

Working Without Chairside Support Policy

Working without chairside support in dentistry heightens the risk to the dental setting. The risks mainly relate to medical emergency situations and how these would be dealt with appropriately without immediate assistance. Aggressive and threatening behaviour is another factor that needs to be considered as well as how you may be putting yourself in harm's way by not having assistance in the surgery setting.

Clinicians should aim to always have the chairside support of a dental nurse in the room with them wherever possible. Practices need to consider all possible scenarios where chairside support would be needed and ensure there are procedures in place for this, this may be out-of-hours emergencies for example, the practice should ensure there is a nurse available on call to cover alongside the dentist.

Regulators may become concerned if they were to discover clinicians working alone without exceptional circumstances being in place as to the reason. They will take into consideration whether or not your specific situation is safe based on the GDC standards and the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (regulated Activities) Regulations 2014.

Protecting the clinician from potential allegations of misconduct when working alone is something that should also be carefully thought of and considered. Although clinical notes may be comprehensive, Patients' complaints may be in regard to attitude and mannerisms, and without a supporting witness statement from a nurse, you do not have this to support claims. It is necessary that in the event any Dentist, Hygienist or Therapist is working without a dental nurse, that an individual "working without Chairside support Risk Assessment" is completed, this can be found in the DCME Portal at:

Compliance Suite > Risk Assessments > Additional Risk Assessments > Working Without Chairside Support Risk Assessment Template

If you are to be in a situation where working without assistance is required, a risk assessment should be thorough and outline any potential risks to both the clinician and the patient. Every effort should be made to avoid working without assistance where possible.

What do the GDC standards say?

GDC standard 6.2 states:

"You must be appropriately supported when treating patients."

GDC standard 6.2.1 states:

"You must not provide treatment if you feel that the circumstances make it unsafe for the patients."

Steps to take if the practice has clinicians working without chairside assistance;

Conduct your risk assessment on a one-to-one basis with the individuals that are affected, take into consideration the environment and how you can mitigate any risks, agree on your control measures and regularly re-review the assessment for any updates and changes. It may also be worth calling your indemnity provider to seek their opinion on the situation.

Please also refer to the Chaperone Policy.

Document Control

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0.1	Draft	11/01/24	PG	Re-write of original policy

The latest approved version of this document supersedes all other versions, upon receipt of the latest approved version all other versions should be destroyed, unless specifically stated that previous version(s) are to remain extant. If in any doubt, please contact the document Author.

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