

# The duty of candour

## Communicating when things go wrong



## A guide for patients, families and carers

This leaflet provides information on the duty of candour process and what to expect.

## What is the duty of candour?

Healthcare staff should talk with you openly throughout your care. The duty of candour is a formal requirement to be open and honest with a patient if they have suffered harm. This means that if you suffer any unexpected or unintended harm during your care we will:

- tell you about it
- apologise
- investigate
- give an open explanation of what happened.

## Why do things go wrong?

Healthcare is very complex and things can change rapidly and unexpectedly. Occasionally things do not go to plan and a patient can be harmed despite our best intentions.

We regret every case of harm to our patients but we make sure we use the opportunity to learn and stop similar things happening again.

## What can I expect?

- A member of staff will speak to you honestly and openly as soon as possible after the event to discuss what happened, your condition and your ongoing care plan.
- All of the facts may not be clear at this time so staff may not be able to answer all of your questions until we have investigated.
- If you are not in a condition to receive the information, for example if you are too ill or recovering from an anaesthetic, staff will inform your next of kin or the person named by you in your healthcare record.
- You can involve family members or carers in these discussions.

- You will be treated with dignity and respect and you will receive an apology.
- You can expect to be involved in and contribute to decisions made about your care.
- You will normally be given a named person to speak to about any further queries or concerns.
- We will investigate what went wrong and you will be informed about the findings.
- You can expect confidentiality.

### **Should I have someone with me when staff are talking to me about what happened?**

It is recommended that you do choose someone to support you during the discussion. This should be somebody that you are comfortable with, can talk to easily and who you do not mind hearing personal information.

Please let us know if you wish somebody to be with you for the discussions. An advocate can be arranged for you if required.

Please remember that when something goes wrong it is distressing for everyone involved including the members of staff.

### **Who will speak to me about what happened?**

- One or more staff may talk to you, depending on what happened.
- Usually the person leading the conversation will be someone from your healthcare team who knows the most about what happened and will be able to answer any questions you may have.

## How should I prepare for a duty of candour conversation?

Before the conversation you may find the following advice helpful:

- Think about what questions and fears/concerns you have in relation to: what has happened, your condition and your ongoing care.
- Write down any questions or concerns you have.
- Think about who you would like to have with you to support you.
- Think of what things may assist you moving forward.

## What happens next?

- Further meetings may be necessary if all of the information you need is not available.
- We will tell you our findings and offer you a copy of any report.
- If you are not satisfied with your care or your concerns have not been addressed you have the right to make a complaint. In the first instance please contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**:

t: 020 7188 8801 / 020 7188 8803

e: [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

Further information on the duty of candour is available from the service you are attending or from PALS.

## Further sources of support

### **Guy's and St Thomas' spiritual care**

The chaplaincy is a confidential service available 24 hours a day to all patients, families and carers. They offer help on all aspects of pastoral care to members of all faiths or those of no particular religious belief. Sacred spaces are also available at both of the main hospital sites.

**Telephone:** 020 7188 1187

**Email:** chaplains@gstt.nhs.uk

### **Healthwatch**

Healthwatch England is the national consumer champion in health care and works to share information, expertise and learning in order to improve health and social care services.

**Website:** [www.healthwatch.co.uk](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk)

### **Support, Empower, Advocate, Promote (SEAP)**

Independent advocacy services to help resolve issues or concerns you may have about your health or healthcare services.

**Website:** [www.seap.org.uk](http://www.seap.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 03304 409000

**Email:** [info@seap.org.uk](mailto:info@seap.org.uk)

### **Carers UK**

Provide free expert advice, information and support on issues including financial and practical matters related to caring.

**Website:** [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

**Telephone:** 08088 087777

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Provides support to those having experienced the death of a close friend or relative.

**Website:** [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

**Telephone:** 08088 081677

## Further information

### Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**Telephone:** 020 7188 8815

**Email:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

**NHS Choices** – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**Website:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

The full guideline on duty of candour is available from the CQC website: <http://www.cqc.org.uk>

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