

Zero Tolerance Policy

Introduction

1. Health Sciences University (HSU) takes it very seriously if a member of staff is treated in an abusive or violent way.

1.1 The service supports the government's '**Zero Tolerance**' campaign for Health Service Staff. This states that staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused. To successfully provide these services a mutual respect between all the staff and patients has to be in place.

1.2 Our staff aim to be polite, helpful, and sensitive to all patients' individual needs and circumstances. HSU staff understand that ill patients do not always act in a reasonable manner and will take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint.

1.3 However, aggressive behaviour, be it violent or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in patients being removed from the clinic list and, in extreme cases, the Police being contacted.

2. The occasional types of behaviour that would be found unacceptable are;

2.1 Using bad language or swearing at staff

2.2 Any physical violence towards any member of the Team or other patients, such as pushing or shoving

2.3 Verbal abuse towards the staff in any form including verbally insulting the staff

2.4 Racial abuse and sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

2.5 Persistent or unrealistic demands that cause stress to staff will not be accepted.

2.6 As a responsible employer, HSU has a duty as a provider of healthcare to protect the health, safety and welfare of staff under the Health & Safety at Work Act. This includes a risk assessment of violence towards staff and taking steps to mitigate this under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Violence at Work

- HSU acknowledges that there may be instances where violence and / or aggression forms part of a patient's illness. In these circumstances, the issue will be discussed with the patient and form part of their care planning.
- This information will be recorded in the patient's medical record and flagged to ensure that members of staff are aware. In addition, where deemed necessary, appropriate support will be put in place, e.g. staff members do not see the patient alone.

Definition of Physical and Verbal Abuse and Violence:

- Physical and verbal abuse includes:
- Unreasonable and / or offensive remarks or behaviour / rude gestures / innuendoes
- Sexual and racial harassment
- Threatening behaviour (with or without a weapon)
- Actual physical assault (whether or not it results in actual injury) includes being pushed or shoved as well as being hit, punched or attacked with a weapon, or being intentionally struck with bodily fluids or excrement.
- Attacks on partners, members of staff or the public
- Discrimination of any kind
- Damage to an employee's or employer's property

HSU supports the Zero Tolerance stance adopted by the NHS.

The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) defines work-related violence as:

"Any incident, in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work".

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".

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, HSU will also undertake the following measures to ensure a safe work environment:

- 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.

- Assess and review the layout of the premises to reduce the risk to employees where physically possible.
- Assess and review the provision of personal safety equipment, such as alarms.
- Develop 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 on a Significant Event form and take any remedial action to ensure similar incidents are prevented in future.

Removal from the Clinical List

- The removal of patients from a list is an exceptional and rare event and is a last resort in an impaired patient-practice relationship.
- We value and respect good patient-health professional relationships based on mutual respect and trust. When trust has irretrievably broken down, HSU will consider all factors before removing a patient from their list, and communicate to them that it is in the patient's best interest that they should find a new care provider. An exception to this is in the case of immediate removal on the grounds of violence e.g. when the Police are involved.

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