

Clinical On-Call Policy

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Responsible Committee: Board

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Supersedes: N/A

Next Review Due: Oct 2018

Scope

The role of the clinical on-call is, where possible, to enable GPs or other Health Care Professionals (HCP) working for SELDOC to seek professional support from a senior colleague in the event of any unforeseen difficulty that may arise in the out of hours (OOH) period.

The clinical on-call is not providing supervision or a senior/specialist opinion. The GP/ HCP on duty remains professionally accountable for their clinical decision making. However, it is recognised that the OOH environment is a dynamic one and that there are occasions where the opportunity to reflect on a particular case and discuss challenges in clinical management with another clinician can be helpful.

Any issues regarding staffing, resources or procedures should be referred to the operational manager on-call.

Personnel

All GP board directors (which includes the Group Medical Director) must participate in the clinical on-call rota. Any other senior GP with OOH experience who joins the organisation in a management capacity must also join the clinical on call rota.

Rota

The on-call period usually runs for a week beginning at 6.30pm on a Monday evening and ending on 8.00am the following Monday morning. It is only operational during the OOH period (6.30pm to 8.00am on weekdays and 6.30pm on Friday through all day Saturday and Sunday ending at 8.00 am Monday morning, and 24h on any Bank Holiday). Usually whole weeks are allocated on a rotational basis so an on-call participant can expect to be on-call every 1 in 5 weeks (currently), and less if other HCP's join the rota in the future.

Bank holidays are fairly allocated on a rotational basis across the years with equal total numbers of bank holidays, but rotation of the specific bank holidays across the years i.e. no participant should expect to be on-call over Christmas in successive years. Bank holidays are allocated separately from the associated weekend/week, so that any participant should expect to have some free period not on-call during a bank holiday weekend.

Responsibilities

The clinical on-call is expected to make themselves available for the duration of their allocated on-call period; this would include keeping their mobile phone on overnight or providing a landline number where they can be reached in the night.

However, SELDOC appreciates that as this support is provided over and above their regular working hours and is not remunerated, it is not intended that being the clinical on-call will prevent individuals from participating in other evening and

weekend commitments (such as family and recreational activities). Whilst this may mean that there are short gaps in the availability of the clinical on-call, calls are expected to occur infrequently - and an operational manager on-call is also available. The non-availability of the clinical on-call should not hinder the ability of a GP or other HCP to provide care and treatment to SELDOC patients.

However, should the clinical on-call expect that they will not be available for any significant period during their scheduled on-call period (for example they will be on holiday abroad), they should arrange for a swap of rostered periods of on-call with another participant in the clinical on-call rota, ensuring that the Senior Executive Assistant is informed of the swap.

Procedure to follow if the clinical on-call is not contactable

If it is not possible to contact the clinical on-call after three attempts, it is appropriate to try other clinicians who undertake this role, even though they are not currently scheduled to be providing the clinical on-call support at that time. If they are also not available then other clinicians, either working within the OOH service internally, or externally such as on-call hospital doctors, can also be contacted by the OOH GPs or HCP's for peer-to-peer support.

Accessing the OOH medico-legal advice line

Mills and Reeves provide SELDOC with a 24h medico-legal advice line that the clinical on-call can either access personally for medico-legal advice in the OOH period or they can authorise a GP or HCP to be able to access this and then give the GP/HCP the number to call for advice. This is particularly useful if a tricky legal/ethical dilemma arises in the OOH period.

If the clinical on-call decides to give the number to the GP/HCP to phone themselves then they should always phone the advice line first in order to authorise the GP/HCP, as they act as a 'gatekeeper' to this advice line. GPs/HCP will not be able to access advice on this line without authorisation from the clinical on-call as there is a cost to SELDOC for this service.

The OOH advice line number is **01384 679023**

If the medico-legal advice can wait until the 'in hours' period, then the clinical on-call should direct the GP/HCP to contact the clinical governance team the next working day by email or phone on seldoc.clingov@nhs.net or **0208 6191264**. The GP/HCP should then go through the clinical governance team for this authorisation as it is a different number in the in-hours period.