



Serving the community

Blaby Parish Council

EMPLOYMENT POLICY NO.11 – VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

Procedure for dealing with Violence and Aggression

1. Introduction

The purpose of this procedure is to reduce the risk of workplace violence and aggression and create a safe environment for staff and visitors within Blaby Parish Council.

Work-related violence and aggression is defined as: any incident, in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health. This definition is extended to include verbal abuse against staff that includes threatening, insulting, obscene, racist or sexist language.

2. Training

Blaby Parish Council's manager will provide violence and aggression training for all staff.

3. Procedure

The procedure gives guidance to employees on what action to take in relation to the management of violence and aggression within Blaby Parish Council premises or when acting on Blaby Parish Council's behalf away from the premises.

- Dealing with visitors in Blaby Parish Council reception; and potential threats of violence.
- Dealing with abusive telephone calls.
- Malicious telephone calls.
- Intruders in the building.
- Travel and transport including road rage.
- Work practices and patterns.
- Reporting and post incident actions.

Dealing with visitors in Blaby Parish Council reception

All doors to be kept on their security fob opening during business hours.

Visitors should only enter the building if they can provide a valid reason for visiting and details of a contact within Blaby Parish Council. This to be established by the office staff.

- All visitors to be received courteously and treated professionally and with dignity.
- Any visitors who are kept waiting are informed of any delays, reasons for the delays and how long they can be expected to wait.
- If any member of staff is required to stand by an unfamiliar visitor they should always make sure they have a clear escape route.

If you suspect that a visitor is starting to become aggressive/violent (see Appendix 1)

- Position yourself out of range of the aggressor.
- **Do not** allow yourself to be perceived as a barrier to the aggressor's goals.
- Position yourself as to not intimidate etc. the aggressor.
- **Do not** make steady eye contact with the aggressor.
- Reflect their thoughts back to them so that they feel understood.
- **Do not** turn your back on the aggressor.
- Stay calm and try to defuse the situation verbally.

Dealing with a malicious telephone call

Staff may receive malicious or nuisance telephone calls. In the majority of cases these calls only happen once, however, there are occasions when these calls become repetitive. If such calls occur the following procedures should be followed:

- Remain calm.
- Try not to encourage the caller with an emotional response.
- Do not enter into any conversation, inform the caller that you are terminating the call and why, place the handset down and terminate the call.
- Do not give out any details about yourself, your family or other employee.
- If a caller requests details about another member of staff they should be asked for their contact details so that they can be passed onto the member of staff concerned who will get in touch with them.
- A manager must be immediately informed of any calls.

Intruders in the building

All visitors must sign in and out of the building.

Intruders at fire escape doors / fire escape stairs

In the case of unknown persons attempting to gain entry to the building via the fire escape doors.

- Staff members should be notified immediately and no-one should leave the building until it is confirmed safe to do so.
- A manager will then make an assessment of the situation and call the police if necessary.

Travel and transport

Staff may be at risk when travelling to and from appointments or between locations during their working time.

Use of vehicles

Cars used for the purpose of work should be well maintained and have a valid MOT certificate.

- Staff should always plan their journeys in advance.
- Always ensure that the vehicle has adequate fuel for the journey.
- Staff travelling in cars should always take a fully charged mobile phone with them (ref. page 6) and ensure they have sufficient credit.
- Items such as bags, cases, laptops, sat navs or other equipment should never be left visible in a car.
- Staff should hold the vehicle keys in their hand when leaving premises in order to avoid looking for them outside which could compromise personal safety.
- The inside and outside of the vehicle should be checked for possible intruders before entering.
- Once inside the vehicle all doors should be locked and windows closed especially when travelling at slow speed and when stopped at traffic lights.
- Staff should always try to park as close as possible to the location being visited.
- At night, parking should be in a well-lit area and facing the direction in which they are leaving.
- When driving, especially after dark drivers must not stop even for people who may appear to be in distress or requiring help. Stop as soon as is practicable and safe to do so and contact the emergency services as appropriate.
- If staff are being followed or think they are being followed, they should remain calm and confident and drive towards a lit building such as a petrol station to request assistance.
- Use the car horn to attract attention if needed.
- In the event of a breakdown, where it is safe to do so staff should remain in the vehicle, put on the hazard lights and call for assistance. (On motorways police and driving authorities advise leaving the vehicle and standing a short distance away. If drivers feel threatened in any way and cannot do this, advice is to sit in the passenger side of the vehicle with doors locked).

Road rage

To reduce the risk of being a victim of road rage whilst travelling by car:

- Plan your route before you travel.
- Always obey posted speed limits and traffic signs.
- If you are a slow driver keep to the inside lane.
- Don't make eye contact with an irate driver or gesticulate at them.
- Do not confront the driver.
- If you are being chased do not weave in and out of traffic, pull over when you can, ensuring that your doors are locked and windows closed, sound the horn of your car to attract attention and use mobile phone to contact the police.

- Report the incident to your manager.

Travelling by foot

- Always carry a personal alarm in an accessible place, e.g. pocket or in your hand.
- Staff traveling on foot need to plan a route beforehand to avoid going through under passes or taking short cuts through areas that may be less safe (e.g. parks, especially after dark).
- Staff should walk briskly and not stop in areas that are unknown, for example to look at a map or ask for directions. Instead they should go to a 'safe' place such as a petrol station or shop and ask for directions.
- If staff feel they are being followed, they must trust their instincts, crossing the street and heading for a busy area may provide more reassurance of safety.
- Staff should not use mobile phones overtly in any area.
- If it is necessary to use a phone or respond to a call/text message this should be done in a safe place such as a shop.
- Staff should always remain alert to people around them and stay in the centre of the footpath facing oncoming traffic.
- Staff should carry the minimum amount of luggage.
- Laptops should be carried in a discreet case.
- Where possible avoid overtly displaying valuables.
- Use cash point machines in well lit, busy areas and avoid at night if possible.

Use of taxis

- Wherever possible a taxi should be booked in advance from a reputable company.
- If a taxi has not been booked staff should go to the office of a reputable taxi company or go to a recognised rank to hail a cab.
- It is advised that passengers should sit in the back behind the driver's seat and have a mobile phone readily accessible.
- Staff must not give out personal information to the driver.
- Never accept any drinks or food from a taxi driver.

Working practices and patterns

Site visits

- When staff are visiting other sites all staff must be aware of this through diary or other systems.
- Details of visits and expected return times must be available at the office base in line with local procedures.
- Mobile phones should be available on request for staff use when working away from the work base.

Reporting and post incident action

All incidents of violence, including verbal abuse, must be reported using the appropriate post incident form.

A full debrief of the circumstances should be undertaken by a senior member of staff as soon as possible after the incident. Managers are required to support a member of staff following an incident. The considerations that may be necessary could include:

- Is the member of staff too distressed to continue their duties?
- Do they need assistance to get home?
- Do they need recovery time after the incident?
- Does the individual need medical attention?
- Has any of the other staff been affected by the incident?
- Does the member of staff require counselling or a referral to Occupational Health?

Managers must ensure completed incident forms are forwarded to the Parish Council Manager.

Responsibilities

The manager to Blaby Parish Council is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this procedure.

Managers

- Ensure risk assessments are carried out to identify the potential for violence and aggression.
- Implement measures to reduce any risks identified.
- Assess the training needs of their staff and ensure the training provided is appropriate to their needs on induction and as necessary.
- Facilitate the attendance of their staff on training courses and forward training records to the Parish Council Manager.
- Ensure incidents are reported, investigated, accurately recorded and the completed post incident form forwarded to the Parish Council Manager.
- Ensure there is support for staff following an adverse incident and forward completed post incident forms to the Parish Council Manager.
- Review risk assessments in light of incidents relating to violence and aggression.

Employees

- Comply with the organisation's policies and procedures at all times.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect themselves and others from harm.
- Attend training.

Appendix 1

BLABY PARISH COUNCIL – Violence and Aggression Incident Report Form

Names of person(s) subject to violent / aggressive incident	Staff Member	Job Title	Details of injury, if any	Date of incident

Has this incident resulted in any member of staff being absent from work for more than 3 days?

Yes/No

If Yes, action taken:

<p>Location of the incident: Please put in full address if incident did not occur in the work base:</p>	
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<p>Name and status of assailant if known, visitor / candidate:</p>	
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Details of any witnesses to the incident:

Name		Status	Address

Description of events leading to the incident:

Post incident action (please tick as necessary)

The support of staff counselling service	Yes		No	
Referral to Occupational Health Services				
Medical attention				
Time out following the incident				
Crime number may be obtained from the police				
Assistance home				
Next of kin informed				

Action taken to prevent a reoccurrence of violent and aggressive incident:

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Details of the manager completing this form

Print Name		Job Title	
Signature		Date	

Appendix 2

Categories of suspicious persons

Thieves

Basically, there are two types of thieves you will encounter: opportunists and 'probers'.

Opportunists will try to get past reception either on a pretext or with a modest disguise. Once past reception, they will wander around until they encounter a 'target of opportunity' that they will then steal. Some of these perpetrators will focus only on certain items such as laptops, while others will steal anything of value (e.g. purses, wallets, art objects, cash, stamps, etc.). The best defence is too politely, but firmly, stop and question these people and verify their story **prior** to granting them entry into

your premises. If they do happen to get past you, alert your manager. A search should then be initiated.

Probers will often use the same methods as opportunists to gain entry. Once on site, they will search for specific items and then come back after hours to steal them. While on site, these people will be interested in locating and learning about your security measures. For this reason, **do not** discuss any security measures with anyone.

Terminated employees / irate candidates / callers

From time to time, you may have ex-employees or candidates arrive in the reception. Generally, these people are not a problem. However, they do require sensitive handling and every attempt should be made not to embarrass them. Be prepared to summon for assistance if they appear to be angry or refuse to leave when told the person they wish to see is 'not here'.

Identifying unusual behaviour

It is important that you develop a sense of what is normal behaviour exhibited by persons arriving in your reception. You should 'benchmark' normal arrival routines and compare new arrivals' behaviour against your 'benchmark'. Most individuals visiting your office for the first time will either pause briefly in the doorway, look for the reception desk or then walk towards it, or they will walk directly to the desk without pausing. Visitors who are confused, or who have arrived early for an appointment, will normally approach the desk after eye contact has been made with him or her. People who do not approach the desk after eye contact has been made should be kept under close observation. These individuals may be waiting for an opportunity to 'tailgate' into the office. Watch to see if they are looking for security devices such as door-release switches, locks and cameras. Suspicious or potentially violent visitors may also spend time evaluating escape routes, looking for a hiding place, or searching for a 'weapon of opportunity'. If their behaviour is suspect, call for assistance.

It is expected that when visitors approach your desk you will be engaged in conversation for a brief period of time. This is acceptable to a point. If the discussion becomes unfriendly, focuses heavily on the 'business' or an employee(s), or certain controversial aspects of company operations, you must immediately end the conversation. If you cannot end the discussion after two or three attempts and the situation becomes threatening, call

Angry people

During the course of your duties, you may occasionally encounter angry people. The following section is designed to help you understand the different levels of anger and to assist you in determining if the person is a real threat.

Stage 1: Anxiety

Defined as a 'noticeable change in behaviour, an involuntary reaction or response to something that happens'. Some external changes triggered by anxiety are:

- A flushed face
- Body twitching
- The appearance of veins
- Sweating
- Twitching lips
- Head down
- Minimal eye contact
- Pacing
- Shallow breathing
- A dry mouth
- Frowning or twitching eyebrows
- Little verbalisation
- Excessive fidgeting with eyeglasses, rings, pen, etc.

Anxiety is triggered by:

- Frustration or anger
- The loss of control
- The receptionist's body language, tone or demeanour
- A third party
- Depression
- The feeling of being cornered
- Heat

When dealing with anxious people, give them proper space, correct eye contact and non-confrontational facial expressions or posture. Listen carefully and use supportive, verbal communication. Introduce yourself, use your first name, and try and use their first name as often as possible. Avoid using the word 'you' when talking to them. If you do not understand something they have said, ask them to repeat it clearly. Try and use the word 'we' (e.g. "We will be happy to assist you."). **Do not** exchange insults. **Do not** threaten their dignity by patronising them.

Eye communications

Break eye contact when you speak, but maintain eye contact while the angry person is speaking. Messages you may receive from the angry person's eyes are:

- Pupil size getting smaller, this means the person is getting angrier
- Person sizing you up
- Eyes jerking/darting
- Eyes looking around for possible access/escape routes, or for a 'weapon of opportunity'
- Eyes glazed, empty, or looking through you
- Eyes widening in fear
- Eyes glistening, ready to cry
- Eyes continually glancing at a target

- Generally, lengthy eye contact is a sign of aggression. The wearing of sunglasses indoors is also a sign of aggressive behaviour.

Stage 2: Verbal aggression

In order not to injure him/herself, an angry person will attempt to 'win' through the use of words and/or body language. Some external changes to watch for are:

- A red face
- Standing as tall as possible
- Lips tightly pursed
- Hand waving and finger pointing
- Clenched fists
- Direct, prolonged eye contact
- Deep and rapid breathing
- Person moves into your personal space (e.g. closer than three feet)
- Excessive salivation
- Belligerent
- Cursing and yelling
- Eyebrows frowning
- Fists pounding on your desk or on the walls, etc.
- Stamps feet or kicks nearby objects
- Head and shoulders are back
- Shoulders are square

At this stage, the aggressor is testing you. Let them vent. Be assertive in your verbal communication. Use their name frequently when addressing them. Try and remain composed, use a firm but steady, even-toned voice. Use the substitution technique (e.g. "I can't solve this problem, but let me check with my colleague."). Your subsequent call to 'my colleague' is actually a call for assistance.

Stage 3: Aggression/assault/imminent danger

External changes to watch for are:

- Face turns white
- All verbalisation stops
- Lips tighten over the teeth
- Breaks eye contact and begins to focus on a 'target'
- Very deep and rapid breathing
- Forehead creases and eyebrows furrow
- Head is down
- The shoulders begin to shift
- Person changes their stance
- Bobbing or rocking
- No movement at all
- FINAL SIGNAL: Dropping their centre of balance or lowering the body. This indicates that a person is ready to attack.

You must summon assistance right away. Use loud, positive commands (e.g. “Stop!”) and extending commands (e.g. “Drop that chair! Do it now!”). Use defensive body language and direct eye contact. Keep your head and shoulders straight and your hands ‘bladed’ or ‘fisted’.

Consider distracting your assailant by dropping or throwing something.

Your ‘Sixth’ Sense

The most important safety asset we have is our ‘sixth’ sense. Our five normal senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch – combine to produce our ‘sixth’ sense. The ‘sixth’ sense is the ability of our subconscious mind to detect danger by responding to stimuli that our conscious mind may not be able to recognise or articulate.

Persons who can be exposed to potentially hazardous situations must be prepared to listen to their intuition or ‘sixth’ sense. Although it may not be apparent at the time, signals from the ‘sixth’ sense are always based on something (e.g. “That sports bag looks very heavy, or “That man is not making eye contact.”). The ‘sixth’ sense picks up signals and analyses them faster than we can do consciously. Intuition is a survival mechanism of the unconscious mind and as such, always has your best interest at heart. It will not tell you to put yourself in a dangerous situation.

Our ‘sixth’ sense speaks to us in many ways. Some of the warning signs of the ‘sixth’ sense are:

Physically

- Acidic taste in the back of the mouth. This is caused by the ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ reflex sending blood from our vital organs to our arms and legs.
- Hair-raising on the back of the neck and arms
- Quavering voice
- Accelerated heartbeat
- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Feelings of fear, discomfort and/or panic

Mentally

- Nagging feelings
- Resistant thoughts
- Humour (e.g. “I am leaving before that bomb goes off.”)
- Wonder (e.g. “I wonder what is on his mind?”)
- Anxiety
- Curiosity (e.g. “What is in that hockey bag? It looks really heavy!”)
- Hunches
- Gut feelings
- Doubt
- Hesitation
- Suspicion
- Apprehension
- Fear

In reception contact situations, abnormal visitors send signals that trigger your 'sixth' sense telling you something is wrong. Triggers from an abnormal visitor include:

- Refuses to remove/leave his/her coat and/or boots during inclement weather
- Is wearing clothing inappropriate for the weather/time of year, and/or is wearing multiple layers
- Is carrying something that could be used as a weapon, or is carrying something large enough to contain a weapon
- Makes prolonged eye contact, no eye contact, or eyes radiate hostility/fear
- Reading their 'face' scares you
- They are too nice. Charm is often used to mask criminal intent. They are not charming.
- They are trying to charm you.
- Gives you too many details. He/she does not believe what they themselves are saying.
- Makes unsolicited promises (e.g. "I won't cause trouble, I promise.")
- Will not take no for an answer (e.g. "I have to see Mr. Smith and I won't leave until I do!")

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