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## **Corporate Policy Committee**

**2 October 2025**

### **Violence and Aggression - Health and Safety Policy**

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**Report of: Kevin O'Keefe, Interim Director of Law and Governance  
(Monitoring Officer)**

**Report Reference No: CPC/40/25-26**

**Ward(s) Affected: All**

**For Decision**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to outline and seek approval of the Council's Violence and Aggression Health and Safety Policy, attached at Appendix 1, in line with the Committee's responsibilities for Health and Safety matters affecting the Council and the adoption of policies in relation to staffing matters.

#### **Executive Summary**

- 2 Whilst there are occasions when clients and members of the public may be anxious and distressed, the Council does not accept that violence and aggression towards those working for it is acceptable and therefore takes a zero-tolerance approach towards violent or aggressive behaviour directed towards staff.
- 3 The Violence and Aggression Health and Safety Policy complements other existing Health and Safety and HR policies and provides a framework for the recognition of, response to and management of aggression and violence so that employees have better knowledge of how to deal with potential scenarios, or to respond to situations when they arise.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the adoption of the Violence and Aggression Health and Safety Policy.

## Background

- 4 The Council **does not accept** that violence and aggression should be part of any working situation, whether that is in a physical or virtual/cyber space, and does not accept that employees should have to work in fear of physical or verbal abuse or threats. The policy is intended to support a working environment and culture in which aggressive or violent behaviour towards those working on behalf of the Council **is unacceptable**.
- 5 Whilst this is a new Health and Safety Policy, much of the content has previously been available through previous policy, guidance and support from the Health and Safety team. Following an officer working group on lone working and aggression towards staff, the opportunity has been taken to introduce this as a separate policy, ensuring a shared, clear and consistent guidance and approach is in place.
- 6 The policy complements the existing policy and guidance notes on lone working, risk assessment and social media use and identifies the roles and responsibilities of the Council's senior management, line managers and individual employees. The policy encourages proactive assessment of situations where employees may anticipate a risk of violence and aggression and provides suggestions on actions that can be introduced to manage the risk. Support and advice on individual scenarios can always be provided by the Council's Health and Safety advisors.
- 7 We encourage information about incidents of violence and aggression experienced by staff members to be reported internally and escalated to the police where appropriate.
- 8 Table 1 provides details of the incidents towards staff from members of the public, recorded from 2022/23 onwards. Table 2 provides details of the incidents analysed by directorate and service areas.

Table 1

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 to date
Physical assault, aggressive behaviour and threatening behaviour	62	22	57	18
Verbal abuse / offensive language	45	39	14	3
	<b>107</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>21</b>

Table 2

	2022 /23	2023 /24	2024 /25	2025 /26 to date
<b>Adults Health &amp; Integration</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
Care4CE	3	2	1	0
Safeguarding & Social Care	13	5	5	4
<b>Children's Services</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Children in Need and Child Protection	4	1	2	1
Education, Strong Start and Integration (Family Hub)	1	1	2	1
Family Help and Childrens Social Care	1	1	0	0
<b>Place</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>12</b>
Environmental and Neighbourhood Services (Libraries)	12	12	19	6
Environmental and Neighbourhood Services (Environment Operations) ANSA to be added in	4	5	13	3
Planning	0	0	1	0
Growth and Enterprise (Housing)	0	1	1	0
Growth and Enterprise (Rural & Cultural Economy)	0	0	1	2
Strategic Transport and Parking (Enforcement)	65	31	23	4
<b>Resources - People and Customer Experience (Customer Services)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Chief Executives Office -Governance and Compliance</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total incidents recorded</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>21</b>

- 9 Whilst not welcome, it is not unexpected that some staff areas receive more threats and aggression than others, and that these are the areas where staff work more closely with residents and service users, often in difficult and sensitive situations. Proactively considering the potential challenges and risks to individual safety, and ensuring that appropriate, proportionate measures are in place is a key responsibility of the employer.
- 10 Whilst the recorded incidents provide insight, the data will likely be an “underreported” overall position; individual perceptions of an incident, and whether to report it or not will vary based on personal tolerances. Verbal abuse, bad language or derogatory comments are an example of where staff tolerance will vary greatly. Encouragement to report and record incidents is important and the working group concluded that steps need to be taken to empower and support staff to report incidents and take action.
- 11 Subject to approval, awareness of the policy and the advice and guidance it sets out will be raised through reference in staff communications, engagement sessions with managers, and attendance at staff meetings as requested. Adoption of the policy provides reassurance to staff that they will be supported by the senior leaders of the organisation in dealing with incidents if they arise.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

- 12 The policy has been reviewed through the Corporate Health and Safety Forum which includes management and staff representatives from across the organisation and representatives of the Council's recognised Trade Union representatives.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 13 The adoption of the Violence and Aggression Health and Safety policy ensures that there is shared understanding of the Council's responsibilities as an employer towards this area of risk, that employees understand their respective roles and responsibilities and the resources available to them to minimise and mitigate risks from violence and aggression directed towards them.

## **Other Options Considered**

- 14 Arrangements could have remained informal, but this would not demonstrate the Council's commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of those who work for it or provided effective arrangements to ensure colleagues understand how to assess and minimise the risks of violence and aggression towards them, nor does it ensure a consistent view across the organisation.

## **Implications and Comments**

### *Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance*

- 15 Under the Council's Constitution, Chapter 2, Part 5, the Corporate Policy Committee has responsibility for Human Resources, Organisational Development and Health and Safety matters affecting the Council, including adopting HR policies and practices and assurance in relation to staffing related matters
- 16 The adoption of the policy supports the Council's responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to provide safe systems of work and a safe workplace, and the Council's responsibilities under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which require that a suitable and sufficient assessment be undertaken of the risks to the health and safety of employees whilst at work and this would include the risks of violence and aggression that employees may be subjected to.

### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 17 There are no direct financial implications associated with approving the Policy and there is no impact on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Individual services are responsible for the resource

implications of any additional resources which would be required to support safer working conditions for employees.

### *Human Resources*

- 18 The adoption of the policy supports safer working conditions for those working on behalf of the Council, which should in turn, ensure a working environment which staff should expect to work within, reducing the risk of absences arising from incidents and stress. It provides a mandate for staff to feel confident that the Council supports a zero tolerance attitude in dealing with incidents of violence and aggression towards its staff.

### *Risk Management*

- 19 The policy has been drafted in line with current legislation and best practice, following an officer working group on the risks of lone working and aggression. It provides support to reduce the likelihood and impact of violence and aggression being directed towards staff, improving our working environment and wellbeing, demonstrating the Council's understanding of its employment responsibilities under the relevant Health and Safety legislation.

### *Impact on other Committees*

- 20 The recommendations of this report do not directly impact any other committees.

### *Policy*

- 21 The adoption of this policy contributes to the Council's delivery of its responsibilities as an employer, supporting and promoting a safe working environment for colleagues. This directly supports the commitment of being an effective and enabling council and directly supports all aspects of Corporate Plan commitments.

<b>Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all</b>	<b>Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing</b>	<b>Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council</b>
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### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 22 There are no direct implications arising from this report in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion.

### *Other Implications*

- 23 There are no direct implications for Rural Communities, Children and Young People, Public Health or Climate Change arising from the recommendations of this report.

### *Consultation*

<b>Name of Consultee</b>	<b>Post held</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date returned</b>
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	16/09/25	19/09/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Acting Monitoring Officer	10/09/25	10/09/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Paul Davies	Senior Employment Lawyer	09/09/25	12/09/25
Steve Reading	Finance Manager (Place & Corporate)	09/09/25	11/09/25

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Josie Griffiths Head of Audit Risk and Assurance  josie.griffiths@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Violence and Aggression Health and Safety policy and Guidance Note.
Background Papers:	n/a