



Confidentiality Policy

This practice recognises that all members of the team have an ethical and legal duty to keep patient information confidential. The relationship this practice has with each patient is based on trust that information will not be given to external persons or organisations without the patient's consent. All members of the practice team are expected to comply with this policy and are advised to be aware of the confidentiality clause within their staff contract. Breaches of this policy could lead to dismissal.

'Standards for Dental Professionals', guidance from the General Dental Council, notes that practitioners must 'Protect the confidentiality of patients' information'.

This means:

- Using information only for the purposes for which it was given.
- Preventing information from being accidentally revealed.
- Preventing unauthorised access by keeping information secure at all times.

Only in exceptional circumstances can a breach of confidentiality be justified.

Preventing breaches of confidentiality

We will keep all confidential data stored securely and will not allow it to be placed in areas where data may be seen by unauthorised personnel.

We will not provide information:

- To a school about a child's attendance.
- To employers about a patient's appointments.
- To third parties about appointments or leave answering machines.
- Only leave messages to return the practice's phone call.

Disclosure of information

If it is necessary to release information about a patient:

- We will obtain the patient's consent first, where possible and make sure they understand what information is being released, why and any likely consequences.
- We will release the minimum required.
- We will be prepared to justify our decisions and follow on action.

Exceptional circumstances

Responsibility for disclosure rests with the patient's dentist only. Under no circumstances will any other member of our staff make such a decision.

There may be some circumstances when the dentist feels it would be in the public interest to breach a patient's confidentiality. In such cases we will seek advice from our indemnifier before releasing the patient's information to a third party.

A court may order us to release information without the patient's consent. If so, we will only release the minimum information.

Access to records

Patients have a right to see their records and we will meet any request within 40 days. A request from a patient to see records or for a copy must be referred to the patient's dentist.

The patient should be given the opportunity of coming into the practice to discuss the records and will then be given a photocopy.

More information

For more information on this topic, please speak to Nikki Trigg or Jeff Barlow.

Useful organisations:

General Dental Council (www.gdc-uk.org)

Information Commissioner (www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)