



New Mills & District Volunteer Centre

Aggression Policy

The Volunteer Centre is committed to the protection of staff and volunteers from the damaging effects of aggressive behaviour encountered at work. The Volunteer Centre believes that every employee and volunteer has a right to work without being subjected to violence and aggression. This document details the Volunteer Centre's policy on dealing with violent and aggressive behaviour and explains the procedures that need to be followed in order to comply with this policy.

1. Policy

The Volunteer Centre will support staff and volunteers in preventing uncontrolled aggressive incidents occurring.

The Volunteer Centre will protect staff and volunteers from aggression at work by the following means:

- a) Measures to manage/reduce aggressive behaviour from those whom they support.
- b) Procedures for dealing with aggression arising in face to face or telephone conversations.
- c) The Volunteer Centre's policy on harassment.

2. What do you mean by aggression or violence?

It is important that we are clear about what we mean when we use these terms.

- a) Physical abuse/aggression is when a person attempts to or actually strikes, hits, slaps, kicks, punches or uses an object to hit or injure another person.
- b) Verbal abuse/aggression is when a person is abusive towards or shouts at another person in a threatening manner. This can include less obvious aggression such as certain types of bullying.

3. Managing and reducing aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour rarely occurs without reason. Unpredictable outbursts of aggression can lose their mystery following an examination of potential triggers. It is essential that staff members and volunteers consider each person individually, how they may be feeling and how they may be perceiving or understanding the world around them.

The more staff members and volunteers understand about the motives for the behaviour, the more able they will be to prevent dangerous incidents occurring.

4. Checklist

- a) Could the person feel their personal space is threatened or alarmed that unexpected physical contact has been made?

- b) Might the person because of their personal circumstances feel frustrated or overwhelmed by what is happening in their lives?
- c) Could the person be misunderstanding or getting upset by certain events or actions?
- d) Could the person feel unable to get their message across to others in any other way?

It is important to remember violence and aggression can happen in any setting between any staff, volunteers, clients and/or third parties. Everyone is quite capable of being vulnerable to aggression.

5. **What to do if an incident occurs**

- a) Stay calm.
- b) Respect personal space (this varies from person to person, but at a time of distress a distance of about five feet is a useful estimate).
- c) Keep a safe distance and allow the person to remain in their present position. Overall, give the hostile person plenty of room.
- d) Maintain a calm, relaxed, open posture.
- e) Provide reassurance to the person that they will not be harmed if appropriate.
- f) Speak slowly, clearly and calmly.
- g) If appropriate, or possible, ask or direct other people to draw back and not to interfere.
- h) Sitting down can help. This can make the person feel less threatened.
- i) Encourage the person to talk rather than act out their anger if they can.
- j) Ask the person to describe the problem in his or her own words if they can.
- k) Try to identify the reasons for their aggressive behaviour.
- l) Listen to complaints.
- m) Be flexible and accepting, not rigid or rejecting.
- n) Provide alternatives to the behaviour, or divert the person's attention.

6. **What not to do**

When supporting a person who has the potential to be either physically violent or abusive, don't:

- a) Be confrontational.
- b) Take a personal offence at the assault or accusation.
- c) Raise voices.
- d) Attempt to lead away the person or initiate any other form of physical contact, as such action can easily be misunderstood or resented.
- e) Approach the person rapidly.
- f) Approach the person from behind.
- g) Corner the person, as this will heighten feelings of threat and alarm.
- h) Crowd them by calling for assistance from several members of staff/volunteers.
- i) Provoke by 'teasing' or 'ridiculing'.
- j) Using restraints.
- k) Show fear, alarm or anxiety, as this can either encourage people to become more violent or serve to agitate them.
- l) Offer hot drinks such as a cup of tea as this can inflame a situation. Hot drinks can be thrown.

7. **The person who is at serious risk**

If the person appears out of control and at risk of injuring himself or herself, or if they are attacking a person who is unable to defend themselves, staff and volunteers need to respond quickly and calmly.

8. **When to call the police**

Calling the police should be a last resort. You would need to be sure that you have tried every other way of managing the situation. It would be appropriate to call the police if:

- a) There appears to be nothing more you can do.
- b) The person presents an unacceptable risk to themselves or others.
- c) You need a quick response to a dangerous situation.

You will need to give the police the background of the situation and explain what help you would like.

9. **Aggression over the phone**

There may be times when staff or volunteers receive telephone calls which are abusive, angry or threatening. These types of calls will impact on different people in different ways and it is important that staff members and volunteers acknowledge this. This can be done through debriefing and supervision.

Some calls, such as those from people who call repeatedly, may make people angry and confused. It is essential to find constructive ways of dealing with these callers which might include debriefing everyone who answers the phone on how to respond to a particular caller, even preparing a scripted response if the intention is to terminate the call quickly.

Other possibilities include:

- a) Making written records and reviewing them in confidence with the Centre Manager (remembering to follow the Volunteer Centre's policy on data protection and confidentiality).
- b) Agreeing a plan with the caller and write this down on the record, taking into account the personal safety of the caller and the people they will come into contact with. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to involve the police or other statutory services.

Even if you have a clear plan the caller may not be clear or in agreement with that plan. When a call is terminated or the caller is told not to call without understanding why, they may simply keep calling. The goal is to set clear boundaries and ensure that members of staff and volunteers feel confident and able to deal with this type of incident.

10. **Recording Incidents**

In a care service, record all actions, interventions and responses in the client's notes and adjust the client's care plan and risk assessment accordingly. In all cases, record all actions, interventions and responses in an incident report.

11. **Summary**

- a) It is important to remember violence and aggression can happen in any setting between any staff, volunteers, clients and/or third parties. Everyone is quite capable of being vulnerable to aggression.
- b) The Volunteer Centre believes that every employee and volunteer has a right to work without being subjected to violence and aggression.

- c) The Volunteer Centre will support staff and volunteers in preventing uncontrolled aggressive incidents occurring.

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