

TOWER HAMLETS GP CARE GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY (TEENAGERS) POLICY

Date Issued	01/05/2015
Title	CONFIDENTIALITY (TEENAGERS) POLICY
Supersedes	All previous Policies
This policy will impact on	All staff
Related Documents	
Policy Area	Safeguarding/Quality & Safety
Version No	2
Issued By	Governance Team
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Effective Date	01/06/2015
Review Date	01/01/2016

	Committees / Groups / Individual	Date
Approved by	Safe Guarding Leads and HR Leads	
Approved by	THGPCG Board	

INTRODUCTION

This policy is specific to patients under the age of 18, and should be read in conjunction with the Staff Confidentiality Policy and Agreement [*], and Fraser (Contraceptive) Guidelines [see Resources below].

POLICY

The principles of confidentiality apply equally to all patients regardless of age. Young persons (including those under 16) are owed the same duties of care and confidentiality as adults. This includes respecting their wishes to withhold information from parents or guardians. The health professional involved will determine the competency of a young person seeking treatment and will determine the extent to which confidentiality guidelines apply in each case.

Any young person regardless of age can independently seek medical advice or treatment, including surgical procedures, if a health professional believes that they are capable of understanding the choices of treatment and their consequences. This includes contraceptive advice, but the principles apply to other treatments, including abortion. It is good practice for health professionals to follow the criteria commonly known as the Fraser guidelines:

- That the young person understands the advice and has sufficient maturity to understand what is involved
- That the doctor could not persuade the young person to inform their parents, or to allow the doctor to inform them
- That the young person would be very likely to begin, or continue having sexual intercourse with or without contraceptive treatment
- That, without contraceptive advice or treatment, the young person's physical or mental health would suffer
- That it would be in the young person's best interest to give such advice or treatment without parental consent

The policy of the Tower Hamlets General Practice Care Group is to support young people in exercising their choice of medical treatment, and to deal with them in a sympathetic and confidential manner. Where a young person presents at a service provided by the THGPCG without adult support, they may be booked in to see a health professional in the normal way.

Care must be taken to ensure that this right of confidentiality is not inadvertently breached by following the procedural guidelines in force. Confidentiality may only be broken when the health, safety or welfare of the young person, or others, would otherwise be at grave risk; Professionals working with young persons need to consider how to balance their rights and wishes with their responsibility to keep the young persons from harm. Where there are reasonable grounds for believing that a child is at risk of or suffered significant harm e.g. as a result of physical or sexual abuse, the healthcare professional should disclose information to the appropriate authorities (see the THGPCG Child protection policy). In such circumstances, the health professional must be prepared to justify his or her reasons for doing so. He or she should attempt to gain consent for this unless by doing so would place the young person under significant harm. At times of disclosure, the healthcare professional must be able to demonstrate that the information disclosed has been done so after careful consideration and for the best interest of the young person. The amount of information disclosed should be the minimum necessary to enable an appropriate enquiry to be carried out. The child and family should be informed of the disclosure unless by doing so places the young person at risk. Please refer to the THGPCG child protection policy.

If the young person is not able to fully understand the nature or purpose of information disclosure, effort should be made to gain consent from a person with parental responsibility. However, good practice would involve obtaining the child's view on the disclosure of their information.

RESOURCES

THGPCG Child Protection Policy

BMA - Consent and Gillick competency

Fraser (Contraceptive) Guidelines