

Guidance for nursing and midwifery staff on chaperoning

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Introduction

This guidance is intended to safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of patients/clients and staff throughout consultation, examination, treatment and care. All nursing staff employed by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust have a duty of care to patients/clients. Nursing staff who are required to be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council have an additional responsibility to act in the patient/client's best interests and are accountable for their actions and omissions. It is important that all staff are sensitive to privacy, dignity and modesty issues and must consider if a given situation or examination is acceptable to the patient/client (DHSSPSNI, 2008).

Registered nurses should apply the principles to guide practice as set out in the advice sheet 'Chaperoning' (NMC, 2008) and also in 'Chaperoning: The role of the nurse and the rights of patients' (RCN, 2006).

Registered nurses should also adhere to the guidance provided by the Nursing and Midwifery Council on Consent (NMC 2008) and Record Keeping (NMC 2009)

This guidance applies to all nursing staff of the Southern Trust involved in the intimate examination, treatment or care of patients/clients accessing the services of the Southern HSC Trust.

In order to meet the needs of specific patient groups, each directorate/ division should develop patient/ client specific procedures. These should be screened in accordance with the Trust's screening procedures and the Equality screening template should be completed.

Aims

The aims of this guidance are to: -

- 1) Ensure that the privacy, dignity and modesty of all patients/clients is protected.
- 2) Ensure that all staff, (including locum, bank and agency staff,) have an understanding of rights of patients/clients when undertaking care activities of an intimate nature.
- 3) Reduce stress and embarrassment for patients/clients undergoing intimate examination, treatment or care.
- 4) Provide staff with guidance when conducting intimate examination, treatment or care.
- 5) Protect staff when intimate examinations, treatment or care are being conducted in order to avoid misunderstandings and in very rare cases, alleged accusations of abuse and/or misconduct.

Definitions

Intimate examination/care is defined as the examination/care tasks associated with bodily functions, body products and personal hygiene which demand direct or indirect contact with or exposure of the sexual parts of the body (Cambridge and Carnaby 2000). Staff should be aware that other body parts may also be classified as intimate by patient/clients of diverse cultures.

A Chaperone is defined as someone who accompanies, attends, conducts or escorts another (COED1998).

Recommended reading

Staff must take cognizance of relevant legislation and good practice guidance, including the following: -

- Department of Health (2001), *The Essence of Care*.
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Northern Ireland (2008) Improving the Patient & Client experience.
- General Medical Council (2001), *Intimate examinations*
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008), *The Code Standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurse and midwives*.
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (2008), *Advice Sheet - Chaperoning*.
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (2009), *Record Keeping:Guidance for Nurses and Midwives*
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (2004), *Midwives Rules and Standards*.
- Royal College of Nursing (2008), *Defending Dignity – opportunities and challenges for nursing*.
- Royal College of Nursing (2006), *Chaperoning: The role of the nurse and the rights of patients, Guidance for nursing staff*.
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust (2008), *Policy on Gaining Consent*
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust, Multi cultural handbook
- The Royal Marsden Hospital (2008), *Manual of Clinical Nursing Procedures*. Seventh Edition.

References

Cambridge and Carnaby 2000, *Making it personal: Providing intimate and personal care for people with learning disabilities*. Pavillion Publishing, Brighton.

Concise Oxford English Dictionary (COED) 1998, University Press, Oxford.

Sources of advice and further information

Further advice and information regarding this policy can be obtained from the Assistant Director of Nursing Services Governance.