

VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION POLICY

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| Developed by | Ruth Cater |
| References | N/A |
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| Associated Documents or policy implementation leaflets | Violence and Aggression Risk Assessment |

1. Introduction

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.

2. 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 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 loudly in an intimidating manner. Aggressive behaviour includes behaviour in person, over the telephone and in written form e.g. email, text message and online.

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. The policy also applies to behaviour online and over the telephone.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 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 practice 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.

3.2 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 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.

4. 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 a colleague (e.g. another receptionist) or Team Leader 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 encounter is via the telephone the caller continues to be abusive the call can be terminated.

4.1 Course of action for staff to follow when these situations occur - standard form of words

Telephone/online:

First warning:

1. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, I've tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making me feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I must ask you to stop.

Terminate call:

2. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, I've tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making me feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I am going to terminate this conversation.

Face to face:

First Warning:

1. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, I've tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making me feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I would be grateful if you could stop. I am going to ask a colleague to come and support me.

Ask person to leave:

2. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, we have tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making us feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I would be grateful if you could leave the building as I am going to report this to the practice manager and the senior doctors.

- If the person is acting in an unlawful manner, causes damage or actually 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.
- 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 Manager immediately in order to determine severity
- Practice Manager will determine if the patient should be removed from the practice list forthwith
- Practice Manager will decide if a written warning should be given
- Practice Manager will decide whether to take further action if the matter has been sufficiently dealt with by the advice already given

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. If an injury has occurred this may be notifiable to the HSE.

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.

Marking Patients' Records

In the event of an act of violence or aggression taking place, it is possible to mark the patient's record to warn other staff of the potential threat of violence. An alert will be used to alert staff when they securely access the patient's record.

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.

Resources

<https://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/violence-and-aggression>

APPENDIX I – Message for screens & posters at reception

Violence and Aggression

Our reception staff have one of the most challenging jobs in the practice.

They are here to help you and their aim is to be as polite and helpful as possible to all patients.

When things go wrong it is rarely their fault but they will do their very best to solve your problem.

Staffa health does not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour.

Raised voices, shouting, pointing and swearing at practice staff will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Patients who are abusive will be asked to leave the premises and removed from the practice list.

Please treat our staff with the respect and courtesy they deserve.

Thank you.

APPENDIX 2 - Course of action for staff to follow when situations occur - standard form of words

Telephone

First warning:

3. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, I've tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making me feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I must ask you to stop.

Terminate call:

4. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, I've tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making me feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I am going to terminate this conversation.

Face to face

First Warning:

3. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, I've tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making me feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I would be grateful if you could stop. I am going to ask a colleague to come and support me.

Ask person to leave:

4. Mr/Miss/Mrs Smith, we have tried to address your concerns but the way you're behaving is unacceptable and making us feel uncomfortable/upset/anxious.

Staffa Health does not tolerate aggression or abusive behaviour and I would be grateful if you could leave the building as I am going to report this to the practice manager and the senior doctors.

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

| Do | Don't |
|--|--|
| 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 | 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 have to win the argument |

APPENDIX 4 - Warning Letter to Patient re: Abusive Behaviour

NAME
ADDRESS

DATE

Re: Formal warning about unacceptable behaviour

Dear *[insert name]*,

We are writing to discuss a report about *[abusive / violent / unacceptable]* behaviour, which took place on *[insert date]*. As you are already aware *[insert details of actions already taken]*.

Instances of violence or aggression which includes *[shouting, pointing and swearing]* at practice staff by any person will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Whilst we appreciate how frustrating the situation must have been for you at the time the *[insert staff member]* did find your attitude towards *[him/her]* rather intimidating and this caused some considerable distress.

It is possible that you may not have realised the impact your behaviour had on the *[insert staff member]* however I hope you will understand that we do have a Zero Tolerance Policy on abusive behaviour.

Please treat this letter as a formal warning that any such behaviour in the future will not be tolerated. Any repetition of abusive/aggressive behaviour will result in you being removed from this practice's patient list and you will be required to register elsewhere.

Yours sincerely

The Partners

Dr Cooper, Dr Parker, Dr Taylor, Dr Gadsden, Dr Stinton & Dr Humes

Staffa Health

APPENDIX 5 – General letter to patients regarding violence and aggression

Staffa Health operates a 'zero tolerance' policy with regard to incidents of aggressive or abusive behaviour towards our members of staff.

It's an honour and a privilege for us to provide healthcare to our local population and we are grateful to the 99.9% of our patients who use our services with good grace and understanding of the pressures faced by the modern NHS: this message is not directed at you.

In recent times we have experienced an increasing number of examples of unacceptable behaviour directed towards our staff, something which we will not tolerate. Just to be clear, we are not referring here to expressions of frustration or complaints which you may have about our services; everyone is entitled to express their opinion in a fair and reasonable manner and we will always listen and endeavour to help.

Examples of what IS unacceptable include:

- Physical violence
- Verbal abuse
- Racist abuse
- Sexual or sexist abuse
- Shouting, physical intimidation or other threatening actions
- Applying force to any practice property

Our policy is available to read on our website www.staffahealth.co.uk but it can be summarised as follows:

- When the line is crossed our staff will make that clear to the person involved and ask them to stop. If the behaviour continues they will terminate the conversation and (where the incident occurs on practice premises) ask them to leave.
- The case will be reported to the practice manager and discussed with a senior GP at the earliest opportunity to decide on appropriate action.
- Possible actions include:
 - Sending of warning letter
 - Removal from the practice list
 - Reporting to police

This has been in place for a number of years and is in accordance with general NHS policy but we have felt the need to make it more public in light of the increasing number of problems we are seeing. As stated earlier, we do not wish to offend anyone and understand that the vast majority of our patients treat us with fairness and respect. This is directed at the very small minority of people who seem to think that our staff are 'fair game' and consequently behave in an unacceptable manner; this will not be tolerated.

The Partners
September 2017