# Dealing with Violence or Aggression in the Dental Workplace Policy (Zero Tolerance)

**Introduction**

[Name] Dental Practice recognises that it has a statutory duty of care to ensure the health and safety at work of all employees, which includes a duty to protect against bullying and harassment so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines violence as ‘Any incident in which a person working in the healthcare sector is verbally abused, threatened or assaulted by a patient or member of the public in circumstances relating to his or her employment’. The range of incidents covered includes those which:

* cause major injury;
* require medical assistance;
* require first aid only;
* involve a threat, even if no physical injury results;
* involve verbal abuse;
* involve non-verbal abuse, for example stalking;
* involve other threatening behaviour.

[Name] Dental Practice has put in place measures to prevent violence or aggression towards staff. A risk assessment has been carried out and all staff have been trained in how to deal with such incidents. A panic alarm has been installed at the reception desk and all staff on domiciliary visits are provided with a personal alarm.

Violence or aggression against any member of staff will not be tolerated. Incidents which involve violent conduct towards members of staff will be

reported to the police. General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) have the right to remove, with immediate effect, any patient who has been violent or threatened violence to the GDP or a member of their staff.

**Informal action**

Where a patient or a member of the public is verbally abusive, threatening or acts in a threatening manner, the staff member will inform them that their remarks, actions or behaviour is unacceptable and will refer them to this policy. Members of staff who do not wish to directly address unacceptable behaviour may ask another member of staff to deal with the incident on their behalf. A member of staff who is asked to deal with such an incident will immediately act upon the request. In some cases it may also be appropriate to discuss an abusive patient’s behaviour with a carer or relative.

Any staff member who witnesses any form of threatening or abusive behaviour will report it to [Name]. They will also support any colleagues who have been subject to such behaviour; this could include talking to the person responsible for the behaviour at the time of the incident.

In many cases, the threatening or abusive behaviour may stop without the need for further action.

**Formal action**

If the unacceptable behaviour persists after the informal approaches by members of staff, then a more formal approach will be made. This will take into account the seriousness of the incidents and the seriousness and urgency of the patient’s care needs.

Where the unacceptable behaviour was verbal or threatening in nature, [Name] will write a formal letter to the patient informing them that their behaviour is unacceptable and any further incidents will not be tolerated.

This letter will refer, if appropriate, to an NHS employer’s responsibility to protect the human rights of those working for it. If the patient has asserted or asserts an entitlement under the Human Rights Act 1998 (for example, free speech), their attention will be drawn to Article 17 (in schedule one of the Act). Under this Article, persons whose actions are, ‘aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms’ or ‘at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the Convention’, are not permitted to rely on their Convention rights.

**Violent incidents**

Where a member of staff was the victim of a violent assault or has been made fearful for their safety, [Names] will meet to decide what action to take. This may include considering whether it is appropriate to withdraw services in line with national guidelines on withholding treatment from violent and abusive patients. [Name] Health Board may also need to be involved in any decisions about patients. In some cases, it may be necessary to involve the police or invoke legal action. This will be mandatory if violence is used to our staff. The practice has a Violent Incident Report Form to report these incidents to the police.

Policy last updated:

Date of next review:

[Name and/or designation of responsible person]

Signature:

The following staff have read and understood this policy [include all team members].

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| **Dental Team Member**  | **Position** | **Signature** | **Date** |
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