

Delivering Same-Sex Accommodation

Declaration of compliance

Every patient has the right to receive high quality care that is safe, effective and respects their privacy and dignity. The Whittington Hospital NHS Trust is committed to providing every patient with same sex accommodation because it helps to safeguard their privacy and dignity when they are often at their most vulnerable.

We are proud to confirm that mixed sex accommodation has been virtually eliminated in our trust. Patients who are admitted to our hospital will only share the room where they sleep with members of the same sex, and same sex toilets and bathrooms will be close to their bed area. Sharing with members of the opposite sex will only happen by exception based on clinical need (for example where patients need specialist care or equipment is needed such as on Isis ward, the high dependency unit and critical care unit or when patients choose to share for instance in our chemotherapy or thalassaemia unit).

What does this mean for patients?

Other than in the circumstances set out above, patients admitted to the Whittington Hospital can expect to find the following:

Same sex-accommodation means:

- The ward or bay **where your bed is** will only have patients of the same sex as you
- Your **toilet and bathroom** will be just for your gender, and will be close to your bed area

It is possible that there will be both men and women patients on the same ward as you but they will not share your sleeping area. You may have to cross a ward corridor to reach your bathroom, but you will not have to walk through opposite-sex areas.

You may share some communal space, such as day rooms or dining rooms, and it is very likely that you will see both men and women patients as you move around the hospital (e.g. on your way to X-ray or the operating theatre).

It is probable that visitors of the opposite gender will come into the ward or bay where your bed is and this may include patients visiting each other.

It is almost certain that both male and female nurses, doctors and other staff will come into your ward or bay area.

If you need help to use the toilet or take a bath (e.g. you need a hoist or special bath) then you may be taken to a “unisex” bathroom used by both men and women, but a member of staff will be with you, and other patients will not be in the bathroom at the same time.

The Whittington will not turn patients away just because a “right-sex” bed is not immediately available

What are our plans for the future?

Patient Experience
To ensure that there is an on-going process in place to measure patient experience of single sex accommodation with reports submitted to our Trust Board
To ensure there is a process to track other mechanisms for determining patient experience of single sex accommodation, e.g. through patient complaints/comments from Governors, PALs and Links
To provide information leaflets for patients on single sex accommodation and ensure they are used by staff in discussions with patients.
Delivery of single sex accommodation will always be considered when planning any new or refurbished estate development schemes
Where there are rare occurrences of gender mixing for non-clinical reasons, a process exists to investigate the reason and take remedial actions as required to prevent future occurrence
The relevant Trust policies will refer to requirement to delivering single sex accommodation and privacy and dignity
Staff Culture
The Board is committed to on-going delivery of single sex accommodation
The Trust believes that delivering single sex accommodation should be the norm. Mixing will only occur by exception for reasons of clinical justification or patient choice.
If mixing does occur, staff will attempt to rectify the situation as soon as possible, whilst safeguarding the patient's dignity and keeping the patient informed about why the situation occurred and what is being done to address it (with an indication of how long this will take)
Issues of privacy/dignity and single sex accommodation are included in mandatory staff training and induction and the trust provides training to support the elimination of mixed sex accommodation and to promote the protection of privacy and dignity.

What do I do if I think I am in mixed sex accommodation?

We want to know about your experiences. Discuss your concerns with the ward manger on your ward or you can contact the clinical site practitioner (available 24 hours a day on bleep 3589 via switchboard) if you have any comments or concerns. Any nurse on your ward will be able to help you to do this.

Signed:

Joe Liddane
Chairman

Rob Larkman
CEO

Same Sex Accommodation - Safeguarding your privacy and dignity

Maintaining privacy and dignity for our patients is a key priority and over the past year we have invested over £1.2 million to improve the 'patient experience' on our wards.

One of our most important actions has been to ensure that men and women staying in our hospital do not have to share their accommodation with patients of the opposite sex. Being comfortable in your surroundings is a key part of maintaining dignity and our Trust Board is fully committed to eradicating mixed sex accommodation.

In January 2009, the Secretary of State for Health announced an intensive drive to all but eliminate mixed sex accommodation. Hospital Trusts are now required to publish a 'declaration of compliance' stating whether or not they are able to declare the virtual elimination of mixed sex accommodation and its continued delivery. We have carried out a ward improvement programme to help address this. To date we have refurbished six wards across the Trust to ensure they comply with the single sex standard.

The work we have undertaken means that our patients on mixed sex wards can now be accommodated in single sex bays, with dedicated bathroom and toilet facilities. Arranging patient's accommodation in this way (using single sex bays rather than single sex wards) means we can still provide the specialist clinical care patients need.

Of course we have always tried to ensure patients are accommodated in bays of the same sex, but this work – which has included building work, refurbishments and introducing additional bathroom and toilet facilities – will make this much easier and we are confident we will have eliminated mixed sex accommodation in all but the most difficult of circumstances by April 2010.

Of course there are some areas and occasions where this isn't possible and a patient's clinical need overrides their need for single sex accommodation, such as in our intensive care and high dependency units. In these circumstances our staff work hard to ensure that patients, while they are receiving what is often life-saving treatment, are put at their ease and maintain their dignity as much as possible.

If it is absolutely impossible to provide separate accommodation in rare and extenuating circumstances, then our staff will be expected to rectify the situation as soon as possible, whilst safeguarding the individuals' dignity and keeping the patient informed about why this has happened and what we are doing to address it and how long this will take. These situations are taken very seriously and each case is investigated to ensure we learn from the experience. Every breach of our 'single sex standard' is reported to the Trust board.

Our target is to ensure no patient is accommodated in mixed sex bays (apart from the exceptions stated above) after 1st April 2010. It's that important to us that we work hard to get this right.