



SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

VIOLENCE & AGGRESSION AT WORK POLICY

AIMS OF THE POLICY

Shrewsbury Town Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all staff, including agency staff, our contractors and those seconded to the Town Council. It does not accept, and will not tolerate, physical, verbal or emotional abuse to staff who are going about their duties on behalf of the Council. Violence to Shrewsbury Town Council employees is not accepted as being 'part of the job'.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy, abuse, aggression or violence is defined as 'an incident in which employees feel they have been verbally abused, threatened or attacked in circumstances relating to their duties either in or out of work'. Employees should report incidents involving race, gender or gender identity, religion or belief, disability, sexuality and age in line with the requirements of the Town Council's Dignity & Respect Policy.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Clearly any incident of physical assault which causes an injury to a member of staff, whether it results in physical pain and suffering or anxiety and stress, is a cause for serious concern. It is important to recognise that verbal abuse and/or threats also may take their toll in emotional strain with equally serious effect. Failure to address the issue can lead to low morale and poor performance and there may be the associated costs of absence as staff are rendered incapable of coming to work because of injury, depression or fear. Furthermore, there is a legal requirement to consider which places a statutory obligation on the Town Council to provide a safe system of work, a safe place of work and a safe working environment. This duty extends to protecting employees from assaults.

This Policy applies to all incidents of work-related abuse, aggression and violence. Town Council employees are potentially at risk of violence at work from members of the public. Those at increased risk are likely to be employees who:

- Handle or collect money or valuables
- Give advice or training
- Work alone or away from a workplace
- Carry out enforcement duties or inspections
- Have contact with service users.
- Handle public calls

The Town Council recognises the potentially damaging effect on an employee's well-being of all categories of violence - actual physical attack, the threat of violence and verbal abuse. It regards all types of violence as unacceptable and will take effective action to deal with violent incidents. 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. This also includes 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.

MANAGERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

All line managers have a responsibility to implement this Policy and to make sure their staff are aware of it and understand it. Line Managers 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. You 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Carry out risk assessments.
- Being sensitive to the needs of employees and the risks they face in all aspects of their work.

EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of staff have a 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:

- Recognise the potential for work-related violence and take action to resolve it early on.
- Take positive action and, for example, contact a line manager if they think a customer or member of the public might cause problems.
- Don't accept instances of work-related violence directed towards you 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.
- Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or witnessed work-related violence.
- Suggest additional measures to line managers which might help to prevent and manage work-related violence.
- Make use of any infrastructure or technology to support their work including use of phones, radios and body worn video cameras
- Staff have a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. Any staff member found to be encouraging or inciting violence may be subject to disciplinary action.
- Staff and line managers should also work with Union Representatives, where relevant, in preventing, addressing, reporting and responding to incidents or work-related violence.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

These guidelines apply to all services but can be adapted to meet specific needs.

Reception areas

The way in which people are received sometimes affects how they react. Reception areas should have easy access, good lighting and an inviting atmosphere.

When people are kept waiting, explain the reasons and apologise if appropriate. If a receptionist considers a violent situation is likely to develop, they should call a senior employee to help.

Access from reception to work areas or interview rooms should be controlled using keypads, swipe cards or other security devices. Alarm systems with readily accessible panic buttons should be installed in reception areas and interview rooms. It's important that alarm systems can be heard, and that all employees are trained to respond on hearing the alarm.

Property and cash

Although safeguarding property and cash is important, it IS secondary to the safety of employees. If violence is directed solely at property, individual employees must decide whether to try to stop it. If it's likely to result in personal injury, then it is better not to intervene. Try to contain it within a restricted area and summon assistance.

Severe disturbances or 'sit-ins'

If someone refuses to leave, employees must get help from their line manager and, if necessary, call the Police.

People with dogs and other animals

With the exception of registered assistance dogs, all dogs are banned from all Town Council offices, without prior permission.

Sometimes people encourage their dogs and other animals to behave aggressively towards employees. Employees must report and record such incidents. This will alert other employees to potential danger.

The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 requires owners to keep their dogs under control. An owner may be guilty of an offence if their dog:

- is dangerously out of control in a public place, or
- causes fear or apprehension in a place where it shouldn't be, and which isn't public property.

If the dog injures anyone, the owner may be guilty of an aggravated offence. In either case, the Council or the Police can take action against the owner.

DEALING WITH VIOLENT INCIDENTS

It may not always be possible to predict violence, but in most cases events gradually escalate. Treat all threats of violence seriously. Because individuals respond differently, it is difficult to suggest exactly what to do. If you feel threatened, consider trying to calm the person down to diffuse the situation.

It is important to be perceptive and 'read' situations. Try:

- to avoid arguing
- to be careful in what you say and how you say it
- to not be provocative
- to not swear

Make sure you know how to get help or escape if necessary. These situations are stressful, but it is important to try and remain calm, not to panic or overreact. Always try to predict and prevent violent behaviour. If you can recognise early warning signs and symptoms, it's often possible to prevent violence or avoid direct confrontation. However, if the situation escalates then leave and get immediate help.

ACTION FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

Employees

If you are involved in a violent incident, you must tell your line manager as soon as possible afterwards and fill in the form provided in Appendix 2. You, or your line manager, must also report it immediately to the Police and, if necessary, seek medical attention.

Managers

Cases of assault, physical violence and severe disturbance are criminal offences, so ensure sure that the Police are contacted as soon as possible.

Line Managers are to investigate any incidents fully. Take written statements from witnesses as soon as possible, preferably on the day of the incident. The Police may also wish to take separate statements.

If the incident involves physical violence, and the employee suffers an injury then you also need to complete a separate Accident/Near Miss Report form.

Specific courses of action, depending upon the type of incident, are available in Appendix 1.

Staff are to be kept updated about any actions or outcomes throughout the process.

LEGAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

If an employee is assaulted whilst carrying out their duties, and the Police take no action, the Town Council may seek professional advice to decide whether or not to prosecute the assailant if it considers a successful prosecution is possible and justified. An employee can also take a private action, either through the Criminal or Civil Courts, with assistance from their trade union or a private solicitor.

SICKNESS PAYMENTS

Injury as a result of an assault at work will be treated as an industrial injury, and occupational sick pay will be paid. It is therefore important that abuse, aggression and violence incidents are reported to your line manager.

COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

The welfare of employees is of paramount importance. An employee who suffers violence must be treated sympathetically, and their immediate needs attended to **before** the more formal process of recording and reporting the incident. Employees may choose to use the Council's counselling service available via Vivup.

TRAINING

Line Managers are responsible for identifying their employees' training needs, including the requirement for conflict management training. Any employees requiring further, or refresher training should contact their line manager.

Approved by Personnel Committee	7 December 2023
Adopted by Council	
Review Date	

Appendices

Appendix 1

Specific Course of action for Managers following an incident

Incident	Legislation	Manager's Actions
Actual Physical Assault.	Offences Against the Person Act 1861	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Report to Police at time of incident to restrain offender and then press charges. 2) Ensure notes are taken from any witnesses. 3) Ensure Incident Report form is completed 4) Review incident with member of staff, identifying a need for support, training needs etc.
Threat of violence or abuse in public place	Public Order Act, ss. 4,4A and 5 and Protection from Harassment Act	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Line Manager should try to calm the offender and ask them to leave. If it becomes necessary, Police should be called to facilitate removal. 2) In any event, matter should be reported to the Police. 3) Ensure notes are taken from any witnesses. 4) Ensure Incident Report form is completed 5) Review incident with member of staff, identifying a need for support, training needs etc.
Threat to kill or threats to property.	Offences against the Person Act 1861	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Report to Police 2) Ensure notes are taken from any witnesses. 3) Ensure Incident Report form is completed 4) Review incident with member of staff, identifying a need for support, training needs etc.
Threat of violence or abuse in non-public place, e.g., in assailants' home or on their property, including abusive correspondence	Protection from Harassment Act and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensure Incident Report form is completed 2) Review incident with member of staff, identifying a need for support, training needs etc. 3) If further incident occurs to SAME person, then a witness statement needs to be prepared detailing BOTH incidents and this and a copy of the letter needs to be given to the police who will then make further investigations. 4) Ensure further Incident Report form is completed 5) Review incident with member of staff, identifying a need for support, training needs etc.
Shouted or sworn at in person or over the telephone/abusive correspondence.	Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensure detailed notes of the incident are made 2) Ensure Incident Report form is completed

		<p>3) Review incident with member of staff, identifying a need for support, training needs etc.</p> <p>4) Repeat incidents should be assessed by the manager with the member/s of staff in the context of the situation</p> <p>5) If this does not have the desired effect Line Manager should consider designating one officer to deal with complainant, etc.</p> <p>6) If the behaviour continues seek advice from Legal Services.</p>
Customer is intimidating but is not abusive or swearing.	Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003	<p>1) Ensure detailed notes of the incident are made</p> <p>2) Ensure Incident Report form is completed</p> <p>3) Review incident with member of staff, identifying a need for support, training needs etc.</p> <p>4) Repeat incidents should be assessed by the line manager with the member/s of staff in the context of the situation.</p>
Customer is angry but not abusive or swearing.	None	If member of staff has concerns about dealing with this kind of situation it may be necessary to review training needs of member of staff

Appendix 2

Abuse, Aggression & Violence Incident Report

Employee Details

Name			
Service		Team	
Location/Site			
Do you wish your identity to be kept confidential	Yes	No	

Details of Incident

Date		Time	
Location:			

What Happened (Tick as appropriate)?

Verbal Abuse	Threat of Violence	Physical Violence
Other e.g., Intimidating behaviour	Damage to Public Property	Damage to private property
Details of Injury (if applicable)		
Describe what happened (continue on additional page if required)		
Employees Signature		Date

Details of Aggressor (Tick as appropriate)

Name	Male		Female		
Any other relevant details? In your opinion was he/she under the influence of:					
Alcohol	Yes	No	Drugs	Yes	No
Appear to be ill/disturbed			Yes	No	

Witness Details (if applicable)

Name		
Team/Address		

Manager's Initial Actions (tick as appropriate)

First Aid required	Yes	No
Hospital treatment required	Yes	No
Police Informed	Yes	No
If yes, what action is proposed?		
Name	Signature	Date

Health & Safety Advisor – Follow Up Action (Tick as appropriate)

HSE Reportable	Yes	No
Detail entered on database register	Yes	No
Were existing procedures followed?	Yes	No
Were existing procedures adequate?	Yes	No
Comments		
Details of any other actions carried out		
Name	Signature	Date