



# White Lodge Medical Practice

## Patient Behaviour and Acceptable Standards Policy

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| 1       | 22/05/2025 | Maciej Karas | Policy Introduced |
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## 1. Introduction

This practice is committed to providing high-quality healthcare services in a safe, respectful environment for all patients, visitors, and staff. We believe patients have a right to be heard, understood, and respected, and we work hard to be open and accessible to everyone.

As an employer, the practice has a duty of care for its staff's health, safety, and well-being. We are also legally responsible for providing a safe and secure working environment. Staff mental health is as important as their physical health.

All patients and staff are expected to behave in an acceptable, respectful manner. This policy outlines our expectations and the actions we will take when these standards are not met.

## 2. Our Commitment to Our Patients

What you can expect from us:

- A commitment to provide care of a high standard
- Care that is tailored to the needs of the individual patient
- Confidentiality on all matters
- The right to see your medical records, subject to limitations of the law

## 3. What We Expect from Our Patients

Your care is a partnership between yourself and the practice. The success of that partnership depends upon mutual respect and appropriate behaviour. In particular, we ask Patients to:

- Be courteous and respectful to all staff members
- Make responsible use of all appointments, particularly emergency appointments
- Attend appointments on time and cancel with at least 24 hours' notice when possible
- Plan your repeat prescription requests appropriately
- Use appropriate communication channels and contact methods
- Accept that appointments may occasionally run late due to urgent patient needs

## 4. Zero Tolerance Policy

The practice follows NHS guidance concerning zero tolerance. Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

This includes:

- Serious or persistent verbal abuse
- Aggressive tone and language
- Swearing or foul language
- Threatening behaviour or language
- Physical violence or assault
- Behaviour that leaves staff upset and distressed

All instances of actual physical abuse or threatening behaviour towards any doctor or member of staff by a patient or their relatives will be reported to the police as an assault.

## 5. Unacceptable Behaviour

### 5.1 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

We understand that patients may feel frustrated or upset about health issues. However, when that frustration escalates into aggression towards practice staff, we consider this unacceptable.

**Unacceptable behaviour includes:**

- Violence or threats of violence
- Verbal or written abuse designed to insult, degrade, or intimidate
- Derogatory, racist, sexist, transphobic, or homophobic language
- Serious allegations of criminal, corrupt, or unprofessional conduct without evidence
- Offensive gestures or behaviours
- Language or behaviour that causes staff to feel afraid, threatened, or abused

### 5.2 Unreasonable Demands

A demand becomes unacceptable when it impacts substantially on the work of the practice or disadvantages other patients.

***Examples include:***

- Demanding to speak only to a specific team member when this is not clinically appropriate or possible
- Refusing appointments with appropriately qualified clinicians
- Refusing to access services through appropriate channels
- Demanding same-day appointments for routine clinical needs
- Repeatedly demanding responses within unreasonable timescales
- Repeatedly requesting early supplies of medication without clinical justification
- Insisting on medical treatment for which there is no clinical evidence
- Contacting staff directly via personal social media or email instead of practice channels

### 5.3 Unreasonable Levels of Contact

Contact becomes unacceptable when the volume or duration impacts our ability to provide services to all patients.

***This includes:***

- Excessive telephone calls in a short period
- Repeatedly making very long telephone calls
- Inundating the practice with letters, emails, or irrelevant documentation
- Contact that prevents staff from attending to other patients' needs

### 5.4 Unreasonable Refusal to Cooperate

When addressing concerns or complaints, we expect patients to work constructively with us.

***Unreasonable behaviour includes:***

- Repeatedly refusing to provide necessary information
- Refusing to engage with reasonable requests for clarification
- Continuously changing the substance of issues or raising unrelated concerns
- Bringing issues to our attention but then refusing to respond to reasonable requests

## 5.5 Substance Misuse and Illegal Activity

**We expect all patients to:**

- Avoid attending the surgery under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Refrain from drug dealing on practice premises
- Not engage in theft or wilful damage to practice property

Any alteration of prescriptions is illegal and will not be tolerated.

## 6. Actions We May Take

### 6.1 Immediate Response to Unacceptable Behaviour

**Staff have the authority to:**

- End telephone calls if the caller becomes aggressive, abusive, or offensive
- Refuse to respond to abusive correspondence
- Request that patients leave the premises if their behaviour is unacceptable
- Contact security or police if there is a threat to safety

### 6.2 Warning System

Where behaviour is unacceptable but does not warrant immediate removal, we may issue a first and final warning. This warning will:

- Be given in writing
- Specify the unacceptable behaviour
- Outline expectations for future conduct
- Explain the consequences of further incidents

### 6.3 Contact Restrictions

We may implement restrictions such as:

- Limiting contact to specific times and staff members
- Requiring appointments for all contact
- Restricting communication to writing only
- Returning irrelevant documents or correspondence

### 6.4 Removal from Practice List

**You will be removed immediately when:**

- We have needed police assistance or made a report to the police
- There has been violence or serious threats towards staff
- There has been serious physical or verbal abuse of practice team members

**Factors considered for removal include:**

- Severity and frequency of incidents
- Impact on staff wellbeing and safety
- Effect on services to other patients
- Previous warnings and patient response

## 7. The Decision-Making Process

**Immediate decisions** may be made by any staff member directly experiencing unacceptable behaviour.

**Decisions to issue warnings or remove patients** are made by senior management after careful consideration, taking into account:

- The severity of the incident
- Impact on staff and other patients
- Previous history and warnings
- Individual circumstances
- Broader implications for practice safety

## 8. Recording and Review

All incidents of unacceptable behaviour are recorded. Warning decisions are documented in patient files and computer records. Our senior management team reviews all restrictions quarterly to ensure appropriate application of this policy.

## 9. Appeals Process

Patients may appeal decisions regarding warnings or removal from the practice list. Appeals should:

- Be submitted in writing
- Relate specifically to the warning or removal decision
- Be considered by senior management not involved in the original decision

Appeals may include arguments that:

- Actions were wrongly identified as unacceptable
- The warning was disproportionate
- Personal circumstances warrant reconsideration

## 10. Support and Alternatives

**If you are dissatisfied with our services:**

- Use our formal complaints procedure
- Contact the Practice Manager to discuss concerns
- Register with another practice without notifying us
- Contact NHS England for further guidance
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We are committed to resolving issues through dialogue and conciliation whenever possible. However, the safety and wellbeing of our staff and all patients remains our primary concern.

## 11. Practice Resources and Information

The practice has a finite number of available appointments. You may be directed to a clinician who is not a GP but appropriately qualified to manage your care needs. We are a group teaching

practice and cannot always accommodate requests for your preferred GP due to high patient demand.

We trust this policy is clear and supports a mutually respectful environment for patients and staff. By working together with mutual respect and understanding, we can ensure the best possible healthcare experience for everyone.