

Conflicts of interest case study: NHS healthcare professional asked to give private treatment

Note: While this scenario focusses on a physiotherapist, it could also apply to a range of healthcare professionals employed by the NHS. The suggestions offered are examples, and are not an exhaustive list of all the possible solutions or courses of action.

The scenario

Simon is a physiotherapist employed by the NHS. He treated Rosie in an NHS neuro-rehabilitation unit for six weeks following a stroke. Rosie improved significantly during her time at the unit and her family were keen for Simon to continue treating her in a private capacity once she was discharged.

What did Simon consider?

Simon considered whether or not there was a conflict of interest in him providing private care to a patient he had previously treated through his employment with the NHS. He thought about how he might ensure any fees he charged were appropriate and that the patient and their family wasn't coerced into paying high fees because they wanted continuity of care.

Simon also reflected on how he might approach providing private care in a way which retained professional boundaries.

What did Simon do?

Simon was mindful of his professional obligations to his current employer, the wider NHS, and the people in his care, and so discussed his plans to undertake private treatment with his line manager, who raised no concerns.

Simon discussed the realistic prognosis for Rosie with her and her family to ensure they were aware of the likely outcomes of ongoing private physiotherapy treatment. He also discussed the fee he intended to charge, providing them with a breakdown so they understood fully the payments they would be making.

Simon also hired a room at a private physiotherapy practice for Rosie's physiotherapy sessions, to ensure that she felt comfortable with treatment and that professional boundaries were maintained. He also outlined the key NHS policies he would adhere to when undertaking private sessions.

Other useful resources for you

- Joint statement from the Chief Executives of statutory regulators of healthcare professionals
- HCPC, *Standards of conduct, performance and ethics*