



# Human rights in practice: Health

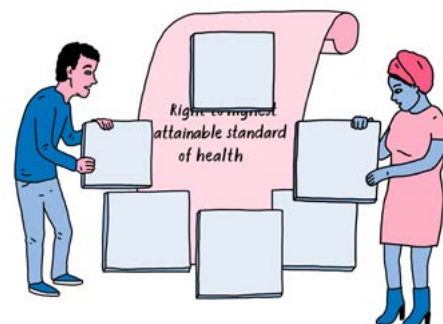
As part of Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP), a participatory research initiative looked at what the right to health means to people whose health is at risk because they live in poverty, face discrimination (are treated worse because of who they are) or have other difficult circumstances.

The research took place with two groups of people in Glasgow who experience health inequalities: people who are homeless and women refugees and asylum seekers (people who have fled unsafe countries).

The health of homeless people is worse than most other people in society and homeless people are less likely to be able to make use of services, even a GP. The health of asylum seekers and refugees is affected by uncertainty, isolation and the trauma of what they have been through. They may also find it difficult to know how to use health services in this country.

Through one to one interviews and focus groups, the participants discussed their experiences of services, whether they were able to take part in decisions about their health and access to services. A list of the common barriers they faced were then identified and from this some suggested changes for health services that could make a real difference in people's lives. This included:

- Clearer language and communications
- Provision of advocates to help people know their rights and act on them
- Providing staff in NHS Scotland and other services with information on how being homeless or seeking asylum damages your health.
- Drawing on people who have lived through these experiences to train staff in services, including primary care teams.
- Challenging racism and prejudice in NHS services.
- Funding peer support groups and peer workers.
- Improving access to interpreters.



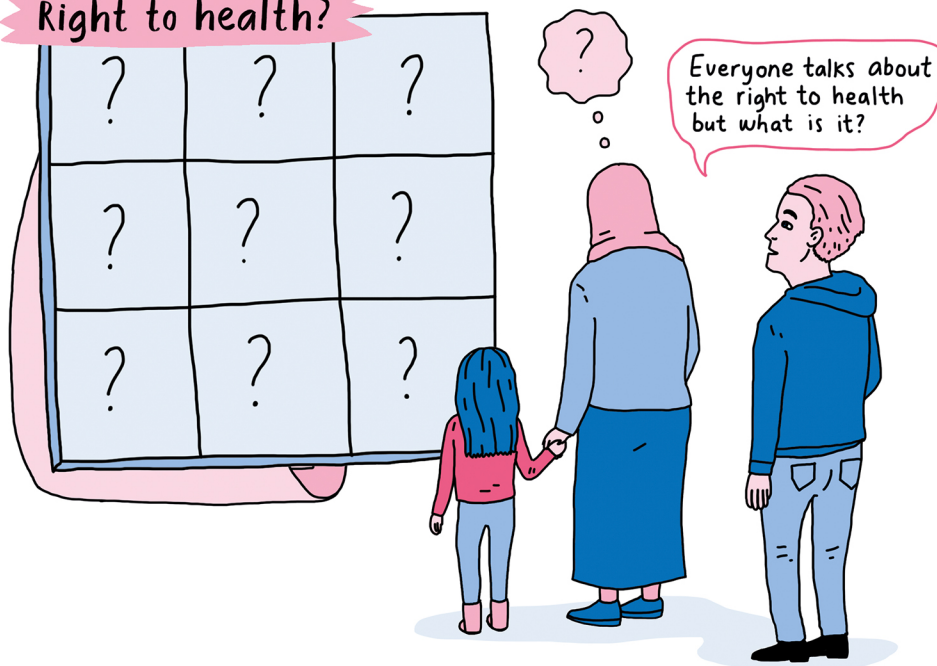
The research was carried out by peer researchers from Glasgow Homelessness Network and the Mental Health Foundation. All of the researchers had experience of homelessness and being asylum seekers. They helped to develop questions and were given training in how to carry out discussion groups and interviews. The University of Strathclyde Centre for Health Policy and the Alliance supported peer researchers from Glasgow Homelessness Network and Mental Health Foundation. The researchers said they gained confidence and skills from taking part and learned a lot from listening to the people who spoke to them.

This research was funded by NHS Health Scotland for the SNAP Action Group on Health and Social Care.



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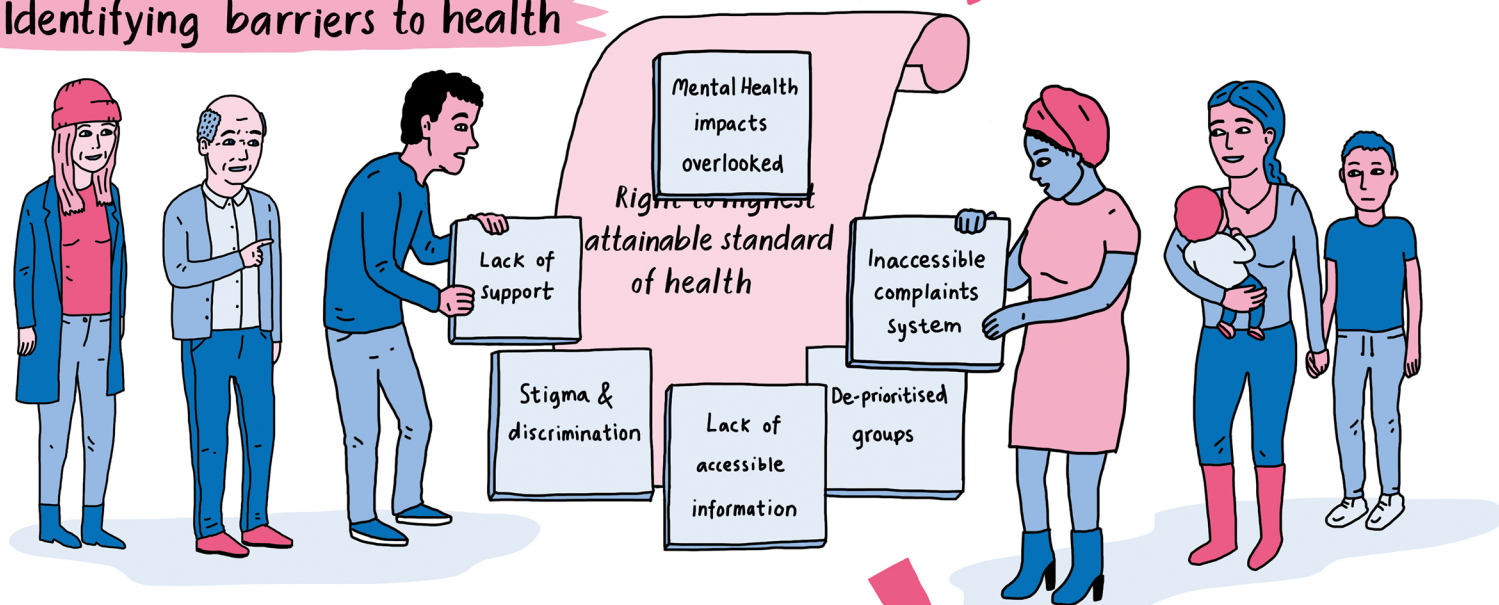
## Right to health?



Everyone has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This includes how available and how accessible good quality medical services are. This also includes other rights which support your right to health, such as decent housing, healthy working conditions and a clean environment.

With support from Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP), people with lived experience of health issues, including those who have been homeless and women who are refugees and asylum-seekers, actively participated in a research project exploring their right to health and what it means in their own lives. They looked at their experiences of services, their ability to take part in decisions about their health and access to services.

## Identifying barriers to health



## Changes that would make a difference

Treat everyone who comes to a service as an individual who is to be respected.

Provide advocates to help people know their rights and act on them.

Challenge racism and religious prejudice in NHS services.

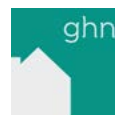


To be continued...

To find out more about the work of Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights, visit [www.snaprights.info](http://www.snaprights.info)



Right to highest  
attainable standard  
of health



UNIVERSITY of STRATHCLYDE  
INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC  
POLICY INSTITUTE



Mental Health  
Foundation

This case study has been produced as part of  
Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP)

[www.snaprights.info](http://www.snaprights.info)



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