**Zero Tolerance Policy**

**Introduction**

Garden City Surgery takes it very seriously if a member of staff is treated in an abusive or violent way.

The Practice supports the government’s ‘**Zero Tolerance**‘ campaign for Health Service Staff. Meaning our GPs and staff have the right to care for others without the fear of being abused or attacked. For this campaign to be successful whilst providing different health services there must be a mutual respect between all the staff and patients.

At Garden City Surgery, we intend to be helpful, polite, and sensitive to all patients’ individual needs and circumstances. It is important to remember that quite a few times the Practice staff could be faced with several varying and sometimes difficult tasks and situations, all at the same time. Our staff understands that ill patients do not always act in a reasonable manner and will take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint.

However, aggressive behaviour, be it violent or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in you being removed from the Practice list and, in extreme cases, the Police being contacted.

For the Practice to continue having good relations with their patients, the Practice would like to ask all its patients to read and take note of the occasional types of behaviour that would be found unacceptable:

* Using bad language/swearing at Practice staff.
* Verbal abuse towards the staff in any form including verbally insulting the staff.
* Racial abuse and sexual harassment will not be tolerated within this Practice.
* Any physical violence towards any member of the Primary Health Care Team or other patients, such as pushing or shoving.
* Persistent or unrealistic demands that cause stress to staff will not be accepted. Requests will be met wherever possible, and explanations given when they cannot.
* Causing damage/stealing from the Practice’s premises, staff, or patients.
* Obtaining drugs and/or medical services fraudulently
* We ask you to always treat your GPs and their staff courteously.

**The Legal Position**

As a responsible employer, the Practice has a duty, as a provider of NHS healthcare, to protect the health, safety, and welfare of staff under the Health & Safety at Work Act. This includes a risk assessment of violence towards staff and taking steps to mitigate this under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Staff members who are victims of violent conduct or assault have the right to sue their employers for compensation if the risk of violence could have been reduced or removed completely, but the employers did not act upon this information.

Examples of security issues:

* Security of grounds and car parking.
* Security of premises – incl. storage, “out of hours”.
* CCTV.
* Cash and staff – storing, handling, and transferring.
* Security Systems.
* Security of equipment – medical devices, computers.
* Communication of national security alerts.
* Information records.
* Contingency planning.
* Security of employees.
* Staff working on their own.
* (Staff can be lone workers when making domiciliary visits or within a hospital department e.g., out of hours).

This list is not exhaustive.

For example, a lone working risk assessment must provide the lone worker full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which they are being exposed and what they must need to do when something goes wrong. Other responsible persons must know the whereabouts of lone workers and what they are doing.

**Violence at Work**

The practice acknowledges that there may be instances where violence and/or aggression forms part of a patient’s illness. In these circumstances, the issue will be discussed with the patient and form part of their care planning.

This information will be recorded in the patient’s medical record and flagged to ensure that members of staff are aware. In addition, where deemed necessary, appropriate support will be put in place, e.g., staff members do not see the patient alone.

**Definition of Physical and Verbal Abuse and Violence:**

Physical and verbal abuse includes:

* Unreasonable and/or offensive remarks or behaviour/rude gestures/innuendoes.
* Sexual and racial harassment.
* Threatening behaviour (with or without a weapon).
* Actual physical assault (whether it results in actual injury). includes being pushed or shoved as well as being hit, punched, or attacked with a weapon, or being intentionally struck with bodily fluids or excrement.
* Attacks on partners, members of staff or the public.
* Discrimination of any kind.
* Damage to an employee’s or employer’s property.

**The Practice supports the Zero Tolerance stance adopted by the NHS.**

The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) defines work-related violence as:  
*“Any incident, in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”.*

Violence and aggression towards a person may also be defined as:  
*“A physical contact with another person which may or may not result in pain or injury. The contact is uninvited and is an attempt to cause harm, injury or to intimidate. Non-physical aggression includes the use of language which causes offence or threatens the safety of a member of staff”.*

**Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the practice will also undertake the following measures to ensure a safe work environment:**

* Carry our risk assessments to assess and review the duties of employees, identifying any “at risk” situations and taking appropriate steps to reduce or remove the risk to employees, particularly if they are working alone.
* Assess and review the layout of the premises to reduce the risk to employees where physically possible.
* Assess and review the provision of personal safety equipment, such as alarms.
* Develop surgery policies, procedures, and guidelines for dealing with physical and verbal abuse.
* Provide support and counselling for victims or refer to suitably qualified health professionals.
* Make employees aware of risks and ensure employee involvement in suitable training courses.
* Record any incidents on a Significant Event form and take any remedial action to ensure similar incidents are prevented in future.

For more information, please click the link below.

[Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 – legislation explained (hse.gov.uk)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm)

**Removal from the Practice List**

It is a rare event to remove a patient from our Practice List, this incident is a last resort action in an impaired patient-practice relationship. We value in having a respectful and good patient-doctor relationship that is developed from a mutual trust and politeness.

However, when the trust has broken down and it is incurable, the Practice will consider all factors before we remove the patient for our list. We will also communicate to them that this is in the best interest of the patient to find a new Practice which suits their needs better. An exception to this is in the case of immediate removal on the grounds of violence e.g., when the Police are involved.

**Removing other members of the household**

Because of the possible need to visit patients at home, it may be necessary to terminate responsibility for other members of the family or the entire household to ensure the safety of practice staff.

Therefore, visiting patients who live with a someone who is no longer a patient of the Practice, may make it a challenge for the Practice to continue to look after them due to the risk of being regularly confronted by the removed patient.

This action normally occurs when the removed patient has been violent, or displayed threatening behaviour, and keeping the other family members could put doctors or their staff at risk.