

Shepley Health Centre
25 Jos Lane Shepley Huddersfield HD8 8DJ

Chaperone Policy

Introduction

This Practice is committed to providing a safe, comfortable environment where patients and staff can be confident that best practice is being followed at all times and the safety of everyone is of paramount importance.

Intimate examinations can be embarrassing or distressing for patients and all staff need to be sensitive as to what they may think of as intimate. This is likely to include examinations of breasts, genitalia and rectum, but could also include any examination where it is necessary to touch or even be close to the patient.

Policy

This policy is designed to protect both patients and staff from abuse or allegations of abuse and to assist patients to make an informed choice about their examinations and consultations.

The chaperone policy is clearly advertised through the practice website and on notices boards within the Practice (Appendix 1).

Patients are encouraged to ask for a chaperone if required at the time of booking an appointment wherever possible.

All staff are aware of, and have received appropriate information in relation to this chaperoning policy.

All formal chaperones¹ understand their role and responsibilities and are competent to perform that role. All chaperones are DBS checked.

Guidelines for the Clinician

All clinicians (male and female) should consider whether an intimate or personal examination of the patient (either male or female) is necessary and whether such an examination poses a risk of misunderstanding.

Clinicians should:

- Give a clear explanation of the nature and purpose of the examination so that the patient can understand and give them the opportunity to raise questions or concerns.
- Make the patient aware of any potential pain or discomfort.

¹ **Formal chaperone** – implies a clinical health professional, such as a nurse, or a specifically trained non-clinical staff member, such as a receptionist. This individual will have a specific role to play in terms of the consultation and this role should be made clear to both the patient and the person undertaking the chaperone role.

- Adopt a professional and considerate manner and avoid humour as a method of relaxing the patient.
- Ensure the patient is provided with adequate privacy so that they can undress and dress.
- Ensure a suitable sign is clearly on display in each consulting room or treatment room informing patients that a chaperone service is available if required.
- Reassure the patient that all practice staff/chaperones understand their responsibility not to divulge confidential information.
- Inform the patient if the chaperone is a non-clinical chaperone and given them the opportunity to re-book their appointment when a clinical chaperone will be available if appropriate.
- If a chaperone is requested and none are immediately available, an alternative appointment should be arranged when a chaperone could be present.
- Be aware that during the course of the examination, an additional explanation and further consent may be required.
- The examination should be discontinued if the patient requests it or shows any indications of distress.

Role of the Chaperone

There is no common definition of a chaperone and their role varies considerably depending on the needs of the patient, the healthcare professional and the examination or procedure being carried out. Broadly speaking their role can be considered in any of the following areas:

- Providing emotional comfort and reassurance to patients
- To assist in the examination, for example handling instruments during the procedure
- To assist with undressing patients
- To act as an interpreter
- To provide protection to healthcare professionals against unfounded allegations of improper behaviour
- In very rare circumstances to protect the clinician against attack
- An experienced chaperone may identify unusual or unacceptable behaviour on the part of the healthcare professional

Guidelines for the chaperone

Chaperones should be sensitive and respectful of the patient's dignity and confidentiality, be familiar with the procedures involved in a routine intimate examination and be prepared to raise concerns about a clinician if misconduct occurs.

Chaperones should:

- Enter the room discreetly.
- Be positioned so they can see the patient and watch the examination, normally inside the curtain at the head of the examination couch.
- Not enter into conversation with the patient or clinician unless requested to do so.
- Make no mention of the consultation afterwards.

Leave the room after the examination when the patient is dressed, to allow a one to one communication between the patient and the clinician.

Record Keeping

The clinician

- A record should be made in the patient's medical record indicating that the patient consented to the examination together with details of the examination.
- If a chaperone is present record details of their identity and role within the Practice.
- If a patient refuses a chaperone record that the offer was made but declined.

The chaperone

- A record should be made in the patient's medical record after the examination.
- The record should reflect the examination, whether the chaperone had any concerns or state that there were no problems. Or give details of any incidents/problems that occurred during the course of the examination.

Note: If any situation where concerns are raised or an incident has occurred and a report is required this should be completed immediately after the consultation.

There may be rare occasions when a chaperone is needed for a home visit. This chaperone policy should still be followed.

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

The COVID-19 pandemic has fast-tracked the use of online and video consultations as part of regular patient appointments and interactions, but the same chaperone principles will still apply - an online/video/phone consultation does not negate the need to offer a chaperone.

The General Medical Council (GMC) published guidance for GP Practices on how to provide appropriate patient care in online, video or telephone consultations. The guidance includes appropriate use of photographs and video consultations as part of patient care.

The Royal College of Nursing published genital examination in women. It includes some useful information on chaperoning which is applicable regardless of gender.

NHS England have produced guidance on key principles for intimate clinical assessments undertaken remotely in response to COVID-19, including how to conduct intimate examinations by video and the use of chaperones.

The GMC published guidance on intimate examinations and chaperones. It provides a framework for all health care professionals, and sets out when and why a patient may need a chaperone and what should be taken into consideration.

If a GP wishes not to follow this guidance they should risk-assess the situation. They should record their logic or discussion clearly.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Coronavirus : Your Frequently Asked Questions (GMC) : <https://bit.ly/3DWOfT5>

Genital Examination in Women (Royal College of Nursing) : <https://bit.ly/3l09tXN>

Key principles for intimate clinical assessments undertaken remotely in response to COVID-19 (NHS England) : <https://bit.ly/3tnM3Pz>

APPENDIX 1

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CHAPERONE NOTICE

This Practice is committed to providing a safe, comfortable environment where patients and staff can be confident that best practice is being followed at all times and the safety of everyone is of paramount importance.

All patients are entitled to have a chaperone present for any consultation, examination or procedure where they feel one is required. This chaperone may be a family member or friend. On occasions you may prefer a formal chaperone to be present i.e. a trained member of staff.

Wherever possible we would ask you to make this request at time of booking your appointment so that arrangements can be made. Where this is not possible we will endeavour to provide a formal chaperone at the time of request. However occasionally it may be necessary to reschedule your appointment.

Your healthcare professional (the doctor, nurse practitioner or nurse) may also require a formal chaperone to be present for certain consultations in accordance with our Chaperone Policy.

A copy of the Policy is available at the reception desk for any patient who would like to view it.