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Communication Standards Policy

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Probus GP Practice

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Purpose and definitions

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for staff and assurance to patients that Probus Surgery and Probus Surgical Centre is committed to continually providing high quality healthcare for all patients and supporting the staff who provide this care. The aim of the policy is to provide all staff with sufficient information to understand our approach to communication standards.

All patients regardless of age, gender, ethnic background, culture, cognitive function, or sexual orientation have the right to have their privacy and dignity respected.

Communication is at the heart of good primary care.

Good communication is a skill that can be developed and improved.

The elements of good communication include active listening, respect for others' views, clear thinking, use of verbal and non-verbal cues, an understanding of confidentiality, and the appropriateness of sharing information.

Confidentiality is defined as:

‘The nondisclosure of another’s private information.

The state of data privacy, which is generally held under legal and ethical obligations of non-disclosure’.

Patient privacy is defined as:

‘An implied agreement between a physician and a patient that all information related by the patient is to be held in the strictest of confidence, unless it is illegal and/or dangerous to society’.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Probus Surgery and Probus Surgical Centre, contractors, seconded staff, placements, and agency staff.

Roles, rights, and responsibilities**All staff**

All staff have a responsibility to understand the element of the law and its relevance to agreed ways of working to maintain good communication and confidentiality in day-to-day practice.

Senior Managers & Communications Lead (Mrs. Emily Poulter)

To update the policy, ensure that it is aligned with national guidelines, distribute appropriately. and ensure that staff are trained at induction and at regular intervals so that they are aware of the principles of communication standards and the content of the practice policy.

Principles of this policy

This policy adheres to local and national guidance and policy including the NHS Essence of Care 2010 and Department of Health Confidentiality NHS Code of Practice.

As healthcare professionals we are placed at the heart of the patient consultation and, therefore, electronic and paper records.

We understand our need to maintain and store these records, digital and paper records, securely, so that they are contemporaneous, accurate, and confidential.

We also understand when it is appropriate to share information from the practice and with whom.

The following situations allow sharing of confidential patient information.

- With explicit patient consent.
- With implicit patient consent, for example a referral to secondary care from primary care.

Exceptions to the rules of explicit and implicit patient include:

1. Where a patient lacks capacity to consent, but the disclosure of information is in their best interests.
2. Where information has been requested as part of legal proceedings by court order or to prevent or detect crime, such as by coronial request.
3. Where the disclosure is in the public interest, such as prevention of a serious crime.
4. Where the information relates to public safety or public health, for example in the case of notifiable communicable diseases.
5. Where you have reason to believe that seeking consent would put you or others at serious risk of harm.

In these situations, patient confidentiality can be overridden by the need to disclose information.

Advice relating to these disclosures will be sought from our local Caldicott Guardian, Data Protection Officer, or legal indemnity provider depending on the situation.

Distribution

Employees will be made aware of this policy via TeamNet.

Patients will be made aware of this policy using patient leaflets and on the practice website

Training

All staff will be given training on communication standards at induction and at regular intervals thereafter.

Any training requirements will be identified within an individual's Personal Development Reviews. Training is available in the Training module within TeamNet.

Equality and diversity impact assessment

In developing this policy, an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken. An adverse impact is unlikely, and on the contrary the policy has the clear potential to have a positive impact by reducing and removing barriers and inequalities that currently exist.

If, at any time, this policy is considered to be discriminatory in any way, the author of the policy should be contacted immediately to discuss these concerns.

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring and reporting in relation to this policy are the responsibility of the practice manager.

The following sources will be used to provide evidence of any issues raised:

- PALS.
- Complaints.
- Significant and learning events.

Any incidents relating to communication standards will be monitored via incident reporting.

Summary of NHS legal and mandatory documentation

NHS. Essence of Care 2010

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216691/dh_119978.pdf

Department of Health. Confidentiality NHS code of practice

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200146/Confidentiality_-_NHS_Code_of_Practice.pdf

Versions

Document review history

Version number	Author/reviewer	Summary of amendments	Issue date
1.0	Spencer Casey	Policy written	20.5.2021
2.0	Spencer Casey	Reviewed	04/08/2021
3.0	Spencer Casey	Annual Review	24/02/2023
4.0	Spencer Casey	Annual Review	02/03/2024
5.0			
6.0			
7.0			

Bibliography

Health Education England www.hee.nhs.uk

Skills for Care www.skillsforcare.org.uk

Skills for Health www.skillsforhealth.org.uk

The Care Certificate. The Care Certificate standards

https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/images/projects/care_certificate/Care%20Certificate%20Standards.pdf

Health Education England. Care Certificate <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/care-certificate>

NHS. Essence of Care 2010

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/216691/dh_119978.pdf

Department of Health. Confidentiality NHS code of practice

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Information Commissioners Office <https://ico.org.uk/>

Primary Care Support NHS England. How to move medical records with labels

<https://pcse.england.nhs.uk/services/gp-records/>

Care Quality Commission. Code of Practice on confidential personal information

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/files/code-practice-confidential-personal-information>