

Safeguarding policy

We are committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Our dental team accepts and recognises our responsibilities to develop an awareness of the issues which may cause children and vulnerable adults harm.

We endeavour to safeguard children and vulnerable adults by:

- An awareness of and adopting safeguarding guidelines through our practice procedures and policies.
- A code of conduct for the dental team.
- Making staff and patients aware that we take child and vulnerable adult protection seriously and respond to all concerns.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Following carefully the practice procedures for staff recruitment and selection and, where appropriate, requesting enhanced criminal records checks and ISA Adult First checks.
- Providing effective management for staff by ensuring access to supervision, support and training.

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- Patients have access to information and knowledge to ensure that they can make an informed choice.
- Patients are given the opportunity to consider the various treatment options available to them. They are encouraged to participate fully in their care at the practice.
- Patients are supported to make their own decisions and to give or withhold consent to treatment. Unless provided for otherwise by law, no-one can give or withhold consent on behalf of another adult.
- Information about patients held by the practice is managed appropriately and all members of the team understand the need for confidentiality.
- The individual needs of each patient are respected.
- The background and culture of all patients is respected.
- Practice procedures ensure the safety of patients at all times.
- Recruitment and selection procedures at the practice are followed routinely and ensure that all required checks are carried out.

Other practice policies relevant to this safeguarding policy include

- Confidentiality
- Consent policy
- Equal opportunities policy
- Equality and diversity policy
- Patient safety policy
- Recruitment policy

Within our practice is our safeguarding champion responsible for ensuring our procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are kept up to date and is our point of contact for raising concerns.

Supporting guidance

Patients should be kept safe from harm and danger. All members of the team should know what to do to keep patients safe and what action to take if they think that someone is being harmed.

Definitions

- A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday¹.
- A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation².

Signs of abuse

Members of the dental team may observe the signs of abuse or neglect or hear something that causes them concern about a child or vulnerable adult. They are not responsible for making a diagnosis of child abuse or neglect, just for sharing concerns appropriately. Each team member should be aware of the local procedures for child protection.

Abuse or neglect may present to the dental team in a number of different ways:

- through a direct allegation (sometimes termed a 'disclosure') made by the child, vulnerable adult, a parent or some other person
- through signs and symptoms which are suggestive of physical abuse or neglect
- or through observations of child behaviour or parent-child interaction; or observation of the vulnerable adult and the relationship they have with their carer.

If abuse or neglect is suspected

It is uncommon for dentists to see patients with signs of abuse but where you have concerns about a patient who may have been abused and there is no satisfactory explanation, prompt action is important.

Records

Records of the incident should be maintained and be restricted to:

- The nature of the injury
- Facts to support the possibility that the injuries are suspicious.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice standards at regular intervals.

¹ England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland have their own guidance on keeping children safe, but all agree that a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

² Definitions of a vulnerable adult vary, but this definition is consistent with most definition used by health organisations.