

The Oaks Medical Centre

ZERO TOLERANCE PRACTICE POLICY & SOCIAL MEDIA

INTRODUCTION

The Practice takes it very seriously if a member of staff is treated in an abusive or violent way.

The Practice supports the government's '**Zero Tolerance**' campaign for Health Service Staff. This states that GPs and their staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused. To successfully provide these services a mutual respect between all the staff and patients has to be in place.

Our Practice staff aim to be polite, helpful, and sensitive to all patients' individual needs and circumstances. They would respectfully remind patients that very often staff could be confronted with a multitude of varying and sometimes difficult tasks and situations, all at the same time. The staff understand that ill patients do not always act in a reasonable manner and will take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint.

However, aggressive behaviour, be it violent or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in you being removed from the Practice list and, in extreme cases, the Police being contacted.

In order for the practice to maintain good relations with their patients the practice would like to ask all its patients to read and take note of the occasional types of behaviour that would be found unacceptable:

- Using bad language or swearing at practice staff
 - Any physical violence towards any member of the Primary Health Care Team or other patients, such as pushing or shoving
 - Verbal abuse towards the staff in any form including verbally insulting the staff
 - Racial abuse and sexual harassment will not be tolerated within this practice
 - Persistent or unrealistic demands that cause stress to staff will not be accepted. Requests will be met wherever possible and explanations given when they cannot
 - Causing damage/stealing from the Practice's premises, staff or patients
 - Obtaining drugs and/or medical services fraudulently
 - We ask you to treat your GPs and their staff courteously at all times.
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REMOVAL FROM THE PRACTICE LIST

In the event of a patient being rude or aggressive towards staff or other visitors to the practice, or when using the telephone, the Practice Manager/Governance Manager will be informed. A letter will be sent to the patient with a warning that any such behaviours will NOT be tolerated at this practice. In the event that 3 such incidents for any individual are recorded, a letter will be despatched to that patient informing them of their removal from the list. The local Clinical Commissioning Group will be informed by letter that the doctor wishes the patient to be “Removed at the Doctor’s request”.

The removal of patients from our list is an exceptional and rare event and is a last resort in an impaired patient-practice relationship. We value and respect good patient-doctor relationships based on mutual respect and trust. When trust has irretrievably broken down, the practice will consider all factors before removing a patient from their list, and communicate to them that it is in the patient’s best interest that they should find a new practice. An exception to this is in the case of immediate removal on the grounds of violence e.g. when the Police are involved.

Removing other members of the household

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 to ensure the safety of practice staff.

The prospect of visiting patients that is the residence of a relative who is no longer a patient of the practice, or the risk of being regularly confronted by the removed patient, may make it difficult for the practice to continue to look after the whole family. This is more likely where the removed patient has been violent or displayed threatening behaviour, and keeping the other family members could put doctors or their staff at risk.

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Social Media – Zero Tolerance Policy

The NHS operate a zero-tolerance policy with regard to violence and abuse and the practice has the right to remove violent patients from the list with immediate effect in order to safeguard practice staff, patients and other persons. Violence in this context includes actual or threatened physical violence or verbal abuse which leads to fear for a person's safety. In this situation we will notify the patient in writing of their removal from the list and record in the patient's medical records the fact of the removal and the circumstances leading to it. This includes negative comments on social media websites.

Following activity on social media where patients of The Oaks Medical Centre have posted derogatory comments about the practice and some of our staff; we now have a social media Zero Tolerance Policy in place. If any such posts are brought to our attention, they are viewed as a breakdown in the doctor-patient professional relationship and will result in the individual being removed from our list if the appropriate channels to complain have not been followed at first. This is to ensure that the appropriate channels are followed and we can action the complaints accordingly.

We would ask that rather than posting derogatory or upsetting comments about the practice or any of our staff on social media, please speak to us at the surgery or via telephone about this or put your comments to us in writing giving us the opportunity to respond you may also email directly to theoaks.medical@nhs.net or via our website – theoaksmedical.co.uk.

Posting derogatory or offensive comments online causes unjustified distress to our practice members and staff. They also cause other patients to delay or deter them from presenting to the surgery to receive medical treatment.

Please consider the impact of your online activity before you post a comment.

The Oaks Team

Practice Manager, Governance Manager, Drs Naik, Khaira & Lewis
