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.

DEFINITION

Violence and aggression are defined as:

- Violence is the use of force against a person and has the same definition as “assault” in law (i.e. an attempt, offer or application of force against the person). This would cover any person unlawfully touching any other person forcefully, spitting at another person, raising fists or feet or verbally threatening to strike or otherwise apply force to any person.

- Aggression is regarded as threatening or abusive language or gestures, sexual gestures or behaviour, derogatory sexual or racial remarks, shouting at any person or applying force to any practice property or the personal property of any person on the Practice. This would cover people banging on desks or counters or shouting loudly in an intimidating manner.

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.
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 stand at reception and argue with the patient.

- Never argue with a patient on the telephone.

- Always be polite even if the patient is very difficult to please.

- Should the person not stop their behaviour the Practice Manager or their Deputy should be asked to attend and the member of staff should explain calmly what has taken place, preferably within hearing of the perpetrator.

- If the person is acting in an unlawful manner, causes damage or actually strikes another then the police should be called immediately.

- 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.

- If such a course of action proves necessary then those members of staff involved must complete a significant event report form detailing in chronological order what has taken place and the exact words used prior to leaving the building at the end of their working day.

- 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.

- There is a PANIC BUTTON built in to each computer terminal – USE IT!
PROCEDURE FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

• The Practice Manager is to collate all the significant event information

• The Practice 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

• Decide if a written warning should be given

• Decide whether to take further action if the matter has been sufficiently dealt with by the advice already given

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.

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 annually

JJ Todd

Practice Manager
At Westlands, we take it very seriously if a member of staff or one of the Doctors or Nursing Team is treated in an abusive or violent way.

Westlands supports the government’s ‘Zero Tolerance’ campaign for Health Service Staff. This states that GPs and their staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused.

Our team understands that ill patients don’t always act in a reasonable manner and will take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint.

However aggressive behaviour, be it violent or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in you being removed from our list and, in extreme cases, the Police being contacted. If removed from our list you may be placed on the Violent Patient Scheme operated by Fareham & Gosport CCG.

In Summary, we will not hesitate to remove patients from our list who:

- Are violent
- Use or condone threatening or violent behaviour
- Cause damage/steal from the Practice’s premises/staff/patients
- Obtain drugs and/or medical services fraudulently.

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