying the charge and will continue to receive free NHS care. These are:

- Children looked after by local authorities.
- Migrants making an application for asylum, humanitarian protection, or a claim that their removal from the United Kingdom would be contrary to article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.
- A person applying for leave to remain relating to their identification as a victim of human trafficking.
- A person who applies for limited leave under the Home Office concession known as the 'destitute domestic violence concession'.

2. Will persons with infectious diseases be exempt from paying the health surcharge?

No. Persons may be exempt from the surcharge on the basis of their immigration status but the surcharge will not distinguish between migrants on health grounds. The NHS charging regulations provide that overseas visitor charges do not apply to treatment for specified infectious public health conditions.

3. Will pregnant women be exempt from the surcharge?

Pregnant non EEA temporary migrants are not exempt. Those who have paid the surcharge will be able to access the NHS in line with permanent residents for the duration of their leave. This includes pre-natal, child birth and post-natal care.