

Removal of Patients

Introduction

There may be circumstances when it would be considered reasonable, or in the best interests of the patient, to remove patients from the list.

The purpose of this policy, therefore, is to define the Practice guidelines for removal of a patient from the Practice list and to ensure that any concerns about removing patients from the list are dealt with fairly.

Situations Which Justify Removal

Violence

When a patient:-

- Is physically violent or threatening towards a doctor, Practice staff or other patients on the Practice premises.
- Causes physical damage to Practice premises or other patient's property.
- Gives verbal abuse or makes threats towards the doctor, Practice staff or other patients.
- Gives racist abuse, orally or physically.
- Is violent or uses or condones threatening behaviour to doctors (or some other members of the primary health care team) while visiting the patient's home. Such behaviour may involve the patient, a relative, a household member, or pets (such as unchained dogs).

Crime & Deception

Where a patient:-

- Fraudulently obtains drugs for non-medical reasons.
- Deliberately lies to the doctor or other member of the primary health care team (e.g. by giving a false name or false medical history) in order to obtain a service or benefit by deception.
- Attempts to use the doctor to conceal or aid any criminal activity.
- Steals from Practice premises.

Distance

- Where a patient has moved out of the designated Practice area and has failed to register with another GP.

Embarkation

- Where a patient has moved abroad for a period of 3 months or more.
- Failure to attend pre-booked appointments.
- Where a patient fails to attend pre-booked appointments on a number of occasions during a given period.
- Irretrievable Breakdown of the Doctor-Patient Relationship.

- Where a patient's behaviour falls outside of that which is normally considered reasonable and leads to an irretrievable breakdown of the doctor-patient relationship

Procedure For Removal

Violence / Crime and Deception

Any incident involving violence, crime or deception will be reported to *[Insert nominated person]*, who will complete an incident report and bring to the attention of the Practice Partners.

Each individual case will be discussed at a Practice Meeting and a majority agreement will be reached.

Following agreement, the *[Insert nominated person]* will write to the patient and explain the reasons for removal. See Appendix 1 for sample text.

The exception to this is if a patient has to be reported to the police for violent behaviour towards any member of the Practice staff when s/he may be immediately removed. The PCT will be advised of the decision by telephone and requested to effect an immediate removal.

Distance

On notification that the patient is no longer living within the Practice boundary, a letter will be sent to the patient advising of the need to re-register.

Notification will be sent to the PCT with the request for a deduction within 8 days of the receipt of the notification by the PCT.

Embarkation

On notification that the patient has moved abroad the patient will be removed from the Practice list within 3 months of that notification.

Failure to attend pre-booked appointments

If a patient fails to attend a pre-booked appointment on more than one occasion in the last year, a warning letter will be sent to the patient, advising them that a further occurrence could risk removal from the Practice.

Warning letters are valid for a period of 12 months. Removal based on warnings greater than 12 months old will be invalid – in this case a further formal warning and period of grace will be required.

If the patient fails to attend another appointment, the matter will be discussed at a Practice Meeting and a majority agreement will be reached as to whether the patient will be removed from the Practice list.

Following agreement, [*Insert nominated person*] will write to the patient and explain the reasons for removal.

Guidance on removing patients due to irretrievable breakdown of the doctor - patient relationship.

Occasionally patients persistently act inconsiderately and their behaviour falls outside that which is normally considered to be reasonable. In such circumstances there may be a complete breakdown in the doctor-patient relationship.

Steps to be taken within the Practice

- Inform all appropriate members of the Practice about the problem.
- The patient and possible reasons for the patient's behaviour (e.g. disagreeableness, cultural differences, mental illness, personality disorder) will be discussed at a Practice Meeting.

Steps to be taken with the patient

- Inform the patient, either personally or in writing, that there is a problem.
- Explain the nature of the problem to the patient.
- Obtain the patient's perspective and interpretation of the situation.
- Obtain advice of a Medical Defence Society.

Steps to be taken if discussion fails to resolve the problem

- Suggest that another GP within the Practice might better fit with the patient's needs and expectations.
- Steps to be taken in actually removing the patient.
- Inform the appropriate Health Authority in writing of your decision.
- Inform the patient in writing of the decision and the reason for removal from the list.
- Explain to the patient that he or she will not be left without a GP.
- Give the patient information on how to begin the process of registering with another GP.

Family Members

When a decision is made to remove a patient from the Practice list, the removal may well be extended to other members of the family or household.

[*Insert nominated person*] will write to the family / household offering an explanation for the removal. They will be allowed 4 weeks to re-register rather than being removed from the Practice list immediately.

Responsibility

Responsibility for implementing and monitoring the policy rests with the Practice Partners / Practice Manager.

The Practice re-affirm its commitment to do everything possible to protect staff, patients and visitors from unacceptable behaviour and their zero tolerance of any incident that causes hurt, alarm damage or distress.

APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE TEXTS

General practice-initiated (non-urgent) removal

You will recall I wrote to you on [*Insert date of initial warning letter*] warning you that the Practice would remove you from the patient list should there be a recurrence of [*the event / behaviour / incident*].

I regret to note that this previous warning does not appear to have resolved this issue and as a result I must advise you that you have been removed from the Practice list. The principle reason (s) is:

[*Insert a brief and concise statement of the reason for removal. e.g. "Repeated failure to attend pre-booked appointments"*]

This removal takes immediate effect / is effective [*Edit as appropriate*] from [*Insert date*].

You are advised to register elsewhere for medical services, and for your information, the address(s) of other Practices within the area are:

[*Insert the names and addresses of other local Practices*]

Or in the event of any difficulty you may contact the [*Insert Name*] Primary Care Trust at:

[*Insert PCT address*]

Yours sincerely

The Partners

Removal of patients who have relocated out of area

I note that you have registered a change of home address which is outside the Practice's operating area. As a result the Practice is unable to continue to provide you with medical services and it will be necessary for you to register elsewhere.

For your information, Practices local to your new location are:

[Insert name and address of local Practices] (where known)

In the event of difficulty in obtaining a new Practice you may contact

[Insert the name and address of the local PCT]

Please arrange to register elsewhere. Your new surgery will arrange for the transfer of your medical records. The Primary Care Trust have been requested to remove you from our list of patients, and this will normally take effect after 8 days. It will no longer be possible to provide medical advice.

Thank you for attending the Practice and hope that you are successful in finding a new GP.

Yours sincerely

(Usual doctor)