

LEGAL INFORMATION

REMOVING ABUSIVE PATIENTS FROM YOUR PRACTICE LIST

GP practices may find themselves in a situation where they are faced by a violent, abusive or aggressive patient. In such cases the patient can be immediately removed from the practice list. This includes all kinds of abusive behaviour, whether verbal or physical.

This guidance explains how to remove such patients, minimising the risk to staff while complying with GMS regulations. PMS and APMS practices have the same rights but it is always advisable to contact the LMC to ensure the practice has followed the right steps and is protected.

There is separate advice for removing patients from your practice list for reasons other than abusive behaviour online here [Removing patients from your GP practice list \(bma.org.uk\)](https://www.bma.org.uk)

You do not need to wait for approval or confirmation from your CCG before removing an abusive patient.

WHEN REMOVAL IS APPROPRIATE

The practice must have grounds to show that the individual committed an act of violence – or behaved in such a way that an individual feared for their safety. This could be against any member of staff, visitor or patient on the premises.

There is no exhaustive list of behaviour and the practice's judgement is necessarily subjective, but the main types of behaviour that would justify a patient's immediate removal are:

- **assault**
- **threatening or abusive behaviour**
- **behaviour resulting in damage to property**

Practices often know their patients well, and the LMC suggests a traffic light approach to abuse. However, this is only a guide – we will always support a practice that has removed a patient due to violence or the threat of violence.

Red – immediate removal

Any physical assault; any threatening or abusive behaviour causing distress to staff, patients or the public; any damage to practice or staff property; aggressive use of abusive language.

Amber – consider a written warning

Repeated incidents despite a verbal warning; abusive language without threatening behaviour e.g. racist, sexist, homophobic or ableist comments; personal offensive comments to or about staff members.

Green – consider a verbal warning

Aggressive language not directed at an individual e.g. "my leg really f**ing hurts"; a patient who is verbally aggressive in acute distress as an isolated incident e.g. renal colic, appendicitis; patients with severe mental impairment or advanced dementia where actions may be related to their diagnosis; patients who immediately realise their behaviour is not acceptable and seek to make amends.

THE REMOVAL PROCESS

Call 999 or your local police station as soon as possible.

State what happened and if necessary, request police assistance at the incident location. The police will allocate an incident number that can be requested by the practice.

Notify NHS England at 0333 014 2884 or pcse.patientremovals@nhs.net. The removal takes effect at the time at which the practice contacts PCSE.

Inform the patient of the removal, as long as it would not be harmful to the patient's mental or physical health or put any of the people listed above at risk. If it would be, consider how to contact the patient and who is best to do this. Seek LMC advice if you are unsure.

Notify the CQC 'without delay'. Incidents reported to, or investigated by, the police while carrying out a CQC registered activity must be reported to them using their notification system.

THE PROCESS AFTER THE REPORT TO PCSE

Responsibility then passes to PCSE. PCSE will write to the patient to tell them, and should ensure a flag is placed on the patient record to stop them registering at another practice. They must ensure the patient no longer remains on the practice list, but that they can continue to receive primary medical services through a commissioned SAS provider.

WHAT IS AN SAS PROVIDER?

Patients who are removed due to abusive behaviour can be referred to the special allocation scheme (SAS).

The special allocation scheme (SAS) provides primary care medical services in a secure environment to patients who meet the criteria. Designated GP practices provide services to patients by appointment at specific locations and times as detailed in individually agreed contracts. Patients join the scheme after being immediately removed as a result of an incident that was reported to the police.

The purpose of the SAS is to deal with patients who are aggressive, abusive or violent. It aims to protect GPs, practice staff and patients who have the right to be in the practice without fear of intimidating behaviour.

To progress an allocation to the SAS, the regulations require a GP practice to report an incident to the police. However, practices do not need to obtain a police incident number or crime number. Not having an incident number is not a barrier to the immediate removal of a patient who meets the criteria.

The removal of a patient and their allocation to the SAS remains under review by a panel.

This advice to practices is taken from the BMAs GP practice support pages [Removing violent patients and the special allocation scheme \(bma.org.uk\)](https://www.bma.org.uk)