

## PROGRAMME IN MATERNITY



### WHAT IS THE NHS CHARGING PROGRAMME?

ESTABLISHED IN 2004 TO CHARGE THOSE WHO ARE NOT 'ORDINARILY RESIDENT IN THE UK' FOR THEIR NHS CARE IN ENGLAND TO LIMIT THEIR ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND PREVENT 'HEALTH TOURISM'



### WHO IS CHARGED?

Ø Those who are not 'ordinarily resident' in the UK, or on the 'exempt' list (classed as an 'overseas visitor')

Ø Women who sadly have a miscarriage/ stillbirth/ termination of pregnancy have the right to care but will be charged if they are not 'ordinarily resident' or exempt from paying.

Ø Anyone who has had their asylum, temporary or humanitarian protection application and ALL appeals rejected becomes a failed asylum seeker. Failed asylum seekers and their dependants are charged for relevant services.

Ø If women are on dependant visas (eg. Spouse Visa) and leave their partner, they may be charged even though they are not able to claim mainstream benefits.

Ø Undocumented migrants- For example, those who have overstayed work/ visitor/ student visas; entered the UK without any documents or don't have EU Settlement Status.



### SERVICES FREE FOR ALL

- **A&E services** up until the point that you are admitted as an inpatient
- **Family planning services** (not including pregnancy termination)
- Diagnosis and treatment of **certain contagious diseases** e.g. TB/ HIV
- Diagnosis and treatment of **sexually transmitted infections**
- Treatment of any **physical or mental condition caused by torture, FGM, DV or sexual violence** (as long as you did not travel to the UK for the purpose of seeking that treatment).
- **GP registration and treatment**

### HOW ARE WOMEN CHARGED

Governmental guidance states that the woman should not be asked to pay any money towards her care until after the baby is born. Before delivery, the NHS provider hospital will issue the woman with an invoice outlining how much the charges are likely to be, but no advance payment should be expected due to maternity care being classed as 'urgent.' The woman will then receive a final invoice informing her of the total charges after the baby is born. If the woman is unable to pay the charges in one instalment, she should be given the opportunity to speak to the local 'Overseas Visitor Team' at the hospital to arrange a repayment plan. Debt can be temporarily written off if the woman is **DESTITUTE**.

### REPORTING DEBT TO THE HOME OFFICE

The NHS is required to tell the Home Office about unpaid charges of over £500 which have been outstanding for more than 2 months.

This can affect a woman's immigration claim.

### EFFECTS OF CHARGING

- Detering women from accessing maternity care.
- Exacerbating mental health problems.
- Leaving women vulnerable to exploitation and risk of domestic abuse
- Poverty and destitution.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Familiarise yourself and signpost women to **Maternity Action website** for information on charging.

Call Maternity Care Advice Service (0808 800 0041) for free legal advice if a woman is at risk of being charged, or has been charged and cannot pay.