**Chaperone Policy**

# Introduction

## Policy statement

At Fortrose Medical Practice, all patients will routinely be offered a chaperone, ideally at the time of booking their appointment. It is a requirement that, where necessary, chaperones are provided to protect and safeguard both patients and clinicians during intimate examinations and or procedures.

All clinical staff may at some point be asked to act as a chaperone at Fortrose Medical Practice. Therefore, it is essential that clinical personnel are fully trained and aware of their individual responsibilities when performing chaperone duties.

The importance of a chaperone should not be underestimated. Children and young people, their parents, relatives and carers should be made aware of the policy and why this is important.

## Status

The organisation aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have with regard to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment.

##  Training and support

Fortrose Medical Practice will provide guidance and support to help those to whom it applies understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Additional support will be provided to managers and supervisors to enable them to deal more effectively with matters arising from this policy.

# Policy

## Raising patient awareness

Patients are to be advised that a chaperone is ‘an independent person, appropriately trained, whose role is to observe independently the examination/procedure undertaken by the doctor/health professional to assist the appropriate doctor-patient relationship’.

At Fortrose Medical Practice, a chaperone poster is clearly displayed in the waiting area, in all clinical areas and annotated in the organisation leaflet as well as on the organisation website.

## Personnel authorised to act as chaperones

It is policy that any member of the organisation team can act as a chaperone only if they have undertaken appropriate chaperone training. The GMC advises that a relative or friend of the patient is not considered to be an impartial observer and therefore would not be considered a suitable chaperone.

## General guidance

All clinicians should consider using a chaperone for some or all of the consultation and not solely for the purpose of intimate examinations or procedures. This applies whether the clinician is of the same gender as the patient or not.

Before conducting any intimate examination, the clinician should follow this checklist:

* Explain to the patient why the particular examination is necessary and what it entails so they can give fully informed consent
* Record the consent discussion in the notes, along with the identity of the chaperone or if a chaperone was offered but declined
* If possible, use a chaperone of the same gender as the patient
* Allow the chaperone to hear the explanation of the examination and the patient’s consent

During the examination, the clinician should:

* Ensure the patient’s privacy during the examination when they are dressing and undressing, for example by using screens and gowns/sheets
* Position the chaperone where they can see the patient and how the examination is being conducted
* Explain what they are going to do before they do it and seek consent again (if the examination is going to differ from what the patient was previously advised)
* Avoid personal remarks
* Invite the patient to advise if the examination becomes uncomfortable.
* Watch the patient for any signs of pain or discomfort and check the patient is happy for the examination to continue

Ensuring that the patient fully understands the why, what and how of the examination process should mitigate the potential for confusion.

## Expectations of a chaperone

All staff who undertake a formal chaperone role must have been trained so they develop the competencies required. Training can be delivered externally or provided in-house by an experienced member of staff so that all formal chaperones understand the competencies required for this role.

At Fortrose Medical Practice, chaperone training will include:

* What is meant by the term chaperone
* What an intimate examination is
* Why chaperones need to be present
* The rights of the patient
* The role and responsibilities of the chaperone. Chaperones must place themselves inside the screened off area rather than outside of the curtains/screen
* The policy and mechanism for raising concerns

Training will be provided in-house and/or via Turas or other formal training opportunities.

Additionally, at Fortrose Medical Practice chaperones will adhere to the GMC guidance which states chaperones should:

* Be sensitive and respect the patient’s dignity and confidentiality
* Reassure the patient if they show signs of distress or discomfort
* Be familiar with the procedures involved in a routine intimate examination
* Stay for the whole examination and be able to see what the doctor is doing, if practical
* Be prepared to raise concerns if they are concerned about the doctor’s behaviour or actions

For most patients and procedures, respect, explanation, consent and privacy are all that is needed. These take precedence over the need for a chaperone. A chaperone does not remove the need for adequate explanation and courtesy. Neither can a chaperone provide full assurance that the procedure or examination is conducted appropriately.

## Disclosure Scotland PVG check

Clinical staff who undertake a chaperone role at Fortrose Medical Practice are already members of the PVG scheme. Non-clinical staff who carry out chaperone duties may need a PVG check. This is due to the nature of chaperoning duties and the level of patient contact. Should Fortrose Medical Practice decide not to carry out a PVG check for any non-clinical staff, then a clear rationale for this decision must be given, including an appropriate risk assessment.

## When a patient refuses a chaperone

When a patient is offered but does not want a chaperone, it is important the organisation has records and codes in the record:

* Who the chaperone was
* Their title
* That the offer was made and declined

## When a chaperone is unavailable

If the patient has requested a chaperone and none is available, the patient must be able to reschedule within a reasonable timeframe. If the seriousness of the condition means a delay is inappropriate, this should be explained to the patient and recorded in their notes. A decision to continue or not should be reached jointly. Special consideration needs to be given to examinations performed during home visits or online, video or telephone consultations.

## Using chaperones during a video consultation

Many intimate examinations will not be suitable for a video consultation. When online, video or telephone consultations take place, GMC guidance explains how to protect patients when images are needed to support clinical decision making. This includes the appropriate use of photographs and video consultations as part of patient care.

Where intimate examinations are performed, it is important that a chaperone is offered. Documentation should clearly reflect this. It is important to document who provided the chaperoning and this should also state what part of the consultation they were present for.

## Practice procedure

If a chaperone was not requested at the time of booking the appointment, the clinician will offer the patient a chaperone explaining the requirements:

* Contact reception and request a chaperone
* Record in the individual’s healthcare record that a chaperone is present and identify them
* The chaperone should be introduced to the patient
* The chaperone should assist as required but maintain a position so that they are able to witness the procedure/examination (usually at the head end)
* The chaperone should adhere to their role at all times
* Post procedure or examination, the chaperone should ensure they annotate in the patient’s healthcare record that they were present during the examination and there were no issues observed
* The clinician will annotate in the individual’s healthcare record the full details of the procedure as per current medical records policy

# Summary

The relationship between the clinician and patient is based on trust and chaperones are a safeguard for both parties at Fortrose Medical Practice.

The role of a chaperone is vital in maintaining a good standard of practice during consultations and examinations. Regular training for staff and raising patient awareness will ensure that this policy is maintained.

## Annex A – Chaperone policy poster

FORTROSE MEDICAL PRACTICE

CHAPERONE POLICY

This practice is committed to providing a safe and comfortable environment and strives to achieve good practice at all times.

**All** patients are entitled to have a chaperone present during any consultation, examination or procedure. Clinicians at this practice will advise patients that a chaperone is necessary during any intimate examination; this is to safeguard both the clinician and you, the patient.

Where a chaperone is not available, the clinician will ask you to make an appointment and

**request the presence of a chaperone at the time of booking**.

We only use clinical staff as chaperones as they have had the appropriate training and have knowledge of the examination or procedure you may be undergoing.

Family and friends are not permitted to act as chaperones as they do not have the knowledge required, nor do they have the necessary training.

Should you wish to see the full chaperone policy, please ask to speak to the Practice Manager. A copy of the policy is available on the practice website: [www.fortrosesurgery.co.uk](http://www.fortrosesurgery.co.uk)

If you have any questions, please speak to the reception staff who will direct you to an appropriate member of the team.