

A photograph of a patient lying in a hospital bed, wearing a white gown and a white identification band. A caregiver's hand is gently holding the patient's hand. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the patient and the caregiver.

Your Journey Abroad

**A Practical Guide for
Patients and Families
Travelling to the UK
for Treatment**

In collaboration with the
Treatment Abroad Unit, MDH



Karl Vella
foundation

Dear families,

On behalf of the Karl Vella Foundation (KVF), I extend my heartfelt welcome to you and your loved ones. We understand that needing to travel overseas for medical treatment can be an overwhelming experience; one filled with uncertainty, challenges, and hope. At such times, no one should feel alone.



KVF was established with a simple yet powerful mission: to offer emotional, practical, and psychosocial support to families facing serious illness. Whether you are a patient or a family member, we are here to walk beside you, helping you navigate the journey with compassion, understanding, and care.

This booklet has been designed to provide you with essential information, guidance, and reassurance as you prepare for treatment abroad. We hope it serves as a helpful companion throughout your whole journey, a source of comfort and clarity when you need it most.

Please remember that support is always available. Our dedicated team at KVF is just a call or message away, ready to listen and assist in any way we can.

I wish you strength, courage, and peace of mind throughout your journey.

Ms Claire Chircop
Chairperson
Karl Vella Foundation



Karl Vella
foundation
Here to Care

Why was I referred for treatment abroad?

Families may be referred to different hospitals across the UK and Europe depending on the specific expertise required for a particular condition.



While Malta provides high-quality healthcare, certain highly specialised treatments, technologies, or very rare procedures may not be available locally due to scale, resources, or the need for dedicated specialist teams.

Being referred abroad does not mean that a condition is untreatable or more severe than others; rather, it reflects the need for services that are concentrated in larger, more specialised centres.

These referrals are made to ensure patients receive the most appropriate and effective care available.



Patients may only access treatment abroad if they have been referred by their caring consultant working in a government public sector, and approved by the Treatment Abroad Committee.

Once approved, a staff member from the Treatment Abroad Unit will contact the patient to start the logistical arrangements and explain their entitlement and policies.

Contents

Understanding the Support System

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health ...	6
The Malta High Commission in the UK	7
The Treatment Abroad Unit	9
Franciscan Conventual Friars	14
Karl Vella Foundation	15
Beating Hearts Malta	18
The Malta Community Chest Fund	19
Puttinu Cares	20

Getting Ready to Go

Important documentation	21
Guidance when travelling abroad for treatment	24

Accommodation Options

Accommodation in Sutton	26
Accommodation in Central London	26
The Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus	27
The Augustinian Sisters in London	29
Ronald McDonald Charity Houses	31
Accommodation and reimbursement outside of Sutton and Central London	32

Preparing to Return Back Home

Logistical Procedures	33
-----------------------------	----

Back Home

Guidance when returning from abroad	35
---	----

Words from families who went through the experience

.....	37
-------	----

Additional General Information

Health Centres & Support Facilities	41
Accident & Emergency Hospitals in Central London	44

List of Contacts	45
-------------------------------	----

Checklist	47
------------------------	----

Notes	49
--------------------	----

Understanding the Support System

A message from the Chief Medical Officer

It is my pleasure to introduce this information pack, which serves as a valuable resource for patients and their families who may require specialised treatment abroad. Navigating medical care in another country can be a challenging experience, and this guide aims to provide clear information and reassurance throughout that journey.



The Ministry is committed to ensuring that patients have access to specialised treatment abroad whenever this is not available locally. The Treatment Abroad service enables eligible patients to receive expert care at internationally recognised centres, ensuring the best possible outcomes.

We recognise that serious illness affects not only patients but also their families. The Government therefore continues to support accompanying relatives where appropriate and works closely with charitable organisations that provide invaluable practical, financial, and emotional support throughout the treatment journey.

As Chief Medical Officer, I am proud of how the Treatment Abroad service has evolved over the years and of the comprehensive support now available to patients and their families. This progress reflects the strong collaboration between government entities, healthcare professionals, charitable organisations, and our international healthcare partners.

Looking ahead, the Government and the Ministry will continue to invest in the Treatment Abroad service, strengthening support for patients and their families, and ensuring continued access to timely, high-quality care abroad whenever it is needed.

Mr Clarence Pace

Chief Medical Officer

A message from the High Commissioner of the Republic of Malta to the United Kingdom

It is with great pleasure that I pen this foreword to a book that serves as an invaluable guide for Maltese patients and their families embarking on medical journeys to the United Kingdom.

As a country with deep-rooted ties to the UK—historical, cultural, and economic—Malta has long benefited from the world-class healthcare expertise available in the UK.



Yet, navigating foreign medical systems can be daunting, especially during times of vulnerability and uncertainty. This book addresses that very need, offering practical insights, resources, and reassurance to those seeking treatment abroad.

Drawing from my own background as a physician, I understand the profound importance of accessible, high-quality care. My transition to the role of High Commissioner has allowed me to extend that commitment to service on a diplomatic level, ensuring that Maltese citizens receive the support they deserve while in the UK.

The Malta High Commission in London stands as a steadfast ally in this endeavour, ready to assist in myriad ways to make your experience smoother and more secure.

Our team at the High Commission provides a range of consular services tailored to the needs of travellers, including those pursuing medical treatment.

Beyond logistics, we are here to offer emotional and practical reassurance. Whether it's helping locate Maltese-speaking interpreters in healthcare settings, connecting you with local

support networks, or simply providing a familiar point of contact in a foreign land, the High Commission embodies Malta's spirit of solidarity. We encourage all patients and accompanying loved ones to reach out to us when in need; our doors at Malta House in London are always open.

This book is a testament to the collaborative efforts between these two countries in fostering health and well-being. I commend its authors and the Karl Vella Foundation for compiling such a comprehensive resource and urge readers to utilize it alongside the Treatment Abroad Coordination Office.

Together, we can ensure that your pursuit of healing is met with compassion, efficiency, and the full backing of your homeland. Wishing you strength, recovery, and safe travels.

H.E. Professor Stephen Montefort

High Commissioner of the Republic of Malta
to the United Kingdom
London

A message from the Treatment Abroad Unit

As Head of the Unit, I am proud to form part of a team who works tirelessly to support patients receiving treatment overseas. Every patient and every family we meet carries a unique story, and we recognise the courage it takes to seek care away from home.



We understand that this journey can be emotionally and practically challenging, and our role is not only to coordinate logistics, but to offer reassurance, compassion, and a steady presence during uncertain times. My team and I are committed to walking alongside patients and their loved ones with empathy, respect, and genuine care, ensuring that each person feels heard, supported, and never alone.

We feel truly privileged and grateful to work in a service that is able to give something back to the community, and to support families during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. It is a responsibility we hold with great dedication, and one that continues to guide our work every day.

Ms Charlene Fenech

Head of Treatment Abroad Unit

The Treatment Abroad Unit - Mater Dei Hospital

The Treatment Abroad Offices can be found in three locations: at Mater Dei Hospital, 1st floor at the main entrance; in Swatar (Ex-HSBC Call Centre); and in Gozo at the General Hospital - Short Stay Level 1.

The Unit is responsible for the logistical arrangements of patients who require treatment overseas. Patients may be referred under different routes, that is, either under the long standing UK-Malta Bilateral Agreement or under the EU Regulations (S2 Route) or the Agreement with ISMETT (Palermo).

The services offered through this programme are considered as an extension to the services being offered locally. Cases referred overseas require specialised equipment and highly specialised interventions which can be offered in a very few centres overseas.

However the Office of the CMO is continuously exploring areas where to invest and to develop specialised treatment at Mater Dei in order to reduce the number of patients being referred overseas. This is aimed to reduce the burden and hardship families go through when having to leave Malta for treatment.

A patient can receive government-funded healthcare abroad if they are under the care of a Maltese Government consultant, have completed all possible local treatments and investigations, and are referred by their consultant for further care overseas.

Benefits for patients

The Department will cover expenses related to the patient and these include the air ticket, accommodation, transport, and food. The medical costs related to the condition received under the NHS will be covered by the Department. No other medical expenses will be entertained.

Airline tickets

Patients in possession of a blue card will have one relative's flight ticket covered. When a patient is under 18 years of age, the Department also pays the tickets of parents or legal guardians. The Government has reviewed its travel assistance policy and agreed to start covering the airfare of one accompanying relative for patients aged 18 years and over. For further information, kindly contact the Treatment Abroad Unit.

Food

The Department refunds the patient for meals when on out-patient care. An allowance of £20 per day for meals is provided to patients travelling to the UK. Reimbursement is capped and will be processed upon the patient's return, subject to the applicable refund policy and presentation of original receipts.

This does not apply for patients staying at the Franciscan Sisters as accommodation is on full board basis.

Transport

Transport services will be booked by the Treatment Abroad Unit for travel to and from Heathrow and Gatwick airports in the UK.

For transport arranged by the Department, up to two accompanying persons may travel with the patient, carrying 3 big (75cm x 50cm x 30cm) and 3 small hand luggage (55cm x 40cm x 25cm), which can be accommodated in a standard estate vehicle. If you are travelling with luggage exceeding these standard dimensions or with additional items beyond this allowance, you will be responsible for covering any additional costs associated with arranging a larger vehicle.

Transport will be provided for patients to attend hospital appointments directly related to his/her condition. Patients are expected to stay in accommodation situated within a maximum of 10 kilometres from the hospital.

For stays exceeding 10 days, transport assistance may be considered for accommodation located up to 32 kilometres from the hospital.

Patients may arrange their own transport and submit original fiscal receipts for reimbursement, provided arrangements comply with the above stipulations.

Transport for relatives is not provided, except for post-delivery mothers, who will receive transport up to two weeks after childbirth. If complications arise, further transport may be considered based on medical needs.

The Treatment Abroad Unit will provide transport for up to three relatives of deceased patients to register the death and hand documentation and clothes to the undertaker. A taxi will also be provided for the airport.

Same policy applies for patients receiving treatment outside London. The Treatment Abroad Unit are unfortunately unable to provide taxi services in those locations. Therefore, transport arrangements will need to be made by the patient and a refund would be issued on presentation of fiscal receipt.

Transport Arrangements for Appointments and Emergencies

Scheduling Transport for Appointments

Whenever you have a new appointment, please inform the Treatment Abroad Office as soon as possible, providing the date and time of the appointment so that appropriate transport arrangements can be made.

You may contact the Treatment Abroad Unit on:
+356 79642355 / +356 79642650.

Return Transport

Once your appointment is completed, please contact the Treatment Abroad officer to arrange your return transportation from the hospital.

Return transport should only be booked once that the appointment is finished.

Emergency Situations

In case of an emergency, call your Treatment Abroad officer immediately to arrange a taxi to A&E.

If an ambulance is required, call 999 (the UK emergency services number). They will ask questions to assess the urgency and provide an ambulance if necessary.

After calling 999, also inform the Treatment Abroad officer of the situation and provide details about the emergency.

IMPORTANT

Patients are expected to adhere to regulations and maintain a respectful and considerate attitude toward others. Unruly patients may be asked to vacate accommodation at short notice and the Department cannot take responsibility in such circumstances. If an appointment is missed without a valid reason, the rescheduled appointment may be delayed, and the patient will be required to cover any additional costs incurred as a result.

ALL REFUNDS WILL BE MADE UPON PRESENTATION OF RECEIPTS. NO REFUND CAN BE ISSUED WITHOUT RECEIPTS.

Patients on long stays (e.g. several months) may send receipts directly to the Treatment Abroad Unit by email, monthly, while still abroad.

Franciscan Conventual Friars

Dear families,

We are Franciscan Conventual friars living in London and collaborating with the Treatment Abroad Unit. Our mission is to accompany Maltese patients and their families who travel to London for specialised medical treatment, offering them ongoing pastoral care during a particularly challenging period of their lives.



For the past years, we have been regularly visiting patients in hospitals, at the Franciscan nuns in Victoria and at Puttinu Cares apartments, offering moral and spiritual support to patients and their relatives through regular visits.

Through these visits, we offer moral encouragement, spiritual guidance, and compassionate listening, helping patients and their loved ones face illness with faith, hope, and dignity. We pray with them, celebrate the sacraments when requested, and provide moments of conversation and reflection. Our pastoral work is rooted in regular contact and personal accompaniment, allowing us to build relationships with patients and families alike. In this way, we seek to ensure that no one feels alone during their treatment journey and that each person is supported with care, understanding, and spiritual strength throughout their stay in London.

May the Lord give you peace.

Fr. Mario Sant & Fr. Joseph Formosa
Franciscan Conventual Friars

Mental Health Support

KVF (Karl Vella Foundation) provides free psychotherapeutic support to patients and families facing illness or loss.

Through one of our services, **Because You Matter**, we support those needing medical treatment abroad and their families. We offer emotional support before departure, during treatment, and after return, recognising that the emotional journey spans far beyond hospital walls.



When You Might Need KVF's Support

- When breaking the news of treatment to children or family members.
- When a patient or carer is feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or isolated.
- When navigating grief, setbacks, or uncertainty about recovery.
- When returning home and struggling to readjust.

Services Offered

Because You Matter

This initiative provides free psycho-emotional support to patients, donors and caregivers travelling abroad for medical treatment. The support is also extended to family members who remain in Malta while the patient is abroad. Support takes the form of frequent phone calls and check-ins, individual/family therapy and crisis intervention provided by mental health professionals.

During the phone calls, the professional provides you with a safe space to process any thoughts and emotions. The professional checks in on your well-being, assesses your needs, assists you with any general queries, gives you space to process your experiences and supports you throughout your time abroad. Upon returning to Malta, KVF continues supporting you and your family to help readjust.

Embrace

If the patient needing treatment abroad is aged between 5 and 17, we provide free online psychotherapeutic and academic support. The sessions foster resilience, belonging, and skills to navigate challenging circumstances.

The Wellness Pod

Our years of experience working with children have highlighted how they are affected by having a close relative travelling abroad for treatment. Children may feel a mix of emotions, like anxiety, uncertainty, and fear, that they do not always display. We are here to support any child aged between 5 and 17 through free psychotherapeutic and academic support.

Life Beyond Loss

This service is held in collaboration with the Franciscan Conventual Friars and offers free grief therapy groups for those suffering the loss of a loved one.



In 2022, Beating Hearts Malta (BHM) celebrated its 10th anniversary. To mark this important milestone, we launched the Travel Support Scheme, aimed at providing financial assistance to children and adults who need to travel overseas for specialist cardiac surgery or interventions not available in Malta.

Through this scheme, BHM has allocated a dedicated fund to support eligible patients and their immediate family members when travelling to a recognised overseas specialist cardiac centre. Eligible applicants include patients of any age undergoing cardiac surgery, non-surgical cardiac interventions, or other cardiac procedures abroad. Each approved applicant will receive a fixed grant. As funds are limited, grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to availability and verification.

Applicants must contact Beating Hearts Malta after receiving confirmed travel details and documentation from the Treatment Abroad Office. The grant will be paid directly to the patient either before departure or upon arrival, depending on timing.

To apply, please use the following link:

beatingheartsmalta.org/travel-support-scheme/

Malta Community Chest Fund



www.mccff.org.mt

The Medical Assistance Unit at MCCFF assists by providing:

- Specialised medicine for severe chronic illness and cancer;
- Specialised treatment for rare diseases;
- Accommodation, transport and subsistence for patients receiving treatment abroad, and their accompanying relatives.

For more information, please call +356 2205 3500, or visit the MCCFF website.

When patients and their families need to travel abroad for medical treatment, Puttinu Cares offers additional support to complement the assistance provided by the Maltese Government. Their aim is to help make a difficult time a little easier for those going through it.

Originally established to support children with cancer and their families, Puttinu Cares has since expanded its services to include adult patients, continuing to provide practical support and care to those who need it.

For more information, please call +356 9967 2790 or visit the Puttinu Cares website

Getting Ready to Go

Important documentation (ETA, VISA, EHIC)

Patients are advised to ensure that their passport is valid for at least six months from the date of departure. This is essential to avoid travel disruptions, visa complications, or issues with entry requirements when travelling abroad.

Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA)

Please note that any patients and relatives travelling to the UK must apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA). It is valid for multiple entries into the UK for a period of two years. However, each individual visit can last for a maximum of six months. Please also be aware that the two-year validity is linked to your passport, and if you change your passport, you will need to apply for a new ETA. We recommend that you apply for the ETA as soon as you are aware of your need to travel to the UK.

You will need the following:

- The passport you will travel with (not a photocopy or digital passport).
- Access to your email.
- A credit card, debit card, Apple Pay, or Google Pay.

Additionally, you will need to upload or take photos of:

- Your passport.
- The face of the person applying.

To apply, please visit the following link:

<https://apply-for-an-eta.homeoffice.gov.uk/apply/electronic-travel-authorisation/easier-on-the-app>

UK Visa for Non-EU Nationals Legally Residing in Malta

A Visa is valid for 6 months.

Medical Visa: A UK Medical Visitor Visa allows entry for private medical treatment or organ donation for up to 6 months, or up to 11 months if treatment takes longer, with a fee of £127 (6 months) or £220 (11 months) ([Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)).

Do you need a UK Visa?

If you are a non-EU / non-UK national, you most likely need a UK visa, even for short visits.

A Maltese residence permit does NOT exempt you from UK Visa requirements.

Who Can Apply from Malta?

You can apply from Malta if you:

- Hold a non-EU nationality (e.g. Philippines, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, etc.)
- Are legally residing in Malta with a valid residence permit

Official UK Government Visa Website

Apply and check visa requirements

www.gov.uk/uk-visas-and-immigration

This is the main UK government page where you:

- Check if you need a visa
- Select the right visa type (e.g., Standard Visitor Visa for medical reasons)
- Start the online application form
- Pay the visa fee
- Create your application account

Visa Application Centres (TLS / VFS) – Biometric Appointments

After you complete the online application, you will be directed to book a biometric appointment - usually via a partner

visa application service such as TLScontact or VFS Global, depending on the arrangement at the time.

Here's a useful general link (redirects to the centre list):

gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre

Please send your application reference to the Treatment Abroad Unit as soon as you apply, and inform them once you have booked your biometrics appointment.

EHIC

servizz.gov.mt/en/Pages/Health-and-Community-Care/Health/Health-Policy/WEB012/default.aspx

It's important that both patient and those accompanying have a valid EHIC card with them. The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) allows holders to access free or reduced-cost, medically necessary treatment in public healthcare facilities during a temporary stay in another European country, including the UK. It is intended for emergency or essential treatment that cannot wait until the patient returns home.

The EHIC helps simplify access to care and, where applicable, speeds up the reimbursement process. The card is free of charge and is designed to complement, not replace, private travel or medical insurance (adapted from **servizz.gov.mt**).

S2

Your treatment overseas will be covered by a form called S2. This will be issued from the Treatment Abroad Unit to cover the period of your treatment.

This can only be issued once the date for treatment is known. Without the S2 your treatment will not be covered hence it is advised that you keep the Treatment Abroad Unit informed about all your appointments including telephone calls and video consultations.

Please note that the S2 form must be issued before the appointment date and therefore, cannot be issued backdated. If the Treatment Abroad Unit is not informed of an appointment in advance, the patient may be held personally responsible for any charges and receive the invoice directly.

Guidance when Travelling Abroad for Treatment

Emotional & Mental Readiness

Preparing to travel for medical treatment often brings a wide range of emotions. Many people notice feelings of anticipation, concern, hope, and reflection as they step into this important journey. These emotional responses are a natural part of preparing for meaningful change.

Being away from familiar surroundings can invite thoughtful reflection about loved ones, daily routines, work, or school. Whether you are travelling or remaining in Malta, these moments often highlight how deeply connected we are to one another. Recognising these emotions with kindness and patience allows space for emotional balance and self-compassion.

Emotional shifts throughout this period are a normal part of adapting to change. Giving yourself permission to experience these feelings without judgment can support emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Bringing a few personal comfort items can help create a sense of familiarity and calm. Photographs, meaningful keepsakes, favorite clothing, music, or spiritual items can offer grounding and reassurance throughout your journey.

Practical & Logistical Readiness

Planning for travel, accommodation, and healthcare in a new environment often involves learning new routines and systems. Taking things step by step can help foster confidence and a sense of readiness.

Medical appointments and procedures may feel unfamiliar at first, but many patients find that care teams are attentive, supportive, and responsive to questions. Clear communication and guidance from healthcare professionals can help create clarity and reassurance.

Financial planning is also an important part of preparation. Seeking guidance, asking questions, and accessing available resources can support a sense of stability and confidence throughout the process.

It is also important to plan carefully for an adequate supply of medication, both for the patient and for any accompanying relatives, particularly in the case of longer stays abroad. Ensuring that enough medication is taken from Malta can help prevent unnecessary stress or interruptions to treatment. If medications do run out while abroad, patients are advised to coordinate with a trusted relative in Malta who has access to the necessary documentation, so that the medication can be collected from a local pharmacy on their behalf. The Treatment Abroad Unit should then be informed to assist with any further coordination or guidance required.



Accommodation Options

Accommodation in Sutton, UK

In Sutton, one can find free accommodation close to the Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton (roughly a 10-minute car ride away), so that patients and their accompanying relatives can stay with them while treatment is ongoing.

Puttinu House – Cheam Road

A family-focused residence offering a supportive environment close to the hospital. This building offers a backyard and a common room. A Mass is held in the common room on Sunday mornings and residents of all Puttinu blocks are encouraged to join.

Martin Court – Camden Gardens

Comfortable accommodation within easy reach of medical facilities and local amenities. This building is a 3-minute walk away from Robin Hood Lane Health Centre (see p. 41).

Mitre House – High Street

This building is located near the train station and surrounded by shops and cafes, making it convenient for daily needs and travel to and from the hospital.

Accommodation in Central London

Convents in London which offer accommodation

These convents are located in central London, close to most major hospitals. The Treatment Abroad Unit recommends these accommodations not only for their convenient location but also because the nuns provide support and a welcoming environment for patients and their families. Both convents are equipped with a kitchenette and a laundry room.

These accommodation options are arranged via Malta's Treatment Abroad Unit in many cases, so you will need to contact them ahead of time to secure a space.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus

9, St. Georges Drive, Pimlico,
London SW1V 4DJ

fcjmalta.com



Welcome to the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus. The Sisters devote their lives to caring for the sick, the elderly, and the vulnerable, and to educating children through their schools. In 1960, we opened a guest house in Victoria, London, to warmly welcome patients sent by the Maltese government for treatment in UK hospitals.

For over sixty years, the Sisters have provided shelter, nourishing meals, and spiritual support through daily Mass and prayer. We are here to bring comfort, encouragement, and companionship, walking alongside you and your loved ones during this time of treatment and recovery.

The Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus

Accommodation for the patient includes full board (breakfast, lunch, and dinner).

One accompanying relative, or both parents for patients under the age of 18, is provided accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis. Please note that only shared bathrooms are available. Any additional relatives may stay at a cost of £30 per night.

Hospitals within close distance to the Franciscan Sisters, Victoria

Hospital	Distance (approx)	By Public Transport
St Thomas' Hospital	1.6 km	10-20 min (Walk/Bus)
Chelsea and Westminster Hospital	2.4 km	20-25 min
Moorfields Eye Hospital	5 km	25-35 min
Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH)	4 km	20-30 min
Evelina London Children's Hospital	4.5 km	20-25 min
National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery (NHNN)	4 km	20-30 min
University College London Hospital (UCLH)	4 km	20-30 min
Royal Free Hospital	8 km	35-45 min
Royal London Hospital	6.5 km	30-40 min
St Bartholomew's Hospital	3.5 km	20-25 min
Evelina London Children's Hospital	2 km	15-20 min
Guy's Hospital	3 km	20-25 min

The Augustinian Sisters

St. Monica House, 83 Clapham Road, Stockwell, London SW9 0HY

asimoz.org/hospitality-bed-and-breakfast.html



St Monica House enjoys a convenient location close to Oval Station, which itself is situated near Victoria Station, making it easily accessible for visitors and residents alike.

The House is run by the Augustinian Sisters Servants of Jesus and Mary. Guided by the charism of our Congregation, we are dedicated to serving God through others, following the example set by Jesus and Mary. At St Monica House, our aim is to foster a welcoming and family-like atmosphere, ensuring everyone feels valued and at home.

Guests at St Monica House often express that they feel as though they have found a second home with us. We recognise that visiting for health reasons may not be easy or pleasant, but we strive to support each individual in a variety of ways. Whether through a comforting word, encouragement, a listening ear, or simply a warm smile, we endeavour to make a meaningful difference in the lives of all who come through our doors.

The Augustinian Sisters

Accommodation for the patient and one accompanying relative, or both parents for patients under the age of 18 is provided on a bed and breakfast basis.

Private bathrooms may be requested, subject to availability. Additional relatives are charged £35 per person per night.



Hospitals within close distance to the Augustinian Sisters, St Monica House (Oval)

Hospital	Distance (approx)	By Public Transport
St Thomas' Hospital	4.8 km	20-25 min
King's College Hospital	4 km	15-20 min
Moorfields Eye Hospital	6 km	30-40 min
Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH)	7 km	35-45 min
National Hospital for Neurology & Neurosurgery (NHNN)	7 km	35-45 min
University College London Hospital (UCLH)	7 km	35-45 min
Royal Free Hospital	7 km	35-45 min
Royal London Hospital	8 km	35-50 min
St Bartholomew's Hospital	6.5 km	30-40 min
Evelina London Children's Hospital	4.5 km	20-25 min
Guy's Hospital	5 km	25-30 min

Accommodation for Families with a Child Requiring Treatment

Ronald McDonald House Charities

rmhc.org.uk/our-houses



When a child requires medical treatment abroad, arranging suitable accommodation becomes an important part of supporting both the child and the family. Staying close to the hospital allows parents to remain actively involved in their child's care, while also providing a comfortable space to rest, eat, and restore energy.

Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) supports families by offering accommodation close to paediatric hospitals, helping reduce the practical and financial burden of extended hospital stays.

In most cases, the Treatment Abroad Department communicates directly with the hospitals regarding accommodation through Ronald McDonald House for parents of children; however, this depends on the specific circumstances. The department will advise patients based on the situation and the location where Ronald McDonald House accommodation needs to be arranged.

Accommodation and reimbursement rates outside of Sutton and Central London

The Treatment Abroad team can assist you in finding and booking suitable accommodation. For short stays, the Treatment Abroad Unit usually recommends Travelodge or Premier Inn hotels, as they are widely available in different countries with reasonable prices. Please note that when booking independently, you will need to pay the full cost upfront (for example, by providing your Visa credit card details through booking.com or similar websites). Reimbursement will be processed upon your return.

If you choose to book accommodation independently in the UK, the Treatment Abroad Unit Department will reimburse up to £80 per night when the patient is on an outpatient basis and up to £40 per night for one relative when the patient is admitted to hospital. If the patient is under 18 years of age and is travelling with two accompanying persons, a reimbursement of £65 per night will be provided while the child is admitted to hospital.

Patients on a longer stay (e.g. several months) may send receipts directly to the Treatment Abroad Unit by email, monthly.

Meals

The Department will refund the patient for meals when on an outpatient basis or when meals are not provided at the nuns' accommodation. The refund is capped at £20 per day, upon submission of receipts.

Preparing to Return Home

Step 1: Obtain Medical Clearance

If you had a follow-up appointment, consultation, or pre-operative assessment in the UK, you must obtain a medical report confirming that you are fit to return to Malta.

If you underwent a surgical procedure, the hospital must provide:

- A completed “Fit to Fly” form, signed by both the patient and the consultant.
- Your discharge summary and medical report.

Step 2: Collect Medication

Ensure that all prescribed medications are collected from the hospital or pharmacy prior to your departure. Kindly also ensure that any new prescribed medication is available in Malta.

Step 3: Contact Treatment Abroad Office for Return Flights

Once all medical documentation is in hand, contact the Treatment Abroad Office:

Mobile Numbers: +356 79642650 | +356 79642355

They will assist with booking return flights for both the patient and accompanying relatives.

The Treatment Abroad Unit is responsible for organising return flights for both the patient and any accompanying relatives. Where required, the Unit also arranges special travel provisions, such as medical staff accompaniment, stretchers, oxygen support, or other medical arrangements, to ensure the patient’s safe return. Expenses for additional luggage over and above the entitlement need to be paid by the patient.

In cases where a patient requires immediate hospital admission upon returning to Malta, the Treatment Abroad Unit coordinates the ambulance transfer from the airport to the hospital and arranges the hospital bed booking.

If follow-up appointments with the patient's consultant are required, the patient should inform the Treatment Abroad Unit, who will then liaise directly with the consultant to coordinate the necessary arrangements.

Step 4: Confirm Accommodation Arrangements

Once your return flights are booked, inform those responsible for your current accommodation - whether staying at the Nuns' accommodation or Puttinu apartments - of your intended check-out date.

Bereavement Support and Repatriation

When a patient passes away while receiving treatment abroad, once the death certificate is issued the relatives need to register the death of the patient. Once registered the relatives would need to take the death certificate and clothes to the undertaker in the UK.

The Department oversees the repatriation of deceased individuals and maintains formal agreements with undertakers in Malta and the United Kingdom to facilitate and coordinate these processes. Families have the right to opt for cremation.

All costs are covered by the Department. Any changes to the service in place need to be covered by the family.

Birth

When a baby is born in UK, the parents would need to register the birth in the UK. When the baby is given the go ahead to return and flights are booked, an appointment is made with the Malta High Commission so that they can prepare the Travel Document. An application will be given to the parents before the appointment. ***Only one parent needs to go to the High Commission and would need to take the completed application form, 2 passport sized photos, a copy of the birth certificate and the passports of both parents.***

Back Home

Guidance When Returning from Abroad

Emotional Adjustment

Returning home after treatment is a meaningful transition that often brings a wide range of emotions. Many people experience moments of relief, gratitude, reflection, and hope as they settle back into familiar surroundings. Alongside this, it is natural to notice emotional shifts as you adjust to daily life again.

Reconnecting with routines, relationships, and responsibilities may take time. Allowing yourself space to adapt gradually can support emotional balance and wellbeing. Each person's pace of adjustment is unique, and honouring your own rhythm can foster a sense of stability and self-compassion.

Taking each day as it comes and gently reintroducing familiar activities can help rebuild confidence and emotional grounding.

Physical & Practical Recovery

Recovery often continues after returning home, and listening to your body's needs is an important part of healing. Prioritising rest, balanced activity, and regular follow-up care can support ongoing recovery for both patients and caregivers.

Coordinating care between overseas and local healthcare providers may involve learning new routines and processes. With guidance and support, many families find their way through this transition smoothly and confidently.

Planning time for rest and gradual reintegration into daily responsibilities can help create a sense of balance, strength, and continuity.

Relationships & Support

Returning to family life, work, school, and social connections is an important step in the journey. As you readjust, you may notice new perspectives, deeper appreciation, or shifts in priorities. These reflections are often part of personal growth and healing.

Maintaining open communication with trusted people can nurture connection and understanding. Gentle conversations, shared moments, and emotional openness help strengthen relationships during this phase of adjustment.

You may also find value in connecting with others who understand similar experiences. Mental health professionals and peer networks can offer insight, validation, and reassurance.

Being patient and kind with yourself is essential. Emotional adjustment unfolds gradually, and support remains available whenever you need it.

If it feels right for you, our emotional support professionals at KVF are here for you during this phase as well.

“You’re not necessarily under the clinical team any longer, but you’re not able to function normally at home as you perhaps once used to ... someone to help talk you through that ... guide you through that sort of phase that comes after treatment ... is really valuable.”

- Kate Middleton, Princess of Wales

Words From Families Who Went Through The Experience

Initial fear is normal

As you prepare for the journey ahead, you may notice a mix of emotions.

Moments of reflection, anticipation, and concern are all natural responses, and many people find reassurance as they gather information and support.

You are not alone

Many others are going through similar journeys. Talking to people around you can be deeply reassuring and comforting.

A strong support network awaits

Patients often find a new, supportive “family” among fellow patients, carers, and staff. Being open to socialising can make a big difference.

Spiritual support (if meaningful to you)

Find strength and hope through faith, prayer, quiet reflection, and spiritual guidance. stress.

Trust the process

It can help not to fix a return date too early. Treatment journeys can change, and allowing things to unfold naturally can reduce stress.

Peer support matters

Meeting others undergoing treatment can be invaluable - they often understand your experience better than anyone else.

Create small daily positives

Simple ideas like a “hospital advent calendar” with small surprises can give children (and parents) something to look forward to each day.

Take care of yourself

Simple self-care - walking outdoors, spending time in parks, reading, enjoying a coffee or treat - can help maintain balance and wellbeing.

Let others help in practical ways

Friends and relatives often want to support - ask for useful items such as pyjamas, comfortable clothes, or small activity packs.

Entertainment helps pass the time

Books, TV series, and streaming services can be a helpful distraction and source of relaxation.

Maintain personal routines

Gentle exercise, skincare routines, and small daily habits can help parents and carers feel grounded and maintain a sense of normality.

Encouraging messages matter

Notebooks with notes and messages from friends can provide ongoing comfort and motivation during difficult days.

Stay organised

Keep a visible planner (for example on the fridge) with upcoming appointments to reduce stress and confusion.

Support for the soul

What helped us immensely was the spiritual support from Fr. Mario and Fr Joseph.

Use local amenities

Supermarkets and shops are widely available for daily necessities, reducing the need to overpack.

You're in good hands

I wish i had known that my son would have been treated so kindly both at Great Ormond Street Hospital and at the Franciscan Sisters residence.

Make use of hospital services

Children's hospitals often offer play therapy and psychological support, which families find extremely helpful.

Clothing tips

One has to take a warm jacket for outside, a comfort shoes/boots + an umbrella, and it's best to wear layers.

Support for children

Bring favourite books, soft toys, board games, card games, or puzzles to help children feel comforted and occupied.

Logistics made easier

I would have worried much less about the logistics if I had known how organised and supportive the MDH treatment abroad office is.

Go cash-light

Contactless payment is widely accepted, so there is no need to carry large amounts of cash.

Value emotional support from home

Regular contact from loved ones and professional support services can be deeply reassuring while abroad.

Keep life as normal as possible

Being yourself and maintaining everyday routines can help both patients and families cope better.

Additional General Information

Maggie's Cancer Support Centre

Maggie's provides non-clinical support for families and patients affected by cancer. It is a welcoming, quiet space where parents and caregivers can:

- Talk to someone trained in emotional support
- Receive guidance on coping with stress, hospital routines, or practical daily challenges
- Meet other families who understand what you are going through
- Have a place to unwind in between hospital appointments

Maggie's services are free and open to patients and family members alike. No referral is needed to visit. Maggie's centres may be found next to the Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton, other hospitals across the UK and other countries.

General Healthcare Facilities in Sutton, UK

When needing medical care in the UK, families may visit different hospitals or healthcare centres during their stay. Each place provides specific types of care or support. Understanding the options in advance can help reduce stress and make the experience more manageable. Upon arrival in the UK, it is strongly advised that any accompanying family members register themselves with a health centre. This ensures that they can access primary healthcare services if needed during their stay.

St Helier General Hospital

A 20-minute bus ride from Sutton Station, St Helier General Hospital is a large NHS hospital in Sutton. It provides emergency care, outpatient clinics, specialist services, and inpatient care.

Getting Around Sutton (Public Transport)

The Royal Marsden Hospital, Sutton (Downs Road)

- **Bus:** Routes S3 and S4 stop inside the hospital grounds (close to the main entrance). Routes 80, 280, 420 and S1 run nearby along Brighton Road/Downs Road and connect with Sutton town centre and train station.
- **Train connections:** The nearest stations are Sutton (served by Southern, Thameslink & others) or Belmont (on the Victoria–Epsom Downs line). From Sutton station you can take a bus to the hospital or walk (bus is recommended especially with luggage).

Robin Hood Lane Health Centre

This is a community health centre offering specialist outpatient clinics, therapies, and follow-up appointments that do not require staying overnight in a hospital. Families may be referred here for appointments or ongoing support. If you are a patient or a relative, we recommend that you sign yourself up with the Centre.

Nearest bus stops: Sutton Civic Centre (4 min walk), Times Square (6 min walk) and nearby stops served by 164, 213, 280, SL7, S1, and other buses.

Train access: Sutton rail station is about a 30 min walk, or you can catch a bus that stops close by from outside the station.

Fitness

Better Gym Sutton – Located opposite Puttinu Cares accommodation in Sutton. Offers gym equipment, fitness classes and flexible short-term passes, which may be convenient for families staying temporarily.

Parks & Recreation

Sutton has many parks, green spaces and outdoor areas ideal for rest, gentle exercise or family time between medical appointments:

- Manor Park: in Sutton town centre with lawns, a café and fountain.
- Beddington Park: large park with lakes, picnic areas and paths.
- Oaks Park: extensive parkland with open fields and trails.
- Cheam Park, Grove Park, Carshalton Park, Rosehill Park: other popular local spaces.

Most of these parks are accessible by local buses from Sutton town centre or from the nearby rail stations.

Libraries

For quiet time, reading, Wi-Fi access, or a peaceful change of environment:

- Sutton Central Library – Main library in the town centre.
- Belmont Library – Close to The Royal Marsden Hospital.
- Cheam Library
- Wallington Library

Shopping & Essentials

From Sutton town centre (near Sutton rail station) you can walk or take short bus rides (e.g., S1, S2, S3, S4 or local 150s) to reach:

- High Street shops (clothes, electronics, pharmacies)
- St Nicholas Shopping Centre: large indoor centre with supermarkets, clothing, cafés
- Marks & Spencer, Boots, supermarkets and banks: all within a short walk of the main station area

Accident & Emergency Hospitals in Central London

St Thomas' Hospital – A&E

Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1
(Major trauma and emergency services)

University College Hospital (UCLH) – A&E

235 Euston Road, London NW1
(24-hour emergency department)

Guy's Hospital – A&E

Great Maze Pond, London SE1
(Major emergency and specialist services)

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital – A&E

369 Fulham Road, London SW10
(24-hour A&E services)

King's College Hospital – A&E

Denmark Hill, London SE5
(Major trauma centre and emergency services)

NHS Health Centres / Primary Care

(under Bilateral Agreement):

Healthcare Central London

NHS health centre providing primary care services within the South Westminster Centre for Health.

South Westminster Centre For Health

NHS primary care hub at St George's House, Vincent Square (near Pimlico).

List of Contacts

Augustinian Sisters

www.asjmoz.org

+44 20 7582 0840

stmonicahouseuk@gmail.com

Beating Hearts

www.beatingheartsmalta.org

+356 7946 8338

info@beatingheartsmalta.org

Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus

www.fcjhostel.co.uk

+44 20 7834 5356

fransisuk09@gmail.com

Fr Joseph Formosa

+356 9924 6311

+44 77 9900 2431

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+44 75 8616 9261

Karl Vella Foundation

kvf.org.mt

+356 2123 7928 / +356 7704 1569

info@kvf.org.mt

becauseyoumatter@kvf.org.mt

Malta Community Chest Fund

www.mccff.org.mt/en/

+356 2205 3500

mccf@gov.mt

Malta High Commission

[missions.foreign.gov.mt/high-commissions/
united-kingdom/contact-the-high-
commission](https://missions.foreign.gov.mt/high-commissions/united-kingdom/contact-the-high-commission)

Puttinu Cares

puttinucares.org

+356 9967 2790

info@puttinucares.org

Ronald McDonald Charity Houses

ronaldmcdonaldhouse.org

Treatment Abroad Unit

On-call numbers to use when in the UK:

+356 79642650 | +356 79642355

Please call using the regular phone line and do not use WhatsApp or messages to communicate.

It is important to use these on-call numbers (and not office numbers).

Checklist

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Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.



Karl Vella
foundation
Here to Care

Kunvent Patrijiet
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Triq Burmarrad,
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GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTRY
FOR HEALTH



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL POLICY
AND THE FAMILY



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR INCLUSION
AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR