

Parental Healthcare Decisions

Vaccinations

**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.

Vaccinations are an emotive subject with disproportional media profile. It can be easy to forget that parental vaccination decisions should be treated like any other parental healthcare decision.

The vast majority of healthcare professionals respect parental vaccination decisions in line with their professional standards. Thank you for being one of them.

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.

Parents have sometimes been accused of neglect, pressured, labelled selfish or told their decision will result in financial loss to the practice. Such an approach can be very upsetting to parents and is usually also counterproductive. A respectful approach is not only required by professional standards but is also more likely to get patients to listen openly to your concerns.

Safeguarding

Non-vaccination on its own does not constitute 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>