

# HOLLOW WAY MEDICAL CENTRE

## ZERO TOLERANCE AND PATIENT REMOVAL POLICY

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### Zero Tolerance Policy

Hollow Way Medical Centre (the “practice”) takes it very seriously if a member of staff or one of the doctors or nursing team 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.

All staff aim to be polite, helpful, and sensitive to all patients' individual needs and circumstances. They 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 the patient being removed from the Practice list and, in extreme cases, the Police being contacted.

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.

Examples of the occasional types of behaviour that would be found unacceptable are:

- 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 and the use of derogatory and/or defamatory language
- 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 patients, relatives and carers to treat all members of the surgery team courteously at all times.

#### **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 an exceptional and rare event and is a last resort in an impaired patient-practice relationship. When trust 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.

An exception to this is on immediate removal on the grounds of violence. If the incident is serious enough to involve the police, either to assist whilst the patient is present, or to inform the police after the event, the practice will secure an incident/crime number and inform NHS England that the practice would like the patient removed immediately from its list. It is anticipated that in instances such as this the severity of the incident would warrant referral to the Special Allocation Scheme.

#### **Removing other members of the household:**

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 behaviour 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 behaviour and keeping the other family members could put doctors or their staff at risk.

### **Patient Removal Policy**

#### **Introduction:**

Hollow Way Medical Centre aims to provide the best possible health care for its patients. However, there may be circumstances when it would be considered reasonable, or in the best interests of the Practice or the patient, to remove patients from the list. The purpose of this policy is therefore to define the practice guidelines for patient removal ensuring that all cases are dealt with fairly.

#### **The Policy:**

This is outlined below under several categories, and extends beyond the various forms of abuse of staff: It also covers situations where our services are repeatedly abused, and the more complex areas of "breakdown of the doctor patient relationship". We look after over 9,000 patients and the frequency of unacceptable behaviour by patients is extremely rare.

Below are examples that will trigger the removal process and the resulting action by the practice.

1. **Physical abuse or Violence**, or threats of the same, including any damage to practice premises: Will be immediately reported to the Police and the person will be immediately removed from the list and referred to the Special Allocation Scheme. Once ratified by NHS England the person will forfeit the right to be registered with a local GP and will need to travel to a specially commissioned provider for future GP care until they can be reintegrated into mainstream Primary Care.
2. **Crime and deception**. Where a patient fraudulently obtains drugs for non-medical reasons, deliberately lies in order to obtain a service or benefit by deception, steals from the practice or attempts to use the doctor to conceal or aid any criminal activity, they will be immediately removed from the list.
3. **Verbal Abuse** of a doctor or other member of staff: Normally one written warning will be issued with any further incident resulting in removal from the list but the practice reserves the right to remove someone instantly depending on the severity and nature of the incident. Verbal abuse includes the use of derogatory and/or defamatory language towards a doctor or other member of staff.
4. **Persistent Failure to Attend**: Once an appointment is made, patients are expected to keep it, or inform us that they need to change it. Failure to do so will be overlooked once: the next occasion will trigger a warning letter. Any further incidents within a three month period will result in removal from the list.
5. **Persistent abuse of services**: If the practice is aware that a patient, or relative, persistently ignores requests to follow procedures set down to ensure safe clinical care for them and other patients, two warnings in writing will be given. On a third occasion, the removal of that patient will be made.
6. **Persistent non-compliance with treatment plans**: We understand that patients sometimes disagree with a plan or treatment. We acknowledge this and allow for second opinions both within and beyond the practice. However, there sometimes comes a point where a patient is unwilling to accept advice and treatment, yet continues to put the clinicians in a position of responsibility for their care. This represents an impossible situation and one where the patient risks serious detriment to their health. The GP will discuss the issue with the patient and following this discussion two warnings will be made in writing before removal is instigated. We hope that this will almost never be necessary.
7. **Irretrievable breakdown of the doctor-patient relationship**: Occasionally a patient's behaviour falls outside that which is normally considered reasonable and leads to an irretrievable breakdown of the essential doctor-patient relationship. In some cases this can be overcome by changing GP's within the practice but in others this will not be appropriate and following written explanation the patient will be removed from the practice list.

8. **Distance:** If a patient moves outside of the practice boundary, which includes going abroad for a period in excess of 3 months, they are automatically deemed to have left the practice and will be removed from the list by NHS England.

When the extremely rare situation detailed in items 1 and 2 requires instant removal of a patient, NHS England will be informed in writing, as will the registered patient, and their carer if appropriate, and the practice will cease caring for the individual immediately.

In cases covered by items 3 to 7 the practice will continue to treat patients for 9 days from the date of the removal letter to allow them time to register elsewhere.

In some instances where removal is considered necessary it may be deemed appropriate to extend this to other members of the family or household. In such cases the practice will write to the individuals concerned explaining the situation and they will be given 4 weeks to re-register with another GP rather than being removed from the practice immediately.

Except in the circumstances detailed in 1 and 2, no removal of a patient or their family/household will take place without discussion and agreement amongst the GP partners.