

Sexual safety

information for patients and carers

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Inside this leaflet we'll cover a range of topics on sexual safety.

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We want anyone who uses our services to feel safe at all times.

This leaflet focuses on your sexual safety.

It has been designed for patients on our wards, but the information can help keep you safe wherever you are.

We know that talking about sex can be a difficult subject, but we will always approach this subject with sensitivity , honesty and dignity.

What we'll cover

- What is a breach of sexual boundaries?
- What are the consequences?
- What to do if there is a sexual safety incident. How
- to increase your own sexual safety.

This will help you, or the person you care for, to recognise and respond to behaviour that may put sexual safety at risk, and develop ways of protecting yourself.

Sometimes a patient who is ill can put others at risk of harm, and this leaflet addresses that too.

Everyone is entitled to be sexually safe, these key principles outline our approach.

- Any disclosure about incidents will always be taken seriously and addressed promptly with empathy and compassion.

- Sexual Safety Standards ensure everyone understands and respects standards of behaviour. ●

Information is available about what to do if sexual safety is threatened or there are concerns about someone.

- We will take appropriate action to prevent and respond to sexual safety incidents. Our staff will be given training to enable them to do this. ● We will help service users develop behaviours to support their own sexual safety.

- We will work hard to provide an environment that supports sexual safety.

- Sexuality is a normal part of life, but there should be no sexual activity between service users while in hospital.

What does a sexually safe service look like?

- A physical environment which is as safe as possible this includes wards, corridors and bathrooms. Where your
- rights to physical and psychological safety are recognised. Without this your recovery and wellbeing will be affected.
- A place where your own sexual safety and for those around you is promoted, including identifying any risk for you or others. Where appropriate we'll put in place plans to support you.
- If you have been sexually assaulted in the past, please talk to us and we will develop a support plan for you on the ward. Everyone is given the opportunity to disclose their experience of abuse.
- All clinical supervision includes staff professional standards and provides training on managing professional boundaries.
- Where sexually disinhibited behaviour is managed and strategies are developed to keep you safe.
- Where you're listened to and incidents, harassment or sexual assault are responded to quickly and appropriately.
- Where there is a culture that all sexual safety incidents are reported, fed back on and learned from.

Your rights to sexual safety

Everyone has the right to sexual safety. Whenever you use one of our services you have the following rights:

- If you experience any harassment or sexual assault you will be listened to and we will act on it. ●
You will be treated with compassion and understanding when disclosing incidents that have compromised your sexual safety.
- You will be supported by a member of staff who has appropriate skills and training after any sexual safety incident has occurred.
- You will receive appropriate support once your experience of harassment and sexual assault is disclosed.
- You will be informed of your options after experiencing sexual harassment or a sexual assault. ●
You will be protected from the person alleged to have caused harm when in the care environment, regardless of whether this is another service user, family member, friend, a member of staff or a visitor.

How are sexual boundaries broken?

A breach of sexual boundaries occurs when another person displays sexualised behaviour towards you.

This includes a range of behaviours like sexual humour or innuendo, and making inappropriate comments about a person's body, through to criminal acts like sexual assault or rape.

This can include things like:

- Inappropriate sexual or demeaning comments. Being
- asked inappropriate questions about sex or sexual orientation.
- Ask for, or accepting an offer, of sex.
- Unnecessary exposure of a person's body.
- Any sexual act without consent.
- Taking photographs that are not consented to.
- Watching someone undress.
- Inappropriate touching.
- The exchange of drugs or services for sexual favours.

Sexually disinhibited behaviour

Sexual disinhibition is an inability to restrain sexual impulses and involves behaviour or talk.

This ranges from an increase in sexual thoughts, through to removing clothing inappropriately and being over-familiar, to engaging in indiscriminate sexual activity.

This behaviour can arise for a variety of reasons.

Impact

Sexually disinhibited behaviour can be embarrassing, distressing and potentially dangerous for the person exhibiting the behaviour, as well as for those that may be exposed to it.

It can also have a big impact on existing relationships.

For those who have experienced a prior incident of sexual assault or harassment, being exposed to this behaviour can trigger strong feelings of fear or anxiety.

Staff will understand and discuss sexual safety issues with you in a sensitive and non-sexualised way to support keeping you safe. This will include:

- Supporting you if you have previously experienced sexual assault or harassment and recognising the impact this may have had on you.
- Managing your disinhibited behaviour while you are unwell, talking to you about your behaviour and letting you know if it is not appropriate.
- Developing a care plan with you that includes plans for staying safe on admission.
- Look for opportunities to support you in an environment that will increase your sexual safety.

You may be more exposed to a number of potential risks, especially when you are acutely unwell, and may be more vulnerable to sexual assault.

It's really important that we work together to keep you safe.

You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

It is important to tell us if you:

- Feel uncomfortable.
- Do not like something that is happening.
- Want to ask questions about what is being done to you.
- Do not understand why certain questions are being asked.
- Want someone else present during any interaction with staff.

You should also:

- Be aware of your own feelings and behaviour consider how it will impact on others.
- Respect yourself and others.

Acknowledge everyone

Cultural differences can affect people's perceptions of what is intimate or appropriate.

For example, you may be modest about showing parts of your body to another person.

Our staff will always be sensitive to cultural differences and treat you in a way that respects your views, wishes and preserves your dignity.

Sexual Safety Standards

These Sexual Safety Standards will help maintain your own sexual safety. Everyone should behave in a way that meets these standards.

Sometimes individuals may not see that their behaviour is unacceptable. It is important to be able to speak up (or ask someone to support you) and tell the person that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Standard 1	I respect myself.
Standard 2	I treat others with respect and dignity
Standard 3	I understand that sexual activity with another person should be for mutual pleasure and never used for punishment or through coercion.
Standard 4	I do not try to talk someone else into engaging in sexual activity or harass another person sexually.
Standard 5	I will try to be aware of how my behaviour makes others feel, and will change my behaviour if someone tells me it makes them uncomfortable, or I will ask for help with this if I need to.
Standard 6	I respect the rights of others to fulfill their sexual needs through masturbation with space and privacy.
Standard 7	I understand that fulfilling my own sexual needs through masturbation must be conducted privately and discreetly.

Standard 8 I will speak up if I have been hurt, harassed or assaulted physically or sexually.

Standard 9 I will speak up if I see or hear about someone else being hurt, harassed or assaulted either physically or sexually.

Consequences when sexual boundaries are broken

- It can cause significant and enduring physical and psychological harm.
- It damages self-esteem and can have a huge impact on your other relationships.
- It damages trust between individuals.
- Possible sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy.
- Criminal charges being brought against the person alleged to have caused the harm.

Reporting an incident

We know how distressing telling someone of a sexual assault or harassment may be. We promise to listen to you, be compassionate and provide you with all the support you need. You should feel confident and safe.

We will talk through your options so you can make an informed choice about how you want to proceed. We will ensure that a plan is put in place to keep you safe and we will respect your wishes.

Healthcare professionals and others have a duty to make sure you're safe and establish (and maintain) clear boundaries with you.

We expect high standards of professional conduct from all our staff. You must be able to trust healthcare professionals to provide the best possible care and act in your best interests.

If a member of staff makes you feel uncomfortable and you feel that they have breached your sexual safety you must report it. It may be an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, a breach of the Trust's Code of Conduct and Professional Code of Conduct.

How do I report an incident

You may feel extremely upset about what has happened. You might feel too frightened or upset to speak directly to the healthcare professional concerned.

No matter how scared you may feel, you must report any incident.

You can report an incident to:

- Another member of staff on the ward or the Ward Manager.
- Our Complaints Department.
- Local mental health advocacy services.
- Care Quality Commission.
- Social services.
- South Yorkshire Police.

Remember it is the healthcare professional's responsibility never to display sexualised behaviour towards you.

If a healthcare professional has breached sexual boundaries you are not to blame.

You're not alone, support is available.

Find out more

If you have any concerns or you'd like to find out more about sexual safety please speak to your ward manager.

The information in this leaflet is based on an original leaflet produced by Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, and used with their permission.

