

# Prevention and Management of Abuse Towards Staff Policy

## Policy Statement

The Veterans Charity values its staff and service users and recognizes the duty of care required to ensure both their health and safety and their ability to conduct their business in a safe and non-threatening environment. This policy assists with the health and safety of employees as well as others who may be exposed to the risk of abuse, aggression or violence whilst working on the behalf of the charity.

The charity considers work-related violence to be a serious matter and although it is rare, incidents of violence, aggression or abuse can occur in during charity fundraising and events. This policy has been designed to ensure staff are encouraged to work closely together in identifying, assessing and managing risks so as to reduce the likelihood of, or to prevent, incidents occurring.

This policy will also provide appropriate guidance, support and assistance to employees and managers following incidents of abuse including how and where to report an incident.

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff and sub-contractors working on behalf of The Veterans Charity, regardless of location.

This policy is primarily designed to cover any work related abuse or other unacceptable behavior towards employees and / or other charity users that is perpetrated by:

- a. Any users of the charity's services
- b. Any member of the public interacting with fundraisers, working on behalf of the charity
- c. Any member of the public on events organized by the charity

In other circumstances of workplace abuse such as by one employee towards another employee, then policies such as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Discipline Policy and Complaint Policy, should applied. This policy does not affect the rights of any individual to take independent action following abuse or an assault, for example by contacting the Police.

Equally it may be appropriate in extreme instances for The Veterans Charity to request police support e.g. where there is considered to be a real risk of violence to employees, other service users or the public.

## Definitions

The 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'. This includes verbal abuse and threats, not just physical abuse.

The four types of violence are shown in the diagram below:



The following definitions are used throughout this policy:

**Non-physical Assault:** The use of inappropriate words or behavior causing distress and/or constituting harassment e.g. this may include but not be limited to offensive language, unwanted or abusive remarks, racially aggravated remarks, intimidation and any other words or non-physical actions which either cause, or are likely / intended to cause, distress or constitute harassment.

**Physical Assault:** The intentional use of force by one person against another, without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort.

## Related Legislation

The leading statutory authority for this provision is the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). The legislation (listed under Appendix G) lays out the framework that employers must adhere to the related points are listed below:

- a. Ensure managers and staff are encouraged to work closely together in identifying, assessing and managing risks so as to reduce the likelihood of, or to prevent, incidents occurring.
- b. Keep employees and third parties free from risk of harm so far as is reasonably practicable.
- c. Undertake suitable risk assessments of reasonably foreseeable violence.
- d. Make arrangements to control risks and monitor and review these arrangements.
- e. Consult with staff along with safety representatives on promoting, developing and monitoring measures to ensure health and safety at work.
- f. Comply with the statutory duty (RIDDOR) to report any act of physical violence to a person at work that results in a fatality, major injury or incapacity for normal work.
- g. Employees are required to cooperate with / implement their employer's policies.

Employment law also provides for protection of employees from third party harassment. This confers responsibility onto the charity and line managers to ensure action is taken if an employee has been harassed on two or more occasions by a third party (someone who does not work for the charity). Reasonable steps must be taken to protect the employee from further harassment. The Equality Act 2010 has broadened the potential liability beyond sexual or gender based harassment, into all protected characteristics which are: age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Veterans Charity will not tolerate any form of assault or abuse against its staff, irrespective of the level of abuse used or injury caused and considers that:

- a. Any potential risk of work related violence or abuse is a serious matter.
- b. Addressing these risks will require careful consideration, coordination and compliance by all who work for or use the charity's services.

- c. All reasonable steps must be taken to reduce risks of violence to employees and others and to eliminate work related violence.
- d. Where practicable, the charity should undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments of the risk of violence, where identified risks will be reduced as far as is reasonably practicable through safe systems of work, such as suitable equipment, and information and training.

The Charity's managers and staff will be required to undertake dynamic and/or specific risk assessments to determine preventative measures to remove or reduce the risk to staff members in contact with members of the public. Once measures are identified in this process, all staff will be required to support these by making proper use of any equipment and systems of work provided for their safety. Periodically, any existing arrangements that are in place and any changes to the level, source and likelihood of risk of work related violence will need to be re assessed

It is rare for serious assaults to occur, but if they should occur, the charity recognizes that following an incident of abuse:

- a. Appropriate support and assistance must be provided.
- b. Any incidents of violence at work must be investigated and recorded.
- c. Action will be taken in the event of Violence, Aggression or Abuse, be it physical or non-physical.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **The Chief Executive Officer and Board of Trustee's**

The Chief Executive Officer and Board of Trustee's respectively have ultimate and delegated executive responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of all staff at risk from violence and abuse and for ensuring that this policy is effective and resourced.

### **Line Managers**

Line Managers have the operational responsibility for ensuring the implementation of this policy and that effective arrangements are in place to ensure that:

- a. Risk assessments are carried out, collated and preventive measures put in place where required.
- b. All staff working on behalf of the charity are aware of the appropriate policies and procedures relating to abusive behavior.
- c. Provide immediate support and assistance to staff when they need it.
- d. Incident reports are submitted, collated, acted upon and reviewed.
- e. The Chief Executive Officer is notified of serious incidents of violence / aggression.
- f. Incidents that need to be reported to the Police or the HSE are identified and acted upon.

### **Employee Responsibilities**

Staff must take reasonable steps to protect the safety of themselves and their colleagues by:

- a. Co-operating with the policy
- b. Informing their line manager of any concerns that they have relating to violence at work
- c. Acting responsibly to avoid putting themselves or others in danger or at risk including withdrawing from serious and potentially threatening or actual violent

- situations until appropriate assistance and support is available.
- d. Following any advice, procedures, systems or training that has been developed for their safety and introduced in order to reduce or eliminate risk'
  - e. Reporting any incidences of violence, including verbal abuse, that have occurred as part of their work to their line manager.
  - f. Filling in the appropriate Incident Report form detailing the circumstances of any incident that has taken place. (See the form at Annex A – VCF003 for incidents involving a member of the public)

Note: in exceptional instances where employees may deem approaching their line manager to be uncomfortable or inappropriate, an alternative source of support and advice is available from the Chief Executive Officer.

## **Risk Assessments**

Where there is a possibility that a criminal act may have been committed, care should be taken not to take any action that may jeopardize any subsequent criminal investigation. This includes contacting the alleged perpetrator. Advice should be sought first from the charity's Designated Safeguarding Officers, the Chief Executive Officer or the police.

Risk assessments are the starting point for considering the potential risks and measures to be taken for managing the risk of violence and abuse towards staff in contact with members of the public.

Assessments should take account of the way in which risks vary according to the role of the employee and/or volunteer, the areas and the environment in which staff members work and many other factors (e.g. staff that handle money or lone work). Account should also be taken of the incidents that have occurred so that these can be assessed and recommendations used.

A written record of the risk assessments produced will be kept in accordance with the HSE and should include:

- a. Brief description of the risks involved and any risk factors specific to that area.
- b. Details of the groups of workers exposed to the risks.
- c. If required, brief details of the preventive measures to mitigate or reduce the risks.
- d. Date when the risk assessment was last reviewed.

Recommendations for preventive measures from the risk assessment to reduce or mitigate the risk for staff members in contact with members of the public could include:

- a. Physical measures such as panic alarms.
- b. Providing information to staff on the people they are dealing with and likely sources of aggression;
- c. Reviewing staffing abilities and experience.
- d. Appropriate training for staff to enable them to avoid aggression through identifying its early signs and to have awareness of handling incidents.
- e. Designing working practices to avoid lone working and potentially violent situations.
- f. Ensuring arrangements are in place for regular reporting where lone working is unavoidable.

- g. Reducing the need for staff to carry money, valuable items

## **REPORTING SYSTEMS AND ACTIONS**

Reporting procedures are in place for staff to report incidents and staffs are encouraged to report all incidents including incidents of verbal abuse, intimidation, or harassment, as this is essential information for the prevention and management of abuse.

The forms for reporting of an incident can be found in Appendix A (VCF003). The form should be completed promptly and in full and handed to the appropriate line manager who will handle this sensitively and will take this seriously.

Where reports reveal a serious or persistent problem, suitable support will be provided from the senior management from within the charity.

### **Action in the event of serious abuse**

#### **Non-Physical Assault or Abuse**

The Charity will consider a range of measures depending on the severity of the incident and which may assist in the management of unacceptable behaviour. This will be with the aim of reducing the risks of recurrence as well as demonstrating acceptable standards of behaviour by users.

The Veterans Charity will consider taking internal or external action against the aggressor, subject to other relevant policies and legal advice, where non-physical assault or abusive behaviour is likely to:

- a. Prejudice the safety of staff or lead a member of staff to believe that they are no longer able to undertake their duties properly as a result of fearing for their safety.
- b. Be in breach of codes of conduct of event participants.
- c. Contravene legal requirements around harassment, bullying, discrimination etc.
- d. Prejudice the safety of other service users and event attendees.
- e. Result in damage to property or collection material.

#### **Physical Assault**

The Veterans Charity advises all staff to withdraw from violent situations until appropriate assistance and support is available. However, should this not be possible, it also supports the right of all staff to reasonably and proportionately defend themselves should the need arise.

Any person who assaults a staff member during the course of their employment may be liable to prosecution. The Veterans Charity or the victim of an assault may report that offence to the Police for consideration as to whether a crime has been committed and if so, whether to proceed against the person concerned (subject to discussion with the victim and consideration of their wishes where appropriate).

### **Internal Support for Staff Members Experiencing Abuse**

A member of staff who experiences abuse should make their line manager aware and discuss the situation so that the manager can, as appropriate:

- a. Support the staff member and where required, signpost them for additional support to senior management.
- b. Investigate or initiate the investigation of the incident.
- c. Take measures to prevent further incidents and ensure workplace health and safety of the charity's staff.
- d. Ensure any effects or subsequent issues with performance or attendance would be handled appropriately.

- e. Minimize possible disruption to the service / colleagues caused by dealing with the staff member's situation.

It should be noted that incidents affect individuals in different ways and there is a significant degree of subjectivity as to whether a person feels threatened, alarmed, distressed or harassed. The impact of a violent or abusive incident on a staff member's physical and mental health can be long lasting and sometimes may not be obvious. They may require support and care from the charity to help them recover and in some cases may need specialist counselling.

Line Management should consider the provision of other support within the charity where appropriate, being mindful of the staff members' team, service and individual needs. For instance:

- a. Staff members who have experienced abuse may need to be temporarily absent from work to recover and individual absences can be discussed and agreed between the individual and their line manager.
- b. Other working arrangements may need to be considered to support or protect the employee while they recover, such as temporarily reducing hours, working more flexibly, assistance to manage their workload or transfer to alternative work or work location.

## **Managing Work Place Safety**

The charity will work to protect the safety and security of all staff at work following an incident, especially if a need to minimize any risk of further incident to them has been identified. This may include consideration and provision of the following:

- a. Identifying an emergency contact should the manager be unavailable to contact
- b. Where a particular staff member is at risk, changing their work arrangements e.g.
  - a. Offering temporary or permanent changes to location, schedule and/or role.
- c. Reminding relevant staff not to divulge personal information about other staff members.
- d. With the staff members' consent, advising colleagues and security on a need to know basis
- e. Agreeing the response if the perpetrator of abuse contacts the individual again.

Where the situation is deemed a real threat to other staff members, service users or indeed the public, it may be that more serious actions are required for safety and security such as:

- f. Providing a photograph or description of the perpetrator to department managers and security staff.
- g. Setting up procedures for alerting event staff and / or the police, and;
- h. Providing instructions about what to do if the perpetrator gains unauthorized access to the event and/or workplace

## **Equal Opportunities**

Abuse or violence can be perpetrated or experienced by anyone and it occurs regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural or political beliefs, ethnicity, disability, class or location.

Any information or personal details with regard to abuse or violence such as race, gender, age and disabled status will be kept confidential by charity and will be used for no other purpose than to enable the charity to fulfil its obligations for monitoring equal opportunities. It should be noted that there is also a responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the policy in terms of preventing and managing abuse as well as the diversity aspects

## **Review and Monitoring**

The charity undertakes monitoring to inform and improve our workplace practices. If through monitoring any abuse is identified The Veterans Charity will take corrective action to eliminate it.

In addition, a Staff Survey is conducted in order to gain the views of all employees and volunteers which include a section on the working environment. The charity will use the information from the Staff Survey to identify potential areas of improvement.

Policy written by;



Chris Tyrrell  
Event Facilities Manager  
The Veterans Charity



Danny Greeno  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Veterans Charity

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