**LAGANVIEW MEDICAL PRACTICE**

**LEVEL 2 LISBURN PRIMARY & COMMUNITY CARE CENTRE**

**ZERO TOLERANCE / VIOLENCE POLICY**

The Practice takes it very seriously if a member of staff or one of the nursing team is treated in an abusive or violent way.

The Practice supports the Governments ‘Zero Tolerance’ campaign for Health Service staff. This states that GP’s and their staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused. To successfully provide these services a mutual respect between all the staff and patients has to be in place.

All our staff aim to be polite, helpful and sensitive to patients’ individual needs and circumstances. We would respectfully remind patients that very often staff could be confronted with a multitude of varying and sometimes difficult tasks and situations, all at the same time. The staff understand that ill patients do not always act in a reasonable manner and will take this into consideration when trying to deal with a misunderstanding or complaint.

However, aggressive behaviour, be it violent or abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in the patient being removed from the Practice list and, in extreme cases, the Police being contacted.

The Practice provides training for staff in techniques that provide them with (1) skills to manage and deal with aggression and/or physical violence and (2) information about triggers for aggression and violence. The aim is to give them an understanding and knowledge to defuse and de-escalate potentially dangerous situations before they become physical. Practice staff must attend refresher courses as and when required. Additional training will be made available to those members of staff who need to develop practical skills and confidence in handling different situations.

**Definition**

The definition of violence is not limited to physical assault or injury: it also includes verbal aggression. The Practice accepts the Health & Safety Executive’s working definition of violence, namely:

‘Any incident in which as employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of his or her employment’.

The following behaviours will also not be tolerated:-

* Any physical violence towards any member of the Primary Health Care Team
* Excessive noise, for example, loud, intrusive conversations, shouting
* Threatening or abusive language in any form including swearing or offensive remarks
* Derogatory, racial, bigoted or sexual remarks
* Persistent or unrealistic demands that cause stress to staff. Requests will be met wherever possible given when they cannot
* Rude or aggressive behaviour which staff find intimidating even when not couched in foul or abusive language
* Malicious allegations relating to staff, other patient or visitors
* Offensive sexual gestures or behaviours
* Obtaining drugs and/or medical services fraudulently
* Substance abuse in our facilities
* Causing damage / stealing from the Practice’s premises, staff or patients.

We ask patient to treat GPs and our staff courteously at all times.

**Duty of the Practice**

Under the Health & Safety Work Order (NI) 1978 and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000, the Practice has a duty to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of all employees. The duty of care at common laws extends to taking reasonable precautions to protect employees from criminal attack. We also have a duty to our patients to provide for them a safe environment.

**Removal from the Practice List**

A good patient-doctor relationship, based on mutual respect and trust, is the cornerstone of good patient care. The removal of patients from our list is an exceptional and rare event and is a last resort in an impaired patient-practice relationship. When trust has irretrievably broken down, it is in the patient’s best interest, just as much as that of the Practice, that they should find a new Practice. An exception to this is on immediate removal on the grounds of violence, for example, when the Police are involved.

**Removing other Members of the Household**

In rare cases, however, because of the possible need to visit patients at home, it may be necessary to terminate responsibility for other members of the family or the entire household. The prospect of visiting patients where a relative who is no longer a patient of the Practice by virtue of their unacceptable behaviour resides, or being regularly confronted by the removed patient, may make it too difficult for the Practice to continue to look after the whole family. This is particularly likely where the patient has been removed because of violence or threatening behaviour and keeping the other family members could put doctors or their staff at risk.

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**ZERO TOLERANCE PROTOCOL**

* Staff should attempt to diffuse the situation in a manner befitting the incident, (e.g. ask assailant to take a seat / or by either party leaving the room, provided this would not put the staff member in any perceived danger, or aggravate the assailant).
* Seek immediate assistance from colleagues. (e.g. by phoning reception, alerting other staff, using the panic alarm).
* Inform the Practice Manager / GP Principal on site and provide details of the incident to allow appropriate follow-up.
* Briefly document the incident in the patient’s clinical record on EMIS.
* Make a note of what occurred. As part of the investigation, staff involved will be asked to provide details of the incident.
* After discussion by the GP Partners & Practice Manager, if a written warning is required, a Warning letter/Zero Tolerance letter will be issued to the patient.
* An alert message ‘Warning/Zero Tolerance Alert’ and date should be added to the patient’s record.
* If a similar incident occurs within 12 months, the patient will be considered for removal from the practice list.
* In any incident where physical violence is involved, the PSNI should be contacted immediately and informed of the incident and the incident discussed the same day with the GP Partners present. Immediate removal of the patient should be instigated by completion & submission of an RVP1 Form; for any patient where the PSNI have been contacted in relation to a patient’s unacceptable behaviour.

**All Zero Tolerance issues should be dealt with under the Practice Policy “Removal of Patients from the Practice List”.**

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