

Preesall Town Council

Violence at Work Policy and Guidance

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- **Introduction**

Preesall Town Council has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. This duty includes protecting employees' physical and mental wellbeing from violence at work.

Work related violence can be defined as any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to work. This can include verbal abuse or threats as well as physical attacks.

- **Policy Statement**

Preesall Town Council believes its employees have the right to work in a safe environment and will not tolerate behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

The Town Council will therefore undertake to reduce to the lowest level reasonably practical, the risk to health and safety of its employees and members of the public from incidents of violence connected with work activities by implementing the following measures: -

- a. **Keeping under review all workplaces and work activities that may expose employees to incidents of violence.**
- b. **Where risks of incidents of violence are identified, undertaking a risk assessment and implementing safe systems of work and practical preventative measures where required.**
- c. **Providing adequate information, instruction and training to employees who may be exposed to incidents of violence.**
- d. **Encouraging employees to report all incidents of violence.**
- e. **Investigating all incidents of violence towards employees as appropriate.**
- f. **Providing full support to any employee who is the victim of violence including prosecution of offender should that be appropriate.**
- g. **Reviewing the policy and guidelines through monitoring and auditing at suitable intervals.**

- **Implementation**

The Clerk shall have responsibility to ensure that arrangements and provisions are made to implement this policy.

Through the control measures identified in general guidance, the Town Council will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and take all reasonable steps to continually reduce the level of violence to employees.

- **General Guidance**

There are several policies and procedures already in place within the Town Council which help to reduce the risk to employees from physical and verbal abuse. These include:

- **Lone Working/Personal Safety**
- **Risk Assessment**
- **Harassment**
- **Discipline**

Violence against any employee in the course of their employment is both legally and morally unacceptable. The effect of prolonged or repeated exposure to the threat of these incidents can have a detrimental impact upon the health and wellbeing of the individual.

Even where there is no physical injury, an incident can still generate considerable emotional stress. Threats may indicate a risk of actual injury, while malicious damage to an employee's property can cause distress and fear of future physical attack. People have different perceptions about the behaviour which they find threatening or offensive. Something which causes distress to one person may simply annoy another; and what one finds threatening may be shrugged off by others. It is important that each reported incident is taken seriously.

- **General Advice**

- **Think of your safety – assess potential risk situations. Although the chances of a physical attack are statistically low there is the tendency to believe that it will 'never happen to you'.**
- **Act on warning signs immediately (for example, feeling threatened, unnerved or upset).**
- **Walk away from situations which you feel may become out of hand.**
- **Do not resort to aggression.**
- **Discuss any fears with the clerk or if the clerk is unavailable, the chair. Do not try to hide them in fear of being seen as 'weak'.**
- **Avoid aggressive actions likely to challenge and confront anyone. Lack of aggression may help to identify and avoid potentially violent confrontations.**

- **Types of Violence**

There are several areas in which employees may potentially be exposed to violence: -

- **Whilst working alone around the town or away from the workplace.**
- **Whilst handling Town Council valuables or equipment.**

- Whilst carrying out inspection duties.
- Whilst working with individuals who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Whilst working with individuals with mental health problems.
- **Visits or Meetings away from usual working environment (home/around the town)**
 - Initial contact meetings should be held at Preesall and Knott End Youth Centre. In situations where this is not possible, the authenticity of the person(s) must be verified before a visit is arranged.
 - Do not enter areas which feel threatening.
 - Ensure that a spouse/another person in the home or the clerk knows the work details and times of arrival and departure of work.
- **Working Alone in an Establishment**
 - Where possible, lock entry doors but ensure that there is still safe access and exits in the event of an emergency.
 - Unexpected callers must always have their credentials checked before being permitted to enter the establishment.
 - There should be suitable means to summon help in the event of an emergency.
- **Handling Money or Valuables**
 - Personal belongings must not be left on view in work vehicles. Surplus throughout the day should be stored away in a safe place out of view within the locked vehicle.
 - Arrange the work area so that there are easy routes to escape if required.
 - In situations where safety feels threatened, help should be sought immediately.
 - There should be a suitable means to summon help in the event of an emergency.
- **Town Councils' Guidelines**

h. General Responsibility

As the Town Council you have responsibility for the health and safety of your staff. On behalf of the Town Council the clerk should take appropriate action to monitor and reduce where reasonably practicable, the exposure of staff to potentially violent incidents by:

- i. assessing the work activities and workplaces in relation to violence at work;
- ii. taking measures to minimise the risks by implementing appropriate control measures;
- iii. monitoring the Town Council's employees for signs and symptoms of physical or verbal assault;
- iv. offering support to employees who suffer violent/traumatic incident whilst at work.

- v. The Clerk should report any issues to the Town Council at the next Council meeting or if immediate response is required to the Chair.

- **Procedures to be followed when a violent incident has occurred**

- vi. The complainant and the alleged perpetrator must be separated and calmed until the Police arrive.
- vii. If medical attention or first aid is required, it should be sought immediately.
- viii. The manager in charge of the establishment where the assault occurred should be informed of the incident.
- ix. The clerk or person assaulted should take the details of any witnesses present, including names and addresses where possible. The witnesses should be asked to provide a full account of the incident.
- x. Once documented, the account should be signed by the witness and the person taking the details.
- xi. In cases where legal proceedings may be involved the person assaulted should be referred to Legal Services. (The person assaulted has the right to refuse counselling or legal services if they wish).
- xii. The clerk must investigate the incident, obtaining specialist advice as required to ensure that suitable control measures are introduced as part of the risk assessment process to prevent reoccurrence wherever possible.
- xiii. The clerk must ensure that the Town Council's Incident Report form is completed.

- **Employee Guidelines**

- i. **General Responsibilities**

You or your colleagues may be exposed to violence/abuse at work. It is important that you can recognise factors in the workplace which may expose you to violence and abuse. It is also important that you recognise the signs and symptoms brought on by both physical and verbal violence in yourself or others around you to be able to take appropriate action.

Legally you have a duty under Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your acts or omissions whilst at work.

The Clerk is required to undertake a risk assessment of all activities to identify significant risks

within the working environment, this includes risk of violence. If you think you are exposed to potentially violent situations then discuss these with the Clerk.

It is important that all incidents of violence are reported to the Clerk. In many cases, incidents of assault may occur away from your residence. It is important that these are reported to the Clerk, however trivial the incident may seem.

It must be understood that an incident of say, verbal abuse, may seem trivial to you but to another employee it may feel threatening, therefore by reporting the incident you are protecting others as well as yourself from a possible re-occurrence.

- **Sources of Help**

Your first point of contact for further advice and assistance would be with the Clerk, if the Clerk is not available the Chair, or departmental Health and Safety Section.

- **Other sources of help include:**

Legal Services.

HR (bullying/harassment policies, etc.).

Preesall Town Council Incident Reporting Guidance.

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