



Westlands Medical Centre

Violent & Abusive Patients

Practice Policy

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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.

AIM

This document describes violent and aggressive patient and details the steps to be taken to deal with them.

DEFINITION

Everyone has a duty to behave in an acceptable and appropriate manner. Staff members have a right to work, as patients have a right to be treated, free from fear of assault and abuse in an environment that is properly safe and secure.

The following baseline definitions of a verbal and physical aggression were introduced in November 2003 as part of work to tackle violence against staff and professionals who work in the NHS and replaced any other definitions previously in use across the NHS:

- **Physical Assault** – The intentional application of force to the person, without lawful Justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort.
- **Non-Physical Assault** – The use of inappropriate words or behaviour causing distress and or constituting harassment. (This includes inappropriate sexual remarks or attention and racial, gender, disability related remarks or activity).
- **Harassment** - A course of conduct causes another to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them, or causes alarm or distress without physically assaulting them. This can be carried out in any way.

The following is a comprehensive but not exhaustive description of the types of incidents and behaviours that are covered under this policy:

- Offensive language, verbal abuse and swearing which prevents staff from doing their job or makes them feel unsafe
- Loud and intrusive conversation
- Unwanted or abusive remarks

- Negative, malicious or stereotypical comments
- Invasion of personal space
- Brandishing of objects or weapons
- Near misses i.e. unsuccessful physical assaults
- Offensive gestures
- Threats or risk of serious injury to a member of staff, fellow patients or visitors
- Victimisation or intimidation
- Stalking
- Harassment
- Spitting
- Alcohol or drug fuelled abuse
- Any of the above linked to destruction of or damage to property

There are further considerations in regards to violence and aggression, these concern:

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.

Mental health issues are not an excuse for assault

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/Deputy Practice 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.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH VIOLENT, AGGRESSIVE OR DIFFICULT PATIENTS

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.
- If the aggressive patient wishes to make an appointment, the receptionist must never say NO. Say yes to diffuse the situation and then proceed to tell the patient when he/she can be seen.
- Never argue with the individual
- Always be polite even if the person is very difficult to please.
- If the situation is escalating and you feel you are no longer in control, and the person behaviour is threatening, intimidating, or you fear for your personal safety then use the GREEN BUTTON built in to each computer terminal which will summon assistance from Practice staff
- Those responders should help the member of staff explain calmly what has taken place, preferably within hearing of the perpetrator.
- 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.
- 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.

POLICE INVOLVEMENT

If there is a threat of physical violence then the police should be summoned using a 999 call

For all cases that meet the threshold for Aggressive behaviour the policed should be informed of the incident on the day using the 101 call number. A Police incident number should be provided by the Police.

Any call to the Police should be reported to the management team.

PROCEDURE FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

- The Senior Manager is to collect a statement from the staff involved
- The incident should be reported using the Quasar system
- The Senior Manager is to review the incident with the practice partners in order to determine severity
- Determine if the patient should be removed from the practice list forthwith. The NHS England removal of a violent patient form should be completed with the Police Incident number. This form needs to be completed within 7 days of the event
- Decide if a 12 month written warning should be given. A letter should be sent to the patient within 7 days of the incident
- Decide whether to take further action if the matter has been sufficiently dealt with by the advice already given for example chaperone consultations

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 Senior Partner or 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. The Police will also offer victim support.

In the event of serious physical and verbal abuse patients will be removed from the practice list and may be transferred to the Violent Patient Scheme provided by Fareham & Gosport CCG.

REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed every three years or on a substantive change in the law.



Debbie Langley
Quality and Compliance Manager

ZERO TOLERANCE **STATEMENT**

At **Westlands**, we take it very seriously if a member of the Westlands Team is treated in an abusive or violent way and this behaviour will not be tolerated.

In all cases the Police will be informed and you may be removed from Westland's patients list. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Are violent or threaten violence
- Are aggressive with
 - Raised voice,
 - invasion of personal space
 - offensive gestures and language
 - Negative, malicious or stereotypical comments
- Cause damage/steal from the Practice's premises/staff/patients
- Obtain drugs and/or medical services fraudulently.

If removed from our list you may be placed on the Violent Patient Scheme operated by Fareham & Gosport CCG.

We ask that patients treat the GPs and staff of **Westlands** courteously at all times.