

Mutual respect and tolerance



Information for staff



Where
EVERYONE
Matters

We are committed to delivering safe, effective care to our patients in an environment that recognises and promotes the principles of equality, inclusion and non-discrimination. This means that there is mutual respect and tolerance for each other's beliefs and background, regardless of age, race, gender, religious beliefs or sexual orientation and preferences.

You can read more detailed guidelines on Connect.

Challenging inappropriate behaviour

As an organisation we must consistently challenge any behaviour to, or by, any of our patients or colleagues that can be perceived as prejudiced or discriminatory. Treating each other with respect, tolerance and trust is critical to creating a safe environment where each and every person can feel protected and safe.

If you observe behaviour that conflicts with our culture of mutual respect and tolerance you must challenge it, even if you are not personally offended, or if the person who is the subject of the inappropriate behaviour, is not offended.

What constitutes inappropriate behaviour?

Any behaviour that goes against our mutual respect and tolerance guidelines for instance:

- Making jokes about people's sexual orientation.
- Using derogatory terms to describe someone's ethnicity (even if they use these terms themselves).
- Treating people differently because of their gender.
- Not allowing staff to wear religious dress or symbols including jewellery, despite being in line with our agreed uniform policy.
- Choosing to be treated by a certain clinician because of prejudice eg a man choosing to only be treated by a man.

What should I do to challenge the inappropriate behaviour?

If a patient or visitor is behaving inappropriately you should:

- Explain that their language or actions are not acceptable and ask them to stop.
- If they persist, inform them that they risk being excluded from the Trust and ask that they stop.
- You must inform your clinical lead or senior manager and note what has taken place. If it happens again you should get support from another colleague and ask the individual to leave. You may need support from the security team.
- Take care in situations where an individual's mental health or past experience is influencing their behaviour, for example, someone who has been sexually assaulted in the past may reasonably request a clinician of a certain gender to care for them. Where that request is based on clinical need, it should be accommodated if possible.
- Where a patient is to be excluded from the Trust in the future, a note should be made on their patient record and their GP must be informed.

If a member of staff is behaving inappropriately you should:

- Explain that their language or actions are not acceptable and ask them to stop.
- If they persist you should inform their team leader or someone else senior within the department.
- If you want to discuss the issue informally contact our tolerance and mutual respect telephone message service. You can leave a message and we will arrange for someone to talk to you in confidence.

Common situations and questions

1. My colleagues often make fun of me but I take it as a joke and I don't get offended. ...

It doesn't matter whether you personally get offended or not. Inappropriate language or actions should not take place at our Trust and that behaviour must be challenged.

2. We always get patients who want to be seen by a woman rather than a man. Are we going to stop letting patients have their choice?

If we have arranged for a patient to see a certain clinician then we believe that the clinician is competent and able to provide the best care for that individual. Patients can ask to see someone of a certain gender but we will not always be able to facilitate that choice. The exception is where a patient has a clinical need to see a certain gender for instance if someone has been abused in the past and has a fear of some individuals.

3. There are often patients with mental health problems or conditions such as dementia who can be abusive to members of staff and other patients. How should we deal with these people?

Inappropriate behaviour or language can be a consequence of an illness or condition. In these situations it is appropriate to continue to care for these patients in line with best practice guidelines. Training on dementia can be accessed for all staff.

4. I have overheard a patient making homophobic comments and I don't want to care for them. Is this ok?

It is only ok to refuse to provide care to a patient if you feel you are in danger of physical harm. In these situations you should challenge the patient and ask them to stop making those inappropriate comments.

Find out more or share your stories

You can find out more on Connect – search for mutual respect and tolerance.

We want to hear your stories so that we can continue to learn as an organisation.

If you want to share your stories we would love to hear from you. You can call the communications team on 5303 or email swbh.comms@nhs.net

You can also speak to someone in confidence by calling our mutual respect and tolerance line on 5763.