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Forrest
Medico-Legal Services



What to expect from an online vulnerability assessment

Please read this before we call you

Forrest MLS, the organisation through which the doctor who will contact you, is a group of doctors with a lot of training and experience in listening to, and examining, people who have suffered from torture, trauma, and forced migration.

We are concerned by what we hear about conditions for asylum seekers in army camps and their effects on residents' health.

Putting people in places like Napier has not happened in the UK for many years. No one now active in this country has dealt with a situation like this before, so we are still trying to figure out best methods of working.

What can and can't we do to help?

There are not many of us doing this work, so we need to limit the amount of time we spend with each person.

Please read and think about this note. It will make it easier for you and us if you understand how we are trying to work.

During the Covid-19 pandemic we **cannot** visit you in Napier or examine you face to face. Most of us live many miles from Kent and would not be allowed to travel there under Covid regulations. Everything we do will need to be by long-distance methods.

We **can** communicate with you by phone, WhatsApp, or tele-conferencing (Zoom), and we can exchange emails and photos with you.

We **cannot** offer you tests or treatment. We are not your National Health Service (NHS) doctors and the law does not allow us to take on that job.

We **will** keep everything you tell us confidential and **will not** tell it to anyone else without your clear permission.

We **can** send you a letter by email to your phone summarising what we understand of your situation from discussions with you.

If you give permission, we **can** also send it to the local NHS telling them that you appear to have medical needs which are not being met, or we **can** give you an address to do so.

You **can** also give a copy of this letter to anyone you wish, or keep it entirely to yourself.

We **can** advise you as to your rights to effective healthcare from the National Health Service and ways you and your supporters can try to get it.

We **cannot** force the overworked local NHS to speedily provide what you need. They are having serious problems in giving needed care to the usual residents of Folkestone. And when and if they agree to give you an appointment with a doctor or nurse, we cannot force Clearsprings or their contractors to take you to clinic or hospital. But they would be very unwise to refuse a request from the NHS to take you there. If that happens please let us know.

Forrest Medico-legal Services C.I.C.

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How a telephone interview works:

We will call your phone. The interview can last up to an hour, at a time decided by the availability of the doctor and interpreter. We ask to have two doctors on the same call in some cases. The doctor and interpreter may be female (unless you wish to speak only with men; this may take longer to arrange).

We will invite you to tell us what problems you have noticed with your health in the camp and before. Then we will ask a number of simple questions. For example:

- Are you on any medicines, or were you before?
- Did you have a general practitioner before you were taken to Napier?
- Have you seen a doctor or a nurse since you arrived?
- Do you think you need to see a doctor?
- Do you have pain?
- If so, where in your body?
- Are you losing weight?
- Do you have a bad cough?

And so on.....

It is very important that we understand each other clearly.

We have found that interviews like the ones we are offering you work best if we first ask simple questions like those above, and you then answer each question very briefly. There will be time for us to listen to any more complicated things you may want to tell us such as: How did you come to be in Napier?

There will be time for you to ask questions of us and add more information, but the best time to ask questions of us is after we have dealt with the most obvious things first.

It is also important that after you say a few short sentences you stop and give the interpreter time to translate what you have said.

What happens after the interview?

We will send a copy of our report to you and your lawyer, and if you wish, to the responsible local health services.

We will also send you an anonymised copy of your report. In this copy we will remove your name, date of birth and any other information that could identify you. We will ask your permission to use that (and only that) information to carry out a survey of how camp conditions affect residents' health.

If there is anything you do not understand in this note, or have questions either discuss them with your lawyer or with the doctor when they call you..

Dr Frank Arnold
Clinical director, Forrest Medico-Legal Services