



Operational procedures and equipment for forensic medical examination rooms in Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs)

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The following information refers to the set of rooms used within a SARC for the forensic medical examinations. The following is generic advice and local practice may vary depending upon particular circumstances.

Forensic Medical rooms

Suggested dimensions 5.5m x 3.6m

Operational procedures for SARCs

- The suite should be locked when not in use with a numbered seal attached to the door. This number of the seal should be logged for audit trail purposes.
- The suite should only be used for Forensic Medical examinations.
- A log book should be kept indicating all persons who enter the room and a note made of the date and time and reason for entering (e.g. cleaning, examination, repairs, etc.). There should be a Staff Elimination Database in which the SARC staff DNA is included. The DNA of anyone entering the room should be taken, this includes anyone accompanying the client; the accompanying person's DNA should be put with the client's samples. They should be given a full explanation as to why their DNA is needed and reassurance that the sample is not processed unless there is a contamination problem. Any work people who enter the room should have their DNA taken and stored on a Visitor Database.
- There should be a log book containing relevant information; for example, how to call out a cleaner, useful telephone numbers - genitourinary (GU) clinics, social services, etc.
- The room must be cleaned after each use (including after any visits by repair men, visitors etc., even though a forensic medical has not been done). This is to prevent DNA contamination (this includes the waiting room, the examination room and bathroom). Within the Forensic room: the floor, couch (even if covered with a protector at the time of the medical), worktop, writing desk, sink and taps need to be cleaned each time the room is used, even if not for a forensic medical.
- An alcohol-based wipe with organic content should be used for wiping down vinyl chairs in waiting room area and for the medical examination couch.
- A general cleaning agent should be used for all the work surfaces such as counter tops and sinks. Certain cleaning agents are meant to be in contact for at least 10 minutes to be effective. Concentrated solution should be diluted down to a 10% solution. However, once diluted, the solution has a limited shelf life. A 10% solution is suitable for floors and other surfaces where it is 'left on'. Rubber gloves should be used when handling these products. The Police DNA lab or a Forensic Provider can advise on which cleaning agents are suitable – they should be ones that have been validated by an accredited DNA lab.
- Use disposable white paper towels for cleaning surfaces with the disinfectant. Surfaces that could potentially collect dust etc. e.g. exposed storage shelves, should be cleaned at least once a week.
- After the cleaning agent has been used to clean the sinks, they should be wiped with cleaning cloths. The cloths should be used once and restrict their use to one room.
- A lockable drug cupboard may be in the Forensic Examination room, but preferably in another part of the SARC. The resuscitation bag should be easily accessible in a room near to the Forensic Examination room and a notice (laminated for easy cleaning) should be in the examination room indicating the location of the bag.
- A named person should have responsibility for checking and restocking the suite on a regular basis (at least once a week). This includes checking the expiry dates on the kits/equipment. Any problems with stocks should be reported to the SARC Manager.
- The modular kits should be stored in appropriately labelled wipeable containers. All unused items from opened kits or out of date kits must be appropriately disposed of.
- In every examination room there should be a wall mounted clinical waste bin with a foot lever to open. This must be emptied after every forensic medical and the contents disposed of as per the organisation's policy.
- The sharps disposal bin should be replaced when three quarters full.
- Used towels, gowns etc. will be placed in a disposable plastic bag and should be professionally cleaned and returned in a sealed plastic bag
- There should be access to a refrigerator and freezer for storage of samples with a separate fridge for the storage of vaccines.
- A room thermometer should be available to record the ambient temperature for medicines stored at room temperature.

Guidance on fridge/freezer monitoring

The temperature of the fridge and freezer should be monitored with a daily check which must be recorded. It is essential that there is a complete record of the temperature at which the samples have been stored including any temperature deviations. The actual acceptable temperature range appears to be governed by what is specified by the equipment manufacturer, e.g. fridges operate at 2° to 10° with 4° as optimal and freezers operate at approximately -20°C (must be below -10°C to maintain freezing). Best practice is to check the freezer temperatures daily and record the reading. Action is required if the temperature deviates up or down by 5°C (see local standing operating procedures).



Freezers should be alarmed and there should be a backup generator. It is good practice for the equipment used for the temperature monitoring to be calibrated and its accuracy known. It would be highly likely where freezers have broken down, or have been accidentally switched off for up to 48 hours, that there may still be positive body fluid findings and DNA results.

The storage of toxicology samples is non critical i.e. the samples need to be at 'refrigerated' or 'frozen' temperatures but do not need to be at a specific temperature (as it may need to be for certain diagnostic reagents, some medications, certain foods etc).

Waiting Room

- Easily cleaned surfaces
- Good heating and ventilation
- Comfortable chairs in washable vinyl fabric
- Coffee tables
- T.V./music centre with remote controls
- Pictures (non-reflective glass)

Forensic Medical Examination room

In addition to the stock items each room should have:

- Desk or table which can easily be cleaned.
- Plastic chairs may be in the examination room but best practice would be to have none, if thought to be essential then 2 plastic chairs could be used.
- Examination couch (with steps or raising/lowering facilities). Pillows should not be used, if necessary, a suitable support covered in the same material or similar to the couch can be used. This must be suitable material for the robust forensic cleaning process and should be sampled during the environmental sampling process.
- Screen (rigid panels) or suspended curtains which are disposable to use around the couch.
- Store cupboards labelled to identify what they contain – this should be only essential items.
- If stationery is needed in the examination room this must be stored in a washable box which is routinely cleaned in every room. Best practice is to leave all paperwork in another room to be completed after the forensic medical.
- Washbasin with elbow operated taps (preferably mixer). Tiling above wash basin
- Paper towel and liquid soap dispenser
- Mobile examination light with magnifying lens
- Colposcope with attachments for photo-documentation. A disposable colposcope cover should be used for each case.
- Wipeable clock
- Telephone (access to language line) – if needed the mobile on speaker phone in an evidence bag should be sufficient – a fixed telephone is a risk of contamination.
- Waste bin
- Clinical waste bin (wall mounted)

- Sharps disposal bin (secure, wall-mounted)
- Good heating, lighting and controlled air change system.
- Wipeable weighing scales and a height scale (cleaned in every room clean) for weighing and measuring.

- Disposable tape measures

Clinical equipment e.g.:

- Auroscope
- Stethoscope
- Ophthalmoscope
- Sphygmomanometer
- Pulse oximeter
- Disposable thermometer should be kept in a wipeable box and should not be used except in an emergency before the forensic examination is completed to avoid the risk of DNA contamination.

Bathroom facilities

- Easily cleaned surfaces
- Good heating and ventilation
- Shower (non-slip mat/surfaces), toilet, wash basin
- Clean towels, soap (single use), shampoo, combs, sanitary towels and tampons, etc.
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Seat
- Lock on doors which can be opened from outside in an emergency
- Suitable mirror
- Supply of nappies for different ages and pull ups
- Mobile changing trolley and baby changing mat and baby wipes

Sitting room

- Good heating and ventilation
- Comfortable wipe clean easy chairs
- Coffee table
- Telephone (outside line)
- T.V./music centre
- Pictures – neutral, may be used on the walls.
- Toys for complainants/accompanying children – but please remember that the toys must be able to be forensically cleaned or there will be a serious risk of DNA contamination.

Refreshment facilities - in the Kitchen

- Kettle
- Cordial, tea bags and instant coffee
- Long-life milk in individual cartons and sugar
- Snacks (biscuits, crisps)
- Crockery and cutlery
- Washing up liquid and disposable paper towel for drying



Miscellaneous

- Air freshener
- Supply of dressing gowns and towels – to be washed and returned in sealed plastic bags.
- Spare clothing and shoes – to be kept outside the forensic examination room.
- Blankets – to be washed and returned in sealed plastic bags.
- Plastic bags for laundry
- Hair dryer

SARCS SUPPLIES LIST

Resuscitation equipment

SARC staff must ensure that they are familiar with any equipment that is available and fully trained to use such equipment.

- Bag-valve-mask with various size facemasks
- Oropharyngeal airways (range of sizes)
- Naso pharyngeal air ways size 6/7
- I gel size 3/4/5
- Magill Forceps
- Suction equipment (electrical or hand operated)
- Pocket masks various sizes
- AED
- Oxygen cylinder with delivery head, tubing and masks
- Oximeter
- Sphygmomanometer
- Stethoscope
- Auroscope (with disposable covers)
- Thermometer (with covers if required)
- Glucometer with test strips (and control solution for calibration)
- Patella hammer

Dressing bandages & plasters

- Steristrip closures 6mm Pack 36
- 2 fabric dressing strip 6cm x 1m
- 2 fabric dressing strip 8cm x 1m
- 50 non-adherent dressings 9.5cm
- 5 microporous tapes 2.5cm x 5m
- 30 cotton wool 25g
- 5 boxes of assorted adhesive dressings
- Dressing packs x 20 (these contain cotton wool, gauze etc. and are not the same as ambulance dressing packs).

Disinfectant & antiseptics

- 30 antiseptic wipes
- 30 antiseptic sachets 25ml
- 2 liquid soap
- 2 alcohol handrub

Protective items

- 2 sharps disposal bin 7L (one in use)
- 100 clinical waste bag 200 x 320mm
- 20 clinical waste bag 400 x 800mm
- 50 clinical waste bag 700 x1000mm
- 3 boxes of each size non-sterile powder free vinyl gloves (small, medium, large)
- 5 pairs of each size of sterile surgical powder free gloves
- Facemasks

Miscellaneous

- 2 paper towel rolls 250mm (one in use)
- 2 plastic bowls (1 pint)
- 1 scissors dressing 150mm
- Single use lubricating jelly
- 2 boxes tissues
- Low adhesive tape
- Pregnancy test (minimum 2)
- Disposable plastic vaginal speculum – various sizes – minimum 20 of each size.
- Disposable plastic proctoscopes small and large minimum 10 of each size.
- Saline eye wash x 3
- Urine bottles, gel swabs and chlamydia swabs with appropriate request forms, this may vary depending on the local Sexual Health agreements. These must be stored in wipe clean boxes if kept in the forensic examination room.
- Foley catheters
- Disposable tape measure

Forensic kits (*National Kit list available here*)

For more information see [Recommended equipment for obtaining forensic samples from complainants and suspects](#)

- Modular swab collections kits for the investigation of sexual offences
- Elimination DNA kit
- Blood for toxicology (alcohol/drugs) kit
- Urine collection kit
- Mouth collection kit
- Condom collection kit



- Fibre collection
- Hair collection kit
- Nail collection kits

Packing for Exhibits

- Paper evidence bags with clear panel (small and large) minimum 50
- Criminal Justice Act labels minimum 50
- Roll of tape for sealing bags
- Biohazard tape

Access to online documents and stationery

- Letterhead, plain paper and envelopes
- Body diagrams – female, male and children
- Clinical Questionnaires, e.g. CIWA (Clinical Institute Withdrawal Assessment – alcohol) / COWS (Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale) / MMSE (Mini Mental State Examination) if an assessment is needed for alcohol/drug withdrawal or a Mental State Examination.
- Forensic sampling forms for laboratory e.g., MEDEX forms or equivalent but the use of the MEDEX form is preferable as it allows standardisation of exhibit documentation.
- Hospital referral forms
- Patient advice sheets
- Other proformas as required

Medication at the SARC

Medication should be provided as per an agreed formulary and stored in a suitable locked medicine cabinet in the SARC. The management of the stock should be agreed locally by the SARC staff involved and checked regularly with respect to expiry date of contents. The drugs covered by Patient Group Directives should be included. It is suggested the formulary may include:

1. Paracetamol 500mg
2. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory e.g. ibuprofen 200mg
3. Co-codamol or similar analgesic
4. Salbutamol inhaler
5. Levonorgestrel 1.5 mg and Ulipristal acetate 30mg
6. Anti-emetic tab
7. Antibiotics for prophylaxis for STDs – this will depend on local Sexual Health directives.
8. Post exposure prophylaxis for HIV – 30 -day packs.
9. Hepatitis B vaccine for adults and children
10. Consideration to be given to other medication such as that available in a custody suite but this will be decided by individual organisation. The SARC examiners are unlikely to be able to recognise/treat moderate drug or alcohol withdrawal. If a patient is felt to be withdrawing then the police should take them to the ED for assessment and treatment.

If immunisation for hepatitis B is to be given, provision must be made for the treatment of anaphylactic shock should it occur – this will be in the resus bag.

All HCPs should be familiar with *FFLM Safe and Secure Handling and Supply of Medicines in Sexual Assault Services for Adults and children*.