

Queen's Crescent Surgery

Practice Policy

Zero-Tolerance Policy

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1. Introduction

Surgery staff should be able to come to work without fear of violence, abuse or harassment from patients or their relatives.

In most cases, patients and their relatives will be appreciative towards those who treat them but a minority of people are abusive or violent towards staff. Queen's Crescent Surgery is committed to dealing with this problem.

Queen's Crescent Surgery fully supports the Government's NHS Zero Tolerance Zone campaign

2. Zero Tolerance Statement

Queen's Crescent Surgery believes that any act of aggression, violence or intimidation, both physical and non-physical from any member of staff, patient, visitor or member of the public is unacceptable. The surgery is committed to the creation of a culture and environment where staff may undertake their duties without fear of abuse or violence.

As a business, we are committed to introducing measures, through the Zero Tolerance Policy and relevant guidelines, to reduce risk and to have procedures in place that will enable staff to manage appropriately an aggressive or violent situation should it arise.

All staff have a vital role to play in protecting themselves, including participation in appropriate training, reporting of incidents and taking appropriate action against perpetrators of abuse or violence. Queen's Crescent Surgery has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate support is given to staff in such instances.

3. Aims

This policy aims to outline the surgery's commitment to the safety of its employees, local contractors and their staff, provide clear lines of accountability and engender a working environment that embodies the rights and expectations of both staff and patients as outlined in the healthcare regulations

4. Areas of accountability

4.1 Surgery responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the surgery to develop policies, procedures, systems and environments that reduce the risk of violence and aggression.

Queen's Crescent Surgery recognises that it is an integral part of the community which it serves and its overall policies and procedures directly affect what happens at the interface between staff and clients.

The surgery undertakes to:

- Identify as far as reasonably practicable, the potential for violence, aggression and vexatious behaviour arising in the workplace, including those most at risk
- Take practical steps to eliminate/reduce the risk
- Identify safe working practices and provide training for staff appropriate to their needs, e.g. de-escalation training, breakaway, care and responsibility
- Encourage reporting of all incidents to the Practice Manager
- Maintain an effective reporting system
- Ensure arrangements are in place to treat known violent patients
- Investigate significant incidents
- Take appropriate action against patients who assault, threaten or abuse staff
- Provide support to individuals who have been a victim of assault or abuse
- Evaluate the effectiveness of any measures undertaken

4.2 Individual responsibility

Every individual has a responsibility to follow safe working practices and co-operate with the Drs Crighton, Chapman & Ali to promote safety at work.

Individuals have a responsibility to report incidents of violence and aggression, including verbal abuse.

Queen's Crescent Surgery does not expect staff to place themselves at risk to protect or prevent damage to or theft of property. The surgery does not expect staff to place themselves at risk in order to deliver care.

5. Assessing the risk of violent behaviour

5.1 Violent behaviour

Violence is defined as “any incident where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health.”

Violent incidents do not necessarily have to cause physical harm. They can:

- involve a threat, even if no serious injury results
- involve verbal abuse
- involve non-verbal abuse, for example gestures
- involve other threatening behaviour, for example stalking
- require first aid only
- require medical assistance
- cause major injury

It is acknowledged that violence can come from other workers as well as clients and members of the general public.

5.2 Risk assessment

Queen's Crescent surgery has developed a strict procedure that must be followed in order to provide services to patients who are persistently violent and abusive. This procedure follows the Zero Tolerance Patients Scheme (protocol for dealing with violent patients), which is a mechanism for implementing sections 202 and 203 of the GP GMS contract.

When dealing with a known or suspected violent or abusive individual, under no circumstances should staff see such people on their own. They should seek advice from the Practice Manager before face-to-face meetings are arranged.

Whenever there is a reasonably foreseeable risk of violence, the Practice Manager must ensure that Queen's Crescent Surgery risk assessments are completed.

In making a risk assessment the following may indicate that there is a risk of violence:

- Dealing with intoxicated or distressed members of the public
- Dealing with patients suffering from mental illness or stress
- Patients who are confused / disorientated / suicidal / known criminal history
- High-risk areas such as contentious issues or complaints or staff working alone
- Tasks where money, drugs or other valuables may be a target for theft
- When withholding or withdrawing a service
- Irregular situations such as where persons known to be potentially violent are referred to other disciplines, services or GP surgeries.

The list shown above is not exhaustive and the Practice Manager must take care to assess all possible personal security risks within their responsibility.

Police assistance should be sought where the presence of drugs / weapons has been detected or to deal with violence or threatened / suspected violence.

IN ANY SITUATION WHERE PHYSICAL ASSAULT IS CONSIDERED LIKELY, STAFF SHOULD IMMEDIATELY CALL THE POLICE.

5.3 Processes for staff following violent or abusive behaviour

All instances of actual or threatened violence and aggression must be reported in accordance with Queen's Crescent Surgery Incident Reporting Policy. Incident reporting will be used to ensure that other members of staff benefit from shared experiences and training can be realistic and relevant.

All staff who are subjected to violent / abusive behaviour should report such incidents to the Practice Manager with whom referring the matter to the Police will be considered.

Incidents of violence and aggression can have a detrimental effect on the victim out of proportion to the scale seen by outsiders. The Practice Manager is to ensure that staff are properly cared for and debriefed immediately, or as soon as is reasonably practicable, after each such incident(s). Even those staff not directly involved can be subject to anxiousness and concern. It is important that all staff are informed as soon as possible of the basic details of the incident and any counter measures planned.

6. Further healthcare offered by the surgery

Following an incident of violence, abuse or harassment a multidisciplinary meeting will be held to discuss the outcome and any further services the surgery will provide the patient.

6.1 No further action necessary

Should the investigation conclude that this was an isolated, 'out of character' event, no further action will be taken and the patient will receive future treatment without prejudice.

6.2 Adjustments made to receiving healthcare

Should the investigation conclude that this event was of a serious nature but does not warrant a formal warning, then the surgery may make adjustments in the way advice and/or treatment is administered. Adjustments can include one or more of the following:

- Appointments scheduled for a certain time of the day

- Health advice and/or treatment is to be administered by a named professional only
- The health professional may be joined by a colleague / chaperone throughout the appointment
- Telephone appointment may be required ahead of a face-to-face appointment

The list shown above is not exhaustive and adjustments will be managed on an individual basis.

6.3 Formal Warning

Should the investigation conclude that this event was of a serious nature and the patient recognises the seriousness of their actions, then a formal warning will be placed on their health records. Should a further incident occur whilst receiving treatment provided by Queen's Crescent Surgery, then the patient will be removed from the surgery's register and will be advised to register with a separate surgery / practice / health centre as outlined in section 6.4.

6.4 Removal from register

Should the investigation conclude that this event was of a serious nature and the patient does not recognise the seriousness of their actions, or, believe this was not an isolated incident, then the patient will be removed from the surgery's register and will be advised to register with a separate surgery / practice / health centre as outlined in section.

6.5 Removal from register and reported to the Health Board

Should the investigation conclude that this event was of a serious nature and the patient does not recognise the seriousness of their actions, or, believe this was not an isolated incident, then the patient will be removed from the surgery's register. Their details will also be reported to NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, which will result in the patient being unable to receive healthcare from other General Practitioners within the Health Board's remit. This does not include emergency healthcare, which will be provided to all individuals under certain circumstances.

Appendix 1

Dealing with aggressive / abusive patients: Flowchart

