

DARWEN HEALTHCARE **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**

PURPOSE

There may be circumstances when it would be considered reasonable, or in the best interests of the patient, to remove patients from the list under Zero Tolerance. The purpose of this policy, therefore, is to define the practice guidelines for removal of a patient from the practice list and to ensure that any concerns about removing patients from the list due to Zero Tolerance are dealt with fairly.

INTRODUCTION

Darwen Healthcare supports the government's "Zero Tolerance" campaign for staff working within the NHS. This states that GP's and their staff have a right to care for others without fear of being harmed or abused. A mutual respect between all the all staff and patients has to be in place for us to provide general practice services. Darwen Healthcare takes it seriously if one of our doctors or nursing team or a member of the non-clinical team is treated in an abusive, harmful or violent way.

POLICY

All practice staff aim to be professional, helpful, polite and sensitive to patients' needs and circumstances. We would like to remind patients that staff can be presented with a variety of difficult tasks and situations all at the same time.

Our practice staff have been provided with training to help them understand that when patients are unwell they do not always act in a reasonable manner and staff will take this into consideration when trying to deal with any complaints, issues or misunderstandings.

Darwen Healthcare would however like to point out that aggressive behaviour, be it violent, harmful or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in you being removed from the Practice list and, in rare cases will contact the police if deemed necessary.

In order for the practice to maintain a good relationship with its patients Darwen Healthcare asks all its patients to read and take note of the types of behaviour that it finds to be unacceptable:

- Verbal abuse towards any member of staff
- Using unacceptable language such as swearing or shouting at staff
- Any form of physical violence such as shoving or pushing
- Any form of Racial abuse or Sexual harassment
- Unrealistic or persistent demands that cause unnecessary stress to staff. If requests from patients or their family or carers cannot be met then an explanation will be given to them either verbally or in writing to explain this and documented within the patient record.
- Causing damage to the practice's premises
- Obtaining drugs and/or medical services fraudulently

REMOVAL FROM THE PRACTICE LIST:

A good patient-doctor relationship, based on mutual respect and trust, is the cornerstone of good patient care. The removal of patients from our list is rare and is a last resort in a patient-practice relationship that is impaired. When trust and respect has irretrievably broken down, it is in the patient's interest, just as much as that of the practice, that they should find a new practice.

Any forms of zero tolerance should be reported to the Practice Manager or Corporate Governance Administrator who will speak to the individual and details of this will then be discussed at the GP Meeting on either the weekly Tuesday or Friday meeting or a record kept. In extreme cases the Lead GP for that day will be contacted. The outcome of the GP discussion will then be communicated to the patient either verbally or in writing by the Practice Manager or Corporate Governance Administrator and a copy of the Zero Tolerance Policy provided. If any further issues of Zero Tolerance occur the matter will be dealt with as follows:

The patient should therefore have a warning within their patient record which can either have been provided verbally or in writing advising them that the practice has a Zero Tolerance Policy which details that a patient risks being removed from the practice list and explains the reasons why. No further warnings are given. If the impaired patient-practice relationship does not improve then the patient will be removed from the practice list under the 8 day rule.

The 8 day rule is defined: as the patient removal form under zero tolerance is completed with relevant details, signed by the named GP and forwarded to PCSE. Once the form has been administered by PCSE the practice will receive confirmation of the date that the patient is being removed.

The practice is still responsible for their care within the 8 day period. It seems reasonable and responsible that the Prescription Team should check what medication the patient is on and ensure that a prescription is completed for up to 28 days to ensure that the patient has time to be registered with another GP Practice.

An exception to this is immediate removal on the grounds of violence where the police have been contacted and incident number obtained.. The Patient Removal Zero Tolerance Form should be completed and emailed to PCSE immediately in order that alternative GP services can be provided for the individual.

REMOVING OTHER MEMBERS WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

When a decision is made to remove a patient from the practice list, the removal may well be extended to other members of the family or household but only where they breach this policy.

If the behavior of one member of a household or family has led to their removal, this does not mean that the removal of other family members should automatically follow. An explicit discussion, whilst protecting the confidentiality of the removed patient, with other family members about the problem and the doctor's concerns will often obviate the need for any further action.

In rare cases, however, because of the possible need to visit patients at home it may be necessary to terminate responsibility for other members of the family or the entire household. The prospect of visiting patients where a relative who is no longer a patient of the practice by virtue of their unacceptable behavior resides, or being regularly confronted by the removed patient, may make it too difficult for the practice to continue to look after the whole family.

This is particularly likely where the patient has been removed because of violence or threatening behavior and keeping the other family members could put doctors or staff at risk.

Darwen Healthcare will always consider how it would look to outside observers if a family were to be summarily removed from the list, in haste, without explanation, for a single misdemeanor or disagreement with one family member.

RESPONSIBILITY

Responsibility for implementing and monitoring the policy rests with the Practice Partners / Practice Manager.

The practice re-affirm its commitment to do everything possible to protect staff, patients and visitors from unacceptable behaviour and their zero tolerance of any incident that causes hurt, alarm, damage or distress.