

North Street Medical Care 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.

This Chaperone Policy adheres to local and national guidance and policy –i.e.:- ‘NCGST Guidance on the role and effective use of chaperones in Primary and Community Care settings’.

Guidelines

Clinicians (male and female) should consider whether an intimate or personal examination of the patient (either male or female) is justified and whether the nature of the consultation poses a risk of misunderstanding. Patient should be offered a chaperone for such examinations.

- The clinician should give the patient a clear explanation of what the examination will involve.
- Always adopt a professional and considerate manner – be careful with humour as a way of relaxing a nervous situation as it can easily be misinterpreted.
- Always ensure that the patient is provided with adequate privacy to undress and dress.
- Ensure that a suitable sign is clearly on display in each consulting or treatment room offering the chaperone service if required.
- If a patient does not want a chaperone it is good practice to record ‘chaperone declined’ in the medical record.

This should remove the potential for misunderstanding. However, there will still be times when either the clinician, or the patient, feels uncomfortable, and it would be appropriate to consider using a chaperone. Patients who request a chaperone should never be examined without a chaperone being present. If necessary, where a chaperone is not available, the consultation / examination should be rearranged for a mutually convenient time when a chaperone can be present.

Complaints and claims have not been limited to male doctors with female patients - there are many examples of alleged homosexual assault by female and male doctors. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of a malicious accusation by a patient

There may be a rare occasions when a chaperone is needed for a home visit. The following procedure should be followed.

Who can act as a chaperone?

In this practice chaperones will be provided by the Practice Nursing team. Where suitable clinical staff members are not available a GP colleague should be sought or the examination should be postponed.

Confidentiality

- The chaperone should only be present for the examination itself, and most discussion with the patient should take place while the chaperone is not present.
- Patients should be reassured that all practice staff understand their responsibility not to divulge confidential information.

Procedure

- The clinician will contact the practice nurse to request a chaperone.
- The clinician will record in the notes that the chaperone is present, and identify the chaperone.
- Where a patient has requested a chaperone and no chaperone is available the examination should not take place until one is available. The patient should not usually be permitted to dispense with the chaperone once a desire to have one present has been expressed. However individual patients may indicate at that point that the examination or procedure could go ahead without a chaperone; this should be noted in the records.
- The chaperone will enter the room discreetly and remain in room until the clinician has finished the examination.
- The chaperone will normally attend inside the curtain at the head of the examination couch and watch the procedure.
- To prevent embarrassment, the chaperone should not enter into conversation with the patient or GP unless requested to do so, or make any mention of the consultation afterwards.
- **The chaperone will make a record in the patient's notes after examination.** The record will state that there were no problems, or give details of any concerns or incidents that occurred.
- The patient can refuse a chaperone, and if so this **must** be recorded in the patient's medical record.

Training

The nursing staff who act as a chaperone must have undergone relevant training.

Annex A

Example Chaperone Poster for use in Waiting Area

Chaperones

If you feel you would like a Chaperone present at your Consultation, please inform your Doctor / Nurse, who will be more than happy to arrange this for you.

