

# SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

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## PERSONAL SAFETY POLICY



Approved:  
Reviewed/Amended:  
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## 1. Introduction

This guidance supplements the Health and Safety Policy of Southwater Parish Council. It defines violence at work and sets out the Council's procedures for dealing with violence or aggression that all employees may face in the course of their work. Employees are also directed to the Council's Lone Working Policy.

## 2. Definition

The term violence covers a wide range of incidents not all of which involve injury. The definition by the Health and Safety Executive 1997 is:

*"Any incident in which a member of staff is verbally abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work".*

This definition includes bullying, harassment, threatening behaviour and behaviour intended to humiliate. However, bullying or harassment involving another member of staff, or a Councillor should be reported under the Dignity at Work policy.

## 3. Personal safety

The Parish Council manages personal safety at work in the following way:

- A risk assessment of the potential for violence and aggression in the Parish Council Offices has been undertaken and placed on the Risk Register.
- Training in how to manage violence and aggression should it arise at work is provided for all staff at appropriate intervals.
- Staff must report to their Line Manager any dangers they identify or any concerns that they may have about potential violent situations or the environment in which they work, and Line Managers must address these. If these are not addressed staff must inform the Executive Officer.

## 4. Procedure

A guiding principle for all employees to help them manage a potentially violent or aggressive situation is

**"DO NOT"** put yourself or your colleagues at risk – the equipment/money is insured and can be replaced – YOU cannot!

## 5. Potentially violent situation

**If you are faced with a potentially violent situation, you should:**

- Try to be calm, confident and objective.
- Not be domineering.
- Be non-critical.
- Not react to the customer's emotions.
- Listen and talk, taking the time to deal with the customer's questions in jargon free language.
- Take care not to appear threatening by voice projection, gesture or behaviour.
- Use soft relaxed tones.
- Avoid being drawn into a heated debate. If the situation appears to be getting out of control you should consider withdrawing and summoning help.
- Ask questions to gain control and clarify matters – do not assume.
- Let the individual suggest solutions.
- Try not to touch the person who is arguing with you as this could constitute an assault in law or trigger a violent reaction.
- Consider non-verbal behaviour and be aware of others' perceptions of your body language.
- Communicate at a safe distance and stand sideways to reduce your size as a target and to allow extra mobility if it becomes necessary to retreat.
- Maintain eye contact without staring and use open and fluid hand movements.
- Show concern and understanding and.
- Acknowledge the feelings of the person with whom you are communicating.

## 6. Steps of Management of a Violent or Aggressive Situation

- Staff understand reason for violence.
- Risk Assessment for all situations - staff able to predict the potential violent situation.
- Try to manage the confrontation.
- Violent incident occurring or feel threatened and other actions have failed to resolve the situation
- Withdraw from the situation immediately.
- Inform the police if appropriate.
- Incident form to be completed.
- Debrief.
- Communication of any learning points.

## 7. Incidents at the Reception Desk of Beeson House

If you are faced with a potentially violent or aggressive incident at the reception desk at Beeson House, the following safe system of work must be followed:

- For your own personal and colleagues' safety the code accessed door MUST be kept closed at all times.
- An employee who is subjected to a threat should summon the assistance of a colleague immediately (if possible, to do so).
- Whilst awaiting the arrival of assistance, the employee should maintain physical distance between her/himself and the aggressor by keeping the code accessed door to the office closed, while attempting to calm the situation.
- Where an employee is working away from the office, they must inform their line Manager of their exact movements and when they expect to finish. Any change of plans must be communicated to their line Manager. Also see the Council's Lone Working Policy.
- Telephone calls – if an employee is subjected to verbal abuse on the telephone the employee must explain to the aggressor, they will terminate the call if they do not stop the verbal abuse. If such a situation occurs, please notify your Line Manager.

## 8. Incident Reporting

All incidents must be reported to the Executive Officer within 24 hours using the Incident Form, which will be saved in a secure file. In recording incidents, you should use your discretion to distinguish between the types of offensive language some people may use as part of their everyday vocabulary.

If a physical injury has occurred, an accident form must be completed within 24 hours and held on a secure file.

In the event of any death, major injury, dangerous occurrence, admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or 3 days absence from work, the Health and Safety Executive must be informed immediately by the line manager and a Report of Injury or Dangerous Occurrence Form (Form F2508 from the HSE website) completed and sent to them within 10 days.

The Parish Council is committed to protecting staff from violence and assault and will support criminal proceeding against those who carry out the assault. All staff are encouraged to report violent incidents to the police and will be supported by the organisation throughout the process.

## 9. Debriefing

Following an incident, a debrief meeting will be held with your Line manager who will then consider the facts and, in consultation with the Executive Officer, take all necessary steps to redress risks and prevent an occurrence. The purpose of the debrief will be to establish what happened, what further action or support was required and what lessons could be learnt. Any changes to procedures or guidance as a result of the debrief will be communicated to all relevant staff.

## Incident Report Form

<u>ABOUT YOU</u>	<u>ABOUT THE INCIDENT</u>	
<u>Name:</u> <input type="text"/>  <u>Job Title</u> <input type="text"/>	<u>Date:</u> <input type="text"/>  <u>Time:</u> <input type="text"/>  <u>Place:</u> <input type="text"/>	<u>Verbal Abuse</u> <input type="checkbox"/>  <u>Threatening Behaviour</u> <input type="checkbox"/>  <u>Emotional Distress</u> <input type="checkbox"/>  <u>Physical Assault</u> <input type="checkbox"/>  <u>Disability/Sexual/Racial Harassment</u> <input type="checkbox"/>  <u>Property Damage</u> <input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Describe What Happened (give as much detail as you can)</u> <input type="text"/>		

<u>Assailant (if known)</u> <u>Name:</u> <input type="text"/> <u>Age:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="text"/>	<u>Witness</u> <u>Name</u> <input type="text"/>
<u>Address</u> <input type="text"/>	<u>Address</u> <input type="text"/>

<u>Apparent Motive:</u> <input type="text"/>
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<u>Your Signature</u> <input type="text"/>	<u>Date</u> <input type="text"/>
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I have reviewed the relevant risk assessment and taken appropriate action		
<u>Additional Comments (if any)</u> <input type="text"/>	<u>Executive Officer's Signature</u> <input type="text"/>	<u>Date:</u> <input type="text"/>