

Brief guide: substance misuse services – same-sex provision¹

Context and policy

Clients of substance misuse services may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Also, because of the stigma attached to addiction, providers must protect clients' privacy and dignity. For these reasons, residential services should provide same-sex accommodation where possible.

Evidence required

NHS-funded substance misuse services (NHS and independent sector)

NHS providers and independent sector providers that admit clients whose care is funded by the NHS must provide same-sex sleeping accommodation, day spaces, bathrooms and toilets. The CQC brief guide on same-sex accommodation¹ applies to these units.

Non-NHS funded substance misuse services (independent sector)

We normally expect the requirement to provide same-sex accommodation to apply to substance misuse hospital services that admit clients whose care is paid for privately and to residential units that provide detoxification and rehabilitation. However, CQC recognises that in some services (for example, a small standalone residential rehabilitation unit), the physical premises may make providing women-only day spaces and segregated bathroom and toilet facilities difficult. Clients should be made aware of sleeping accommodation prior to admission so they have a choice whether to admit themselves or not.

In such cases, providers should be able to demonstrate that they have thought about what women-only day space could be made available and how shared bathroom and toilet facilities are managed to ensure safety, privacy and dignity. When non-NHS funded substance misuse services do not provide women-only day spaces or segregated bathrooms and toilets, they must be able to demonstrate they have:

- a rationale for why this level of separation is not needed
- assessed the risks for and informed individual clients that are admitted
- put measures in place to minimise any risks to safety, privacy and dignity.

All services

It is good practice for all services to have a policy which covers how they support people who are transgender or non-binary, especially if they provide sleeping accommodation.

¹ For services that also offer treatment for mental health needs or operate within a hospital setting, this guidance should be read in conjunction with the existing [brief guide on same-sex accommodation](#). Brief guides are a learning resource for CQC inspectors. They provide information, references, links to professional guidance, legal requirements or recognised best practice guidance about particular topics in order to assist inspection teams. They do **not** provide guidance to registered persons about complying with any of the regulations made pursuant to s 20 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 **nor** are they further indicators of assessment pursuant to s 46 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

Reporting

Report under '**safe and clean environment**' in the Safe key question section.

Links to regulations

Regulation 10 (dignity and respect) would apply if clients' rights to privacy and dignity have not been upheld.

Regulation 12 (safe care and treatment) would apply if the premises are not safe to use for their intended purpose and have not been used in a safe way and there is evidence that this has impacted on care or treatment.

Regulation 13 (safeguarding service users from abuse and improper treatment) would apply if systems and processes, such as comprehensive assessments and risk assessments, have not been effectively used to protect service users from abuse.

Regulation 15 (premises and equipment) would apply when the premises are not suitable for the purposes for which they are being used.

Regulation 17 (good governance) would apply if the provider has failed to operate systems and processes to assess, monitor and mitigate risks to the health, safety and welfare of service users.

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