



Southern Health  
and Social Care Trust  
*Quality Care - for you, with you*

# Mixed Gender Accommodation Policy

<b>Lead Policy Author &amp; Job Title:</b>	Assistant Director of Nursing Governance
<b>Directorate responsible for document:</b>	Nursing, Midwifery and AHP Directorate
<b>Issue Date:</b>	01 April 2019
<b>Review Date:</b>	01 April 2021

**The review of this policy has been paused pending the outcome of a Department of Health audit of policy provision**

### Policy Checklist

<b>Policy name:</b>	Mixed Gender Accommodation Policy
<b>Lead Policy Author &amp; Job Title:</b>	
<b>Director responsible for Policy:</b>	
<b>Directorate responsible for Policy:</b>	Nursing, Midwifery and AHP Directorate
<b>Equality Screened by:</b>	Screened out
<b>Trade Union consultation?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Policy Implementation Plan included?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Date approved by Policy Scrutiny Committee:</b>	23 May 2017
<b>Date approved by SMT:</b>	Click here to enter a date.
<b>Policy circulated to:</b>	Eg Directors, Assistant Directors, Heads of Service for onward distribution to line managers, Global email, Staff Newsletter
<b>Policy uploaded to:</b>	Eg SharePoint, Trust website

### Version Control

<b>Version:</b>	Eg Version 2_0		
<b>Supersedes:</b>	Mixed Gender Accommodation Policy		
<b>Version History</b>			
<b>Version</b>	<b>Notes on revisions/modifications and who document was circulated or presented to</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Policy Author</b>
<i>Eg Version 1_0</i>	Click here to enter text	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text
<i>Eg Version 2_0</i>	Click here to enter text	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text



## **1.0 Introduction**

This policy provides guidance for staff working in adult inpatient areas within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust

The overriding principle of the policy is to ensure that all patients in adult inpatient areas are cared for in same gender accommodation except where it is in the best interests of the patient or reflects their personal choice.

This policy sets out clear criteria for single gender accommodation, a risk assessment process and breach reporting.

*“Every patient has the right to receive high quality care that is safe, effective and respects their privacy and dignity. Patients should not normally have to share sleeping accommodation or sanitary facilities with members of the opposite sex, unless they need specialised equipment such as hoists or specialist baths this applies to all areas of hospital care. However, it is recognised that there are **some exceptional circumstances** (such as the patient needs very specialised or urgent care) where providing fast effective care for the patient may take priority over ensuring same sex accommodation. Where mixing does occur, it must be in the interest of all the patients affected”* (Department of Health, 2009).

## **2.0 Purpose and Aims**

It is the responsibility of all staff to comply with the principles set out in this policy, or to make reasonable adjustments to ensure the privacy and dignity of our Service Users.

All staff should be aware of and appropriately trained in the recognition of, and actions to take when, there are safeguarding concerns in respect of vulnerable patients.

Operational Directors should ensure that all staff within their areas of responsibility implement the principles of the policy and monitor compliance with it through the Executive Director of Nursing Assurance Framework.

## **3.0 Objectives of this Policy**

It is the objective of this policy that staff should be aware of and abide by the following principles and exceptions:

Men and women should be accommodated in

- **Same gender accommodation:** i.e. Men and women have separate sleeping areas, toilets and washing facilities.

Rather than

- **Mixed gender accommodation:** i.e. Men and women have to share one or more of the following: sleeping accommodation, toilets and washing facilities

**Exceptions:** On occasion it may be necessary to accommodate patients in mixed gender accommodation within the clinical setting. The accepted circumstances are:

- In the event of the patient requiring immediate access to clinical care or treatment, either on admission or due to a deterioration in a patient's condition where it is judged to be in the patients overall best interest to have timely access to care or treatment, and a bed in same gender accommodation is not immediately available and their clinical need takes precedence.
- Where a patient requires treatment in a highly specialised department, such as Intensive Care Units, Coronary Care units and Emergency Admission Units where it is not always possible to provide separate male and female accommodation.
- Where a short period of constant patient observation is needed and patient safety is the overriding factor e.g. immediate post-anaesthetic recovery or where there is a high risk of adverse drug reactions.
- On the joint admission of couples or family groups.
- Unpredictable events there may be exceptional circumstances where accommodating patients temporarily in mixed gender accommodation is acceptable as an emergency response to extreme operational emergencies. This may happen in response to unpredictable events such as major clinical incidents such as a multiple road traffic accident or natural disaster, and major non-clinical incidents such as fire or flood which require immediate evacuation of buildings.

When there is a ***justified reason*** it is expected that there are measures in place to protect the privacy and dignity of all individuals affected.

***Circumstances in which it may not be justified as being in the persons overall best interest to be placed in mixed gender accommodation.***

- Placing a patient in mixed-gender accommodation for the convenience of medical, nursing or other staff, or to group patients within a clinical specialty.
- Placing a patient in mixed-gender accommodation because of a shortage of staff or poor skill mix.
- Placing a patient in mixed-gender accommodation because of restrictions imposed by old or difficult estate.
- Placing a patient in mixed-gender accommodation because of predictable fluctuations in activity or seasonal pressures.

- Placing a patient in mixed-gender accommodation because of a predictable nonclinical incident.
- Placing or leaving a patient in mixed-gender accommodation whilst waiting for assessment, treatment or a clinical decision.
- Placing a patient in mixed-gender accommodation for regular but not constant observation.
- Elective care/day surgery/day procedure units

### **Guiding Principles for the provision of Safe and Effective Care and Treatment in Mixed Gender Accommodation**

Where it is not possible to offer admission to a single gender ward, provision should first be made to accommodate males and females within single gender bays.

In the case that this is not possible, and a patient is to be cared for in a mixed gender area the patients should be informed in advance of admission and the following actions should be taken to maintain the privacy and dignity of all patients.

1. Review the current patient placements and where possible relocate patients within the bay or area to segregate males and females.
2. Ensure the patient\* is informed before his / her admission to a mixed gender bay and document same in the patient record. (\* When the patient does not have capacity the next of kin should be informed).
3. Ward Sister / Charge Nurse should review patients placed in a mixed gender bay on a daily basis, if single gender placement is not possible the Patient Flow Co-ordinator (in Acute Hospitals) or Site Co-ordinators of all other sites should be informed for consideration/resolution at site escalation / safety meetings.
4. Ensure that patients have access to separate toilets and washing facilities which are clearly signposted and do not require the patient to pass through opposite gender areas whilst wearing nightwear or gowns.
5. Enhance privacy where possible by using additional screens or room dividers and ensure males and females are placed in opposite ends of the bay.
6. Avoid giving personal care in a mixed gender bay where possible and use discretion where there is a need to discuss sensitive information.

7. Particular consideration should be given in all cases to the placement of vulnerable patients, those with limited communication and patients who are aged between 16-18 years of age.
8. Toilets should be designated as single gender in all wards and departments. All toilets must have an appropriate door lock with a nurse call system in operation.
9. A carer should not be refused to remain present due to the need to deliver same gender accommodation
10. When the patient is nursed within a ward area with a carer present, give consideration to the location of the bed within the ward. Where possible, the carer should not have to pass the foot of the other patient's beds to exit the clinical area

#### ***4.0 Policy Statement***

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) is committed to the delivery of person-centred care where all individuals are treated with dignity, respect, privacy and sensitivity, irrespective of their age, ethnic origin, religious belief, race, gender, sexuality or disability.

SHSCT is committed to the principles which underpin the Quality Standards for Health and Social Care (DHSSPS). These principles are outlined in the standards and further reinforced in the Patient and Client Experience Standards under the heading of respect, attitude, behaviour, communication and dignity.

#### ***5.0 Scope of Policy***

This policy is for all nursing staff, both registered and non-registered employed by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, working in acute, non-acute and mental health in-patient wards and facilities as well as lead nurses and those staff working in patient flow teams.

#### ***6.0 Responsibilities***

##### ***Directors***

**Directors** are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and that guidance on the admission of patients into mixed sex bays is disseminated and implemented at local level, see Appendix 1.

##### ***Assistant Directors***

**Assistant Directors** are responsible for monitoring compliance with the accompanying guidance, reviewing results of audits and ensuring that any required actions are implemented

### ***Ward Sisters / Charge Nurses***

**Ward Sister/Charge Nurse** is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate actions are taken within individual ward areas when single sex bays cannot be provided and for completing any audits as required,

### ***7.0 Legislative Compliance, Relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance***

- DHSSPS, Quality Standards for Health and Social Care (2005)
- DHSSPS, Patient and Client Experience Standards: Improving the Patient Client Experience (2008)
- DHSSPS Guiding principles for the provision of safe and effective care and treatment in mixed gender accommodation. (2009)
- Department of Health NI (DOH) commissioning plan Direction (2016/2017)
- Department of Health England, Chief Nursing officer and Deputy NHS Chief Executive "Eliminating mixed sex accommodation" (2010)HSCB/PHA,

### ***7.0 Equality & Human Rights Considerations***

This policy has been drawn up and reviewed in the light of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) which requires the Trust to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. It has been screened to identify any adverse impact on the 9 equality categories.

The policy has been 'screened out' without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

### ***8.0 Sources of Advice & Further Information***

- Safety and Quality Reminder of Best Practice Guidance Letter Acute Hospital Accommodation for Patients with a Learning Disability, SQR-SAI-2017-032 (Acute and Social Care) (2017)
- The Policy Author, responsible Assistant Director or Director as detailed on the policy title page should be contacted with regard to any queries on the content of this policy.