

Staff Safety Policy



Introduction

The personal safety and wellbeing of our employees is of paramount importance to Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC). We believe that behaviour that includes actual or threatened violence, aggression, harassment, abuse and/or intimidation of our employees is completely unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

We appreciate that in carrying out their duties our employees will meet and have to respond to people who feel angry, anxious or not in control of important matters in their lives. We recognise that in such situations, the potential for abuse, intimidation or actual assault can exist. However, minimising the risk of this to our employees is a key priority for the Council.

We recognise that we have a duty to protect the safety and wellbeing of our employees, those working on our behalf, service users and those visiting Council premises. We will ensure that we take appropriate action to remove or reduce the likelihood and effect of violent or abusive behaviour towards any of our employees and will take all necessary steps to demonstrate that this behaviour will not be tolerated.

This Policy also applies to Council volunteers, agency staff, those working on our behalf and elected members.



How do we define violence, aggression and abuse (and other associated unwanted conduct)?

We include any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is subjected to:

Verbal abuse – swearing, insults, condescending language, malicious allegation and abusive comments about their appearance, behaviour, intelligence, competence, honesty or professionalism. This also includes the expression of beliefs or opinions which involve prejudice or hate due to actual or perceived gender identify, race or ethnicity, nationality, religion, faith or belief, sexual orientation or disability.

Aggressive body language – indicating intimidation, contempt or disdain. This includes, physically blocking the exit so that employees cannot leave.

Threats – expression of intent to cause harm, including threatening behaviour, verbal or written. This also includes threats of self-harm, emotional blackmail or threatening to cause damage to property.

Assault / attack – intentional behaviour aimed at physical injury or attack on a person, leading to actual physical or psychological harm (including verbal and threatening behaviour). This includes, but is not limited to, hitting, pushing, shoving, grabbing, kicking, invasion of personal space, imprisonment and throwing liquids/objects. This can also include attack by an animal or vehicle being used as a weapon or the incitement of violence by others for example through the use of social media.

Harassment - any act, conduct, statement of request, at the workplace or in connection with work, that is unwelcome to a person and could reasonably be regarded as harassing behaviour of a discriminatory, offensive, humiliating, intimidating, sexual or violent nature, or an invasion of privacy. This includes approaching employees outside of their place of work, attempting to obtain their personal or private information and sharing of that information publicly including via social media.

Theft of or damage to vehicles, property or equipment – this includes theft of or damage to the Council's, or an employee's personal, vehicle, property or equipment.

Creating a hostile working environment – any intentional action that creates an environment that interferes with an employee's ability to carry out their duties or that makes them feel threatened or unsafe. This includes, but is not limited to, the presence of dogs, unsecured hazardous substances, abandoned needles, and anti-social behaviour from other people at the address.



How will we deal with those who demonstrate the behaviours outlined in this Policy?

Our employees are authorised to remove themselves from any situation where someone is demonstrating the behaviours outlined in this Policy. Depending on the severity of the behaviour being demonstrated they may first ask the person to stop what they are doing and to change their behaviour. However, if the person does not change their behaviour or if the behaviour being demonstrated is severe then our employee will take appropriate action to remove themselves from the situation. For example, if they are on the phone, they will terminate the call. If they are meeting the person face to face, they will either ask the person to leave or will leave themselves. All incidents where our employees are subject to any of the behaviours outlined will be reported and a record made of the incident and those involved.

All reported incidents will be reviewed by the employees Line Manager and may result in a range of action being taken by the Council. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- restricting or removing access to the Council's buildings and services;
- issuing a Community Protection Warning;
- applying for a Civil Injunction or Criminal Behaviour Order;
- reporting the incident to the Police and seeking legal action.

We will do everything reasonably practicable, in conjunction with the police, to bring a prosecution against any individual or individuals where there are allegations of actual or threatened violence, aggression, harassment, abuse and/or intimidation to any employee arising out of or in connection with the work they undertake on behalf of the Council.



