

Management of Violence and Aggression at Work Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there are adequate safe systems in place to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of employees whose job role may put them at risk of work related violence and aggression (V&A) from members of the public, clients, pupils, customers and contractors.
- 1.2 This policy is written with regard to the duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act to minimise the risk of V&A to all employees so far as is reasonably practicable.
- 1.3 Swansea Council (Authority) is committed to providing a safe and secure work environment for all its employees and will take all reasonably practicable measures to prevent or reduce the risk of such exposure to V&A when delivering services to the Community.
- 1.4 The Authority recognises that exposure to V&A, or threat of violence, is not an acceptable part of employee's duties. The Authority also recognises the potentially damaging effect on an employee's well-being of all categories of violence and regards all types of violence as unacceptable and will take effective action to deal with violent incidents.
- 1.5 Social Media usage has increased significantly in recent years, with many council employees using it as a positive communication tool in a professional capacity. However from time to time, there may be incidents of work related online abuse including defamatory comments, intimidation and threats made by individual members of the public or campaign groups directly targeted against an employee. This type of abuse will not be tolerated, and appropriate action will be taken.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 In line with the Corporate Health and Safety Policy, Swansea Council (Authority) recognises and accepts its duties and responsibilities to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees and others who may be at risk from its activities.
- 2.2 The Authority will not tolerate any aggressive, abusive or violent behaviour from members of the public towards employees engaged in their work duties and appropriate action will be taken to protect staff.
- 2.3 All Directorates, Services and Schools within the Authority will be able to demonstrate compliance with this policy via audit.
- 2.4 Serious and deliberate violation of the Authority's Corporate Health & Safety Policy, health and safety rules and standards by employees may be viewed as gross misconduct under the Disciplinary Policy of Swansea Council.
- 2.5 It is acknowledged that in certain work situations some incidents of violent behaviour, including verbal abuse, can be attributed to client or users of the services medical condition or disability. As such, this is a Corporate Policy with Service Units/Schools supplementing it by having in place their own procedures and guidelines, which reflect the principles of this policy and the individual needs of their Service Unit/School.
- 2.6 This policy is concerned with work related violence and aggressive behaviour, both physical and verbal towards all employees of the Authority from pupils, clients, client/pupil relatives, contractors, visitors or members of the public.
- 2.7 Managers/head teachers may choose to delegate their duties but cannot delegate their responsibilities.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, agency staff and elected members who are all required to comply.
- 3.2 When considering the terms on which work, services or supplies will be provided to the Authority, the relevant procuring officer will ensure specific provision in the contract concerning the health, safety and wellbeing of the contractor, its staff, Swansea Council employees and the public.
- 3.3 This policy applies to:
 - a) incidents of work related violence and aggression from members of the public, Clients, Service users, Pupils, Visitors and Contractors

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- b) incidents where employees are receiving targeted work related Cyber aggression, including defamatory comments directly targeted against an employee e.g. Social Media

- 3.4 Incidents of V&A to employees from their colleagues or councillors are dealt with under the Authority's Discipline Procedure.

4. Definition of Violence & Aggression

- 4.1 For the purposes of this policy the definition of violence is:-

'Any incident in which an employee feels abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of the course of their duties'.

Violence may take the form of:

- Physical assault – whether physical injury occurs or not
 - Verbal abuse – when an employee feels threatened or intimidated and the abuse is personally directed. This can be face to face or over the telephone
 - Cyber aggression – personal work related online aggression through texts, email messages, Social media networking sites, including Defamatory comments directly targeted against an employee
 - Verbal and Non-Verbal Intimidation
 - Racial, sexual, disability or other harassment
 - Threatening behaviour; implied threat
 - The use of animals to assault or intimidate
 - Pre-meditated violence and aggression
- 4.2 Employees are potentially at risk of V&A from members of the public. Those at increased risk are likely to be employees who:
- Handle or collect money or valuables
 - Work alone or away from a workplace
 - Carry out enforcement duties or inspections
 - Have contact with service users
 - Deal with the public directly e.g. Reception staff; Customer Service Staff
- 4.2 This definition includes any violence in, or outside, the workplace, which arises as a result of the employee's work activity.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Cabinet

5.1.1 Cabinet will nominate one of its members as the portfolio holder for health, safety and wellbeing issues. Cabinet will promote this policy and

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comply with its provisions. The nominated Cabinet Member will ensure that the Cabinet will promote this policy and encourage compliance with its provisions.

5.2 Chief Executive

5.2.1 With reference to the Corporate Health and Safety Policy, the Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees and others who may be affected by the Authority's undertaking. The Chief Executive may delegate Health & Safety matters to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Resources as the portfolio holder, but will retain responsibility.

5.3 Corporate Management Team (CMT)

5.3.1 CMT will be collectively responsible for strategic health and safety planning and for periodic review of health and safety performance, under the advisement of the Corporate Health, Safety, Emergency Management & Wellbeing Manager as the Authorities competent person.

5.4 Health & Safety Wellbeing Champion

5.4.1 To promote a positive health, safety and wellbeing culture throughout the authority.

5.4.2 To discuss and monitor issues placed in the corporate risk log and other high-risk incidents with the Corporate Health, Safety, Emergency Management and Wellbeing Manager, the relevant Director and the Chief Executive as appropriate.

5.5 Directors/Chief Officers

5.5.1 Ensure Heads of Service deliver their responsibilities under this policy and report any failings or barriers that may affect compliance to the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

5.5.2 Ensure that the Heads of Service and all managers comply with procurement procedures for equipment and specialist services.

5.6 Heads of Service

5.6.1 Ensure that suitable and sufficient arrangements, funds and resources are in place to manage V&A within their Service Unit.

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- 5.6.2 Ensure that risk assessments are undertaken and risks are mitigated in those areas of work or circumstance where a predictable risk of V&A exists.
 - 5.6.3 Ensure that adequate monitoring systems are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of local arrangements to minimise the risks related to V&A.
 - 5.6.4 Review V&A incident statistics, identify trends and take action as appropriate.
 - 5.6.5 Identify key health and safety risks from V&A and specify in the Service Business plan/School Development plan, and ensure control measures are implemented to reduce the risk.
 - 5.6.6 Ensure that there is effective consultation and communication between management, trade unions and employees to address risks, and raise awareness of V&A risks e.g. SMT, Team Briefs.
 - 5.6.7 Ensure that employees interfacing with the public have access to details of individuals who are known to present a potential risk due to previous violent or abusive behaviour towards Authority employees.
 - 5.6.8 Ensure there is immediate and effective communication between other Directorates, and external partners (where appropriate) when it is deemed that details of a perpetrator need to be brought to the attention of other Authority employees who are likely to come into contact through the course of their work to raise awareness of the risks from that perpetrator.
- 5.7 **Manager/Head Teacher** *(as defined by the Corporate Health and Safety Policy)*
- 5.7.1 Managers/Head teacher are responsible for ensuring that suitable and sufficient arrangements are in place to implement this policy within their sphere of responsibility.
 - 5.7.2 Ensure that risk assessments are carried out on all job roles, including those work activities where employees interact with pupils, service users and members of the public. They will take account of the risk of V&A to employees and ensure suitable control measures are identified and implemented to remove or reduce significant risks.
 - 5.7.3 Ensure that all employees identified through the risk assessment process, receive suitable and sufficient training, information and instruction, to minimise risks to their personal health, safety and wellbeing whilst at work. This includes the provision of refresher training at appropriate intervals.

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- 5.7.4 Ensure that employees are made aware of any known potentially V&A customers or service users/clients/pupils who have exhibited known aggressive and violent behaviours towards employees previously, and ensure that suitable and sufficient control measures are in place to mitigate the risk of V&A to protect them.
- 5.7.5 Ensure that all employees are provided with clear instructions in respect of reporting incidents and threats of V&A to their line manager as required by the Management of Accident and Incident Reporting Policy.
- 5.7.6 Will report all incidents and near misses arising from work related V&A to the Corporate Health, Safety, Emergency Management & Wellbeing Service as required by the Authority's accident and incident reporting procedure.
- 5.7.7 Will respond and treat any reports of work-related violence, threats or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.
- 5.7.8 Will thoroughly investigate all incidents, threats of, or actual violence at work and take any remedial action that may be necessary to reduce the risk of further V&A towards employees.
- 5.7.9 In the event of a V&A incident, will ensure that all relevant employees are made aware of any response or remedial arrangements that have been put in place, for example, reviewed procedural arrangements temporary or otherwise, warning letters sent to perpetrators; exclusion of perpetrator from a premise.
- 5.7.10 Where appropriate, will inform the person/s responsible for the violent or abusive behaviour in writing that this behaviour will not be tolerated and is not acceptable. Managers/head teachers are encouraged to seek advice from Legal Services or Corporate Complaints before doing so.
- 5.7.11 Where applicable, in consultation with the affected employee/s and with their agreement, the manager will ensure any assault, threat of assault or incident of a violent nature is reported to the police in order that the matter can be investigated and legal advice be sought.
- 5.7.12 Support employees involved in incidents of V&A by providing appropriate post-incident support and debriefing to employees. Where appropriate and in consultation with the employee concerned, make an offer of referral to the Stress Management and Counselling Service or request a critical incident debrief.
- 5.7.13 Where appropriate, will notify their Head of Service of incidents of physical assault to those employed within their Service Unit
- 5.7.14 Where safe systems of work procedures are in place e.g. Pupil Behaviour plans or Client care plans, managers will ensure they are regularly reviewed to ensure they are suitable and sufficient.

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5.7.15 Monitor incidents of V&A within their workplace and revise risk assessments accordingly.

5.8 Employee

5.8.1 Accept and understand their responsibility for reducing the risks of violence, and to co-operate and comply with any instruction given by management, which is provided for reasons of health and safety.

5.8.2 Employees will comply with the provisions of all Swansea Council health, safety and wellbeing policies.

5.8.3 Employees will conduct work in a manner, which is safe for themselves, their colleagues and members of the public who may be affected by the employee's acts or omissions. Attempt to minimise potentially violent situations in accordance with relevant training undertaken. This may include the use of a range of strategies to reduce escalation of violence and aggression.

5.8.4 Where identified through risk assessment, attend any training and subsequent refresher training provided for the risks associated with violence and aggression.

5.8.5 Wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided to minimise risks when carrying out their duties, and be responsible for reporting if the PPE is damaged/not suitable for use.

5.8.6 Bring to their managers attention and/or trade union representative if they become aware of a work situation where there is a risk of violence, which has not been adequately addressed.

5.8.7 Will report incidents of violence and aggression or near misses to their line manager and ensure that the relevant sections of the HS3 form are completed.

5.8.8 Will not engage in unsafe practices and take unnecessary risks which have the potential to harm themselves, colleagues or members of the public.

5.9 Corporate Health, Safety, Emergency management & Wellbeing Manager

5.9.1 Will ensure the provision of advice and guidance via the Corporate Health, Safety, Environment Management and Wellbeing Service to those identified as having responsibilities under this policy.

5.9.2 Collate all data submitted by managers as a requirement of this policy, and ensure its analysis and interpretation.

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- 5.9.3 To ensure that all accidents/incidents/near misses reported that are notifiable under RIDDOR are referred to the Health and Safety Executive.
- 5.9.4 Provide through the Stress Management and Counselling Service a confidential safe environment to receive counselling and support for those employees who have been subjected to and affected by following work related V&A
- 5.9.5 To bring to the attention of the Corporate Health & Safety Wellbeing Champion or CMT of any known serious or uncontrolled risks.

5.10 Legal Services

- 5.10.1 Where appropriate, will provide advice and guidance, in cases involving an offence or assault. This may involve general legal advice to the manager, employee, and liaison with the police. Will arrange injunctions and other legal action against perpetrators if appropriate and can provide general advice to employees on Court procedures..

5.11 Corporate Complaints

- 5.11.1 Will provide advice and guidance to managers in relation to the Unreasonable Behaviour Policy and actions that can be taken where employees have been subjected to serious threats and abusive behaviour by a member of the public through their work role.

6. Review and Monitoring

- 6.1 The requirements of this policy will be monitored by way of a risk-prioritised process of auditing. All Service Units within the Authority will be able to demonstrate compliance with this policy.
- 6.2 The training and responsibilities of individuals will be monitored by the Authority through its management and appraisal processes.
- 6.3 Where necessary the Authority will take appropriate action to ensure that this policy is upheld.
- 6.4 This policy will be reviewed by the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager every 3 years or if:
- New legislation is published or existing legislation is updated.
 - New guidance is published or existing guidance is updated.
 - Research, monitoring or auditing suggests that a review may be required.
 - Incident investigation suggests that a review may be required.

7. Reference

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977
- Health and Safety (Consultation with employees) Regulations 1996
- Equality Act 2010

The Authority's:

- [Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Equalities policy statement](#)
- [Corporate Complaints Policy](#)