

Zero Tolerance Policy

(Violence and Abuse Towards Employees and Volunteers)

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 Totton & Eling Centre Association is an equal opportunities employer, committed to treating employees in a fair and equitable manner, with dignity and respect, within a working environment free from all forms of bullying, harassment and aggression.
- 1.2 The Association relies upon volunteers, both in carrying out day to day task and through involvement on the Trustees of the Association. For the purpose of this policy the term employee will also refer to these volunteers and their involvement with the Association.
- 1.3 The Association acknowledges that, in the day to day delivery of services, employees can be confronted by aggressive or violent behaviour by service users / members of the public. Whilst acknowledging that such eventualities may arise, the Association affirms that such behaviour is wholly unacceptable. Specifically, the Association is not prepared to tolerate:
- (i) Verbal abuse of or threats to its employees either during or out of working hours arising from their employment with the Association.
 - (ii) Verbal or physical harassment of its employees either during or out of working hours arising from their employment with the Association.
 - (iii) Physical, racial or sexual assault upon employees by clients or other members of the public, either during or out of working hours arising from their employment or involvement with the Association.
 - (iv) Attacks on or damage to the property of employees of the Association arising from or in conjunction with employees carrying out their duties.
 - (v) Violent or threatening behaviour towards employees in the workplace arising from matters extraneous to service delivery (e.g. domestic violence).
- 1.4 The Association will consider action as appropriate (including service withdrawal and/or legal action where appropriate) against any member of the public or service clients who abuse an employee of the Association in terms of the contents of this Policy.
- 1.5 In order to afford Association employees with the maximum level of protection under this Policy and to assist in the maintenance of a positive and productive working environment, the Trustees of the Association will keep under regular and systematic review working procedures with an aim to, as far as practicable, assess and minimise risk to employees.

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1.6 Where employees are subject to violence/threat of violence or aggression they will be provided with appropriate personal support.

2. Scope of the Policy

2.1 Everyone working for Totton & Eling Centre Association will be covered by this Policy.

2.2 It is acknowledged, however, that different individuals are subject to different levels of risk and that additional guidelines may require to be produced on an individual basis.

2.3 This Policy dovetails with the existing Association policies on Bullying and Harassment and the Association's Code of Conduct.

3. Definitions

3.1 The Health and Safety Executive's working definition of violence towards employees is:

3.2 'Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of his/her employment'.

3.3 The DHSS Advisory Committee on violence to staff (1986) included in its definition of violence:

'severe verbal abuse or threat where this is judged likely to turn into actual violence; serious or persistent harassment (including racial or sexual harassment); threat with a weapon; major or minor injury; fatalities.

3.4 There are three key areas where the Trustees can have a substantial impact in the performance of that duty:

- i) in the prevention of violence
- ii) dealing appropriately with violent incidents (including violent attacks to an employee which results in injury)
- iii) monitoring and aftercare (ensuring appropriate support for employees)

4. Preventing Violence

4.1 All practical steps will be taken to remove or reduce environmental factors which may increase or encourage the incidence of violence.

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4.2 Changes in working practices which assist in the protection of employees will be introduced, as necessary.

4.3 Employees have a duty to take care of themselves and their colleagues and that they do not contribute to or escalate potentially violent incidents. Employees will be encouraged to raise any matter which they consider might assist in preventing violent situations in the workplace.

5. In the Event of an Assault on an Employee

5.1 All violent or threatening incidents must be reported to the appropriate supervisor or manager immediately and recorded in Complaints Log (see 02 - Complaints Procedure) including the details of any physical or mental injury.

5.2 In all but the most **minor** of cases, the Police should be notified of the incident. If the employee has to attend a Police Station to give a written statement, he/she may be accompanied by the Centre Manager, a Trustee or colleague.

5.3 Where the assaulted employee requires medical attention, arrangements must be made by the line Centre manager for the employee to be seen by a qualified first aider and/or taken to hospital as necessary. Arrangements should also be made for the individual to be taken home, if required. If the incident takes place in an area to which the public has access, it may be necessary temporarily to close the premises (e.g. to ensure privacy for the individuals concerned or to preserve the context for Police purposes if any criminal actions have occurred).

5.4 The employee must be allowed to discuss the incident and the manager or supervisor should be available for this purpose as soon as the employee is able to do so. De-briefing should take place as soon as possible after the incident.

5.5 The Association may take action against members of the public/service users, where appropriate. On occasion, the cessation of a service may require to be considered. This will be a decision of the Trustees following examination of all appropriate facts. Legal advice may be sought.

5.6 The Association's will assist employees in sourcing specialist assistance following assault/abuse.

6. Monitoring and Aftercare

6.1 Dealing with the immediate effects of an incident represents the beginning of the process of responding to violence in the workplace. Whilst much will depend on the nature of the incident, the Association recognises that further support may be necessary to restore the confidence of the individual employee and colleagues. Following an incident, relevant Association procedures and training requirements should be reviewed with a view to minimising the risk of recurrence. Reports should be routinely made to and discussed by the Trustees of the Association.

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- 6.2 The line manager/supervisor will inform the employee's colleagues of the facts of the incident in order to prevent misinformation being circulated and to help prevent a recurrence. This must not, however, break confidentiality for the employee concerned.
- 6.3 Where colleagues have been involved in or witnessed the incident, counselling may be necessary for them as well as for the employee who has suffered the assault.
- 6.4 All employees involved in a violent incident should be de-briefed by the Centre Manager (providing such a session is not counter-productive to any individual counselling being given) and the details entered in the Complaints Log.
- 6.5 An appropriate Trustees member will instigate an investigation of the incident and make recommendations for appropriate changes, if necessary.
- 6.6 The Trustees will be made aware of all such incidents and any discernible trends in relation to the pattern or nature of incidents across the Association will be addressed by the Trustees.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

Our staff always have the right to be treated with dignity and respect without the fear of threatening behaviour or violence.

Offenders will be asked to leave and may not be permitted to return.