Settling in the UK
An Essential Guide for Life in the UK

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FOCUS
Settling in the UK
An Essential Guide for Life in the UK

Compiled by FOCUS ©
December 2008

Every attempt was made to ensure the information contained in the booklet is accurate and up-to-date. However, FOCUS wishes to point out that phone numbers, websites, and other details may have changed. FOCUS cannot accept financial responsibility for errors, omissions, or changes in the information contained in this Guide. We also do not intend these resources to be exhaustive; they are a starting point to your life with children in the UK.

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ISBN 978-0-9543342-8-4
Letter from the Editor

We are delighted to welcome you to the UK and hope that your international experience will be one you value for years to come. We realise that the excitement of moving abroad can be overshadowed by the burden of setting up a home, opening a bank account, establishing a social network and finding where to continue your favourite hobby. In order to ease your transition and allow you to enjoy all that the UK has to offer, we have put together some invaluable tips and resources in our 13th edition of FOCUS Settling in the UK. This updated edition, practical and portable, is new and improved with a larger shopping section, extensive range of activities to suit most interests, recommendations for short breaks and of course essential advice about daily life in the UK.

Many of us at Focus have lived here for more than a decade and have navigated our way through the ups and downs of life in the UK. We wanted to share all of the “ups” with you to help make your experience abroad not only enjoyable but also memorable.

As our new edition has almost doubled in size, this would never have been possible without the hard work and devotion of FOCUS staff members and volunteers. Thanks to Julie Rupprecht for finding all the nitty gritty details about the activities and shopping recommendations featured inside. Special thanks to Ana Beatriz Alencar, Barbara Rees and Elizabeth Soose who continually uncover hidden gems, update necessary rules and regulations, and personalise the experience of FOCUS for our members. And finally, thank you to our graphic designer, Fabiana Plat, who has effortlessly and sensationally brought our new edition to life.

Martha Winfield
Editor

FOCUS offers personal advice and professional expertise to help international professionals (and their families) successfully live and work in the UK. We are a non-profit membership organisation staffed entirely by expatriates, offering a minimum of one year’s support.

We maintain the most comprehensive resources for the international community all in one location. Our Kensington office provides seminars, workshops and one-to-one consultations for all members.

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Everyone who is ordinarily resident in the UK (i.e. lawfully living and settled in the UK), including full time overseas students and work permit holders, are entitled to free medical care under the National Health Service (NHS). Many may also choose to register with a private medical practice. However, it is not necessary to make a hard and fast choice about whether to use the NHS or private medical care. In most cases you can tap into both systems and use the one you feel is most appropriate when you need it.

Some people new to the UK prefer using private medical care because they have private medical insurance or have been given a recommendation by a friend. Most private doctors do not require advance registration, but it is advisable to contact them before you become sick to ensure they will see you when you need them.

Another difference in the UK health care system (both private and NHS) is that the General Practitioner (GP) is always the first point of contact. In practice, you must see your GP first so they can refer you to a specialist if required.

To find a NHS GP surgery near you visit the NHS website, (www.nhs.uk). NHS GP surgeries have their own geographical boundaries, so practices will only accept patients living in the catchment area. They may also close their lists from time to time if they are too full. Before registering with your surgery, you may want to ask neighbours for recommendations, visit a couple of surgeries, enquire about opening hours and services offered. If you are having problems finding a GP, call the PCT (Primary Care Trust) responsible for your area and they will find a surgery for you.

In order to register, call or visit your local surgery. You may need to present documents such as your passport, letter from school or employer, and utility bill verifying your address.
Healthcare

To register with a private GP, call or visit your chosen practice. Some will require an initial appointment and may also require an annual fee. FOCUS website has many recommended practices listed as well.

The general guide is to see your GP first who will refer you to a specialist (e.g., paediatrician/dermatologist) if required. British private healthcare insurance companies will only cover specialists and exams fees if referred by a GP. Most companies will not cover the initial appointment with a private GP. The NHS GP can also refer you to a private specialist. The advantage of seeing a private specialist instead of an NHS one is that you don’t have to wait too long for an appointment.

NHS prescriptions are free for children under 18 and for pregnant women from conception through to the first twelve months of the baby’s life. NHS also gives free contraception to all women.

Top tip
Register with a GP as soon as you have a permanent UK address. Do not wait until you are ill to register with a doctor.

Specialists
Specialists including paediatricians, gynecologists, dermatologists and cardiologists, in the UK are highly qualified consultants who specialise in specific areas of medicine. Patients may be referred to a specialist either by a GP or a Consultant.

Many specialists will also see patients directly through the private healthcare system. However, the cost of the consultation will usually only be covered by insurance if you have been referred by a GP. You will also need to ensure that the recommended specialist is included in the list of consultants covered by your insurance company.

Dentists and Orthodontists
Most treatments are offered free through the NHS for children under 18 and pregnant women through to the first year of their child’s life.

All practising dentists must be registered with the General Dental Council. This is a statutory body, which protects the patient by ensuring that all practising dentists are properly trained. All qualified dentists will have the letters BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery) or LDS (Licentiate in Dental Surgery) after their name.

In order to find a local NHS dentist, you can contact your local Health Authority or search online at www.nhs.uk. Dentists operate differently from doctors and therefore do not have specific catchment areas.

Not all practices offering NHS care can take on new patients, so you should check that the dentist you choose is still accepting patients. Most dentists will only register you after they have done an examination, and will only keep you on their register if you go for regular check-ups.

If you are specifically looking for private dental care the best resources are personal recommendations as well as the FOCUS Resource Centre. We have an extensive list of dental contacts as well paediatric specialists and hospitals.

For emergency dental care, contact NHS Direct (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) or telephone 0845 4647 which has a 24 hour helpline.

Opticians
Eye tests can be carried out at any high street optician such as Boots, D&A and David Clulow.

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All children under 16 (or under 19 if in full-time education) are entitled to a free NHS sight test and an NHS optical voucher that can be used to help pay towards the cost of the glasses. The eye tests can be carried out at any high street optician such as Boots, D&A and David Clulow.

Optician is a general term that covers both optometrists and dispensing opticians. Optometrists or ophthalmic medical practitioners carry out sight tests to check the quality of your vision and eye health. They are trained to recognise abnormalities and diseases in the eye, such as cataract and glaucoma. They look for signs of eye disease, which may need treatment from a doctor or eye surgeon, and prescribe and fit glasses and contact lenses.

Dispensing opticians fit glasses and contact lenses, but do not test eyes. They can give you advice on types of lens, such as single-vision or bifocal, and help you choose the frames.

**Medical Emergencies**

As with all emergencies the best advice is to be prepared. All GP surgeries, private and NHS, are required to offer 24 hour coverage. Most surgeries will have recorded messages with contact information and advice during out of office hours.

Private GPs will usually pay a home visit for a fee (usually substantially higher than consultation fees). Response times vary, but in general the response from a private GP is likely to be quicker. Keep in mind, that with both services you may not see your regular doctor. A few private practices will try to provide out of hours service for specific GPs.

Depending on the severity of the situation, there are several good alternatives to house calls and A&E departments. Minor Injury Units and Walk-In Centres are very good options, as waiting times are considerably shorter than NHS Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments.

When you arrive in the UK, make a note of the nearest NHS hospital that has an A&E department (most private hospitals do not). Dial 999 to request an ambulance for serious conditions.

For immediate and confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, contact NHS Direct (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk).
**Resources**

**NHS Hospitals with A&E**
- **Departments**
  - **Chelsea and Westminster Hospital**
    - 369 Fulham Road
    - London SW10 9NH
    - Tel. 020 8746 8000
    - www.chelseawest.nhs.uk
  - **Royal Surrey County Hospital**
    - Egerton Road
    - Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XX
    - Tel. 01483 571122
    - www.royalsurrey.nhs.uk
  - **St. George’s Hospital Tooting Blackshaw Road**
    - London SW17 0QT
    - Tel. 020 872 1255
    - www.stgeorge.nhs.uk
  - **St. Mary’s Hospital**
    - Praed Street
    - London W2 1NY
    - Tel. 020 7886 6666
    - www.imperial.nhs.uk/stmarys
  - **University College Hospital**
    - 235 Euston Road
    - London NW1 2BU
    - Tel. 0845 155 5000
    - www.uclh.nhs.uk
  - ** Evelina London Children’s Hospital**
    - Queen Mary’s Road
    - London E1 2AD
    - Tel. 020 7849 6000
  - **Guy’s and St. Thomas’ Hospital**
    - 250 Blackfriars Road
    - London SE1 7EH
    - Tel. 0845 155 5000
    - www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk
  - **St. Mary’s Hospital**
    - Praed Street
    - London W2 1NY
    - Tel. 020 7886 6666
    - www.imperial.nhs.uk/stmarys
  - **University College Hospital**
    - 235 Euston Road
    - London NW1 2BU
    - Tel. 0845 155 5000
    - www.uclh.nhs.uk
  - **Whittington Hospital**
    - Magdala Avenue
    - London N19 5NF
    - Tel. 020 7272 3070
    - www.whittington.nhs.uk
  - **Royal Free Hospital**
    - 235 Euston Road
    - London NW1 2BU
    - Tel. 0845 155 5000
    - www.uclh.nhs.uk
  - **Whittington Hospital**
    - Magdala Avenue
    - London N19 5NF
    - Tel. 020 7272 3070
    - www.whittington.nhs.uk
  - **University College Hospital**
    - 235 Euston Road
    - London NW1 2BU
    - Tel. 0845 155 5000
    - www.uclh.nhs.uk
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    - Magdala Avenue
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    - Magdala Avenue
    - London N19 5NF
    - Tel. 020 7272 3070
    - www.whittington.nhs.uk

**Recommended Resources**
- **National Health Service**
  - General information website to learn more about the NHS and find doctors, hospitals, dentists and other medical advice.
  - www.nhs.uk
- **NHS Direct**
  - 24-hour health care delivering telephone and e-health information services day and night to the public.
  - Tel. 0845 46 47
  - www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- **General Medical Council (GMC)**
  - A registration of doctors practising medicine in the UK.
  - The purpose is to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the public by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine.
  - www.gmc-uk.org
- **Private Healthcare Contacts**
  - HCA CONNECT - PRIVATE MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS
    - HCA Connect helps find the right specialist for patients, including children, in one of their six HCA International private hospitals in London.
    - Tel. 020 7079 4399
    - www.hcconnect.co.uk
  - **THE HARLEY STREET CLINIC**
    - 35 Weymouth Street
    - London W1G 7BJ
    - Tel. 020 7935 7700
    - www.theharleystreetclinic.com

**Pregnancy**

The first choice for expectant mothers is whether to go through the NHS or private healthcare system.

The NHS provides free care throughout your pregnancy and delivery. In addition, pregnant women receive free dental care and medication with NHS prescriptions from conception through the first twelve months of the baby’s life.

Expectant mothers should see their NHS GP for their first appointment after which they will be referred to the local NHS hospital and midwife team. Some NHS GPs may also share the care in which case some appointments may be at your local GP surgery. In most cases, a midwife will attend the birth unless there are complications in which case an obstetrician will assist. Some NHS hospitals offer a dedicated midwife service for an additional fee. This will ensure that the same midwife will see you throughout your pregnancy and during the birth.

In the private system, you must find an Obstetrician/Gynaecologist who will care for you throughout your pregnancy and deliver the baby. Most Obstetrician/Gynaecologist consultants in London have both private and NHS practices. Check-ups are generally with the same obstetrician, and he/she and a midwife will be present at the birth.

Alternatively you can find the hospital first and work with an in-house team of midwives. It is important to note that most British insurance companies will not cover private pregnancy and baby delivery costs. Choose your doctor wisely as you will have a long-term relationship with him/her. Contact FOCUS or browse our website for specific recommendations or additional advice.

**Antenatal (Pre-natal) Classes**

Although all births are different, antenatal classes can help you prepare for birth as well as provide the opportunity to meet other prospective parents. Many hospitals or health care centres offer classes. Most classes are run by a midwife, and he/she will be present at the birth. Some NHS GPs may also share the care in which case some appointments may be at your local GP surgery. In most cases, a midwife will attend the birth unless there are complications in which case an obstetrician will assist. Some NHS hospitals offer a dedicated midwife service for an additional fee. This will ensure that the same midwife will see you throughout your pregnancy and during the birth.

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Post-Natal Care
A community (NHS) midwife must be in attendance and provide regular checks for at least 10 days following delivery, for patients in both private and NHS hospitals. Visits usually take place in a woman’s home and the number and content of the visits will be discussed depending on the new baby’s and mother’s needs. The community midwife may continue visiting for up to a month or so after delivery and should work closely with the health visitor who does her primary visit on or around 11 days after birth.

Health Visitors
Health Visitors (Specialist Community Public Health Nurse) are qualified nurses who are an integral part of Primary Care in the NHS and often provide invaluable support for new mothers. Most have studied child development, public health, communication and learning theory, sociology, psychology, child protection and health promotion. Many Health Visitors have also undertaken additional training in Family Planning/Sexual Health, or Drug Prescribing. They have knowledge about a wide range of issues and have contact with many other specialist practitioners and provide a great resource for new mothers.

Maternity Rights
Qualifying for statutory maternity leave as an ‘employee’ you have the right to 26 weeks of ‘Ordinary Maternity Leave’ and 26 weeks ‘Additional Maternity Leave’ – making one year in total. Provided you meet certain notification requirements, you can take this regardless of how long you’ve been with your employer, how many hours you work or how much you are paid.

For information on maternity pay and other topics check online (www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/moneyandworkentitlements/).

Alternative Medicine
Most of us find that feeling healthy is about an indefinable sense of being in tune with our bodies. Everything works, and we take it for granted. Feeling ill changes everything; it’s often painful and things don’t work properly. The physical changes can lead to an upset in our sense of emotional wellbeing and can precipitate unwelcome physical sensations such as headaches and muscular pains.

Top tips
Do not assume your private health insurance covers pregnancy. Call your insurance company to understand what is covered.
Free prescriptions on NHS for children and pregnant women throughout the child’s first year.

Pregnancy Resources
Maternity Hospitals/ Departments in Greater London*
Chelsea and Westminster Hospital
NHS hospital with a private maternity ward.
Tel. 020 8746 8000
www.chelwest.nhs.uk

Hospital of St John & St Elizabeth
Private Hospital with a maternity unit. Famous for holistic approach
Tel. 020 7806 4000
www.hje.org.uk

Kingston Hospital
NHS hospital with a private wing
Tel. 020 8546 7711
www.kingstonhospital.nhs.uk

THE PORTLAND HOSPITAL
Private hospital providing care for new mothers and babies
Tel. 020 7580 4400
Maternities Enquiries & Tours: 020 7390 6067
www.theportlandhospital.co.uk

Queen Charlotte’s and Chelsea Hospital
NHS hospital with a private maternity ward
Tel. 020 8383 1111
www.hhnt.org

St. Mary’s Hospital
NHS hospital with a private maternity ward (Lindo Wing)
Tel. 020 7886 6666/3793
www.imperial.nhs.uk

*For other areas contact the FOCUS office

Antenatal Resources
The Birth Centre
Adjacent to St. George’s hospital in Tooting, a birth centre with the reassurance of a hospital nearby.
Tel. 020 7820 6661
www.birthcentre.com

Independent Midwives Association
Information about, and support for, independent midwives. Find an independent midwife in your area.
Tel. 0870 850 7539
www.independentmidwives.org.uk

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)
Leading charity for pregnancy, birth and parenting. Provides information and support in pregnancy, childbirth and early childcare for parents. The NCT runs classes and support groups for parents. Branches throughout the country. Tel. 0870 444 8707

www.nct.org.uk

Zita West Clinics
Range of programmes, treatments and products to help couples take a planned approach to fertility and pregnancy, right through from pre-conception to recovery. Locations include the Lister Fertility Clinic, and also Women’s Wellness Centre. Tel. 0207 224 0017

www.zitawest.com

Sometimes maintaining health is not just about seeing a doctor to deal with the physical workings of the body, but also about ensuring that we each feel in balance and in harmony with our surroundings and ourselves.

Alternative medicine encompasses a broad domain of healing therapies, which are not included in conventional medicine. Alternative medical therapies are often known as complementary therapies, which are not included in conventional medicine. Recognising the body’s own ability to heal and re-balance itself, treatments are designed to stimulate and support this function. Therapies aim to enable the individual to take control of their symptoms, and develop skills to be able to maintain health in the future.
Consultations with a general practitioner or specialist tend to focus on a particular part of the body, whereas complementary therapists usually take a more holistic approach, focusing on the individual’s unique way of life and response to their condition.

There are a number of different complementary therapies available in the UK today and below are some of the more popular therapies.

Acupuncture is practiced by inserting very fine needles into the skin at particular points on the body to prevent or treat ill health or maintain good health.

Aromatherapy uses the healing properties of essential oils, which are extracted from plants, to improve health and help prevent illness.

Herbal medicine uses the healing properties of plants to treat illness and maintain good health.

Homeopathy works on the basis that a substance, which provokes specific symptoms in a healthy person, can be diluted to treat a person who is unwell with similar symptoms.

Massage therapy focuses on the soft tissue of the body. It involves massaging and applying pressure to specific parts of the body, with the aim of alleviating aches, pains and musculoskeletal problems.

Nutritional therapy is used to improve and maintain good health through choices and combinations of food. It is recognised as being successful in preventing and alleviating ill health.

Osteopathy works by manipulating the body’s bones, joints, muscles, ligaments and connective tissues, to relieve aches and pains.

Reflexology works by applying pressure in a systematic way to reflex points, certain points on the feet and hands, to release tensions and encourage the body’s natural healing.

Almost six million people in the UK use complementary health care. In the UK it is rare to find conventional and complementary practitioners working together. Where they do, it is known as integrated health care. Clinics offering an integrated approach to healthcare combine general practitioners, conventional specialists and complementary therapists who work together to create an environment where practitioners can co-operate fully and learn from each other to provide the best of health care to their patients.

Contributed by The Westover

Resources

Bliss Chemist
Open until midnight
5-6 Marble Arch, London W1H 7EL
Tel. 020 7723 6116

Boots
Multiple locations.
www.boots.com

Lloyds Pharmacy
Multiple locations.
www.lloydspharmacy.com

Zafash
The only chemist opened 24-hours in London.
233-235 Old Brompton Road, Kensington SW5
Tel. 020 7373 2798 www.zafash.com

Pharmacies
Pharmacies (or chemists) are very easy to find in the UK with large chains such as, Boots and Lloyds, to smaller independent shops. Many local large grocery stores have a pharmacy department that is open later in the evening.

Let us take care of every little bit of you

W
The Westover
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Notting Hill
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Wandsworth
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