

Parental Healthcare Decisions

Vaccination Letter to GPs

**A GENERIC LETTER INTENDED FOR
USE BY PARENTS**

To Whom It May Concern

Subj. parental vaccination decisions

Consent is a charity supporting parental healthcare decisions. We aim to be a balanced voice for parents, facilitating and promoting better understanding between parents and healthcare professionals.

Our charity is being contacted by many parents who tell us they feel pressured or even harassed by their GP surgery for declining, delaying or selectively accepting vaccinations for their children.

The vast majority of healthcare professionals respect parental vaccination decision just as their professional standards require. **We are making the following points only because a small minority do not.**

Professional Standards

The *General Medical Council*¹ requires doctors to treat patients with respect and to be polite and considerate. These requirements still apply, even if staff fundamentally disagree with a parent's decision.

It is unprofessional to accuse parents of neglect, exert pressure by inducing fear or guilt, label them selfish, suggest their decision will result in financial loss to the practice or to repeatedly raise the matter at unrelated appointments and/or through unwanted phone calls and messages. Unfortunately all the above continue to be reported to us.

Safeguarding

Non-vaccination in the absence of any other concerns does not and never has constituted a safeguarding issue. It is therefore inappropriate to threaten a parent with referral to the Local Authority on safeguarding grounds for this reason alone. It causes stress and resentment among patients and diverts social service resources away from real safeguarding issues.

Removal of Patients

Parents have reported being told they will be removed from the surgery's list and refused further treatment should they continue to decline vaccinations. Such action is only justifiable if the doctor-patient relationship has permanently broken down, despite real efforts from the surgery to restore it. Justifying such a measure on grounds of non-vaccination is against *General Medical Council*² and *British Medical Association*³ guidelines.

1 Good Medical Practice - The duties of a doctor registered with the GMC "46. You must be polite and considerate." "48. You must treat patients fairly and with respect whatever their life choices and beliefs.

2 Good Medical Practice - The duties of a doctor registered with the GMC "62. You should end a professional relationship with a patient only when the breakdown of trust between you and the patient means you cannot provide good clinical care to the patient." & General Medical Council - Ending your professional relationship with a patient

3 <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/gp-practices/service-provision/removal-of-patients-from-gp-lists>