

LONSDALE MEDICAL CENTRE

1, Clanricarde Gardens Tunbridge Wells Kent TN1 1PE
Tel: 01892 530329/517155 Email: lonsdale.medical@nhs.net

Zero Tolerance: Violent and Abusive Patients Policy

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ANNEX B – DRAFT WARNING LETTER TO A PATIENT REGARDING ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR.7

1 Policy

Whilst any act of intimidation, aggression or violence, be it verbal or physical, is not acceptable, it is acknowledged that a minority of patients may on occasion be abusive or violent towards staff at Lonsdale Medical Centre. This practice has a zero tolerance towards such behaviour and is committed to reducing the risk to staff and other patients.

2 Definition of Terms

2.1 Violence

Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.¹

2.2 Physical assault

The intentional application of force to the person of another, without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort.

2.3 Non-physical assault (Abusive)

The use of inappropriate or discriminatory words or behaviour causing distress and/or constituting harassment.

2.4 Aggression

Behaviour that is hostile, destructive and/or violent.

3 Reducing the Risk

3.1 Risk assessments

Whilst it is acknowledged that a risk assessment alone will not reduce the occurrence of work-related violence, the subsequent actions following the assessment should do

¹ [Violence at Work A guide for employers \(HSE\)](#)

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so.² The findings of the risk assessment(s) will inform the procedures needed to enhance safety within the practice.

3.2 Potential risks

The following constitute foreseeable risks to staff at Lonsdale Medical Centre:

- Known or suspected abusive, aggressive or violent patients
- Patients suffering from stress and/or mental illnesses
- Patients for who services may be withdrawn or withheld
- Patients with a criminal history

3.3 Preventative measures

Preventative measures should be in place when staff are treating known or suspected abusive, aggressive or violent patients or those patients identified as posing a risk to staff, contractor or patient safety.

In addition, the clinician may consider:

- Having a chaperone present throughout the consultation
- Arranging the surgery to ensure they are seated closest to the door
- Ensuring other staff are aware of a potential issue and are prepared to respond accordingly

3.4 Police assistance

The police should be called in instances where physical assault is likely or where weapons or drugs have been identified. It is the responsibility of the police to deal with patients who act in such a manner.

3.5 Removal of patients

Staff should refer to the Removal of Patients Policy which clearly details the procedure to remove a patient from the practice list as a result of violence, aggression or assault.

4 Panic Alarms

4.1 Activating the alarm

All staff at Lonsdale Medical Centre are given an overview of the panic alarms and how they work during the induction process. Within each consulting room, panic

² [Risk Assessment for work-related violence](#)

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alarms are located on each computer in the building (Green button). Activation of this alarm will send an alert to all users within the practice, producing an instant message on each user's computer screen.

Should staff at any point feel threatened or sense that the situation may lead to an incident, they are to activate the alarm.

4.2 Response procedure

Upon seeing the alert from the EMIS generated alarm, all available staff should respond immediately. Two members of staff will go to the location of the incident, proceeding with caution. The first member of staff is to knock and enter the room; the second is to remain in the doorway, ready to summon additional support if necessary.

The specific nature of the incident will determine if:

- Additional staff are required for support
- The police are required to attend and take any subsequent action
- The situation can be resolved by the clinician, with support from a staff member

Staff should at all times try to minimise the risk of harm to themselves and others.

In the first instance, a member of the staff should ask the perpetrator to stop behaving in an unacceptable way. Sometimes a calm and quiet approach will be all that is required. Staff should not, in any circumstances, respond in a like manner.

Should the person not stop their behaviour the Patient Services Manager should be asked to attend and the member of staff should explain calmly what has taken place, preferably within hearing of the perpetrator.

If the person is acting in an unlawful manner, causes damage or actually strikes another then the police should be called immediately.

Should it prove necessary to remove the person from the practice then the police should be called and staff should not, except in the most extreme occasions, attempt to manhandle the person from the premises.

5 Reporting of Incidents

5.1 Internal reporting

All incidents are to be reported to the Patient Services Manager and Practice Manager at the earliest opportunity. The practice manager will ensure that any subsequent reporting action is taken, whilst supporting staff in the completion of the significant event report if appropriate.

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It is the policy to press for charges against any person who damages or steals practice property or assaults any member of staff or visitor/patient.

5.2 Clinical record

In the event of a violent or extreme incident an entry is to be made in the patient's healthcare record, detailing exactly what happened, including timings, the build-up to the incident, those staff members present or if they in fact received a letter from the Practice due to their unacceptable behaviour.

5.3 Significant events

In addition to recording the information in the patient's healthcare record, the staff member dealing with the patient is to complete a Significant Event report/form.

5.4 Practice management actions

The practice manager is required to notify the CQC of an incident that is reported to or investigated by the police.³

6 Effects On Staff

6.1 Supporting the team

Staff who experience incidents of violence, aggression or assault may experience subsequent after-effects, which may require support from the team or external resources. Line managers and the practice management team will be required to support all staff members following any incident, no matter how minor it may seem, to ensure that the health and well-being of the staff member is not adversely affected.

7 Summary

Assaults on NHS staff occur every day across England; healthcare workers are four times more likely to experience work-related violence and aggression than other workers.⁴ Effective risk assessment and incident reporting will support the practice in the appropriate management of offenders, thereby reducing risk to staff, contractors and patients alike.

³ [Care Quality Commission \(Registration\) Regulations 2009: Regulation 18](#)

⁴ [Health Services – Workplace violence: Further Guidance](#)

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Signature	<i>Jo Davis</i>
Reviewed Date	Jan 2022

Annex A – What to do and what not to do when faced with an aggressive patient

DO	DO NOT
Recognise your own feelings	Meet anger with anger
Use calming body language	Raise your voice, point or stare
Be prepared to apologise if necessary	Attempt or appear to lecture them
Assert yourself appropriately	Threaten any intervention unless you are prepared to act upon it
Allow people to explain themselves	Make them feel trapped or concerned

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Annex B – Draft warning letter to a patient regarding abusive behaviour

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [insert patient name],

As the Practice Manager of Lonsdale Medical Centre, I am writing to you on behalf of the GP Partners at the practice. It is alleged that on [insert date] you acted in a manner that was deemed to be [violent/threatening/abusive] whilst [attending the practice / speaking to receptionist on the telephone].

Such behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. The NHS has zero tolerance towards patients who are violent, threatening or abusive towards staff and we take this policy extremely seriously.

Please treat this letter as a formal warning that any such behaviour in the future will not be tolerated. Any repetition of abusive/aggressive behaviour may result in you being removed from this practice's patient list and you will be required to register elsewhere.

A copy of this letter will be retained within your healthcare record.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

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Practice Manager
For the partners