

Requesting same sex health care professionals

The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust employs over 4,800 staff.

Patients may expect to see health care professionals of both genders and on a ward it is almost certain that both male and female nurses, doctors, therapists and other staff will be working throughout the ward area. In clinics you will see doctors and nurses of both genders and in departments such as Radiology (x-ray, scans) and Pathology (blood tests), the health care professionals could be male or female.

Although for reasons of dignity or specific cultural traditions patients may prefer to see and be treated by a member of their own sex, there is no statutory requirement for the NHS to provide a clinician of the same sex in any healthcare setting. Under the NHS Act 1990, we have a duty to provide a proper standard of care to all our patients, but we do not have a duty to promise it will be delivered by a particular person of either gender.

If, for whatever reason, you are very uncomfortable receiving care or treatment from a member of the opposite sex, you may make a request to see a clinician of the same sex. Our ability to respond to such a request will be considered on an individual basis and will be dependent on such circumstances as levels of staffing and the needs of other patients. However, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, you will be seen by the most appropriate clinician. Our prime aim will always be to provide a proper standard of care, regardless of the sex of the clinician.

Please be aware that insisting on care or treatment from a clinician of the same sex may result in delays while the hospital endeavours to make alternative arrangements and even then it may not be possible to allocate clinicians of the required gender.

While we may consider requests for same sex clinicians, patients refusing, or requesting care or treatment from health care professionals on the grounds of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or age is regarded by the Trust as totally unacceptable and without justification.

Patients and visitors to the Trust are reminded that verbal and/or physical abuse to Trust staff, other patients or visitors will not be tolerated. Any person found to be in breach of this may find their treatment withheld, or we may make alternative arrangements for your treatment to be completed elsewhere.

Patient Information Service, March 2013

Reviewed: March 2019. Review due: March 2021