

Delivering Same Sex Accommodation – Statement of Compliance

Together NHS Foundation Trust is committed to delivering same sex accommodation to enhance the privacy and dignity of our service users, whilst in receipt of care in the Trust. We deliver our services using the principles of good practice. We welcome the eleven specific standards, including four specific standards for mental health inpatient areas, set by NHS South West and outlined below.

Background

The Secretary of State has recently given a clear pledge to move rapidly and decisively towards eliminating mixed sex accommodation.

The Operating Framework for 2009/10 states that Primary Care Trusts are expected to work with their local providers to deliver substantial and meaningful reductions in the number of patients who report that they share sleeping accommodation, toilet or washing facilities with members of the opposite sex. In addition, plans for mental health and learning disability inpatient services should ensure that men and women do not share bedrooms or bed bays, and there should be a widening availability of women only day areas.

Single-sex accommodation can be provided in:

- single-sex wards i.e. the whole ward is occupied by men or women but not both;
- single rooms with adjacent single-sex toilet and washing facilities preferably en-suite;
- single-sex accommodation within mixed wards i.e. bays or rooms which accommodate either men or women, not both; with designated single-sex toilet and washing facilities preferably within or adjacent to the bay or room.

Irrespective of where patients are, staff should always take the utmost care to respect their privacy and dignity. There are no exceptions to delivering high standards of privacy and dignity.

It is not acceptable for people to share sleeping accommodation unless it can be clinically justified for each patient. The exceptions previously identified in Mixed Sex Accommodation, Health Service Circular 1998/143, such as emergency admission units, were reporting exceptions only and no longer apply. Some of the circumstances where clinical justification might be applied are as follows:

- patient needs very high-level care, with one-to-one nursing (e.g. Psychiatric intensive care);
- patient needs very specialised care, where one nurse might be caring for a small number of patients and cannot safely leave the room other than for very short periods;
- patient needs very urgent care (e.g. rapid admission following detention under the Mental Health Act).

Inevitably, this is a fine judgement that needs to be made on an individual basis. For instance, in a four-bed bay, it means that mixing must be justifiable for all patients, not just one. It is also a judgement that needs to be revisited regularly – there is an expectation that the clinical justification for sharing sleeping accommodation is reviewed at least daily and a record is made in the nursing notes that justifies the decision. This will ensure the mixing of patients in this way becomes a conscious act, rather than an acceptable norm.

Standards for All Provider Services

1. Nightingale style wards accommodate single sex patients only (unless substantial modification has taken place e.g. fixed floor to ceiling screening and there are segregated bathroom and toilet facilities).
2. Washing and toilet facilities are clearly individually designated as male or female so that men and women do not have to share.
3. Patients should not need to pass through opposite sex accommodation or toilet and washing facilities to access their own. Where patients pass near to members of the opposite sex to reach their single sex facilities, adequate screening is used to prevent embarrassment.
4. There is good physical separation of sleeping accommodation for men and women. Partitions are robust enough to prevent casual overlooking and overhearing.
5. Toilets and washing facilities are fitted with internal privacy curtains where necessary.
6. Toilets and washing facilities are lockable from the inside and are accessible to staff in the event of an emergency.
7. All breaches of mixed sex accommodation standards are recorded and investigated within the NHS Trust and reported as a breach to the commissioner within 48 hours of the breach occurring. The commissioner then reports these on a weekly basis to the Strategic Health Authority. Templates for this reporting structure are attached.

Additional Standards for Inpatient Mental Health Service Accommodation

1. Sleeping areas are arranged into clearly separated male and female zones, regardless of whether this is provided in single rooms or single sex dormitories.
2. Bedroom doors are lockable from the inside with both fail safe entry and observation mechanisms to ensure service user safety.
3. Bedroom doors are fitted with an observation panel or peephole and these can only be operated by members of staff.
4. Women only day areas should be provided.

Standards are based on the following guidance:

- The Patient's Charter: Privacy and Dignity and The Provision of Single Sex Hospital Accommodation (1997), EL(97)3, Department of Health;
- Mixed Sex Accommodation, Health Service Circular 1998/143, Department of Health;
- Privacy and Dignity – A Report by the Chief Nursing Officer into Mixed Sex Accommodation (2007) Department of Health;
- Privacy and Dignity, The Elimination of Mixed Sex Accommodation (2007) Department of Health and NHS Institute of Innovation and Improvement.

Position within Together NHS Foundation Trust

We have developed a policy on Delivering Same Sex accommodation and a leaflet for service users. Details of our inpatient services and how they are working to the principles of good practice in accommodation are below.

Wotton Lawn Hospital – Adult Acute Unit

Kingsholm is a male only ward and Dean is a female only ward.

Abbey and Priory Wards are all mixed gender wards with separately zoned male and female sleeping and washing areas.

Greyfriars - A Psychiatric intensive care facility –which has 1 female area, the rest of the ward being male

Montpellier - a low secure male only facility

At Wotton Lawn Hospital we are carrying out work to increase the number of en-suite rooms available to service users who are admitted to the unit. We have also identified more female specific areas that can be used if individuals are wanting gender specific spaces to have time in.

Recovery Units

We have three Recovery Units – Honeybourne, Laurel House and The Vron. We have separately identified sleeping and washing areas within all our Recovery Units that are gender specific. Additional washing facilities are planned.

Older Persons Wards

There are three older persons wards – Holly House, Bourton Ward and Leckhampton Ward. All have separately identified sleeping and washing areas and designated female only sitting areas.

The development of the Charlton Lane Site due for completion in 2010 will see further enhancements in the care environment including in regard to mixed sex accommodation.

Learning Disability Services

We have two learning disability units – Hollybrook and Westridge. Both have separate female and male sleeping areas and all are en-suite. Sitting areas are available that are gender specific.

Substance Misuse Unit

Branchlea Cross provides inpatient detoxification. It is a recently converted building and as such has all en-suite facilities with clear male and female zones.

Shaun Clee

Chief Executive, 2gether NHS Foundation Trust