

Policy Statement

Oxford Psychiatry Group is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and professional environment for all patients and staff within a fully remote service. We ensure that best practice is followed at all times and that the dignity, privacy, and safety of every individual is respected in a virtual context.

Patient Rights

- All patients are entitled to request a chaperone during any remote consultation where they feel one is needed.
- For sensitive or intimate discussions, patients will always be offered the option of a trained, impartial observer (chaperone) to join the video or telephone consultation.
- Patients may also request to speak to the clinician alone at any stage of the consultation, ensuring they are free to express concerns or provide information confidentially and without fear of influence or coercion from others who may be present in their environment.

Role of the Remote Chaperone

Trained staff acting as remote chaperones will:

- Ensure patient dignity and confidentiality throughout the virtual consultation.
- Reassure patients if they experience distress or discomfort during the discussion.
- Be familiar with the nature of the consultation and their safeguarding responsibilities.
- Remain present for the entire duration of the consultation where appropriate.
- Raise concerns immediately if inappropriate behaviour or safeguarding risks are identified.

Clinician Responsibilities

- Clinicians may themselves request a remote chaperone be present for certain consultations, particularly where safeguarding concerns exist.
- Clinicians must confirm at the start of each consultation whether the patient is in a safe and private environment, free from coercion.
- The presence (or offer) of a chaperone must be documented in the patient's clinical record, including the name and role of the chaperone if present.
- If a patient declines a chaperone, this must also be documented.

Safeguarding and Security in a Remote Context

In order to protect vulnerable patients in a remote consultation setting:

- Clinicians must check at the start of the session whether the patient is alone and feels safe to proceed with the consultation.
- Where a patient is not alone and expresses concerns about their privacy or safety,

alternative arrangements should be made (e.g. rescheduling or offering a chaperone to join).

- Staff must remain vigilant for signs of coercion, duress, or safeguarding concerns and follow Oxford Psychiatry Group safeguarding policies if concerns arise.

Commitment to Safety

This policy ensures that:

- Patients feel safe, supported, and respected throughout remote consultations.
- Staff are protected from unfair allegations or misunderstandings in a virtual context.
- Oxford Psychiatry Group continues to meet the Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards for patient safety, dignity, and safeguarding in remote healthcare delivery.