

Questions for first-stage health assessment at reception into prison

A printable version of Table 1 in NICE’s guideline on the physical health of people in prison.

Topic questions	Yes/No	Actions
<i>Prison sentence</i>		
1. Has the person committed murder, manslaughter or another offence with a long sentence?	Yes	Refer the person for mental health assessment by the prison mental health in-reach team if necessary.
	No	Record no action needed.
<i>Prescribed medicines</i>		
2. Is the person taking any prescribed medicines (for example, insulin) or over-the-counter medicines (such as creams or drops)? If so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what are they • what are they for • how do they take them? 	Yes	Document any current medicines being taken and generate a medicine chart. Refer the person to the prescriber for appropriate medicines to be prescribed, to ensure continuity of medicines. If medicines are being taken, ensure that the next dose has been provided (see recommendations 1.7.10 and 1.7.11). Let the person know that medicines reconciliation will take place before the second-stage health assessment.
	No	Record no action needed.
<i>Physical injuries</i>		
3. Has the person received any physical injuries over the past few days, and if so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what were they • how were they treated? 	Yes	Assess severity of injury, any treatment received and record any significant head, abdominal injuries or fractures. Document any bruises or lacerations observed on a body map . In very severe cases, or after GP assessment, the person may need to be transferred to an external hospital. Liaise with prison staff to transfer the

		person to the hospital emergency department by ambulance. If the person has made any allegations of assault, record negative observations as well (for example, 'no physical evidence of injury').
	No	Record no action needed.
<i>Other health conditions</i>		
4. Does the person have any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allergies, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy or history of seizures • chest pain, heart disease • chronic obstructive pulmonary disease • tuberculosis, sickle cell disease • hepatitis B or C virus, HIV, other sexually transmitted infections • learning disabilities • neurodevelopmental disorders • physical disabilities? 	Ask about each condition listed.	
	Yes	Make short notes on any details of the person's condition or management. For example, 'Asthma – on Ventolin 1 puff daily'. Make appointments with relevant clinics or specialist nurses if specific needs have been identified.
	No	Record no action needed.
5. Are there any other health problems the person is aware of that have not been reported?	Yes	Record the details and check with the person that no other physical health complaint has been overlooked.
	No	Record no action needed.
6. Are there any other concerns about the person's health?	Yes	Make a note of any other concerns about physical health. This should include any health-related observations about the person's physical appearance (for example, weight, pallor, jaundice, gait or frailty). Refer the person to the GP or relevant clinic.
	No	Note 'Nil'.

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<i>Additional questions for women</i>		
7. Does the woman have reason to think she is pregnant, or would she like a pregnancy test?	Yes	If the woman is pregnant, refer to the GP and midwife. If there is reason to think the woman is pregnant, or would like a pregnancy test: provide a pregnancy test. Record the outcome. If positive, make an appointment for the woman to see the GP and midwife.
	No	Record response.
<i>Living arrangements, mobility and diet</i>		
8. Does the person need help to live independently?	Yes	Note any needs. Liaise with the prison disability lead in reception about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the location of the person's cell • further disability assessments the prison may need to carry out.
	No	Record response.
9. Do they use any equipment or aids (for example, walking stick, hearing aid, glasses, dentures, continence aids or stoma)?	Yes	Remind prison staff that all special equipment and aids the person uses should follow them from reception to their cell.
	No	Record response.
10. Do they need a special medical diet?	Yes	Confirm the need for a special medical diet. Note the medical diet the person needs and send a request to catering. Refer to appropriate clinic for ongoing monitoring.
	No	Record response.
<i>Past or future medical appointments</i>		
11. Has the person seen a doctor or other healthcare professional in the past few months? If so, what this was for?	Yes	Note details of any recent medical contact. Arrange a contact letter to get further information from the person's doctor or specialist clinic. Note any ongoing treatment the person needs and make appointments with relevant clinics, specialist nurses, GP or other healthcare staff.
	No	Record no action needed.

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<p>12. Does the person have any outstanding medical appointments? If so, who are they with, and when?</p>	Yes	<p>Note future appointment dates. Ask healthcare administrative staff to manage these appointments or arrange for new dates and referral letters to be sent if the person's current hospital is out of the local area.</p>
	No	<p>Record no action needed.</p>
<i>Alcohol and substance misuse</i>		
<p>13. Does the person drink alcohol, and if so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how much do they normally drink? • how much did they drink in the week before coming into custody? 	Yes	<p>Urgently refer the person to the GP or an alternative suitable healthcare professional if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they drink more than 15 units of alcohol daily or • they are showing signs of withdrawal or • they have been given medication for withdrawal in police or court cells.
	No	<p>Record response.</p>
<p>14. Has the person used street drugs in the last month? If so, how frequently? When did they last use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heroin • methadone • benzodiazepines • amphetamine • cocaine or crack • novel psychoactive substances • cannabis • anabolic steroids • performance and image enhancing drugs? 	Yes	<p>Refer the person to substance misuse services if there are concerns about their immediate clinical management and they need immediate support.</p> <p>Take into account whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they have taken drugs intravenously • they have a positive urine test for drugs • their answers suggest that they use drugs more than once a week • they have been given medication for withdrawal in police or court cells. <p>If the person has used intravenous drugs, check them for injection sites. Refer them to substance misuse services if there are concerns about their immediate clinical management and they need immediate support.</p>
	No	<p>Record response.</p>

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<i>Problematic use of prescription medicines</i>		
<p>15. Has the person used prescription or over-the-counter medicines in the past month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that were not prescribed or recommended for them or • for purposes or at doses that were not prescribed? <p>If so, what was the medicine and how did they use it (frequency and dose)?</p>	Yes	Refer the person to substance misuse services if there are concerns about their immediate clinical management and they need immediate support.
	No	Record response.
<i>Mental health</i>		
<p>16. Has the person ever seen a healthcare professional or service about a mental health problem (including a psychiatrist, GP, psychologist, counsellor, community mental health services, alcohol or substance misuse services or learning disability services)?</p> <p>If so, who did they see and what was the nature of the problem?</p>	Yes	Refer the person for a mental health assessment if they have previously seen a mental health professional in any service setting.
	No	Record response.
<p>17. Has the person ever been admitted to a psychiatric hospital, and if so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when was their most recent discharge • what is the name of the hospital • what is the name of their consultant? 	Yes	Yes: refer the person for a mental health assessment.
	No	Record response.
<p>18. Has the person ever been prescribed medicine for any mental health problems? If so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what was the medicine • when did they receive it • when did they take the last dose 	Yes	Refer the person for a mental health assessment if they have taken medicine for mental health problems.
	No	Record response

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is the current dose (if they are still taking it) • when did they stop taking it? 		
<i>Self-harm and suicide risk</i>		
<p>19. Is the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feeling hopeless or • currently thinking about or planning to harm themselves or attempt suicide? 	Yes	<p>Refer the person for an urgent mental health assessment. Open an Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) plan if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are serious concerns raised in response to questions about self-harm, including thoughts, intentions or plans, or observations (for example, the patient is very withdrawn or agitated) or • the person has a history of previous suicide attempts. <p>Be aware and record details of the impact of the sentence on the person, changes in legal status and first imprisonment, and the nature of the offence (for example, murder, manslaughter, offence against the person and sexual offences).</p>
	No	Record response.
<p>20. Has the person ever tried to harm themselves, and if so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do they have a history of suicide attempts • was this inside or outside prison • when was the most recent incident • what was the most serious incident? 	Yes	Refer the person for a mental health assessment if they have ever tried to harm themselves.
	No	Record response.