Policy 46: Aggression by members of the public

Last updated by: SH, JM, MP, RS

Links to policies: 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>Policy Date</th>
<th>Next Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 17</td>
<td>Nov 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aug 19</td>
<td>Aug 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction

a) Age UK York (AUKY) and its Board of Trustees (the Trustees) greatly value the staff and volunteers of AUKY and acknowledge a duty to protect them from acts and incidents of aggression, violence or harassment by members of the public towards them;

b) The Trustees deem as totally unacceptable any violent act towards any AUKY workers by any member of the public including service users;

c) Policy 29, Harassment and Bullying at Work, which deals with such incidents by and between staff and volunteers of AUKY, and policies relating to service provision are associated with this Policy and should be read in conjunction with it;

d) Training will be provided to all workers at Induction and in all and any cases of doubt, workers should contact their line manager or supervisor immediately.

2. Responsibilities

a) The Trustees have divested day to day management and the running of AUKY with the Chief Officer (CO) but take overall responsibility for the security and safety of all AUKY workers;

b) Workers are expected to behave responsibly and with regard to their own safety and the safety of their colleagues. They must remove themselves and help their colleagues to remove themselves from any dangerous situation and must immediately contact their line manager or supervisor in any such situations;

c) Line managers and supervisors will not ask or require workers to place themselves or carry out any duties or roles in situations known to pose a threat to their security or where they are likely to be subject to violent, aggressive or harassing situations from members of the public;

d) Workers who are asked by their line managers or supervisors to put themselves in such situations will immediately query such requirements, explain the reasons for such queries and if necessary, consult another supervisor or the CO;

e) Particular situations may arise where services are to be carried out with service users who pose particular problems due to their health or physical disabilities. In any such instances, workers will receive briefings before undertaking any relevant duties. In any event, assessments will already have been carried out by the appropriate staff member even to the extent that a service may be refused to any specific potential service user;

f) It is sometimes an automatic reaction when danger threatens to take some action to try to avert the danger. For example, in instances of robbery with violence, a worker may be tempted to tackle the perpetrator. Workers are never expected to take such action and should not do so. Workers should try to keep themselves and their colleagues safe and should leave perpetrators to carry out their intended actions unhindered.
3. Definitions

a) Workers are usually able to identify incidents of violence, aggression or harassment. However, for clarity, the following definitions are provided:

- The Health and Safety Executive has defined violence, aggression or harassment as 'Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.'
- Violence at work can include:
  - verbal and/or mental abuse;
  - emotional blackmail;
  - discrimination;
  - harassment, including inappropriate phone calls, visits or approaches and inappropriate requests for service;
  - bullying;
- Aggression including:
  - by text, phone, letter or e-mail;
  - face to face;

b) The Trustees recognise that some instances of harassment may not be identified as such and some instances may be thought of as culturally acceptable. In all cases of doubt, workers should discuss the situation with their line manager or supervisor;

c) Workers must take responsibility for each other as far as is reasonably possible and where an instance of harassment is observed but a worker appears unable to take action him or herself, a colleague should raise the matter with his/her line manager or supervisor but must not gossip generally about the situation.

4. Training

a) All workers will receive training on dealing with violence and aggression or harassment at Induction and before they carry out any roles or tasks where they are in contact with members of the public including service users;

b) Such training will include, but is not confined to:

- Reassurance on the 'zero tolerance' approach approved by the Trustees;
- Understanding, in a broad way, why individuals can behave in violent, aggressive or harassing ways, with examples such as frustration and disappointment;
- Explanations of the types of physical and mental difficulties that service users may face which may cause them to behave in violent, aggressive or harassing ways;
- Discussion on body language and how it can escalate situations;
- Ways to defuse violent, aggressive or harassing behaviour;
- The fact that AUKY workers can refuse to continue to provide a service to a service user and, if doing so, must discuss this with their line manager or supervisor immediately;
- Recognition of the effect on morale that violent, aggressive or harassing behaviour can have on workers and their colleagues and the importance of seeking support following such situations. This support may include counselling.
5. Dealing with aggression

a) Workers who need to terminate any contact with a service user or other member of the public should do so in a calm and quiet manner;

b) The Trustees have approved forms of words, as follows:

(Where the perpetrator is present) 'Age UK York has a policy about violence, aggression and harassment in the workplace. We find that your behaviour is not acceptable to us and we cannot deal with your situation now. Please leave the premises. If you want to return later, Age UK York workers will do their best to help you.'

(Where the perpetrator is on the phone) "Age UK York has a policy about violence, aggression and harassment in the workplace. We find that your behaviour is not acceptable to us and we cannot deal with your situation now. I am now going to end this call. You may call again later if you wish when a worker will try to help you.' The worker must then replace the phone receiver in a calm but gentle manner.

6. Incident reporting

a) Workers who are involved in any situation where violent, aggressive or harassing behaviour occurs must immediately report this to their line manager or supervisor;

b) An Incident Report Form (below) must be completed as soon as possible so that details aren't forgotten;

c) The line manager or supervisor may consider it appropriate to contact the police and will do so following discussion with the CO or senior manager;

d) Workers who are involved in any situation where violent, aggressive or harassing behaviour occurs must seek support, and be offered support, as the effect on workers may not be immediately apparent and may affect their own health.

7. The Incident Report Form

a) This Form:

- records information that may be needed in any subsequent investigation including in any legal proceedings;
- helps to provide a safe working environment;
- identifies problem and service problem areas;
- helps to monitor the operation of this Policy;
- provides information which allows for comparisons over the longer term allowing the CO and Trustees to consider any changes required to the operation of AUKY or any of its services;
- can be used in any assessment as to whether a service can continue to be provided to a service user;

b) Information on this Form may contain confidential information such as the name of the
perpetrator. Consequently, the Forms themselves will be held in a secure, locked environment;

c) The Trustees will from time to time decide when it is appropriate to destroy any Forms, observing methods to safeguard confidentiality.

8. Data protection

a) The Policy on data protection is under regular review in the light of changing legislation and the problems posed by information technology;

b) Therefore, the CO will take any decisions about information on individual service users which is to be passed on to other organisations and is set out or noted in an Incident Report Form. In making any such decisions, the CO may discuss the situation with senior managers and the Board of Trustees who may decide to take legal advice.

9. Complaints

Service users and members of the public who wish to make a complaint must be asked to put their complaint in writing in accordance with the Complaints Policy.
1. **Details of member of staff:**

Name: ……………………………………………    Job Title: …………………………………

Have you been trained in handling difficult customers/situations?   Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you been trained in personal safety?   Yes ☐ No ☐

2. **Assailant/Customer/Client Details:**

Name (if known): ……………………………………………

Male: ☐    Female: ☐    Approximate age: ☐

3. **Type of Incident:**

Verbal abuse: ☐    Physical abuse: ☐    Intimidation: ☐    Harassment: ☐

Give brief details of the type of incident involved, i.e. shoplifting, verbal abuse etc:

| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |

4. **Aftermath:** *(Tick one box which most closely describes how you feel now)*

No shock/distress experienced ☐

Shock/distress at the time, but now recovered ☐

Shock/distress continuing (give brief details below) ☐

| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |
| …………………………………………………………………………………………………… |
5. **Events leading up to the incident:** (tick as many boxes as appropriate)

- Refusal to replace item(s) or refund money
- Long delay in telephone response
- Non-specific hostility to staff for no apparent reason
- Customer/client appeared to be unstable, erratic, odd
- Office error/clerical error
- Issues affecting partner of customer/client

Other (please give details): ……………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

6. **Conditions when the incident happened:**

- Staffing levels less than usual
- Particularly busy customer flow

Use this space to add anything else that you think is relevant to the incident:
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………………..