

BASICS South West Clinical Observer Policy

1. Introduction & Purpose

1.1 Observer shifts provide a valuable opportunity for clinical team members (normally registered healthcare professionals) to gain experience in the pre-hospital environment, develop a practical understanding of how the ambulance service functions, and obtain a realistic insight into what independent responding may entail prior to committing to the full accreditation process.

1.2 BASICS South West wishes to support and encourage observer opportunities wherever possible, on the BASICS South West Enhanced Care Car, or other similar vehicles operated by the individual schemes. This document should be read in conjunction with South West Ambulance Service's Observer Policy, however there is an abbreviated process in place for clinical volunteers as part of approved BASICS schemes under the management of the Responder Department. This document sets out how clinical observer shifts should be organised and conducted, and should be read by both those undertaking and those supervising the clinical observer shift.

2. Observer Shift Organisation

2.1 Clinical observer shifts should be pre-planned, with an agreed supervising clinician, who should be an approved and accredited BASICS South West responder, who holds a contract for such activities with the Trust.

2.2 Observers should be affiliated to a scheme within the BASICS South West structure. As each of the separate schemes are independent charities, each have their own membership criteria and categories. The exact membership/affiliation arrangements may vary between schemes. However, schemes should be satisfied as to the identity and 'bona fide' nature of the observers as per their own membership processes, and should retain the necessary records to this effect.

2.3 In line with Trust policy, observers under the age of 18 years cannot be accommodated.

3. Observer Shift Practicalities

3.1 The supervising responder is responsible for providing a full verbal briefing at the commencement of the observer shift, and a de-brief at the end of the shift.

3.2 Prior to the commencement of the shift the observer should complete and sign the attached confidentiality / disclaimer agreement in line with Trust policy. A copy of this should be returned at the earliest opportunity to the Responder Department (by post or email to responders@swast.nhs.uk).

3.3 The supervising responder is responsible for ensuring that the observer has access to the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This should include, as a minimum, suitable clothing for the weather and environment, and sturdy footwear (ideally with toe-protection). The supervising responder should ensure the vehicle has an adequate high-visibility jacket (identified externally with

'OBSERVER' name panels), a helmet for each occupant, eye protection and suitable infection prevention and control consumables.

3.4 Observers should follow the specific instructions of the supervising responder at all times.

3.5 Observers should wear seat belts whenever in a moving response vehicle, and wherever practical if travelling in the back of an ambulance. When travelling with lights and sirens, observers should not speak to or distract the driver other than to warn of a hazard that they may not have already identified.

3.6 Whilst there are some inherent and unavoidable risks associated with the pre-hospital environment, observers should not expose themselves to unnecessary risk. Observers should remain in the response vehicle at potentially dangerous incidents, such as incidents involving hazardous materials or assaults with uncontained assailants, until the supervising responder is satisfied that the scene is as safe as practicable. In situations where remaining in the vehicle may increase risk (such as road traffic collisions with live carriageways), observers should follow the direction of the supervising responder and/or the appropriate authorities in control of the incident as to the safest place to position themselves.

3.7 It is recognised that there may be circumstances where the provision of hands-on clinical assistance by clinical observers would benefit patient care. Observers should only take part in hands-on clinical care if expressly requested to do so by the supervising responder, and should work under the supervisor's explicit direction. Observers should only work within their personal professional competences and skills. If an observer feels unable or unwilling to assist in a specific task, or is unfamiliar with an item of equipment, the observer should let the supervising responder know immediately and refrain from providing care. The type of assistance that may be provided by the observer should form part of the detailed pre-shift briefing.

3.8 Observers should comply with BASICS South West and/or Trust policies and procedures at all times whilst undertaking observer shifts, including infection control policies.

4.0 Confidentiality

4.1 During the shift, observers may encounter information of a confidential nature. On no account must information relating to individual patients, members of staff or health service business be divulged to anyone other than members of staff employed by the Trust who have legitimate reason to require it.

4.2 If an observer is approached by a member of the public or another emergency service, the observer should direct the enquiry to the supervising clinician. Incidents that BASICS members respond to can attract media attention. Observers should be mindful of this, and be careful not to inadvertently divulge any information about an incident, particularly as members of the press may not always immediately identify themselves as such. All enquiries must be directed to a member of Trust staff.

4.3 Observers should refrain from taking photographs and making audio-visual recordings whilst undertaking a shift. Observers should also be mindful of avoiding inadvertent breaches of confidentiality, including those resulting from social media use. If in doubt, the Trust produces guidelines about the appropriate use of such outlets that should be referred to.

Confidentiality and Disclaimer Statement – BASICS South West Observer Shift

I have read and agree to abide by this policy and the related documents referred to.

I understand that during the course of my observation shift with BASICS South West /SWASFT, I may have access to information of a confidential nature. On no account will I divulge information relating to individual patients, members of staff or other health service business to anyone other than staff employed directly by SWASFT. I understand that this also relates to the use of photographs, video recordings and social media.

I will also take care to ensure that conversations which contain confidential information are held where they cannot be overheard by others who should not have access to such information.

I acknowledge receipt of, and accept this confidentiality statement. I understand that breaches of confidentiality may result in the immediate termination of the observer shift, and could place at risk future placements with BASICS South West and the South Western Ambulance Service. The Data Protection Act 1998 may also render me individually liable for prosecution in the event of unauthorised disclosure of information, or may involve an action for civil damages against me.

I understand that there are some inherent and unavoidable risks associated with working in the pre-hospital environment, not all of which can be anticipated or reasonably controlled for. I agree to follow the instructions of the supervising clinician at all times, and not to take any action that would jeopardise my safety, or the safety of other staff and the public. I confirm that I am physically fit and well enough to undertake the observer shift.

I agree to abide by South West Ambulance Service and BASICS South West Policies and Procedures where applicable.

Signed _____ Print _____ Date _____

(observer)

Signed _____ Print _____ Date _____

(supervising responder)

Responder Department: Copy to File

Document details

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