

Applicable legislation

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
 Management of Health & Safety regulations 1999
 The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
 The Equality Act 2010

Violence and Aggression Health and Safety Policy Standard

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1.0. Introduction

- 1.1. The Royal Borough of Greenwich (The Council) recognises that it has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all its employees and others whilst undertaking the Council's work activities. The council as an employer must ensure all applicable persons fully carry out their legislative responsibilities to assess the risks to their employees, and to respond appropriately to prevent or reduce the risks. For this policy standard the term 'employee/staff' refers to everyone working for the Council including workers (e.g., agency workers, consultants, and volunteers), whether working from Council premises or other locations.
- 1.2. These legal duties include protecting employees from exposure to foreseeable violence and aggression at work – of a physical and/or verbal nature. this also includes any racist or discriminatory behaviour towards its staff.
- 1.3. The Council views any act of violence and aggression towards its employees or any other persons under its care as unacceptable. As far as is reasonably practicable, the Council will ensure that employees are protected from any risks to their health and safety posed by any acts of violence and aggression.
- 1.4. This Policy Standard applies to all directorates/service areas within the Council there is a risk of violent or aggressive behaviour from members of the public during the provision of services provided by the Council, including their family or their property, that employees may sustain in the undertaking of their responsibilities as an employee of the Council.
- 1.5. This policy standard only covers employees if they have conducted their duties per the Council's General Code of Conduct Policy and will not apply when persons participate in activities outside their responsibilities as an employee of the Council.
- 1.6. The following situations also fall outside of this Policy Standard:
 - Allegations of aggressive or violent behaviour between members of employees which are covered within the Council's General Code of Conduct Policy, Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and the Dignity at Work Policy.
 - Incidents resulting in violence and aggression perpetrated by children against employees in educational establishments, especially those catering to children with challenging behavioural issues. These establishments need to have specific safety management arrangements for incidents of violence and aggression involving children.
 - Any non-work-related violence and aggression incident.

2.0. Aims and Objectives

2.1 The aims and objective of this Policy Standard are to raise awareness across the Council of the following main points:

- What constitutes violence and aggression at work?
- The council's position on any acts of violence and aggression.
- The importance of reporting early signs or threats.
- Implementation of required measures to prevent or manage any incidents of violence and aggression.
- The importance of reporting incidents of abuse, violence, and aggression.

2.2. The council is committed to ensuring that employees undertaking any direct or indirect provision of providing services to the public i.e., face-to-face, through emails, letters, or telephone calls) can conduct their work free from violence, aggression, abuse, hate crimes and hate incidents.

2.3 Where any individual or individuals is alleged by another person to have conducted an act of violence, or aggression or harassed a Council employee, the Council reserves the right to respond to the alleged incident, as deemed necessary considering the circumstances, including involving the police where appropriate.

2.4 The Council is committed to introducing suitable and sufficient measures to

- Reduce the risk of instances of violence, aggression, abuse, antisocial behaviour or hate crimes or hate incidents towards our employees occurring.
- Enable employees to manage appropriately an aggressive or violent situation.
- Support employees in the aftermath of any such incidents.

3.0. Definitions of Violence and Aggression

3.1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define work-related violence as: "any incident in which a person is abused, threatened, feels threatened or is physically assaulted in circumstances relating to the undertaking of their work."

3.2. Violence can range from a life-threatening physical attack to verbal abuse, with verbal abuse and threats being the most common forms of violence and aggression.

3.3. It is also important to recognise that work-related violence and aggression are not limited to the actual workplace and can take place when driving a vehicle during working time or in the community, to and from work, in isolated areas or even at home or the employee, this can be behaviour directed by a service user, their relatives or persons who provide care to the individual, members of the public, employees, visitors or other people which could potentially result in damaging or hurtful effects, physically or emotionally in other people.

3.4. This includes: (not limited to)

- Assault/abuse causing actual physical injury or distress (including anti-social behaviour).
- Verbal or written aggression (letters, emails, social media sites) which offends the individual.
- Assault on others, including members of an individual's family.
- Stalking.
- Animal attacks.
- Offensive language, verbal abuse, swearing, unwanted or abusive remarks which make staff feel unsafe.
- Invasion of personal space.
- Brandishing of objects or weapons.
- Offensive gestures.
- Threats or risk of significant injury to a member of staff, service users or visitors.
- Near misses e.g., unsuccessful attempts to physically assault an employee.
- Spitting.
- Alcohol or drug-fuelled abuse.
- Unreasonable and/or abusive behaviour.
- Any of the above are in destruction or property damage.
- Threat or fear of any of the above.

3.5. The Council is an anti-racist organisation and does not tolerate racist or discriminatory behaviour towards its staff. Where, due to the equality nature of the incident, it could/be considered as being racist or discriminatory in nature (including hate crimes), individuals may wish to speak to relevant Equality / Human Resources (or other relevant) staff within the council for further advice. It is therefore essential that all incidents should be reported that refer to or are motivated by: (not limited to)

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- Race
- Gender reassignment,
- Religion or belief,
- Marriage or civil partnerships,
- Pregnancy & maternity
- Disability
- Sex,
- Sexual orientation,
- Age.
- Any Other specified reasons

4.0. Responsibilities

4.1. Chief Executive/ Directors/Senior Management/Headteachers

- The overall responsibility for Health and Safety relating to violence and or aggression, and the implementation of this policy standard lies with the Chief Executive, and Chief Officers need to be aware of their responsibilities under Health and Safety legislation and the consequences of failings under Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007.
- Responsibility can be delegated to Directors who will ensure adequate resources for the implementation of this policy standard and any directorate/service local arrangements, procedures, or systems as applicable or required within all applicable areas under their control.

4.2. Senior management should ensure : (not limited to)

- All employee/s under their control are aware of this policy standard and its requirements.
- All work activities that could result in exposure to violence and/or aggressive behaviour are risk assessed and adequately managed and controlled.
- All applicable managers/employees have been provided with sufficient training to complete the required risk assessments.
- Local arrangements, procedures and systems are in place that deals with workplace violence and aggression, are reviewed regularly, kept up to date, and communicated to employees.
- There is management sign-off, of all abuse and violence & aggression at work risk assessments undertaken, including reviews of the applicable risk assessments.
- Incidents reporting of any acts of abuse violence & aggression acts, including the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) to the Health and Safety Executive is undertaken as set out in the RIDDOR qualifying criteria and periods.
- All incidents of violence & aggression are investigated and all findings from the investigation are implemented and monitored for effectiveness.
- Incidents are reported to the police (where appropriate) including seeking legal advice.
- Employees exposed to any acts of abuse, violence and aggression are fully supported by management including signposting to agencies/resources, etc. as applicable.
- Any manager found to be encouraging or inciting violence or not resolving potentially violent or abusive situations may be subject to disciplinary action.

4.3. Managers/responsible persons should ensure they are fully aware of this policy standard and its requirements. (not limited to)

- The completion of abuse, violence, and aggression risk assessments.
- Suitable employee training (e-learning or attendance-based training) is in place and undertaken.
- Local arrangements, procedures, and systems in place, which deal with violence and aggression are reviewed regularly and communicated to all applicable employees and all arrangements are reviewed regularly and up to date.
- Monitoring any incidences of abuse, violence and aggression and initiating all appropriate action/s if more measures are identified and are required.
- Consultation with employees about how to improve violence prevention and management, and give feedback to staff about their suggestions, including whether they will be implemented and if not why.
- Respond to and, where possible, resolve any incidents, (ideally before they escalate).
- Any reports of work-related violence, threats, or abuse are treated seriously and responded to promptly.
- Recognise the impacts of all types of abuse, violence, and aggression. If employees are particularly affected by an event, provide support where possible and appropriate, such as time off work or temporary changes to their tasks.
- Be sensitive to the needs of employees and the risks they face in all aspects of their work.
- Employees are aware of the support and advice available after an incident has occurred as applicable.
- Encourage other staff members to support their colleagues, including those that might have witnessed the incident. If victims may be particularly affected by the event, provide support where possible, such as time off work or changes to their tasks.

4.4 Where an employee reports an incident of abuse, violence or aggression, managers should undertake (not limited to)

- In cases of assault, physical violence, severe disturbance, and property damage, ensure that the police are called as these may be criminal offences.
- Provide immediate support to the employee and any witnesses, recognising that people may be affected in diverse ways and with differing levels of severity.
- Take written statements from the affected employee and any witnesses as soon as possible, preferably on the day of the incident. Collect any CCTV/photographic evidence and in the event of a serious incident secure the immediate location to safeguard evidence.
- Record details of the incident where appropriate and give all employees involved in the incident required support during the complete process.
- In cases of verbal abuse (including any aggressive behaviour) where no physical contact or injury has been experienced, record the incident as a “Near Miss” event.
- In cases where physical contact and/or an injury has occurred, record the incident as a “physical assault.”
- Investigate the incident to determine the root cause and other factors and to identify all required actions needed to prevent a reoccurrence of a similar event.

4.5. Employees

All staff have a personal responsibility for their behaviour at work and for ensuring that they comply with this policy standard, directorate/service local arrangement/procedures, risk assessments etc.

4.6. Employees should report any instances of violence, threats or abuse and ensure (not limited to)

- Report any incidents of violence, threats, or abuse to management immediately, and if applicable report to the police and seek medical attention.
- Include any details about when it happened, who was involved and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident.
- Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or witnessed work-related violence.
- Suggest additional measures to managers which might help to prevent and manage work-related violence.

4.7. Employees have a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. Any employee found to be encouraging or inciting violence may be subject to disciplinary action.

5.0. Reporting & other actions following a Violence or Aggression incident

5.1. Incident reporting is an essential element in preventing incidents of violence and aggression incidents the recording of incidents helps and provides the council with documentary evidence for (not limited to)

- Identify risks and triggers for work-related violence and aggression through incident trends.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of control measures.
- Identifying and modifying those control measures in need of improvement or replacement.
- Support the provision of appropriate resources and training.
- Contribute towards evidence required to support any further action/s such as injunctions or Community Protection Notices (CPN), prosecution etc.
- Support the Reporting to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

5.2. Therefore, all violence and aggression incidents must be reported and classified in line with the type of violence and aggression incident that has been reported, the following should be used as a guide to classify the incident correctly:

5.3. If the primary cause of a violent or aggressive incident is identified as one or more of the below criteria (not limited to), this should be recorded in the question section “If physical or verbal abuse, the select reason for the incident” part of the incident report.

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|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Age | • Religion or belief |
| • Disability | • Sex |
| • Gender Reassignment | • Sexual orientation |
| • Marriage and civil partnership | |
| • Race | |

5.4. All incidents of abuse, violence and aggression should be investigated to establish the root cause (including underlying causes) of why the incident occurred, so that lessons can be learnt, and additional control measures are implemented to prevent a reoccurrence of a similar event.

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6.0. Legal advice and assistance

- 6.1 If an employee is assaulted whilst performing their duties, and the police take no action, the Council will consider all the facts and findings from the investigation to make an informed decision to take legal proceedings against the assailant if it considers a successful prosecution possible and justified. While the Council may provide support, it will not normally subsidise an employee's legal proceedings.
- 6.2 An employee can also take a private action, either through the Criminal or Civil Courts, with assistance from their trade union or a private solicitor. Legal Services will provide general advice to employees on Court procedures. They can also arrange injunctions and other legal action against service users if appropriate.

7.0. Counselling and support

- 7.1. The welfare of all the councils' employees is of paramount importance. Any employee who suffers from violence or aggression in the workplace (including those who witness violence or aggression), must be treated sympathetically, and their immediate needs dealt with before the commencement of the formal process of recording and reporting and investigating the incident.
- 7.2. Providing support to the person affected by an incident and their colleagues may help to reduce the risk of longer-term, stress-related illness. This applies to incidents of verbal abuse as well as physical violence. Managers should provide opportunities to talk openly about the incident, allow staff to express their feelings and give them constructive support. People are more likely to cope with an incident, have less fear, and have increased job satisfaction and commitment if they get positive support from colleagues and managers. If an individual is particularly affected by an event, it may be appropriate for them to take some time off work or make temporary changes to their tasks; however, according to the HSE, research has shown that staff benefit from returning to work as soon as they are able after a traumatic incident. Further advice is available from Health and Safety and/or HR Professional Services.
- 7.3 Managers should ensure staff know that counselling is available and encouraged. Employees may choose to use the Council's EAP service for counselling, managers should provide the employee/s with the Employee Assistance Programme (E.A.P) service details. Further information is available on the Council's intranet.

8.0. Training

- 8.1 Managers are responsible for identifying the training needs of the employees that they manage as part of the ongoing risk assessment process.
- 8.2 Managers should ensure that all applicable employees undertake appropriate/applicable training (including refresher training) and that all records of training are in place and maintained and current.
- Personal safety awareness – E-learning – For all employees via the Learning pool (to be refreshed annually)
- 8.3. Where a requirement for vocational specific, violence & aggression training is determined either by a risk-assessed process or by the occupational roles/ activities being undertaken. Managers will need to contact the HR Workforce Development to discuss their specific training needs and requirements i.e., Security Industry Authority (SIA) accredited training.

9.0. Further Information and templates

- 9.1. Further supporting information, on this topic is available by using the links below.
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf>
- 9.2. The below can be obtained from the [Health and Safety intranet page](#).
- RA-08 Risk assessment template
 - RA-11 Violence and Aggression outside of council premises example risk assessment
 - RA-12 Violence and Aggression within council premises example risk assessment
 - FOR 32 Lone Worker assessment questionnaire