

Zero Tolerance Policy



Introduction

NHS staff should be able to come to work without fear of violence, abuse or harassment from patients or their friends and family members.

As an NHS organisation, Scartho Medical Centre cannot ignore or dismiss the chances of violence towards our staff. Employers have a duty 'so far as it is reasonably practical' to protect the health, safety and welfare of staff members under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act. In practical terms, that includes assessing the risk of violence and taking steps to reduce it as required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

What is classed as violence at work?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines violence at work as "any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work." This covers the serious or persistent use of verbal abuse – which the HSE says can add to stress or anxiety, thereby damaging an employee's health. It also covers staff who are assaulted or abused outside their place of work – for example, while going home, while working in the community or while travelling as long as the incident relates to their work. The definition of physical assault used in the 2003 directions to the NHS from the secretary of state was "the intentional application of force against the person of another without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort."

Our Policy

Scartho Medical Centre operates a Zero Tolerance Policy towards verbal or physical abuse towards any member of our staff. Patients are asked to be considerate and act reasonably. All incidents will be followed up and patient will be sent a formal warning or removed from the practice list if his/her behaviour has been unreasonable. We will have no hesitation in having the patient removed from the building by the police should his/her behaviour warrant it.

The Police will be called if:

An incident is taking place and the patient is posing a threat to staff or other patients. If the GP or staff believes that there is a threat to life or of serious injury they will inform the Practice Manager when calling the Police. If the patient has left the premises and there is no immediate danger, the Police will still be notified of the incident so it can be recorded for future reference. The GP will also keep a record of the incident.

What constitutes a warning and when a warning will not be given:

A patient will be warned that they are at risk of removal and will be given an explanation of the reasons for this. A permanent record of the warning, including the date and reason for the warning, will be made and retained.

However no warning will be given if:

The practice has reasonable grounds for believing that the issue of such a warning would put at risk the safety of members of the practice or those entitled to be on the practice premises, therefore it is, in the opinion of the GP, not otherwise reasonable or practical for a warning to be given.

Removal from the Practice List

A good patient-doctor relationship, based on mutual respect and trust, is the cornerstone of good patient care. The removal of patients from this practice list is an exceptional and rare event and is a last resort in an impaired patient-practice relationship. When trust has irretrievably broken down, it is in the patient's interest, just as much as that of the practice, that they should find a new practice.

Notifying the Patient

The Practice will take immediate steps to contact the patient to inform them of the action being taken. The patient will be informed in writing to their home address. Although the General Practitioner is not obliged to give a reason it is the policy of this Practice to inform the patient why they have been removed from the list.

Removing other members of the household

In rare cases, however, because of the possible need to visit patients at home it may be necessary to terminate responsibility for other members of the family or the entire household. The prospect of visiting patients where a relative who is no longer a patient of the practice by virtue of their unacceptable behaviour resides, or being regularly confronted by the removed patient, may make it too difficult for the practice to continue to look after the whole family. This is particularly likely where the patient has been removed because of violence or threatening behaviour and keeping the other family members could put doctors or their staff at risk.