

POLICY FOR HANDLING PATIENTS' MONEY & PROPERTY

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Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Aim of the Policy	2
3	Purpose	2
4	Scope	3
5	Definitions	3
6	Duties	3
7	Policy Statement	3
8	Guidelines	3
9	Procedure	4
10	Patients Property Receipt Book	5
11	Clothing	5
12	Deceased Patients	5
13	Reclaiming Cash And Valuables From Cashiers On Discharge	6
14	Administration On Patients' Monies	6
Appendix 1	Instructions And Procedures	7
Appendix 2	Disclaimer Form For Patients' Valuables And Cash	9
Appendix 3	Extract From Trust Standing Financial Instructions	10

POLICY FOR HANDLING PATIENTS' MONEY AND PROPERTY

This policy should be read in conjunction with Local Procedure Notes

1. INTRODUCTION

From time to time, Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust will have responsibility for property belonging to patients as they enter and leave the care of the Trust. There is both risk and responsibility in such circumstances and this policy seeks to address those issues.

2. AIM OF THE POLICY IS TO:

- Ensure patients' property is properly accounted for;
- Ensure there is adequate provision for safekeeping of patients' property;
- Provide assurance for patients and relatives; and
- Provide safeguards for staff against inappropriate and false accusation.

The Trust will not accept responsibility or liability for patients' property brought into Community Hospitals, Mental Health or Learning Disability Units, unless it is handed in for safe custody and a copy of an official patient's property receipt is obtained. For further information refer to the Trust's Standing Financial Instructions (these can be accessed via the Policies link on the Trust's Intranet).

All property accepted for safe custody must be placed in the ward security container or taken directly to the Cashier's Office. See Appendix 1 for instructions and procedures relating to patient's valuables/cash.

Staff working in Community Hospitals, Mental Health or Learning Disability Units will be informed, on induction, about their responsibilities and duties for the administration and safe custody of patients' property.

In the event of accidental damage, by a member of staff, to patients' property out in the community, i.e. in a patient's home, an incident report should be completed, giving full details of the damage caused and any action taken, as soon as possible.

Patients' property found by staff should be handed into their departmental manager. The item of property or money should be held in a secure area until a decision is taken on how or where to dispose of the item.

Where patients decide to retain items of value such as jewellery they should sign a disclaimer (see Appendix 2).

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1 The Trust has an obligation to provide a service for the custody of patients' property brought into hospital with them.
- 3.2 The following policy and procedure sets out the steps that must be taken to ensure that the interests of the patient are protected and gives clear guidance to Trust employees in the management of patient property.

4. SCOPE

- 4.1 This policy applies to all staff employed by the Trust and those undertaking bank or agency shifts.

5. DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 For the purpose of this policy the definition of “patient” is anyone who is receiving clinical care or treatment at any of the Trust’s Community Hospitals, Mental Health or Learning Disability Units
- 5.2 Property can be defined as anything owned by the patient, which is of value to the patient. Whilst this definition clearly includes items such as money and jewellery, it is important to remember that items owned by the patient may have great personal or sentimental value, and such items also need to be regarded and treated as property under this policy. Items such as clothing, walking aids, books, house keys, spectacles, dentures and so on are also patient property and can cause considerable distress and inconvenience to the patient, and unnecessary additional work and expense for the Trust, if lost.

6. DUTIES

- 6.1 The Director of Finance is responsible for the provision of an appropriate policy and procedure for the safekeeping of patient property.
- 6.2 The Ward/Departmental Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of the policy and that the policy is implemented within the Ward/Department.
- 6.3 The nurse in charge of a patient’s care at the time of admission/discharge/transfer or death is responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy.
- 6.4 All staff should be made aware of their responsibilities and duties for the administration of the property of patients by the appropriate Departmental/Ward Manager. When handling patient property and valuables, care should be taken to be sensitive to any cultural or religious beliefs and values that the patient or carers may hold.

7. POLICY STATEMENT

- 7.1 The Trust will not accept responsibility for the loss of, or damage to, property as defined in 5.2, unless an official receipt is obtained from the Administrative/Nursing staff for property which has been handed in for safe keeping.

8. GUIDELINES

- 8.1 Valuables should preferably not be brought into hospital, and if possible any items of value should be removed by the patient’s relative/guardian. Where this is not possible, a record of the patient’s property must be completed by a member of the hospital staff in the presence of a second member of staff and the patient or his/her personal representative where practicable.
- 8.2 It is not recommended for patients to hold more than £20 on the Ward.

8.3 A patient property record shall be completed using the official Trust property receipt book (see 9.3 below) in respect of the following:

8.3.1 Property handed in for safe keeping by any patient or guardian (as appropriate)

8.3.2 Property taken into safe keeping if belonging to:

- Confused and/or disorientated patients
- Unconscious patients
- Patients dying in hospital
- Patients severely incapacitated for any other reason

8.4 It is important that terms specifying gold, diamond, etc, should not be used. Articles should be described as yellow metal, white stone, etc.

8.5 The record must be signed by both members of staff. Any alterations must be validated by signature as required for the original entry on the record.

8.6 Property handed over for safe keeping must be taken to the Cashiers' Office, except where there are no administrative staff present, in which case the property shall be placed by two members of staff into a night safe. The safes are emptied daily by the Cashiers' Office. It is important that all patients' property is accompanied by the Patients' Property form.

8.7 Any patient property delivered to Cashiers must be clearly marked as soiled if appropriate, and be placed in an appropriate receptacle to avoid danger, injury or damage to the cashier or their premises.

9. PROCEDURE

9.1 All Wards/Departments should be in possession of an official Trust Patient Property Book issued by the Finance Department. These books are controlled stationery and are available only from the Finance Department.

- All cash and valuables handed in for safe keeping must be entered into this book.
- Cash and valuables taken from unconscious or confused patients must also be entered in this book.
- When a patient dies, cash and valuables held on the patient's behalf or in the patient's possession at the time of death must also be recorded and taken to the Cashiers' Office. These items will be kept secure until the person(s) entitled to administer the estate indicates what should be done with them.
- When a patient dies and the next of kin are present and request to take valuables, they must be referred to the Cashiers' Office.

9.2 *Patients' Property which has not been placed into safe keeping* – Each Ward/Department should follow Trust procedures for losses of patient property which has not been placed into safe keeping (e.g.: clothing etc.) It must be made clear to patients and their relatives that the Trust cannot be held responsible for any such items, since they may be moved from the ward at any time by a relative, or the

patient might lose them. See Appendix 1 for Guidelines on the removal of patient clothing during clinical interventions.

10. PATIENTS PROPERTY RECEIPT BOOK

- 10.1 The top copy (white) is a receipt for the patient for cash and valuables handed over for safekeeping. The record must be signed by two members of staff, one of whom should normally be the qualified nurse in charge of the patient's care at that time.
- 10.2 The second copy (green) should be sent along with the property to the Cashiers' Office.
- 10.3 The third copy (yellow) is retained in the book on the Ward/Department.
- 10.4 Used Patients' Property Receipt books should be handed to the Cashiers' office before a new book will be issued.

11. CLOTHING

- 11.1 During clinical interventions it may be necessary to remove patients clothing in situations where the patient can assist.
- 11.2 In non-emergency situations, patients' clothing should be stored safely and securely and labelled where appropriate to avoid loss or misidentification.
- 11.3 Heavily soiled clothing belonging to the patient should be placed in an appropriate property bag for soiled clothing, and laundered in the usual manner.
- 11.4 Trust clothing even if damaged during removal should be returned to the Trust system for processing.
- 11.5 In emergency situations where the patient is conscious and damage to the clothing is unavoidable or where expedience is paramount, verbal consent should be sought before removing patients' clothing.
- 11.6 Where the patient is unconscious or otherwise unable to give consent, the relatives consent should be sought. If neither is possible then the removal of the clothing and damage should be reported as an exception through the risk management system and documented in the patients nursing notes.
- 11.7 If any heavily soiled clothing is no longer required by the patient this should be bagged as clinical waste and consent sought to dispose of the property with the patients or relatives consent, and this should be documented in the Nursing Record.

12. DECEASED PATIENTS

In the event of a patient dying in Hospital, their valuables will be dealt with as follows:

- 12.1 Inform the Cashiers' Office of the patient's death as soon as possible
- 12.2 In order to avoid inconvenience or distress to the deceased patients relatives, the patient's valuables should be sent to the Cashiers' Office as soon as possible after the patient's death, if this has not already taken place.

12.3 Valuables must not be returned to any relative/friends of the deceased by a member of the Ward staff. This is to safeguard the Trust against the possibility of legal action taking place in the event of valuables being given to relatives not entitled to them. The exception to this rule is wedding rings. If the patient's relatives request that the ring remains on the body this should be noted and clearly recorded in the Nursing Record. If the ring is to be removed it should be sent to the Cashiers' Office with all other valuables.

12.4 The deceased patient's property can only be reclaimed from the Cashiers' Office.

13. RECLAIMING CASH AND VALUABLES FROM CASHIERS ON DISCHARGE

13.1 It is important that the patient is informed that all cash is banked, and that items can only be reclaimed from the Cashiers' Office during normal working hours.

13.2 Where it is known that a patient is likely to be discharged outside normal working hours (e.g. evenings, weekends and bank and public holidays), the Ward staff should give consideration to obtaining the patient's property in advance. If the patient is not then discharged, the valuables should be placed in the night safe for safe keeping.

13.3 When the date of discharge is known, staff in the Cashiers' Office will arrange to return cash and valuables to the patient. If a large amount of cash has been handed in, the Cashiers' Office will need advance warning to make arrangements for the money to be returned upon the patient's discharge.

13.4 When the property is returned to the patient by the Cashier, this will take place in the presence of a witness (a member of staff or a relative) who will be asked to countersign the forms.

13.5 If a patient wishes to retrieve part of the property held in safe keeping such as small amounts of money or a personal item, the normal procedure as described above should be followed.

14. ADMINISTRATION ON PATIENTS' MONIES

- 14.1. Separate guidance is provided for Patient Welfare / Patients' Monies Offices on the administration of patients' monies.
- Appendix 1 - Instructions and procedures to be followed for the care of valuables and cash belonging to patients.
 - Appendix 2 - Disclaimer form for patients' valuables and cash
 - Appendix 3 - Extract from Trust's Standing Financial Instructions (SFIs) on Patients' Property

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE NHS TRUST

INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED FOR THE CARE OF VALUABLES AND CASH BELONGING TO PATIENTS

1. It is the responsibility of the member of staff admitting the patient to inquire if they have any valuables with them (see Standing Financial Instructions - SFIs).
2. Patients possessing valuables should be encouraged to get relatives to take the items home or to place them in documented safe custody with the member of staff.
3. If a patient insists that they wish to keep the property with them during their stay then that patient must be made aware of the fact that the management of the Trust will not accept any responsibility for the loss of such items. Disclaimer notices will be displayed worded as follows:

DISCLAIMER NOTICE:

'The Trust will not accept responsibility or liability for patients' property brought into Health Service premises, unless it is handed in for safe custody and a copy of an official patient's property record is obtained as a receipt'.

4. The patient should also be asked to sign a disclaimer form, which should be witnessed by a senior member of staff. On completion this form should be retained in the patient's medical notes.
5. When receiving items for safe keeping the member of staff admitting the patient should itemise the valuables in a record i.e. a Custody of Patients' Property (CPP) Book, with a second member of staff as a witness. Both members of staff and, if possible, the patient should sign the entry in the record. (Refer to SFI's 26.2)
6. The CPP is a three part 'No Carbon Required' (NCR) Book and each part is annotated as to whom it should be held by.
7. Cash and valuables must be kept in a secure place locally until they can be handed over to the cashier's office. (Refer to SFI's 26.1)
8. In the case of patients who are unconscious, confused or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, their valuables should be removed if safe and appropriate to do so, secured until they are in a position to have them returned. The senior member of staff at the time should ensure that details are recorded and witnessed, as above.
9. The cashier's office or his/her representative will return valuables to the patient. Arrangements must be made for patients discharged outside of normal working hours or at weekends.
10. Valuables must not be handed over to relatives unless written authority has been given to the cashier's office.
11. When temporary custody of valuables occurs during such procedures as x-ray, minor operation etc, a member of staff (two members of staff if patient is unconscious,

confused or under the influence of drugs or alcohol) should record and itemise the valuables. (A single sheet similar in design to the sheets in the CPP book should be used and held in the department) Both members of staff should sign the record and again, if possible, the signature of the patient should be obtained. The patient should sign the receipt section of the record when the property is returned and it should again be witnessed and signed by two members of staff.

12. Staff in outpatients' departments should not normally accept custody of patients' property. If a problem arises the manager should be informed so that arrangements may be made for the temporary custody of patients' valuables.
13. Dentures are normally the responsibility of the patient. However, if they are unable to care for them then a note must be made in the property record. (A single sheet similar in design to the sheets in the CPP book should be used and held in the department). The dentures should then ideally be placed in safekeeping in a container clearly marked with the patient's name.
14. In the following circumstances patients' clothing will be itemised in a property record (as above) at the point in time:
 - Emergency admissions.
 - Admissions of all children under 14 years, if unaccompanied by a parent or adult.
 - All internal and external transfers.
 - Admissions of any confused or disorientated patient.
 - Admissions of any unconscious patient.
 - Any clothing received for custody and retained in wardrobes.
 - Deceased patients.
15. In the event of a death, clothing should be recorded by two members of staff who should place the articles into special cream plastic bags and attach a serial numbered property identification label to each one. All valuables should be listed in the CPP book and any outstanding valuables not already accounted for should be included. The cash and valuables should be handed to the cashier's office. The deceased person's cash and valuables should only be surrendered to the next of kin on the written authority of the manager who has the responsibility for ensuring that it is done in strict accordance with instructions from the Department of Health (DH) concerning matters of probate. In no circumstances should staff hand over cash or valuables to other relatives or friends of the deceased person.
16. When a patient is being transferred, all property and clothing should be listed in the property record with a copy of the entry forwarded to the next person in charge, receiving the patient. If cash or valuables are held, then the cashier's office should be informed of the transfer and arrange for the safe transfer of items. If the member of staff escorting the patient delivers any cash or valuables, he or she must obtain a receipt from the receiving unit. The receipt should then be returned to the cashier's office of the original unit.
17. In terms of unclaimed cash and property the HfMA Patients' Monies and Belongings recommendation is to be followed which is that *"low value items may normally be disposed of after 2-3 months. Any monies realised by sale should be paid into the exchequer account whence the patient/next of kin should be reimbursed if a subsequent claim is made."*

Appendix 2

**WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE NHS TRUST
DISCLAIMER FORM FOR PATIENTS' VALUABLES AND CASH**

I have, by my own choice, decided to retain the following valuables and cash in my possession:

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.....

The Trust has offered to place these items into safe keeping and issue me with a receipt. I do not wish to accept this offer and I fully accept the responsibility for their future security.

Signed

Date

Witnessed by: Name

Signature

Ward/Department

Date

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH AND CARE NHS TRUST

EXTRACT FROM TRUST STANDING FINANCIAL INSTRUCTIONS

26. PATIENTS' PROPERTY

- 26.1 The Trust has a responsibility to provide safe custody for money and other personal property (hereafter referred to as "property") handed in by patients, in the possession of unconscious or confused patients, or found in the possession of patients dying in hospital or dead on arrival.
- 26.2 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that patients or their guardians, as appropriate, are informed before or at admission by:
- notices and information booklets;
 - hospital admission documentation and property records;
 - the oral advice of administrative and nursing staff responsible for admissions,
- that the Trust will not accept responsibility or liability for patients' property brought into Health Service premises, unless it is handed in for safe custody and a copy of an official patients' property record is obtained as a receipt.
- 26.3 The Director of Finance must provide detailed written instructions on the collection, custody, investment, recording, safekeeping, and disposal of patients' property (including instructions on the disposal of the property of deceased patients and of patients transferred to other premises) for all staff whose duty is to administer, in any way, the property of patients. Due care should be exercised in the management of a patient's money in order to maximise the benefits to the patient.
- 26.4 Where Department of Health instructions require the opening of separate accounts for patients' moneys, these shall be opened and operated under arrangements agreed by the Director of Finance.
- 26.5 In all cases where property of a deceased patient is of a total value in excess of £5,000 (or such other amount as may be prescribed by any amendment to the Administration of Estates, Small Payments, Act 1965), the production of Probate or Letters of Administration shall be required before any of the property is released. Where the total value of property is £5,000 or less, forms of indemnity shall be obtained.
- 26.6 Staff should be informed, on appointment, by the appropriate departmental or senior manager of their responsibilities and duties for the administration of the property of patients.
- 26.7 Where patients' property or income is received for specific purposes and held for safekeeping the property or income shall be used only for that purpose, unless any variation is approved by the donor or patient in writing.