

# Hope Farm Medical Centre

## Removal of Patients Practice Policy

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## 1 Introduction

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### 1.1 Policy statement

At Hope Farm Medical Centre the removal of a patient from the practice list should be an extraordinary and infrequent occurrence. A good patient-doctor relationship, based on mutual respect and trust, is the cornerstone of good patient care.<sup>1 2</sup> Once that element of trust is lost between the GP and patient, the GP must make every effort to restore trust and develop a positive patient-doctor relationship. If trust is irreversibly lost, it is in the interests of both parties that the patient should seek a new practice.

### 1.2 Principles

The reasons for removing a patient from the practice list are wide-ranging, but must be fully justifiable. Removal will not be sanctioned due to a patient complaint or due to a patient being demanding, critical or non-compliant with treatment.

There are two categories for which removal applies:

- Non-violent and non-threatening patients, i.e. patients move out of the practice area; and
- Violent, threatening or abusive patients

### 1.3 Status

The practice aims to design and implement policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a

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<sup>1</sup> [BMA – Removal of patients from GP lists](#)

<sup>2</sup> [NHS England Guide](#)

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disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been given to the impact this policy might have in regard to the individual protected characteristics of those to whom it applies.

This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual and may be modified or withdrawn at any time. For the avoidance of doubt, it does not form part of your contract of employment.

## 1.4 Training and support

The practice will provide guidance and support to help those to whom it applies understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Additional support will be provided to managers and supervisors to enable them to deal more effectively with matters arising from this policy.

## 2 Scope

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### 2.1 Who it applies to

This document applies to all employees, partners and directors of the practice. Other individuals performing functions in relation to the practice, such as agency workers, locums and contractors, are encouraged to use it.

### 2.2 Why and how it applies to them

All Hope Farm Medical Centre staff are to be aware of the reasons why a patient may be removed from the practice list. Staff are at all times required to inform the practice manager should they experience difficulties with a patient, and they should seek advice in order to maintain an effective relationship with the patient. In the event of a relationship breakdown, the rationale for removing the patient from the list will be discussed with the staff member.

## 3 Removal advice

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### 3.1 General Medical Council (GMC) guidance

Whilst it is acknowledged that practices are permitted to remove patients in appropriate circumstances, the GMC's Good Medical Practice states: "you should end a professional relationship with a patient only when the breakdown of trust between you and the patient means you cannot provide good clinical care to the patient"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> [GMC Good Medical Practice – Treat patients and colleagues fairly and without discrimination.](#)

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Furthermore, the GMC advises that practices should consider the following as reasons for removal:

- The patient has stolen from the premises (including stealing from a member of staff)
- The patient has persistently acted in an inconsiderate or unreasonable manner
- The patient has made inappropriate sexual comments or advances towards staff

## 3.2 General Practitioners Committee (GPC) guidance

The GPC categorises the removal of patients into two areas:

- Removal for administrative reasons
- Breakdown of relationship

Administrative reasons can occur due to the death of a patient, or if the patient moves outside the practice area and has not re-registered.

The breakdown of relationship is more complex and extends beyond the irretrievable breakdown of the relationship. This area includes:

- Violence or threatening behavior: this usually implies a total abrogation by the patient of any responsibility towards the doctor or other members of the practice and will normally result in removal from the list. As well as having a right to protect themselves, GPs have a duty as employers to protect their staff and, as providers of a public service, those who have reason to be on their premises. Since 1994 it has been possible to request the immediate removal of any patient who has committed an act of violence or caused a doctor to fear for their safety.<sup>4</sup>
- Clinicians must exercise their judgement in determining whether a patient's violent behaviour is a result of their medical condition, be it acute or chronic. Where doubt exists, further guidance should be sought from the Local Medical Committee (LMC).

Removal should never be based on the grounds of race, gender, social class, age, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, disability or medical conditions.

## 3.3 Prisoners

Patients sentenced to more than two years in prison can be removed from the patient list. It is accepted that Hope Farm Medical Centre may not be informed of a patient being imprisoned or the length of their sentence. However, if this information is provided, the practice has a duty to act reasonably and to inform NHS England and have the patient removed from the list.

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<sup>4</sup> [BMA - GPC's Advice Breakdown of relationship](#)

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## 3.4 Armed forces personnel

Patients who join the armed forces on a full-time basis are to be removed from the practice list. Hope Farm Medical Centre is to inform NHS England and have the patient's name removed from the list. The patient will still be entitled to treatment as a temporary resident should they return to the area when on leave, etc.

Armed forces reservists, who usually retain their civilian role for the majority of the year, are to remain on the practice list as they only serve for limited periods of time.

## 3.5 Patients who are abroad for more than three years

Where it is known that a patient has been absent from the UK for a period of more than three months, the practice is to exercise caution when deciding to apply to NHS England to have the patient removed from its list.

The practice should determine if the patient has retained a sufficient connection to the UK to continue to be habitually resident here, thereby justifying that they remain on the practice list. For example, it would be inappropriate to remove a patient from the practice list who spends three months abroad but nine months of the year in the UK.<sup>5</sup>

## 3.6 Patient registering with another practice

NHS England is compelled to remove a patient from the practice list if the patient registers with another GP practice in the UK.

## 3.7 End of temporary residence

If a patient has been a temporary resident for three months, they can be removed from the practice list (by the practice) without any further reason being given to NHS England.

## 3.8 Patient requests

A patient has the right to request to be removed from the practice list without providing a reason or explaining why they wish to be removed. The practice will notify NHS England that the patient wishes to leave the list and the patient will be removed accordingly.

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<sup>5</sup> [GP Law – Management of the practice list of patients](#)

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## 4 Non-justified reasons for removal

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### 4.1 Complaints

Hope Farm Medical Centre will never remove a patient merely because they have made a complaint. Only in instances of an irretrievable breakdown of relationship through complaints should consideration be given to removing a patient from the list.

### 4.2 Cost of treatment

It is wholly unacceptable to consider the removal of a patient due to the cost of their treatment. Additional funding may be provided to meet the cost of expensive treatments.

### 4.3 Medical conditions

Patients will never be removed from the practice list due to the clinical condition from which they are suffering.

### 4.4 Age

Whilst some patients may require increased care and treatment due to age, this is not a justifiable reason to remove the patient from the list. Furthermore, the level of care required is recognised in higher capitation weighting for older patients and normally also in the formula for allocating prescribing budgets.<sup>6</sup>

## 5 Process for removal

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### 5.1 Actions to be taken

Prior to seeking formal approval to remove a patient from the practice list, the practice manager is to:

- Warn the patient that the practice is considering removing them from the practice list using the letter template at Annex A
- Retain records of all warnings and if a warning has been given in the preceding 12 months, there are grounds for requesting removal
- Restore trust to the relationship
- Consider changing the patient's GP internally
- Arrange a meeting with the patient to discuss any concerns or issues

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<sup>6</sup> [GPC – Practices should never remove patients on grounds of age.](#)

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In all cases, there must be a justifiable reason(s) for seeking approval to remove the patient from the practice list.

## 5.2 Actions to be taken in cases of justified removal

The following actions are to be taken by the practice manager:

- Write to the patient, explaining why they are to be removed from the practice list (unless doing so would be of detriment to the physical or mental well-being of the patient, or place staff at risk) using the template at Annex B
- Record the decision, attaching the letter(s) to the patient's healthcare record
- Determine the most appropriate arrangements for continuing the patient's care and facilitate the timely transfer of the patient's healthcare record
- Notify NHS England in writing

Practice teams must be prepared to fully justify the decision to request the removal of a patient from their practice list. It is therefore essential that accurate records are maintained at all times.

Records should include:

- All instances of unacceptable behaviour by patients
- Actions taken to try and remedy the situation

## 5.3 Actions by NHS England

NHS England will remove patients eight days after they receive the request. However, if patients require treatment at intervals of less than seven days, Hope Farm Medical Centre is obliged to provide such treatments until the condition of the patient improves. In such instances, removal will occur on the eighth day, once treatment becomes less regular.

## 5.4 Actions involving violent, threatening and abusive patients

In instances where patients are violent, abusive, threatening or have displayed signs of generally unacceptable behaviour, or where there are concerns for staff and other patients' safety, the police are to be notified.

The practice can have the patient removed within 24 hours, once they have notified PCSE by either phone or email. Secondary or local commissioner approval is no longer necessary. However, the incident **must** have been reported to the police.<sup>7</sup>

The practice must ensure that the reason(s) for removal is recorded in the patient's healthcare record, along with any supporting documentation such as previous warnings or information leading up to the removal of the patient. The responsibility for ensuring that the patient meets the criteria for immediate removal rests with Hope Farm Medical Centre.

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<sup>7</sup> [Primary Care Support England – Removal of patients from your practice list](#)

# Hope Farm Medical Centre

To request immediate removal of a patient, the practice manager is to download this [form](#) and once it is completed, upload it to: [pcse.patientremovals@nhs.net](mailto:pcse.patientremovals@nhs.net)

## 6 Summary

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The removal of a patient requires serious consideration and such decisions must not be taken lightly. Staff must remain acutely aware of the reasons why patients can be removed from the list and of the necessary actions to be taken. Accurate record-keeping and adherence to the referenced material in this policy will ensure that appropriate actions are taken and staff and fellow patients' safety is preserved.

## Annex A – Warning letter for removal

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[Address]

[Date]

Dear <Insert Patient Name>

Due to the nature of your recent *phone call to/attendance at* (delete as appropriate) the practice on <Insert date> where you verbally abused and swore at a member of the Practice Team I am writing to you to inform you that the Practice takes it very seriously if a member of staff is treated in an abusive way.

We communicate through our website, practice leaflet and the waiting room the standards we expect from our patients. The Practice supports the government's 'Zero Tolerance' campaign for Health Service Staff. This states that GPs and their staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused. To successfully provide these services a mutual respect between all the staff and patients has to be in place. The staff at Hope Farm Medical Centre aim to be polite, helpful, and sensitive to all patients' individual needs and circumstances.

However, aggressive or unreasonable behaviour, be it violent or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in you being removed from the Practice list. Should this incident arise again in the future the Practice will have to consider what formal action is required to ensure the Practice staff can care for our patient's without fear of being attacked or abused.

On this occasion, we are content for you to remain with the practice. However, should you act in such a manner again, we will exercise our right to consider removing you from the practice list and, if appropriate, report your actions to the police.

A copy of this letter will be retained within your healthcare record.

I thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter.



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Yours sincerely

Tim Goldsbrough  
**Practice Manager**

## Annex B – Removal letter

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[Address]

[Date]

Dear [insert patient name],

As the Practice Manager of Hope Farm Medical Centre, I wrote to you previously on behalf of the Partners at the practice on [insert date] regarding your behaviour. It is alleged that on [insert date] you again acted in a manner that was deemed to be [violent / threatening / abusive] whilst attending the practice.

As previously advised, such behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. The NHS has zero tolerance towards patients who are violent, threatening and abusive towards staff, and we take this policy extremely seriously.

As a result of your behaviour, you have been removed from the practice list and NHS England has been notified. The removal is effective immediately and you are strongly advised to register elsewhere for your medical care.

A list of GP practices is available on the NHS Choices website or you can use the enclosed list of local practices to help you find a new GP.

A copy of this letter will be retained within your healthcare record.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Tim Goldsbrough  
**Practice Manager**

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