

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This practice operates a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment and abuse of staff or patients, which includes (but is not limited to) homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, ageism, or harassment or abuse on basis of disability, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion, or belief.

The purpose of this policy is to address instances of unacceptable behaviour which may cause harm or the fear of harm to any person within the Practice. The scope of this policy is therefore:

Instances of violence or aggression committed by:

Any person, whether patient, visitor or any other person working within the practice

Against: any patient, visitor, or other person working within the practice.

For the practice to maintain good relations with their patients the practice would like to ask all its patients to read and take note of the occasional types of behaviour that would be found unacceptable:

- Using bad language or swearing at practice staff
- Any physical violence towards any member of the Primary Health Care Team or other patients, such as pushing or shoving
- Verbal abuse towards the staff in any form including verbally insulting the staff
- Racial abuse and sexual harassment will not be tolerated within this practice
- Persistent or unrealistic demands that cause stress to staff will not be accepted. Requests will be met wherever possible, and explanations given when they cannot
- Causing damage/stealing from the Practice's premises, staff, or patients
- Obtaining drugs and/or medical services fraudulently
- Any homophobic, biphobic or transphobic behaviour will not be tolerated within the practice.
- We ask you to always treat your GPs and their staff courteously.

DEFINITION

Violence and aggression are defined as:

Violence is the use of force against a person and has the same definition as "assault" in law (i.e., an attempt, offer or application of force against the person). This would cover any person unlawfully touching any other person forcefully, spitting at another person, raising fists or feet, or verbally threatening to strike or otherwise apply force to any person.

Aggression is regarded as threatening or abusive language or gestures, sexual gestures, or behaviour, derogatory, sexual or racial remarks, shouting or raising voices at any person or applying force to any practice property or the personal property of any person on the Practice. This would cover people banging on desks or counters or shouting in an intimidating manner.

This policy applies throughout the premises, including any car park and grounds. It also applies to any employee or partner away from the practice but only in so far as it relates to the business of the practice.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employee Responsibilities

Employees have the responsibility to ensure their own safety and that of their colleagues at work. It is essential, therefore, that all employees are familiar with practice policies and procedures, equipment and precautions adopted to combat the risk of physical and verbal abuse.

Familiarise themselves with practices policies and procedures, guidelines, and instructions.

Use any equipment or devices provided for 'at risk' situations i.e., alarms.

Participate in relevant training made available by the practice.

Report all incidents of physical and verbal abuse (threatened or actual).

Record details of incidents in compliance with practice procedures.

Contribute towards reviews by nominated managers concerning any incidents in which they have been involved.

Suggest precautionary measures involving changes in the layout of the work environment that can reduce risk.

Make use of any available staff support and counselling through the practice.

Advise the practice manager/line manager of any perceived risks involved in work activities.

PRACTICE RESPONSIBILITIES

Carry out risk assessments to assess and review the duties of employees, identifying any 'at risk' situations and taking appropriate steps to reduce or remove the risk to employees.

Assess and review the duties of employees, identifying any 'at risk' situations and taking appropriate steps to reduce or remove risk to employees particularly if they are working alone.

Assess and review the layout of premises to reduce the risk to employees.

Assess and review the provision of personal safety equipment i.e., alarms.

Develop practice policies, procedures, and guidelines for dealing with physical and verbal abuse.

Provide support and counselling for victims or refer to suitably qualified health professionals.

Make employees aware of risks and ensure employee involvement in suitable training courses.

Record any incidents and take any remedial action to ensure similar incidents are prevented.

WHAT TO DO

If violence and aggression is encountered:

In the first instance a member of the staff should ask the perpetrator to stop behaving in an unacceptable way. Sometimes a calm and quiet approach will be all that is required. Staff should not in any circumstances respond in a like manner.

Should the person not stop their behaviour the Practice Manager or a Partner should be asked to attend, and the member of staff should explain calmly what has taken place, preferably within hearing of the perpetrator.

If the person is acting in an unlawful manner, causes damage or strikes another then the police should be called immediately.

Should it prove necessary to remove the person from the practice then the police should be called, and staff should not, except in the most extreme occasions, attempt to manhandle the person from the premises. In these cases, if the police are called, we can remove the patient and place on the Violent Patient Scheme via WYCSA.

If such a course of action proves necessary then those members of staff involved must complete a written note of the incident, detailing in chronological order what has taken place and the exact words used prior to leaving the building at the end of their working day.

It is the policy to press for charges against any person who damages or steals Practice property or assaults any member of staff or visitor/patient

PROCEDURE FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

Review the incident with the practice partners to determine severity

Determine if the patient should be removed from the practice list forthwith

Decide if a written warning should be given

Decide whether to take further action if the matter has been sufficiently dealt with by the advice already given

The details of any incident other than no further action will be entered into the patient's permanent record or the employee's personal file.

Any employee or patient/visitor who receives any injury, no matter how small, should be the subject of an entry in the practice Accident Book and should always be strongly advised to be examined by a doctor before they leave the premises

Every violent incident involving staff will be reasonably supported by the provision of medical or other treatment as necessary and all incidents should be brought to the attention of the Practice Manager, if not already involved.

The practice re-affirms its commitment to do everything possible to protect staff, patients, and visitors from unacceptable behaviour and their zero tolerance of any incident that causes hurt, alarm damage or distress.

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES SUBJECTED TO ABUSE

The practice takes a serious view of any incidents of physical and verbal abuse against its employees and will support them if assaulted, threatened, or harassed.

The first concern of managers after an incident is to provide appropriate debriefing and counselling for affected employees. Depending on the severity of the incident this counselling may be undertaken by trained professionals.

The practice manager/line manager will assist victims of violence with the completion of the formal record of the incident and where appropriate will report the incident to the police.

In the event of serious physical and verbal abuse patients will be removed from the practice List

APPENDIX 1 - POSTER

OUR PRACTICE STAFF ARE HERE TO HELP YOU.
OUR AIM IS TO BE AS POLITE AND HELPFUL AS POSSIBLE TO ALL PATIENTS.

IF YOU CONSIDER THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY OR
INAPPROPRIATELY, PLEASE ASK THE RECEPTION STAFF TO CONTACT THE
PRACTICE MANAGER, WHO WILL BE HAPPY TO ADDRESS YOUR CONCERNS.

HOWEVER, SHOUTING AND SWEARING OR THREATENING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS
OUR PRACTICE STAFF WILL NOT BE TOLERATED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES
AND PATIENTS WHO ARE ABUSIVE OR THREATENING MAY BE REMOVED FROM THE
PATIENT LIST.

PLEASE HELP US TO HELP YOU.
THANK YOU.

APPENDIX 2 – Action in the event of Panic Button activation.
Refer to the Emergency Incident Procedure [*]

APPENDIX 3 - Do's and Don'ts when facing angry patients

<i>Do</i>	<i>Don't</i>
Recognise your own feelings	Meet anger with anger
Use calming body language	Raise your voice, point or stare
Put yourself in their shoes	Appear to lecture them
Be prepared to apologise if necessary	Threaten any intervention unless you are prepared to act on it
Assert yourself appropriately	Make them feel trapped or cornered
Allow people to get things off their chest	Feel that you must win the argument

APPENDIX 4 –

I regret to advise you that after due consideration we have decided to remove you from our practice list.

The Partners believe that the Doctor/Patient relationship has broken down and feel you would be better served by registering with another Doctor in the area.
We will therefore be removing you from our practice list in the near future.

You will receive a letter in due course from Primary Care Support Services will formally advise you of your removal.

Patient Advisory and Liaison Service can be contacted on 0800 0525 270.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Freeman & Partners
