

## **Zero Tolerance Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

We operate a zero tolerance policy with regard to violent, abusive and threatening behaviour. The practice has the right to remove patients who behave in this manner from the list with immediate effect in order to safeguard all staff, patients and other persons.

Behaviour in this context includes actual or threatened physical violence or verbal abuse and derogatory language which leads to fear for a person's safety or leaves a person upset or feeling intimidated as a result. This can also be in written form i.e. letter, text or email. In this situation we will notify the patient in writing of their removal from the list and record in the patient's medical records the fact of the removal and the circumstances leading to it.

### **What actions / behaviours do the practice consider unacceptable?**

The following list is not exhaustive but is provided to explain the actions and behaviours that the practice considers to be unacceptable:

- Violence (towards members of staff and/or other patients)
- Excessive noise e.g. recurrent loud or intrusive conversation or shouting
- Threatening or abusive language involving swearing or offensive remarks
- Derogatory remarks regarding protected characteristics (e.g. racist, sexist or homophobic behaviour)
- Making inflammatory statements e.g. "You are incompetent and should be sacked"
- Derogatory, abusive or insulting comments made about staff online or in the media
- Harassing, abusing or threatening staff on their personal social networks
- Malicious allegations relating to members of staff, other patients or visitors
- Offensive sexual gestures or behaviours
- Abusing alcohol or drugs on practice premises
- Drug dealing on practice premises
- Wilful damage to practice property
- Threats, threatening behaviour or intimidation
- Theft
- Abuse of practice processes/policy

The practice also considers unreasonable demands to be unacceptable. A demand becomes unacceptable when it starts to (or when complying with the demand would) impact substantially on the work of the Practice. Examples of actions grouped under this heading include:

- Repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- Repeatedly requesting early supplies of medication
- Repeatedly requesting further supplies of stolen medication, without the required Police Incident number
- Repeatedly ordering prescriptions without enough notification
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible
- Repeatedly changing the substance of an issue or complaint or raising unrelated concerns
- Repeatedly insisting on a course of medical treatment for which there is no clinical evidence

## **Unreasonable levels of contact**

Sometimes the volume and duration of contact made to our Practice by an individual causes problems. This can occur over a short period, for example, a number of calls in one day or one hour.

It may occur over the life-span of an issue when a patient repeatedly makes long telephone calls to us, or inundates us with letters or copies of information that have been sent already or that are irrelevant to the issue. We consider that the level of contact has become unacceptable when the amount of time spent talking to a patient on the telephone, or responding to, reviewing and filing emails or written correspondence impacts on our ability to deal with that issue, or with other Patients' needs.

## **Unreasonable refusal to co-operate**

When we are looking at an issue or complaint, we will ask the patient to work with us. This can include agreeing with us the issues or complaint we will look at; providing us with further information, evidence or comments on request; or helping us by summarising their concerns or completing a form for us.

Sometimes, a patient repeatedly refuses to cooperate and this makes it difficult for us to proceed. We will always seek to assist someone if they have a specific, genuine difficulty complying with a request. However, we consider it is unreasonable to bring an issue to us and then not respond to reasonable requests.

## **Unreasonable use of the complaints process**

Individuals with complaints about the Practice have the right to pursue their concerns through a range of means. They also have the right to complain more than once about the Practice, if a subsequent incidents occur. This contact becomes unreasonable when the effect of the repeated complaints is to harass, or to prevent us from pursuing a legitimate aim or implementing a legitimate decision. We consider access to a complaints system to be important and it will only be in exceptional circumstances that we would consider such repeated use is unacceptable – but we reserve the right to do so in such cases.

## **Verbally abusive or antisocial patients**

If a patient has been verbally abusive to any members of the practice staff the incident must be written up as a significant event on TeamNet. The Practice Manager will write a warning letter to the patient within 2 working days and record it in the patient notes. Any repeat offenders will be removed from the practice guided by national guidance.

## **Violent or threatening patients**

If a patient has been violent to any members of the practice staff or have been threatening to the point where there have been fears for personal safety, the incident must be reported to the Practice Manager straightaway. In addition, a significant event should be written up on TeamNet. In these instances the police must be informed straightaway.

This will be done by the Practice Manager with the member of staff. In these circumstances, the practice can remove the patient from the practice list quickly, guided by national guidance.

## **Removal from the Practice list**

The removal of patients from our list will be done where actions / behaviours are considered inappropriate. We value and respect good patient-staff relationships based on mutual respect and trust.

When trust has irretrievably broken down, the practice will consider all factors before removing a patient from their list, and communicate to them that it is in the patient's best interest that they should find a new practice. An exception to this is in the case of immediate removal on the grounds of violence e.g. when the Police are involved.

## **Guidance**

*NHS Guidance* - <https://pcse.england.nhs.uk/help/patient-registrations/patient-removals/>

*BMA Guidance* - <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/managing-your-practice-list/removing-patients-from-your-practice-list#:~:text=Issue%20a%20warning%20to%20the,of%20birth%20and%20NHS%20number>