

**RAMSEY GROUP PRACTICE**  
**SOP FOR THE USE OF CHAPERONES**

**1 PURPOSE**

This SOP has been developed to:

- 1.1 Ensure the patient's safety, privacy and dignity is protected during an examination or procedure of an intimate nature.
- 1.2 Ensure the actions of healthcare practitioners cannot be misinterpreted by patients.
- 1.3 Act as a safeguard for both patients and staff.

**2 SCOPE**

This SOP is applicable to any Doctor, Registered Nurse or Healthcare assistant working within Ramsey Group Practice.

**3 POLICY**

- 3.1 All patients have the right to a chaperone – irrespective of age or gender.
- 3.2 Situations where a chaperone should be used vary; however, they are considered essential when doctors carry out intimate examinations on patients of the opposite sex.
- 3.3 Healthcare professionals may request a chaperone for any examination if the patient is considered unpredictable or violent.
- 3.4 Patients who lack capacity and are unable to consent are considered most vulnerable and must, therefore, have a chaperone present for any examination or procedure.
- 3.5 Unaccompanied children must have a chaperone present.
- 3.6 A patient can request a chaperone for any examination or procedure. If no chaperone is available, the procedure must be suspended until a member of staff becomes available.
- 3.7 In a life-threatening situation, an intimate examination or procedure may be carried out without a chaperone. The rationale for doing so must be clearly documented in the patient's notes.

3.8 There are two recognised types of chaperone:

- i) A formal chaperone: a staff member who acts as a witness for a patient and doctor during an intimate medical examination or procedure. The chaperone may assist the doctor during the procedure.
- ii) An informal chaperone: A person who would not be expected to take an active part in, or witness the procedure, directly. An example of this would be a friend or family member (i.e. a familiar person able to provide reassurance and comfort to the patient).

3.8.1 Formal chaperone.

The role of the formal chaperone is to:

- Provide emotional comfort and reassurance to patients during any intimate examinations or procedures.
- Provide assistance during the procedure (for example, handing instruments to the doctor).
- Offer practical support during care interventions, such as undressing patients or attending to intimate toileting or hygiene needs.
- Provide protection for the doctor (or other practitioner) against any potential allegations of improper behaviour.
- Report any unacceptable behaviour by the healthcare professional.
- Act as safeguard for patients against acts of humiliation, pain, distress or abuse.
- Act as a safeguard for all parties and as a witness to continuing consent of the procedure.

3.8.2 Informal chaperone.

The role of the informal chaperone is to:

- Provide emotional comfort and reassurance to patients during any intimate examinations or procedures.
- Act as a safeguard for all parties.

Adapted from Tameside Hospital NHS Foundation Trust's 'Chaperone Policy' (Aug 2015). Available online at:

<https://www.tamesidehospital.nhs.uk/documents/Chaparonepolicy.pdf>