

Violence Awareness Policy

Statement of Intent:

The Vale of Neath Practice is committed to taking all reasonable precautions necessary to ensure the safety and well being of its employees and endeavours to ensure that all employees are protected from physical and verbal abuse while they are working.

Definition of Physical and Verbal Abuse:

Physical and verbal abuse includes:

1. Unreasonable and / or offensive remarks or behaviour
2. Harassment
3. Threatening behaviour
4. Actual assault
5. Attacks on Partners, members of staff or the public
6. Damage to employee's or employer's property

The NHS Zero Tolerance Zone campaign 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".

Practice Responsibilities:

The Practice seeks to ensure that it takes all measures to prevent:

1. Physical or verbal abuse of its employees, including racial and sexual harassment
2. 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.

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.

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

Measures taken by the surgery to ensure a safe work environment:

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Practice will:

1. 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, particularly if they are working alone
2. Assess and review the layout of the premises to reduce the risk to employees where physically possible
3. Assess and review the provision of personal safety equipment, such as alarms
4. Develop surgery policies, procedures and guidelines for dealing with physical and verbal abuse
5. Provide support and counselling for victims, or refer to suitably qualified health professionals
6. Make employees aware of risks and ensure employee involvement in suitable training courses
7. Record any incidents on a Significant Event Form and take any remedial action to ensure similar incidents are prevented in future.

Measures employees should take to ensure a safe work environment:

At all times, employees must consider their own safety and that of their colleagues. They must:

1. Familiarise themselves with Practice policies and procedures, guidelines and instructions
2. Use any equipment or device provided for at risk situations, such as alarms
3. Participate in relevant training made available by the Practice
4. Report all incidents of physical or verbal abuse (threatened or actual) to a doctor, the Practice Manager or other person in a supervisory position within the Practice
5. Record all details of incidents in compliance with Practice procedures.
6. Contribute towards reviews by doctors, the Practice Manager or other supervisor concerning any incidents in which they have been involved
7. 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
8. Make use of any staff support and counselling available through the Practice, if required
9. Advise the Practice Manager or supervisor of any perceived risks involved in work activities
10. Never attempt to physically tackle someone during a violent or aggressive incident

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.

The Practice Manager or supervisor will assist victims of violence with the completion of the Significant Event 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 Practice policy.

Namely:

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.

Thank you.

Dealing with violence in the waiting room:

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

1. Dial 9999 to call the police
2. Use the emergency panic alarm button
3. Work as a team
4. Do not put yourself or your colleagues in danger
5. Evacuate other patients from the waiting room

Prevention:

1. To prevent a dangerous situation arising, the Practice Manager will circulate the names of those patients who may pose a risk of violence to reception staff, doctors, nurses and other staff. Each member of staff is required to memorise these names.
2. The list will be updated every six months.
3. Potentially violent patients should be offered morning appointments only because there are more members of staff around at this time.
4. If an afternoon appointment is requested, whether routine or urgent, the advice of the duty doctor must be sought.
5. Consideration should be given as to whether two professionals should see the patient.
6. The more remote consultation rooms should not be used (e.g. Room 6).
7. Reception staff should be particularly vigilant during the whole time the patient is on the Practice premises – they should respond to telephone calls from the consultation room immediately, telephone the doctor or nurse if the consultation seems to be unduly long, and so on.
8. If a potentially violent patient requests a home visit, reception staff should draw the visiting doctor's attention to the risk so that arrangements for protection can be made.
9. This is particularly important when locum doctors are working in the Practice.

Dos and Don'ts when facing angry patients:

Do

- Recognise your own feelings
- Use calming body language
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Be prepared to apologise, if necessary
- Assert yourself appropriately
- Allow people to get things off their chest

Don't

- Meet anger with anger
- Raise your voice, point or stare
- Appear lecture them
- Threaten any intervention unless you are prepared to act on it
- Make them feel trapped or cornered
- Feel that you have to win the argument