

Simply Medicals - Chaperone Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the role, responsibilities, and procedures related to the use of chaperones at Simply Medicals. The policy aligns with best practice guidance from the General Medical Council (GMC) and the National Health Service (NHS) to ensure patient comfort, dignity, and safety during medical examinations and procedures.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all healthcare professionals, administrative staff, and patients at Simply Medicals. It covers all clinical consultations, examinations, and procedures where a chaperone may be required or requested.

3. Definition of a Chaperone

A chaperone is a trained individual present during a medical consultation, examination, or procedure to provide support, reassurance, and protection to the patient, as well as to offer an objective witness for both patient and practitioner. Chaperones can be clinical or non-clinical staff but must be trained in the role.

4. When a Chaperone Should Be Offered

The majority of medical examinations carried out by Simply Medicals are **not of an intimate nature**. Most assessments relate to routine health checks, such as fitness-to-drive medicals, which do not require exposure of intimate areas. However, Simply Medicals recognizes that there may be circumstances where a chaperone should be offered.

A chaperone should be offered in the following situations:

- **Intimate examinations** (e.g., of breasts, genitalia, ECG or rectum).
- **Physical examinations** that require close contact or exposure of areas of the body that some patients may consider sensitive.
- When the patient requests a chaperone for any reason.
- If the healthcare professional requests a chaperone to protect themselves from potential allegations of inappropriate behavior.

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Simply Medicals ensures that patients are made aware of their right to request a chaperone, even for non-intimate examinations, and staff are trained to recognize situations where a chaperone may be required.

5. Patient Consent

- Verbal consent must be obtained from the patient before any examination or procedure is carried out.
- The patient must be informed of the nature and purpose of the examination, and the role of the chaperone must be clearly explained.
- Patients have the right to decline a chaperone, and this decision must be documented in the patient's records.
- If a patient refuses a chaperone but the healthcare professional feels that the presence of a chaperone is necessary for the protection of both parties, the following options are available:
 - **Rescheduling:** The appointment may be rescheduled for a time when an appropriate chaperone is available.
 - **Cancellation:** If the healthcare professional does not feel comfortable conducting the examination without a chaperone, they have the right to cancel the appointment. This decision must be clearly explained to the patient, and a record of the cancellation and the reason for it must be made in the patient's notes.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Healthcare Professionals

- Ensure that patients are aware of their right to have a chaperone present.
- Provide clear information about the role and purpose of the chaperone.
- Document in the medical record if a chaperone was present, the name of the chaperone, and any refusal of a chaperone by the patient.
- Where possible, avoid being left alone with a patient during an intimate examination unless a chaperone is present.

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- If a patient refuses a chaperone but the healthcare professional feels one is required, they must decide whether to reschedule or cancel the appointment.

Chaperones

- Be present during examinations or procedures as a support person for the patient.
- Observe the interaction between the healthcare professional and the patient, but not actively participate unless requested to do so.
- Raise any concerns about inappropriate behavior to a senior manager or safeguarding lead.
- Respect patient confidentiality and maintain discretion at all times.

Patients

- Have the right to request a chaperone at any time.
- Can decline the offer of a chaperone if they feel comfortable to do so.
- Understand that if a chaperone is declined and the healthcare professional requires one, the appointment may be rescheduled or canceled.

7. Gender of Chaperones

At Simply Medicals, we strive to accommodate patient preferences regarding the gender of chaperones. However, due to staffing constraints, it is important to note the following:

- Where the clinician conducting the examination is male and the only available chaperone is also a male.
- If the patient is not comfortable with having a male chaperone, Simply Medicals will offer the following options:
 - **Rescheduling:** The appointment can be rescheduled for a time when a female chaperone is available.

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- **Cancellation:** If it is not possible to arrange for a female chaperone or the time is not suitable for the patient, the booking may be canceled, and the patient will be offered a **full refund**.
- The patient's decision and any subsequent actions (rescheduling or cancellation) will be documented in their records.

8. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

To ensure the safety of patients and to comply with Care Quality Commission (CQC) guidelines, Simply Medicals requires the following DBS checks for staff:

- **Clinical Staff:** All clinical staff are required to have a valid, up-to-date DBS check as part of their employment at Simply Medicals. This includes doctors, nurses, healthcare assistants, and any other healthcare professionals who provide direct patient care.
- **Non-Clinical Staff:** Non-clinical staff, such as administrative staff who may act as chaperones, will be risk-assessed to determine if a DBS check is required. If their role involves direct patient contact, especially in the role of a chaperone, a DBS check may be mandatory under CQC guidelines.

Simply Medicals will maintain a record of all DBS checks, their status, and renewal dates. DBS checks will be renewed as required by CQC and regulatory guidance to ensure ongoing compliance.

9. Staff Training

All staff designated as chaperones (clinical and non-clinical) must receive training on the following:

- The role and responsibilities of a chaperone.
- Patient confidentiality and data protection.
- Dealing with concerns or allegations of inappropriate behaviour.
- Effective communication and patient support skills.

10. Documentation and Record Keeping

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Accurate records must be kept for all consultations where a chaperone is offered or used. This includes:

- Whether a chaperone was offered and if it was accepted or declined.
- The name of the chaperone present during the examination.
- Any concerns raised by the patient or the healthcare professional.
- Details of any appointment rescheduled or canceled due to the refusal of a chaperone, including the reason for the decision.
- Documentation of patient preferences regarding the gender of the chaperone and any actions taken (rescheduling, cancellation, or refund).

11. Safeguarding

If a patient raises concerns about inappropriate behaviour during a consultation, the chaperone must report it immediately to the safeguarding lead or practice manager. All concerns will be taken seriously and investigated in line with Simply Medicals' safeguarding procedures.

12. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to changes in legislation, NHS guidance, or GMC requirements. Feedback from staff and patients will be considered in the review process.

Approval Date: 12/09/2024

Next Review Date: 12/09/2025

Policy Owner: Simply Medicals Management Team

This Chaperone Policy ensures that Simply Medicals upholds the highest standards of patient care, safety, and dignity, while also protecting staff from potential risks.