

Zero Tolerance Policy

As an employer, the practice has a duty to care for the health and safety of its staff. The practice also has a legal responsibility to provide a safe and secure working environment for staff and our patients. All patients are expected to behave in an acceptable manner and violent or abusive behaviour towards staff or patients may result in removal from our practice list or even criminal proceedings. The practice follows the NHS guidance concerning Zero Tolerance.

The aim of this policy is to tackle the increasing problem of violence against staff working in the NHS and ensures that clinical and non-clinical staff have a right to care for others without fear of being attacked or abused.

We 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. We ask patient's to treat their doctors and all other staff courteously and act reasonably.

All incidents will be reported through Ulysses and a letter will be sent to the patient following the incident. Following the first incident the patient will be sent "Zero Tolerance Letter 1". If a further incident is reported the patient will be sent "Zero Tolerance Letter 2". If a 3rd incident is reported the patient will be sent "Zero Tolerance Letter 3" which will ask the patient to register at another practice and they will be removed from our practice list after 28 days of the letter being sent. We will only send the "Zero Tolerance Letter 3" if the other two letters were sent within 12 months.

The practice holds a retention period of 12 months. This therefore means if no further incidents are reported from the date on "Zero Tolerance Letter 1" or "Zero Tolerance Letter 2" the letters can be removed after 12 months of issue. If any further incidents happen after 12 months of the last letter being sent "Zero Tolerance Letter 1" will be sent to the patient.

However, aggressive behaviour, be it violent or verbal abusive, will not be tolerated and may result in a patient being removed from the practice list and, in extreme cases, the Police will be contacted if an incident is taking place and the patient is posing a threat to staff or other patients.

Different stages of reporting abuse that will result in removal from the practice list

Reporting verbal abuse which is classed as Low/Minor Harm - i.e. over the phone or face-to-face (patient not being extremely aggressive/intimidating):

The Governance Team will send the patient two letters within one year. If the patient then continues to behaviour in this manner we will send a third letter which will ask them to register at another practice outside of The Willow Group (we usually give the patient 28 days to register at another surgery). There are very rare occasions where we will not send a letter to the patient but this would be discussed within the Governance Team first.

Reporting verbal abuse which is classed as Moderate Harm – i.e. over the phone or face-to-face (patient is being aggressive and intimidating/making staff feel uncomfortable):

Once the Governance Team have received the statements from all staff involved we will complete the form for PCSE who will then remove the patient from our patient list. The patient will then have

8 days to register at another surgery. We encourage reporting these incidents immediately to the Governance Team.

Reporting physical and verbal abuse which is classed as Major Harm – i.e. face-to-face (patient is physically violent or threatens violence or is extremely aggressive/intimidating):

Please call the police immediately (even if you do not need them to come out to the incident) and ensure that you record the crime reference number. Once reported to the Governance Team (please ensure that you inform the Governance Team of all staff that will produce a statement) we will contact the PCSE for an immediate patient removal. The patient will then be removed the same day and will be placed on the Special Allocation Scheme. We encourage reporting these incidents immediately to the Governance Team.

The Governance Team will place a note on a patient's warning screen if they have been removed following a Moderate or Major Harm incident to inform all staff that the patient cannot be re-registered at The Willow Group. If you re-register patients please be aware of Patient Warning messages to ensure you are not registering a patient that cannot be registered within The Willow Group. Unfortunately, we cannot remove the patient unless the patient is involved in another incident, if re-registered. If you have any concerns, please contact the Governance Team via email fgccg.mywillowexperience@nhs.net.

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 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 e.g. 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 other staff at risk.

Examples of Unacceptable Standards of Behaviour

- Violence.
- Excessive noise e.g. recurrent loud or intrusive conversation or shouting.
- Threatening or abusive language involving swearing or offence remarks.
- Derogatory racial or sexual remarks.
- Homophobic, biphobic, transphobic remarks.
- Derogatory remarks regarding someone's sexual orientation.
- Malicious allegations relating to members of staff, other patients or visitors.
- Offensive sexual gestures or behaviours.

- Abusing alcohol or drugs on practice premises.
- Drug dealing on practice premises.
- Wilful damage to practice property.
- Threats or threatening behaviour.
- Theft

Our staff have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. They should be able to do their jobs without being physically or verbally abused. Anyone found abusing the staff in person or on the telephone will be asked to leave the practice or the call ended. This behaviour will NOT be tolerated.

Our patients and visitors have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. Anyone found to be abusing or discriminating other patients or visitors will be asked to leave the practice. This behaviour will NOT be tolerated.