



TOPIC 1

The NHS and other support networks

Topic introduction

Background

The National Health Service (NHS) is responsible for promoting and protecting the nation's health; this is achieved by offering a wide range of services through primary and secondary care. NHS Direct websites such as *Change4Life* and other information about health services is provided by telephone and via the Internet. The NHS is funded by National Insurance contributions and is free at the point of delivery to UK residents.

Generally, an individual's first point of contact with the NHS is through a primary care team, consisting of general practitioners (GPs; also called family doctors) and other health professionals such as practice nurses, health visitors, dietitians, physiotherapists, etc. In these materials we use the term 'GP practice' to describe all the services available in a local primary care setting. (The more traditional term – doctor's surgery – may be misleading for ESOL learners.)

Primary care now provides many services that were once provided by hospital outpatient services, for example management of long-term conditions such as diabetes. It is important for learners, particularly older learners, to understand that services such as walk-in centres have been developed to respond better to patients' needs; patients will get a better service if they use the most appropriate service for their health need.

Secondary care (hospitals and allied professionals) is usually only accessed after a referral from a GP, except in an emergency.

National targets / policies

The 2006 Department of Health white paper *Our health, our care, our say* sets out a vision to provide people with good-quality social care and NHS services in the communities where they live. NHS services are halfway through a ten-year plan to become more responsive to patients' needs and to prevent ill health by the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Social care services are also changing to give service users more independence, choice and control.

This topic

This topic helps learners to appreciate the range of services available in the NHS, enabling them to understand their entitlements and how to access services. The themes in this topic are:

- Who works in the NHS?
- What does the NHS do?

- Prescriptions
- Preparing for hospital
- Giving directions
- Getting to the hospital
- NHS Direct
- NHS Choices website
- *Change4Life*
- Telephone helplines
- Emergency services
- Emergency calls

Further information and suggestions

- *Your NHS: Advice, Support and Having your Say* was launched in December 2003 as part of a national publicity campaign to raise awareness about Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS), Independent Complaints Advocacy Services (ICAS) and Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Forums. PALS are a central part of the new system and are available in all trusts. PALS provide confidential advice and support to patients, families and their carers; information on the NHS and health-related matters; information on and explanations of NHS complaints procedures and how to get in touch with someone who can help; and confidential assistance in resolving problems and concerns quickly.

[www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/
PatientAndPublicInvolvement/PatientAdviceAndLiaisonServices/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/PatientAndPublicInvolvement/PatientAdviceAndLiaisonServices/fs/en)

Mapping to the core curriculum

Topic 1 The NHS and other support networks				
Theme	Literacy	Language	Numeracy	Page references
Who works in the NHS?		Rw/E3.1a, Sc/E3.1a, Lr/E3.2a		4–14
What does the NHS do?		Rw/E3.1a, Lr/E3.3b, Rt/E3.7a		15–28
Prescriptions	Rw/E3.1, Rw/E3.2, Ww/E2.1		MSS1/L1.2	29–39
Preparing for hospital		Rt/E3.2a, Rt/E3.3a, Wt/E3.5a		40–49
Giving directions	SLc/E3.3, SLlr/E2.4, SLlr/E3.1, SLc/E3.1			50–59
Getting to the hospital		Lr/E3.2c, Rw/E3.1a	HD1/E3.1	60–72
NHS Choices website	Rt/E3.2, Rt/E3.5, Rt/E3.6, Rt/E3.7, Rt/E3.9, Rw/E3.1			73–81
<i>Change4Life</i>	Rt/L1.5, Rt/L1.4			82–90
Telephone helplines	Rt/L1.1, Rt/L1.5, SLc/E3.3, SLc/E3.4			91–109
Emergency services	SLr/E2.2, SLd/E3.1, Rt/E3.8, Rw/E3.1, SLc/E3.3			110–117
Emergency calls	SLlr/E3.6, SLlr/L1.1, SLc/L1.1			118–127

Highlighted curriculum items [] = included in National Tests