



## **Headway North West London Aggression and Violence toward Staff and Volunteers Policy and Procedure including Physical Restraint Guidelines**

### **1. General Policy Statement**

Headway North West London (HNWL) believes that aggression and violence of any description is unacceptable within HNWL, this comprehensive policy and procedure therefore reflects the importance of this belief.

Violence and aggression are incompatible with HNWL in its mission to promote and protect the health, safety and general well-being of its service users. HNWL acknowledges its duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, 'to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees' and also its duty in common law to take reasonable care of its employees in relation to reasonably foreseeable violence from service users, visitors and trespassers.

HNWL accepts a duty to minimise and ideally eliminate the manifestation of violence and aggression (both physical and verbal) affecting in any way its service users, employees, volunteers and visitors.

Violence and aggression exists in our modern society, but acknowledging their expression within HNWL services is difficult. Violence and aggression may often be at the level of constant verbal abuse or sometimes exhibited through non-verbal behaviour towards others. However rarely or often it occurs, all staff need to know how to deal with it.

Whilst HNWL recognises the existence of violence and aggression, it holds that no one is expected to tolerate it or the threat of it. Where such fear exists, every encouragement is to be given to discuss the problem so that proper preventative action can be taken.

HNWL is as concerned for those who instigate or commit violence as those who are its victims.

### **Definitions of violence and aggression**

An act of work-related violence or aggression is defined as any incident in which a person is verbally or physically abused, threatened or assaulted in any circumstance whilst undertaking duties expected of them in the course of

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their employment, regardless of the location at which it occurs.

This may include acts of violence or aggression instigated by other members of staff, the public, service user, relatives and visitors, and includes any such act that may be racially or sexually motivated.

Further definitions, the reasons for and trigger factors of violent or aggressive behaviour may be found in Appendix A.

## **2. Related HNWL policies / procedures:**

Management of Challenging Behaviour Policy and Procedure

Safeguarding Policy

Disciplinary Procedure

Lone Worker Policy

Incident Policy and Procedure

## **3. Staff Responsibilities**

### **3.1 Co-ordinator / senior person**

To ensure that all staff, volunteers and service users have access to and are aware of this policy.

To ensure that safeguards are in place to protect the interests of the service user.

To receive reports in relation to incidents of violence and aggression and ensure there is consultation and communication with the Staff Team and Trustees/ Directors.

To take every measure recommended in this policy and procedure to avoid incidents of violence and aggression

### **3.2 All staff / volunteers**

To adhere to this policy and seek the guidance/ advice from the Co-ordinator or appropriate senior person.

To get help and support from senior staff where a difficult situation is appearing to emerge

## **4. Audit Plan**

The Co-ordinator/ senior person will monitor adherence of the policy and report findings to the Committee of Trustees or Board of Directors.

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## 5. Scope of Procedure

This policy and procedure covers violence and aggression towards employees, service users, visitors or volunteers working within any HNWL service.

## 6. HNWL Staff / volunteer training

All staff and volunteers to be made aware of and read this policy

## 7. Staff training requirements

- Training is the essential element to enable all concerned to understand violence and aggression, both verbal and physical, to equip them to minimise its likelihood, and to deal with it adequately and safely whenever it occurs
- All employees will be expected to participate in training to be provided by management. Volunteers should be encouraged and, where necessary, may be required to undertake such training

## 8. References

Croner Care Home Management 2005/6  
Leonard Cheshire Policy and Procedure Manual 1999  
Sue Ryder Care Policy and Procedure 2005  
Violence and aggression to staff in health services: Guidance on assessment and management (second edition 1997 and reprinted 2003)  
Redbridge Primary Care Trust – 2005  
Headway Policy documents

## 9. Procedure

### 9.1 General Principles

- Preventative measures will be adopted to create a climate in which all people concerned can feel secure from the occurrence or recurrence of violence and aggression
- Any threat or act of violence will be taken seriously by the senior staff and acted upon. Any fear of violence or aggression expressed will be given due regard and attention both by Co-ordinators and all others concerned
- A living/ working environment will be achieved within HNWL services in which no-one is discouraged to report an act of violence or aggression, or to share the threat or fear of one

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- Prompt and comprehensive support will be offered to any service user, employee, volunteer or visitor should any act of violence or aggression occur
- Anyone subjected to violence or aggression will be given ready assistance to use the HNWL complaints or grievance procedures
- Anyone subjected to serious violence or aggression by a service user that results in damage or injury may be supported to receive initial guidance on bringing a CICA (Criminal Injury Compensation Authority) claim
- Service user aggression or violence on a continuing basis requires addressing through review procedures with all appropriate parties present. Only after all other options have been explored will there be a recommendation for the service user to seek a new placement
- All employees have a responsibility to record and to report to their line Manager/ Co-ordinator/ Trustees all incidents of violence and aggression. The incidence and nature of acts of violence or aggression should be monitored by the Co-ordinator and reported to the Trustees.
- There should be positive links and co-operation with other agencies to minimise violence and aggression
- The Trustees will deal with an employee accused of, or thought capable of, causing a violent or aggressive act according to the HNWL groups Disciplinary Procedure. Under similar circumstances, visitors and volunteers will be escorted from HNWL premises. Visitors may be asked to sign a conduct agreement before re-entering the HNWL House or attending any service provided by HNWL.

## 9.2 Preventative measures

- Creation of a rewarding/safe environment/climate in which to live or work
- People who are confident and give the impression that everything is under control will often enable others to feel secure. Violent assaults are precipitated both by those who are anxious and insecure and by domineering, authoritarian people
- Every attention should be given to ensuring the fabric of HNWL property, as well as their furniture, fittings and equipment.

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- When working alone in interview rooms there should be a way of alerting colleagues if problems arise and a telephone should be immediately available
- In community settings, the service Co-ordinator will assess the likely risk of violence or aggression into low, medium or high risk at the referral interview. Where a high-risk case is serviced, the employee will report back to the service Co-ordinator at the conclusion of every visit. Whenever necessary, two workers should be used to service a case of serious risk
- Clear, unambiguous and reliable care plans should be drawn up, only with full agreement and involvement of the service user and relevant employees. Such plans should be regularly reviewed with all appropriate parties
- The care plan should always be appropriate to the service users needs, and within the capability of the service provider. Unrealistic expectations lead to frustrations

### **9.3 Guidelines for coping with potentially violent and aggressive incidents**

- Remember that people are more important than property. Listening and talking are the crucial tools needed
- Be aware of potential weapons lying around, e.g. milk bottles, scissors etc. put them out of reach or sight, if possible, as soon as you think violence may occur. If you cannot do this discreetly, leave them alone as it may give people ideas
- Remember that animals may also be sources of danger
- Be alert to the possibility of violence. Everyone needs to be aware of their personal safety. Personal alarms can be available if requested. Never ignore the sound of raised voices or thuds etc.
- Employees should avoid becoming 'boxed into' a room and must always encourage a service user exhibiting violent behaviour to enter first
- It is the responsibility of managerial staff to know the whereabouts of their staff, whether employed in a Community/ Outreach or HNWL LINK setting.
- Try to be calm, confident and objective, and always maintain respect for all people involved. Never allow yourself to be involved in

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arguments. Do not lose your temper. Be aware of your own feelings and physical changes. Do not respond to verbal abuse or take it personally. Decide if and when to call for help - whether staff, family, neighbours or the police

- Allow the violent/ aggressive person a way out physically - make sure they are able to exit from the area easily, if they wish. Psychologically, make sure they can back down without losing face. Offer alternatives, such as the opportunity to talk later
- Be flexible - try a range of approaches. If appropriate, leave the person alone for a while
- If appropriate, remove yourself totally from the situation - particularly if you think you are making things worse
- Try to talk calmly and sensibly to minimise the tension. Only try to disarm someone physically if your instincts tell you it will work. **Do not take risks**
- Try to move people that are not involved away from the scene
- The psychological and emotional interactions between men and women may positively or adversely affect any situation and its resolution
- Create a calm atmosphere - do not move quickly or suddenly. Be aware of the effects of body language. Speak quietly and calmly. Use personal judgement about the next steps to take
- Draw attention to the positive aspects of a violent / aggressive persons life and nature, and the destructive aspects of violence should it continue
- If there is any suspicion of the potential for violence and aggression, transport should never be provided without an escort
- If violence and aggression arises whilst in a vehicle, the vehicle should be stopped immediately

#### 9.4 Physical intervention and physical restraint

- Talking and listening should be your first approach. Physical intervention should be avoided if at all possible
- Always attempt to obtain adequate assistance

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- The degree of force must be the minimum required to control the violence. It should be applied in a manner that attempts to reduce rather than provoke a further aggressive reaction
- As a general principle, clothing rather than limbs should be held to effect restraint, but if limbs have to be grasped they should be held near a major joint to minimise risk of fracture or dislocation
- Every effort should be made to safeguard the vulnerable areas of the persons concerned. Avoid gripping the head, throat, chest, genitals, abdomen, or fingers
- Be aware of age and disability
- Be aware of your own strength
- Release from restraint gradually. Relax holds on limbs one at a time. Tell the aggressor what you expect of them when you release restraint
- If a person is armed with a knife or similar offensive weapon, it is best not to approach them at all. Try to keep a large object, such as a table, between yourselves. Urgent police assistance should be summoned
- Damage to property does not necessarily justify immediate physical restraint. If, however, any who are involved in the incident are breaking windows or causing other damage likely to result in injury to themselves or others, attempts should be made to divert attention or to stop them
- Whatever the circumstances, retain respect for the person concerned

### 9.5 Legal guidelines on restraint.

- Violence occasionally occurs very suddenly and at such times there is usually no opportunity to call for assistance from the police. The use of physical restraint to repel violence is, in law, acceptable, subject to the qualification that the restraint must entail only reasonable force
- 'Reasonable' means the amount of force, which is sufficient to stop aggressor or to prevent you from being injured. It should not be greater. Courts will expect you to retreat whenever possible and if the choice is between hitting your attacker or running away, then you should take the latter form of action. There will be very few occasions when the only way in which you can protect yourself is by harming the person, but if this is unavoidable it is acceptable in law

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- Whenever possible, get away and try to obtain assistance. It is better to overpower a person than to inflict injury. There will be times when trying to get away is an unacceptable course of action - your assistance might be needed immediately by other people who are being threatened, or the person might be intent on harming themselves.

## 9.6 Immediate action following the assault

- The incident must be notified to the Co-ordinator or Service Manager as soon as possible after the assault has occurred.
- The person involved should make a rapid decision, consulting, if necessary, with the Co-ordinator, whether to involve the police. The victim has the right to report the incident personally to the police, or to withdraw charges at any stage. However, the person is advised to discuss the situation with the police before withdrawing charges. It should be appreciated that internal investigation in such circumstances may prejudice the independent investigation which will be carried out by the police

*Please note: It may be that the attacker is mentally disturbed or has behavioural problems as a result of a brain injury or has some disease related reason for becoming violent or aggressive. In this case neither the police nor the employee would think of starting civil or criminal proceedings. Seriously injured staff however may still be entitled to compensation provided that the incident has been reported to police.*

- The Co-ordinator to whom the *assault* was reported should advise the individual, where applicable, of his or her right to use the services of any appropriate advisory body
- Implements used or relevant evidence should be retained wherever possible and practicable
- The organisation's investigation following an *assault* should include a visit by the Manager/ Service Co-ordinator to the scene of the assault. Where police investigations are still proceeding, care should be taken not to disturb the scene of the assault
- If a serious injury has resulted from the incident, the person concerned should be encouraged to attend the casualty department of a hospital or consult with their doctor. For employees, paid time off should be given to facilitate such medical consultations. Where necessary, a responsible member of the staff team should escort the person to hospital and contact their next of kin

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- Written statements from all parties involved, including witnesses, are required using the local critical incident reporting form. This should be prepared as soon as possible and preferably on the day of an incident. Any individual has the right to contact his or her trade union or other representative for preparing such written statements.
- The regulating authorities and the HNWL Trustees should be informed. Where an entry is made on an incident reporting form the following details need to be included:
  - date time and location of incident
  - nature of incident and injuries received
  - name(s) and address(es), age and sex and status of parties to the incident
  - name(s) and address(es) of witnesses
  - outcome, such as injuries, treatment required etc
  - involvement of other agencies, e.g. police
  - legal action, if any
  - counselling of/advice to parties concerned
  - action taken to prevent recurrence and
  - an accurate and timely description of the incident, before, during and after.
- Reports should be placed only on the file(s) of the service user(s) and employee(s) directly involved in the incident
- Where a service user is regarded as a serious risk, the case file is to be completed accordingly. The service user is to be advised of such a decision and that he or she can request removal of the attribution after an appropriate period of time, but that this may be refused.
- The holding of information must be kept confidential and only passed to third parties where clearly relevant, appropriate and on a need to know basis.
- The Co-ordinator should identify what information is required to enable them to monitor the incidence of violence and aggression and ensure that appropriate health and safety records are completed.

### **9.7 Post incident support**

- The persons involved should be offered counselling by suitable people, this may be external to the organisation
- The relationship between those concerned should be reviewed and a possible separation from future working situations should be considered

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- The Co-ordinator may, with the agreement of the persons concerned, brief other relevant parties on incidents and seek the co-operation in giving adequate moral support
- The Co-ordinators may hold regular meetings with all those concerned to ensure they are coping satisfactorily
- For employees, with their agreement, team meetings assisted by a facilitator may be used for supportive purposes
- All employees have a responsibility to record and report to the person in charge all incidents and threats of violence and aggression. The incidence and nature of the acts of violence in every service will be monitored by the person in charge
- Positive links and co-operation with other agencies to minimise violence and aggression will be encouraged.
- An employee accused or thought capable of causing violence or aggression will be dealt with using the HNWL Disciplinary Procedure. Under similar circumstances, service users, visitors and volunteers could be asked to leave.

## Appendix A

Definitions of the types of violence and aggression encountered:

- **Serious physical assault** - assault, with or without a weapon, resulting in actual physical harm at the level of bruising / cuts / laceration / hair pulling etc.
- **Physical assault** – assault, with or without a weapon, resulting in a service user being hurt, but no actual physical harm
- **Physical harassment** – conduct leading to fear that violence will be used, which does not result in physical harm.
- **Sexual assault** - sexual assault resulting in actual physical harm at the level of bruising/cuts/lacerations or injury.
- **Sexual harassment** – verbal or non-verbal harassment and other forms of inappropriate sexual behaviour, which do not result in actual physical harm.
- **Racial assault** - assault based on racial grounds, resulting in actual physical harm at the level of bruising/cuts/lacerations or injury.

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- **Racial harassment** - harassment and other forms of inappropriate behaviour based on racial grounds, which do not result in actual physical harm.
- **Threat** - verbal and/or written, to other person and/or property.
- **Other** - any form of assault, psychological harassment or threats, not contained in the above, which the recipient considers to be sufficiently serious to warrant concern.

**Note:** these are not strict legal definitions

**There may be multiple reasons for violence or aggression but it may be a result of:**

- The psychological effects of having a serious illness or disability (with the attendant loss of control or autonomy) are very powerful and can induce, in some people, immense frustration, anger or resentment towards different people or themselves
- Physiological effects of disease
- Management expectations of employee behaviour towards service users
- The institutionalisation of employees in their work settings, leading to apathy in questioning how and why things are done
- The expectation that service users should be grateful and accepting of what is provided, and behave accordingly
- Insensitive familiarity which causes inappropriate expectations
- Inappropriate responses arising from the lack of knowledge about causes and management of violence and aggression
- Communication issues such as non verbal signs, language, cultural expectations, unwritten rules and inability to articulate
- Nature of work patterns and similar organisational constraints
- Lack of regular reviews
- Inadequate staffing levels to deal with the needs of service users
- Boredom

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- Insensitive or inadequate preparation for work of highly personal and intimate nature.

### **Trigger factors**

- Provocation
- Possible effects of certain clinical conditions, both physical and psychological
- Lack of privacy
- Certain times of day e.g. meal times
- Noise
- Change to normal routine, respite care, on admission, after family visits, bereavement, when the home is busy
- Alcohol and other drugs

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