



VIOLENCE AT WORK POLICY

WRITTEN BY:

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Biddulph Town Council has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. This duty includes protecting employees' physical and mental wellbeing from violence at work.

1.2 Biddulph Town Council will use the HSE definition of work-related violence which is **'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work'**.

This includes:

- Physical attack – whether visible injury occurs or not.
- Animal attack – when an animal is used as a threat.
- Verbal abuse – when an employee feels threatened or intimidated and the abuse is personally directed.
- Cyber-aggression through texts, email messages or social networking sites.
- Attack or damage to property or belongings of the employee or the Council.

- Any work-related incident involving an employee, or their family, which happens away from the workplace.

1.3 Reducing violence at work is something that concerns both the employer and the employee. Incidents of violence can lead to poor morale and a poor image for the employer which in turn may make it difficult to recruit and retain staff. Increased absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and compensation payments will also lead to extra cost for the employer. For employees, incidents of violence may cause pain, distress and, in some cases, could cause disability or death. Serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats can cause an employee anxiety or stress.

1.4 The Council understands that sometimes, due to individual circumstances, our customers won't always be polite and calm when they call or visit us or behave in a way that makes us feel comfortable. The Council supports it's employees in their right to politely end an abusive call or to ask a visitor to leave the Council's premises.

1.5 Employees should report incidents involving race, gender or gender identity, religion or belief, disability, sexuality and age in line with the requirements of the Council's 'Equal Opportunities Policy'.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out Biddulph Town Council's policy and procedures to prevent, manage and respond to work-related violence. Biddulph Town Council believes its employees have the right to work in a safe environment and will not tolerate any behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening. No member of staff will be blamed for an instance of work-related violence caused by a customer or member of the public. All employees have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect. This policy applies to all staff working on our premises, including contractors.

PROVISIONS

3.1 Responsibilities of Staff and Managers

These relate to all members of staff who work on these premises, or have responsibilities relating to them.

The Chief Officer has the responsibility to implement this policy and to make sure staff are aware of it and understand it. The Chief Officer should also:

- Treat any reports of work-related violence, threats or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.
- Record details of the incident where appropriate and give all employees involved in the incident full support during the whole process. The Chief Officer should also respond and consider seriously any suggestions made by staff about how to improve violence prevention and management, and give feedback to staff about their suggestions, including whether it will be taken forward and if not, why not.
- Set a positive example by reporting all incidents of violence and abuse and not tolerating abusive behaviour from customers and members of the public. Offer good customer service and follow specific policies, e.g. lone-working.
- Respond to and, where possible, resolve incidents, ideally before they escalate.
- Monitor incidences of violence and abuse and initiate appropriate action if more measures are needed. Review and amend this policy and the risk assessment as necessary.
- Where possible, direct staff to appropriate support and advice after an incident has occurred. Encourage other staff members to support their colleagues, including those that might have witnessed the incident. If victims are particularly traumatised by the event, provide support where possible, such as time off work or changes to their tasks.
- If an investigation is needed, work with the police and offer any assistance needed to help in their enquiries.
- Act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. They also have a responsibility to respond to any reports of violence.
- Keep under review all work places and work activities that may expose employees to incidents of violence.
- Provide adequate information, instruction and training to employees who may be exposed to incidents of violence.

Staff

All staff have personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that they comply with this policy.

There are a number of things that staff can do to help prevent work-related violence:

- Be aware of the Town Council's policy and comply with it, including specific policies on aspects such as the sale of alcohol or excluding customers.
- Offer good customer service and be aware of customer needs.

- Recognise the potential for work-related violence and take action to resolve it early on. Staff should take positive action and, for example, contact a colleague if they think a customer or member of the public might cause problems. Think of your safety – although the chances of a physical attack are low there is the tendency to believe it will ‘never happen to you.’
- Don’t accept instances of work-related violence directed towards them or others. Staff should report any instances of violence, threats or abuse, including any details about when it happened, who was involved and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident. Serious incidents should be reported in the incident book kept in the Chief Officer’s office but minor incidents and incidents of verbal abuse should be reported to the Chief Officer as they occur.
- Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or witnessed work-related violence.
- Suggest additional measures to the Chief Officer which might help to prevent and manage work-related violence.
- Staff have a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. Avoid aggressive actions likely to challenge and confront anyone. Lack of aggression may help to identify and avoid potentially violent confrontations.
- Attend a personal safety training course which deals with aggression, communication and de-escalation techniques and assertiveness. These techniques will help to diffuse potentially violent and abusive situations.

3.2 Risk Assessments

The risk assessment for work-related violence has been completed by the Chief Officer. All risk assessments are reviewed every year, unless a change suggests the assessment should be reviewed more frequently. Risks are assessed by talking to staff, reviewing the incident book and considering the work environment and job design.

3.3 Prevention and Management Measures

There are a number of measures in place following the risk assessment that staff should be aware of. These fall under the areas of work environment, working practices and training.

Work Environment. CCTV is installed in the Town Hall to monitor and survey the premises. The system can be used to focus on a potentially violent individual. It can also be used by the police to identify perpetrators.

The Town Hall is used by a number of agencies. The Police are based in this building and, if available, can provide rapid support and advice.

Working Practices. Lone working is dealt with in the 'Lone Working Policy'. Staff are reminded to manage their safety effectively and to ensure they let colleagues know their whereabouts. Cash is transferred from the main reception desk in the Town Hall into the safe or is taken to the bank. Staff are encouraged to be discreet about this to avoid drawing attention to the fact that they are carrying cash. We will ensure that adequate numbers of staff are available at all times.

Training. The following training should be provided:

All staff, including new staff, should receive awareness training on work-related violence, our policy and procedures, how to prevent work-related violence, reporting procedures and what to do following an incident. This will be a briefing from the Chief Officer.

3.4 Actions Following an Incident. If a staff member is being abused, threatened or attacked, they should approach the Chief Officer or a colleague for help. Colleagues should respond to the situation by talking to the perpetrator, explaining that their behaviour is not acceptable. They should try to resolve the problem and, if that is not possible, call for assistance. Medical assistance should be provided immediately where required. The Police should be informed of a serious incident involving physical attack or serious cases of threatening or verbal abuse. Police should also be informed of persistent cases of violence, threats and abuse.

CCTV recordings of serious incidents should be retained for the purpose of Police investigations in accordance with CCTV policies and procedures.

All incidents should be recorded in the incident book and less serious incidents reported to the Chief Officer.

Staff members will be encouraged to provide support to any victims or witnesses of violence, threats or abuse through appropriate training, and managers should provide support, including, where needed, allowing time off work for individuals to recover.

Injury as a result of an assault at work will be treated as an occupational injury, and sick pay will be paid, this includes any mental health injury also.

3.5 Reporting and Recording Systems. Staff have a responsibility to report incidences of work-related violence, including threats and verbal abuse, to managers. All incidents, including physical attacks, serious or persistent threats and verbal abuse, must be recorded in the incident book in the Chief Officer's office. This asks for details of when the incident occurred, who was involved,

descriptions of the perpetrator and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident.

Any incidents resulting in major injury to staff or that cause staff to be off work for three days or more must be reported under the RIDDOR Regulations 1995.

Any incident which results in a member of the public being taken directly to hospital from the premises must also be reported.

The Chief Officer should contact the Health and Safety Executive Incident Contact Centre on 0845 300 9923 to report the incident.

Less serious incidents should still be reported to the Chief Officer as they occur and they should make a note of these.

If the Chief Officer notices an increase in reports, several reports within a short period or reports about the same perpetrator, they should record the details, ask staff for more information and take action. The action may include contacting the police or other local businesses about a persistent offender, reviewing the risk assessment and considering further prevention measures, or increased vigilance by the Chief Officer or staff to prevent a more serious incident occurring.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

4.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA Act)

Employers have a legal duty under this act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees while they are at work.

4.2 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Employers must consider the risks to employees (including the risk of reasonably foreseeable violence); decide how significant these risks are; decide what to do to prevent or control the risks; and develop a clear management plan to achieve this.

4.3 The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)

Employers must notify their enforcing authority in the event of an accident/incident at work to any employee resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for more than three days. This includes any act of non-consensual physical violence against a person at work.

4.4 The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 – introduced a new offence, so that companies and organisations can be found guilty of corporate manslaughter as a result of serious management failures resulting in a gross breach of a duty of care, i.e. where serious failures in the management of health and safety result in a fatality.

4.5 Consideration should also be given to harassment and discrimination legislation, such as:

- **Public Order Act 1986 (S5)**
- **Criminal Justice Act 1998**
- **Equality Act 2021**