

**Northumbria Primary Care**

**Zero Tolerance Policy**

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**Northumbria Primary Care**

**Zero Tolerance Policy**

**Introduction**

This policy has been set out by Northumbria Primary Care Ltd to promote and support positive patient behaviours and to encourage and outline the expectation we have as an organisation. We are committed to taking all reasonable precautions necessary to ensure the health, safety, welfare and well-being of its employees, patients and visitors, and endeavours to ensure that all employees are protected from physical and verbal abuse while they are working.

**Inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours may include but are not limited to::**

1. Unreasonable and / or offensive remarks or behaviour / rude gestures / innuendoes
2. Sexual and racial harassment
3. Threatening behaviour (with or without a weapon.
4. Actual physical assault (whether or not it results in actual injury) includes being pushed or shoved as well as being hit, punched or attacked with a weapon, or being intentionally struck with bodily fluids or excrement.
5. Attacks on Partners, members of staff or the public
6. Discrimination of any kind
7. Damage to employee's or employer's property
8. Unnecessarily persistent or unrealistic service demands that cause disruption
9. Stealing from practice premises, staff or other service users
10. Obtaining drugs and/or medical services fraudulently

The Practice acknowledges that there may be instances where inappropriate or unacceptable behaviours including violence and/or aggression forms part of a patient’s illness. In these circumstances, the issue will be discussed with the patient/carer and form part of the care planning alongside the practice team.

**Dignity & Respect**

NHS Constitution binds together the communities and patients the NHS serves and the people who work in it. Everyone has a right to be treated fairly and equally, with dignity and respect, and free from discrimination and harassment, and violence and abuse. There are extensive legal rights, embodied in general employment and discrimination law.

The protection and safety of Northumbria Primary Care Ltd employee's mental health is as important as the protection and safety of their physical health. Therefore, this policy also includes the organisation not tolerating any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. The following definitions may be useful:

• Discrimination The act of being treated unfairly because of who they are or because they possess certain characteristics. Within the Equality Act 2010 the following are protected characteristics:

o age

o gender reassignment

o being married or in a civil partnership

o being pregnant or on maternity leave

o disability

o race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin

o religion or belief

o sex

o sexual orientation

• Harassment. The act of being subject to unwanted behaviour which is offensive, intimidating or humiliating. Harassment can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination .

• Victimisation. The action of being singled out for cruel or unjust treatment.

• Microaggressions. Verbal, non-verbal and environmental slights, snubs and insults which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages and behaviours that target a person based on their protected characteristic or belonging to a marginalised group. These can be intentional and unintentional and are based on biases (either conscious and unconscious).

**Violence & Agression**

**The Practice supports the NHS policy of Zero Tolerance which defines violence as:***"Any incident where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health".*

**Violence and aggression towards a person may also be defined as:**

*"A physical contact with another person which may or may not result in pain or injury. The contact is uninvited and is an attempt to cause harm, injury or to intimidate. Non-physical aggression includes the use of language which causes offence or threatens the safety of a member of staff".*

**Types of difficult / angry patients**

* Withdrawn, secretive, vague - limits information as a form of control
* Critical – everything is wrong, bad
* Intimidating – highly sarcastic, cutting
* Sad or low - dwell on all the misfortunes, make others feel guilty.

**Anger can be a common and normal reaction**

* Often due to a loss of control, feelings of powerlessness
* Can sometimes be justified – e.g. due to late/missed diagnosis, medical errors, fatalities, poor quality care, inadequate pain control, excessive waiting times, rudeness, etc

**How you might recognise when someone is angry:**

* Raised voice/shouting
* Flushed face
* Wild gesticulations
* Angry words
* Rigid body
* Withdrawal
* Sarcasm
* Dismissive comments
* Gritted teeth, clenched jaw

**Policy**

This document sets out our policy for dealing with innapropriate and unnacceptable behaviour whether it is committed by or against any patient, visitor, or person working in the practice.

This policy applies throughout the Practice premises, including car parks, grounds and any outbuildings as well as while receiving treatment within a patient's home and whilst interacting with staff via telephone conversations or online consultations.

**Practice Responsibilities**

The Practice will seek to ensure that it takes all measures to prevent:

* Physical or verbal abuse of its employees, including racial and sexual harassment.
* Discrmination in any form
* Manipulation of its employees
* Theft
* Misuse of services
* Physical assault on employees by patients and other members of staff.
* Both management and employees of the Practice have a responsibility for trying to prevent and control physical and verbal abuse by patients and other members of staff.

**The Practice will:**

* Ensure that Doctors, managers and supervisors are responsible for the adequate supervision of employees to ensure that they do not put themselves at risk of physical and verbal abuse by patients.
* Ensure that the contents of this document are brought to the attention of employees under their control.
* Undertake suitable and sufficient violence and aggression risk assessments, in those areas for which they are responsible to quantify any risks and to identify proactive measures to eliminate and/or control the risks.
* Ensure all frontline employees undertake approved conflict resolution training, and where appropriate, breakaway training.
* Ensure new staff members are made aware of this policy as part of their induction.
* Ensure victims of physical assault or serious non-physical assault are offered support through occupational health or the employee assistance programme.
* Ensure a culture exists in which all violence and aggression incidents are reported in accordance with the practice’s significant event policy.
* Support communication initiatives led by local police/community support/parent company to promote initiatives re anti-violence towards staff.

**Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Practice will also undertake the following measures to ensure a safe work environment:**

* Carry our 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, particularly if they are working alone.
* Assess and review the layout of the premises to reduce the risk to employees where physically possible.
* Assess and review the provision of personal safety equipment, such as alarms.
* Develop surgery 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 on a Incident Reporting Form and take any remedial action to ensure similar incidents are prevented in future.

**Employee Responsibilities**

At all times, employees should take care to ensure a safe work environment and must consider their own safety and that of their colleagues. They must:

* Familiarise themselves with this Policy and conform to the requirements, guidelines and instructions contained within it.
* Ensure they are familiar with the location of equipment or devices provided for use in at risk situations (e.g. panic buttons / alarms etc.) and know how to use them.
* Be responsible for their own security and the security of others who may be affected by their acts and omissions
* Co-operate with managers on security matters and observe all safety rules at all times
* Undertake and participate in relevant training made available by the Practice
* Promptly report all incidents of physical or verbal abuse (threatened or actual), violence and aggression incidents, hazards or near misses and damage, in accordance with the Practice Significant Event Policy
* Record all details of incidents in compliance with Practice procedures.
* Contribute towards reviews by doctors, the Practice manager or other supervisor 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, such as removal of possible weapons or projectiles (e.g. telephones or letter openers) from patient access.
* Make use of any staff support and counselling available through the Practice, if required.
* Advise the Practice manager or supervisor of any perceived risks involved in work activities.
* Never attempt to physically tackle someone during a violent or aggressive incident unless to prevent serious harm occurring to another individual

**Practice 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, so long as the employee is correctly carrying out his or her duties.

The first concern of the manager 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. A referral to Occupational Health will likely be made by the employees line manager.

The Practice Manager or supervisor will assist victims of violence with the completion of the SIRMS Form and where appropriate will report the incident to the police.

In the event of serious physical and or verbal abuse, patients causing this will be removed from the Practice List.

With this in mind, posters are displayed in the waiting room stating the following Practice policy:

* 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 manager or supervisor, who will be happy to address your concerns.
* However, shouting and swearing at Practice staff will not be tolerated under any circumstances and patients who are abusive may be removed from the Practice List.
* Please help us to help you.

**Dealing with violence in the waiting room:**

The essential points when dealing with violence in the waiting room are to:

1. Dial 999 to call the police.

2. Use the emergency panic alarm button if fitted.

3. Use the alarm system on S1 to raise your need for help to colleagues in the building.

4. Work as a team and do not put yourself or your colleagues in danger.

5. Evacuate other patients from the waiting room.

**If an incident occurs**

* Ask the perpetrator to stop behaving in an unacceptable way, remaining calm. Under no circumstances should you respond in the same manner
* If a member of staff receives an abusive telephone call, they should warn the caller that they will terminate the call if they do not modify their behaviour.
* If the caller continues to be abusive, the staff member has the authority to terminate the call.
* If the perpetrator continues, call your line manager to attend the incident, explaining, in a calm manner, what has occurred.
* Ideally the perpetrator should also be able to hear what you are saying.
* Should the perpetrator be breaking the law, physically assault anyone or cause damage to the premises, call the police straight away.
* Do not attempt to remove the person from the premises unless it is under extreme circumstances. Call the police. If it is necessary to resort to calling the police and having the person removed, all staff involved in the incident should make a written statement, giving as many details as possible, including exact words used by the perpetrator. This statement should be undertaken straight away while the incident is fresh in the mind.
* Where an injury has been sustained (irrespective of how serious), it must be entered in the accident book/SIRMS and where hospitalisation is not required, the injured party should be advised to consult with a doctor before leaving the premises.
* A significant event form should be completed as soon as possible after the incident.
* It is usual practice to press charges against any person who physically or verbally assaults another, damages or steals property.
* Where the perpetrator is a member of staff, disciplinary proceedings may also be instigated where deemed appropriate.

**Actions following an incident**

* A meeting to undertake a significant event analysis will be convened as soon as possible which will include (but is not limited to) a clinician with the most knowledge of the patient, the Executive GP, the Practice Lead and the staff concerned. Following discussion, further action (if any) will be decided, (e.g. written warning, removal from the Practice list).
* Where there are significant mitigating circumstances, (e.g. severe mental problems), these may be taken into account when deciding on any further action.
* Details of the incident will be entered in the patient’s medical record or the employee’s personal file unless it has been decided that no further action will be taken.
* Any staff involved in a violent incident will be offered counselling and / or medical treatment and encouraged to utilise the Employee Assistance Programme if required.

**Example outcomes**

Warning telephone call

Written warning - Zero Tolerance letter

Good Behaviour agreement

8-day removal (only possible if patient received written Zero Tolerance letter)

Immediate removal (only possible if violence/aggression and police contacted)

Further information regarding all outcomes and advice and guidance can be found within by following this link <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/primary-medical-care-policy-and-guidance-manual-pgm/>

Removals are completed by filling out an online enquiries form at: <https://pcse.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/>

**Appendix 1**

Patient name

Patient Address

date

Dear Patient Name,

I am writing to you following a member of the team at SITE NAME reporting concerns about the way in which they [DELETE / ADD AS APPROPRIATE - have been spoken to/treated during your recent contact with the practice. All telephone calls are recorded and I have had the opportunity to listen to the call on (DATE AND TIME). I am disappointed to hear the way a member of my team has been spoken to] and I am writing to advise that aggressive or intimidating behaviour towards members of the team will not be condoned.

Although we understand and appreciate the concerns you may have regarding your health and that your level of anxiety may be heightened as a result, however, this type of behaviour cannot be tolerated.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to any patient who is violent, aggressive or abusive to GP’s, nurses, practice staff or other patients. .

We ask that when you next visit or contact the surgery you act in an appropriate manner. Whilst I hope we would never need to take such action, you should be aware that practices have the ability to remove patients from our list under certain circumstances. Should further concerns be reported we will have no other option but to action your removal from our register of patients.

Yours sincerely

Practice Lead and Exec GP

**Appendix 2**

**Template Good Behaviour Guidance Agreement** [Non-violent patient version - please amend/update/tailor this guide/contract as appropriate to the individual case and practice circumstances.]

At [practice name] we are committed to ensuring everyone is treated with respect and dignity including all patients, their families, carers and our practice team.

In order to continue to be registered with our practice we are providing this guide to set out the type of conduct that is expected of all patients.

All patients are expected to behave in the following manner:

* To be polite and respectful towards all individuals (staff and other patients).
* To not make inappropriate or unacceptable remarks to any staff or other patients at the practice including any abusive remarks related to any individuals:
  + age
  + disability
  + gender reassignment
  + marriage or civil partnership
  + pregnancy
  + race
  + religion or belief
  + sex
  + sexual orientation
* To not undertake any form of threatening abuse or violence towards any individual (staff and other patients) at the practice.
* To use our services responsibly including:
  + To book routine appointments in accordance with the practice’s policy
  + To request urgent appointments only for genuine urgent conditions
  + To engage with any remote appointments, we may offer over the telephone (or video)/
  + To attend face-to-face services where it is important to be seen in person, (including when physically able to do so, rather than requesting a home visit)
  + Attend all appointments on time
  + Cancel any booked appointments that are no longer required
  + Request repeat prescriptions in good time, ensuring that all items are ordered together rather than in individual lots
  + Use our health care professionals time in an appropriate manner e.g. do not seek appointments for minor ailments that can be self-treated in the first instance.
  + To raise only genuine concerns or complaints you may have about your care or the services we provide you.
* To respect surgery premises and property.
* To attend the surgery premises for the purpose of engaging with our services.

In return, as a patient you can expect to:

* continue to access all out services, to be provided with respect, dignity and confidentiality
* to raise any concerns or complaints about your care or our services and that these will be investigated and responded to.

We would remind that all patients are free to register with a practice of their choice, as long as the practice has an open patient list for new registrations and the patient lives within the practice area.

Any patients who commit any inappropriate or unacceptable behaviours towards a GP, Practice staff, other patients or the surgery premises or property risk being removed from the practice list with 8-days’ notice. We will normally provide a warning letter which will be held on record for 12 months before issuing such a notice.

Any threatening abuse or violent incidents will not be tolerated. Any such incident will be reported to the police and will mean your immediate removal from the practice list and your care transferred to a special allocation scheme which manages violent and aggressive patients.

We invite patients to agree to the terms of this guide as a commitment to our ongoing relationship.

Declaration

I, ..................................................., agree to comply with the above conditions and wish to remain registered at the practice. I understand that if I commit any inappropriate or unacceptable behaviours as illustrated by this guidance, I will be removed from the practice patient list.

Signed: ............................................................... Date: ....................

Please return to [include return details e.g. post/email/reception/next appointment]