



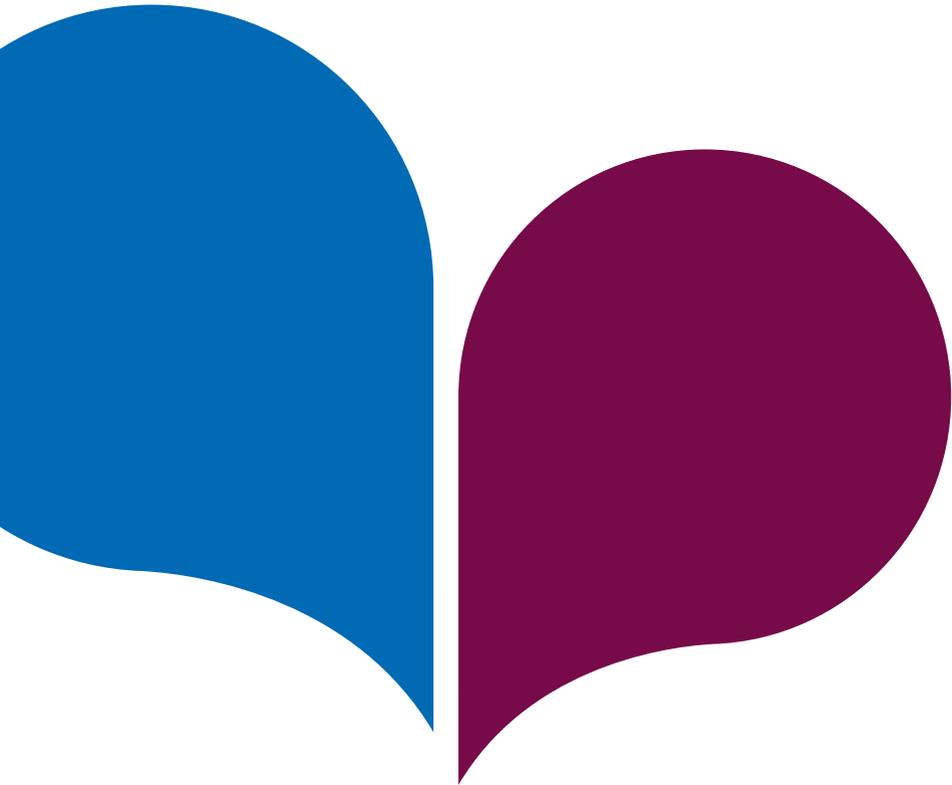
Central and  
North West London

NHS Foundation Trust

# Keeping safe

## Sexual safety

Information for patients and carers



*Wellbeing for life*

## About this booklet

CNWL wants services to be safe and to feel safe at all times.

This leaflet focuses on one specific aspect; your sexual safety.

It has been designed for patients on our wards but the information can keep you safe in the community too.

This is a difficult subject, and requires frankness but we will always approach it with sensitivity, respecting your dignity at all times.

This leaflet covers

- What is a breach of sexual boundaries
- What are the consequences
- What to do if there is a sexual safety incident
- How to increase your own sexual safety

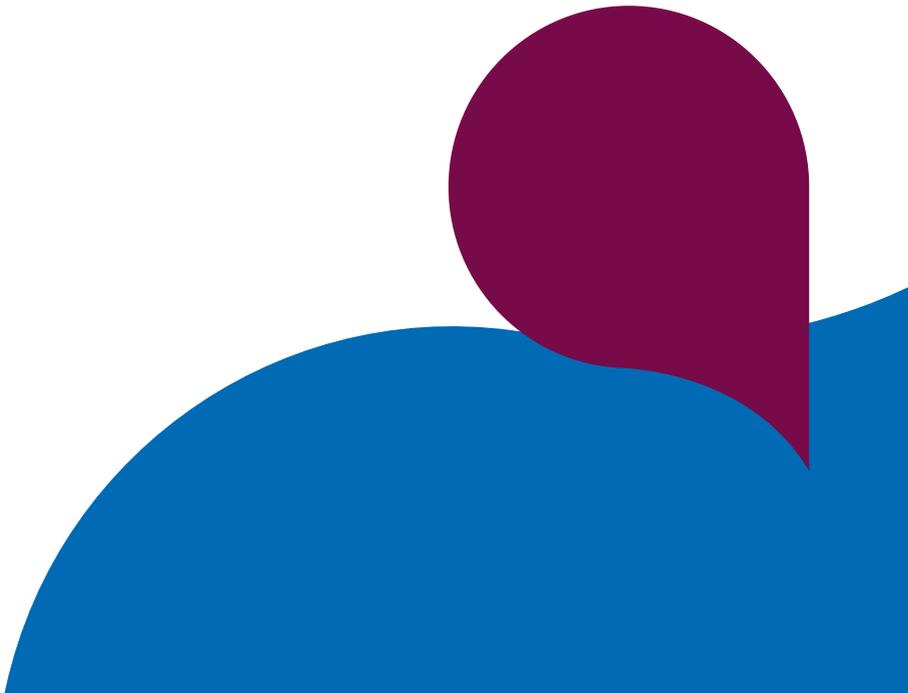
This will help you, or the person you care for, to recognise and respond to behaviour that may put sexual safety at risk, and to develop ways of protecting yourself.

Sometimes a patient – due to illness – can put others at risk of harm too and this leaflet addresses that.



## Key principles

- Any disclosure about incidents will always be taken seriously and addressed promptly with empathy and compassion
- Sexual Safety Standards makes everyone understand and respect standards of behaviour
- Information is available about what to do if sexual safety is threatened or there are concerns about someone
- We will take appropriate action to prevent and respond to sexual safety incidents
- We will help patients develop behaviours to support their own sexual safety
- The physical environment is designed to support sexual safety.
- Sexuality is a normal part of life but everyone is entitled to be sexually safe.



## What does a 'sexually safe' service look like?

The physical environment will be safe – this may include single gender wards, single gender corridors and bathrooms, using single gender areas when wanted.

We recognise your rights to physical and psychological safety and we know that without this your recovery and well-being will be affected.

We will work with you to promote your own sexual safety and sexual safety for all including identifying any risk for you or others and putting in place plans to support you.

If you have been sexual assaulted in the past we will develop a support plan for you on the ward.

We will constantly re-evaluate the ward environment and help improve your safety and for others.

We will monitor staff's professional standards and provide training on managing professional boundaries.

We will manage sexually disinhibited behaviour and develop strategies to support that person, or the person you care for, to keep them safe while unwell.

We will listen and respond quickly and appropriately to any incidents of harassment or sexual assault.

We will record all sexual safety incidents, and provide feedback on outcomes and strive to improve services.



## Your rights to sexual safety

This information leaflet provides you with clear information and advice about:

- Your rights and responsibilities for sexual safety
- Expected standards of behaviour
- The process for dealing with sexual safety incidents
- The support available should you experience sexual assault or harassment or sexual assault
- How to manage sexual health issues

You will be heard and listened to about your experience of harassment and sexual assault

You will be treated with compassion and understanding when disclosing

incidents that have compromised your sexual safety

You will be supported by the person of your choice after a sexual safety incident has occurred

You will receive prompt attention once your experience of harassment and sexual assault is disclosed

You will be informed of your options after experiencing sexual harassment or a sexual assault

You will be protected from further contact with the person alleged to have caused harm when in the care environment regardless of whether this is another patient, a family member or friend, a staff member or a visitor.

# How are sexual boundaries broken?

A breach of sexual boundaries occurs when another person displays sexualised behaviour towards you.

This includes a range of behaviours like sexual humour or innuendo, and making inappropriate comments about a person's body through to criminal acts like rape or sexual assault.

This may include things like:

- Inappropriate sexual or demeaning comments
- Being asked inappropriate questions about sex or sexual orientation

- Asking for, or accepting an offer of sex
- Unnecessary exposure of a person's body
- Any sexual act without consent
- Taking photographs that are not consented to
- Watching someone undress
- Inappropriate touching
- The exchange of drugs or services for sexual favours

## Sexually disinhibited behaviour

Sexual disinhibition is an inability to restrain sexual impulses and involves behaviour or talk.

This ranges from an increase in sexual thoughts through to removing clothing inappropriately,

being over-familiar to engaging in indiscriminate sexual activity.

This behaviour can arise for a variety of reasons

# Impact

Sexually disinhibited behaviour can be embarrassing, distressing and potentially dangerous for the person exhibiting the behaviour as well as for those that may be exposed to it.

## **It can also have a big impact on existing relationships.**

For those who have experienced a prior incident of sexual assault or harassment being exposed to this behaviour can trigger strong feelings of fear and anxiety.

Staff will understand and discuss sexual safety issues with you and your family in a sensitive and non-sexualised way to support keeping you safe. This will include:

- Supporting you if you have previously experienced sexual assault or harassment
- Managing your disinhibited behaviour while you are unwell – talking to you about your behaviour and letting you know if it is not appropriate

- Developing a 'Staying Safe' plan on admission
- Being placed in an environment that will increase your sexual safety, for example a single gender ward.
- You may be more exposed to a number of potential risks, especially when you are acutely unwell, and be more vulnerable to sexual assault and so it is important that we work together to keep you safe.



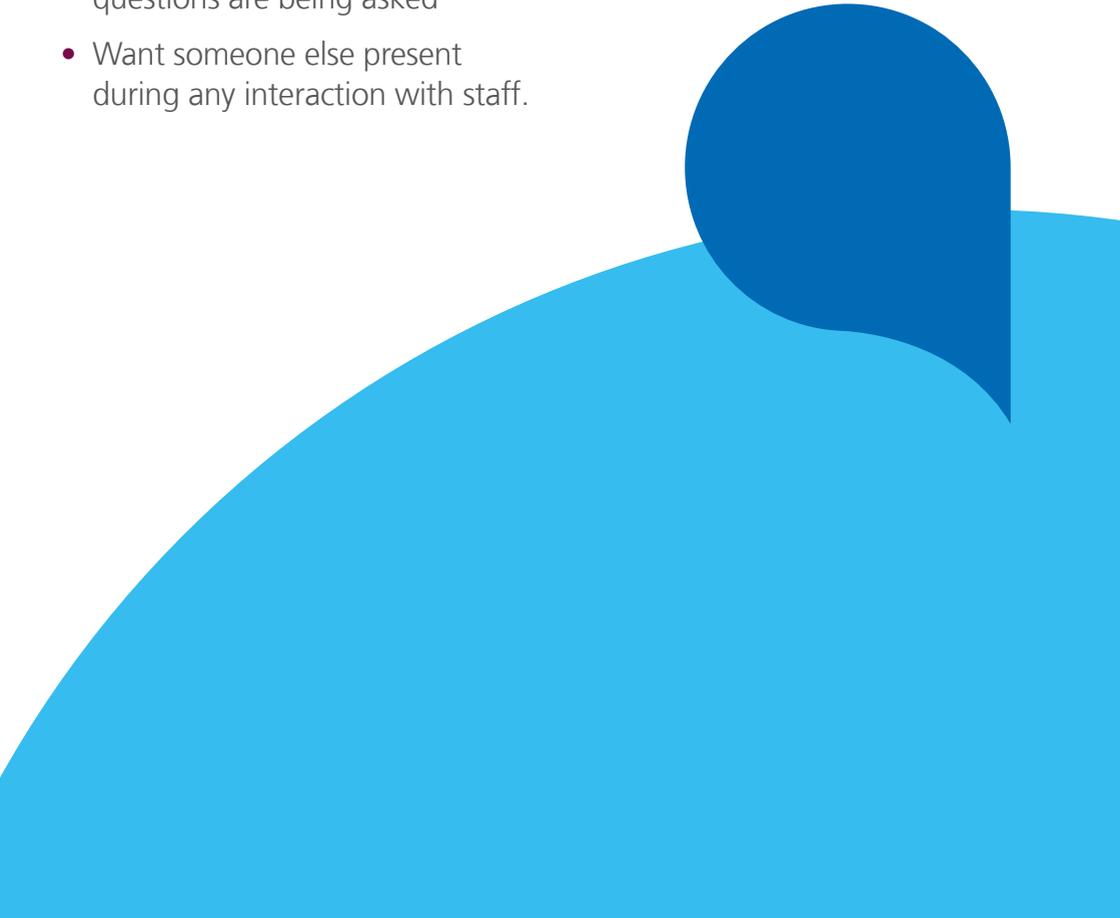
# Looking after yourself

**You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. It is important that you tell the healthcare professional if you**

- Feel uncomfortable
- Do not like something that is happening
- Want to ask questions about what is being done to you
- Do not understand why certain questions are being asked
- Want someone else present during any interaction with staff.

**You should also**

- Be aware of your own feelings and behaviour and its impact on others
- Respect yourself and others.



## General tips on staying safe include:

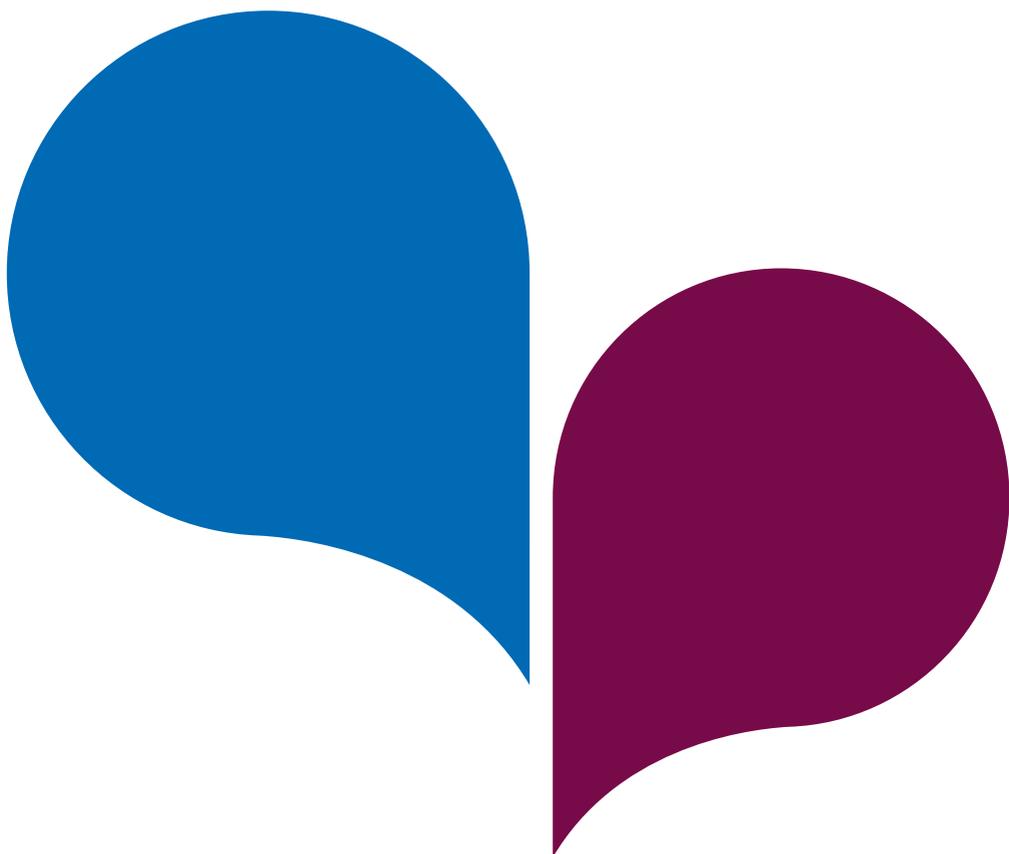
- **Have precautions in place when going out – especially if alone.** Know how you will get home, and plan ahead if you're going somewhere you don't know. Let someone know where you're going and when you expect to be back.
- **Take responsibility for yourself.** You cannot always rely on others to look out for your best interests. Make sure your mobile is charged and able to make calls when you go out, in case of an emergency or if you lose the people you are with.
- **Keep personal details safe –** do not share personal details on line, do not give out your home address/telephone number or invite people round to your home who you do not know well or are unsure of them.

## Acknowledging difference

Cultural differences can affect people's perceptions of what is intimate or appropriate.

For example, you may be modest about showing parts of the body to another person.

The healthcare professional must be sensitive to cultural difference and treat you in a way that respects your views and wishes and preserves your dignity.



# Sexual Safety Standards

These Sexual Safety Standards – originally developed in Australia – will help maintain your own sexual safety.

Everyone should behave in a way that meets these standards. Sometimes individuals may not see that their behaviour is unacceptable. It is important to be able to speak up (or ask someone to support you) and tell the person that their behaviour is unacceptable.

## **Standard 1**

I respect myself

## **Standard 2**

I treat others with respect and dignity

## **Standard 3**

I understand that sexual activity with another person should be for mutual pleasure and never used for punishment or through coercion

## **Standard 4**

I do not try to talk to someone else into engaging in sexual activity or harass another person sexually

## **Standard 5**

I try to be aware of how my behaviour makes others feel, and will change my behaviour if someone tells me it makes them uncomfortable, or I will ask for help with this if I need to

## **Standard 6**

I respect the rights of others to space and privacy to fulfil their sexual needs through masturbation

## **Standard 7**

I understand that fulfilling my own sexual needs through masturbation must be conducted privately and discreetly

## **Standard 8**

I will speak up if I have been hurt, harassed or assaulted physically or sexually

## **Standard 9**

I speak up if I see or hear about someone else being hurt, harassed or assaulted either physically or sexually

# Consequences when sexual boundaries are broken

- It can cause significant and enduring harm
  - It damages self-esteem and other relationships
  - It damages trust between individuals
  - Possible sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy
  - Criminal charges being brought against the person alleged to have caused the harm.
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## **Remember:**

**It is the healthcare professional's  
responsibility never to display  
sexualised  
behaviour towards you.**

**If a healthcare professional has  
breached sexual boundaries you  
are not to blame.**

**Support is available**

## Reporting an incident

We recognise how distressing telling someone of a sexual assault or harassment may be.

We will listen and we will hear you.

We will be compassionate and provide you with support

You should feel confident and safe.

We will talk through your options so you can make an informed choice about how you want to proceed

We will ensure that a plan is put in place to keep you safe and we will respect your wishes.

Healthcare professionals and others have a duty to make sure you're safe and establish and maintain clear boundaries with you.

We expect high standards of professional conduct from all our staff.

You must be able to trust healthcare professionals to provide the best possible care and act in your best interests.

If ever a member of staff makes you feel uncomfortable and you feel that they have breached your sexual safety, you must report it because this behaviour is wrong - it may be an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, a breach of the Trust's Code of Conduct and Professional Codes of Conduct.

You may feel extremely upset about what has happened. You might feel too frightened or upset to speak directly to the healthcare professional concerned.

You have several options:

- Tell another member of staff on the unit or the Manager
- Tell the Patient Feedback and Complaints Service
- Mental Health Advocacy Services in your local area
- The Care Quality Commission
- The Local Social Services Department
- The Police



This document is also available in other languages, large print, Braille, and audio format upon request. Please email [communications.cnwl@nhs.net](mailto:communications.cnwl@nhs.net)

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضاً بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبصيغة سمعية عند الطلب

## Arabic

این مدرک همچنین بنا به درخواست به زبانهای دیگر، در چاپ درشت و در فرمت صوتی موجود است.

## Farsi

এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে, ব্রেল এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধ পাওয়া যায়

## Bengali

Dokumentigaan waxaa xitaa lagu heli karaa luqado kale, daabacad far waa-wayn, farta indhoolaha (Braille) iyo hab dhegaysi ah markii la soo codsado.

## Somali

Mediante solicitação, este documento encontra-se também disponível noutras línguas, num formato de impressão maior, em Braille e em áudio.

## Portuguese

நீங்கள் கேட்டுக்கொண்டால், இந்த ஆவணம் வேறு மொழிகளிலும், பெரிய எழுத்து அச்சிலும் அல்லது ஒலிநாடா வடிவிலும் அளிக்கப்படும்.

## Tamil

Este documento también está disponible y puede solicitarse en otros idiomas, letra grande, braille y formato de audio.

## Spanish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku, w alfabecie Braille'a lub w formacie audio.

## Polish

આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.

## Gujarati

Be belge istenirse, başka dillerde, iri harflerle, Braille ile (görme engelliler için) ve ses kasetinde de temin edilebilir.

## Turkish