

FAIRHAZEL CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

Policy & Procedure Dealing with Violence and Aggression against Staff

26th July 2017

1. Introduction

In line with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and ensuing regulations, responsibilities are placed on management and all employees and volunteers in preventing and alleviating incidents of violence at work. At Fairhazel Co-operative whilst it is a Management Committee's responsibility to ensure that policies, procedures and practices uphold employees' and volunteers' health and safety; it is the responsibility of all employees and volunteers (including members of working parties and committees) to ensure effective implementation of these and to demonstrate care for their colleagues.

2. Definition

Violence is an incident or series of events in which a member of staff or working party or committee is abused, threatened or assaulted, physically or emotionally, in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment and/or in the course of performing their duties, which produces damaging or hurtful effects.

This includes sexual harassment, racial harassment, verbal abuse, abusive communication, threatening and intimidating behaviour, or actual harm to a person or damage to their property.

3. Statement of Principles

Violence and aggression towards Fairhazel Co-operative's employees and volunteers is not regarded as acceptable and should not be accepted as being 'part of the job'.

Preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of violence towards employees and volunteers should be adopted.

Fairhazel Co-operative's services should be delivered in a firm but tranquil atmosphere.

Any threat of violence felt by an employee or volunteer should be taken seriously and acted upon accordingly.

Fear of violence expressed by an employee or volunteer should be given due regard and attention by management and colleagues.

Prompt support will be offered to any employee or volunteer, should violence occur.

No employee or volunteer will abuse or assault a member of the public or of the Co-operative, or another member of staff or volunteer, or instigate retaliation.

Measures for handling potentially violent members will be kept under review.

Where appropriate, sanctions will be taken against perpetrators of violence.

Report of incidents is encouraged and monitored.

4. POLICY

Prevention, Alleviation and Effects of Violence

- a. Any referral to Fairhazel Co-operative for housing someone known to be a risk to others, due to violent and/or aggressive behaviour, will not be accepted.
- b. The Fairhazel Management Committee will be alert to the safety needs of its employees and volunteers and attempt to reduce or eliminate any potential risk.
- c. Employees and volunteers who may be at risk will be advised and supported in order to alleviate and avoid potential violence.
- d. The Fairhazel Management Committee has adopted a 'zero tolerance approach' when dealing with allegations of violence and aggression against staff and volunteers. This is to ensure the procedure detailed below is adhered to and followed.
- e. The Fairhazel Management Committee recognises that employees and volunteers who have suffered violence may be left in a state of emotional debilitation and may need appropriate support and counselling.
- f. All incidents will be recorded in the incident book, also in the personal file of the perpetrator, and reported to the Management Committee.

5. PROCEDURE

The Management Committee appreciates that tenants may have good reasons for their concerns, and they would like to assure the tenants that the Fairhazel Co-op would always value tenants' comments, concerns and complaints as they help us to identify good aspects of our work and those that need improvement. The Management Committee treats tenants' complaints and incidents seriously and would take appropriate action to rectify the situation and minimise and prevent similar instances in the future. In doing so the Fairhazel Co-op endeavours to identify any practices or procedures that may need improvement.

However, the Fairhazel Management Committee recognises and acknowledges their concern about the way some tenants may handle their communication with our employees or volunteers, which can potentially lead to a complete breakdown in our working relationship with the tenant.

To this end, the Fairhazel Co-operative recognises and stresses that: regardless of what problem a tenant or their family may experience with their housing services and our staff or volunteers; they

just cannot be violent or abusive towards member(s) of staff or volunteers including working party and committee members. Instead, using the Co-operative's Complaints Procedure, any complaint must be reported to the Fairhazel office with details of the concern or complaint at the first available opportunity, so the Housing Manager and when necessary the Management Committee, applying the correct procedures, will deal with the issue appropriately.

In the event of allegations of violence against staff or volunteers, however, the matter will be fully investigated, evidence collated, and the perpetrator will be written to with a 'Warning'.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the Police may be notified and involved too who may carry out their own investigation and take any action deemed necessary.

The perpetrator will be instantly banned from the office for a period of up to three months in the first instance. The perpetrator will also be advised that their contact with the office must now be restricted to essential communication limited to housing services only, such as necessary repairs etc. The perpetrator will also be warned that in the event of a reoccurrence, i.e. further instances of the same or similar nature towards any Fairhazel Co-operative's staff or members of the working parties or committees, or contractors for that matter, the Co-operative may have no choice but to apply more severe measures including removal from working parties and sub-committees if applicable and/or impose further sanctions depending on the severity and seriousness of the offence. Further sanctions may include an extended or even permanent ban from the office, and in the most severe cases can potentially jeopardise the tenant's membership of the Fairhazel Co-operative.

The Fairhazel Management Committee, however, hopes that the above course of action(s) will never be necessary against any member tenant or their family as the Fairhazel Co-operative including the Management Committee and members of staff at all levels as well as working parties and sub-committees have been striving to maintain, and indeed look forward to continue to promote, a good working relationship with all tenants and their families.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner when necessary (that is if regular or serious incidents arise that suggest it needs to be revisited) and updated or revised as appropriate.

MANAGING VIOLENCE - GUIDANCE NOTES

1. On the premises including the estate

- a. If staff are in doubt about someone's behaviour they should leave the room/scene and seek assistance from the management or another member of staff.
- b. If staff need to summon help or if in any doubt about an incident or situation they must call the Police.
- c. If any staff notices anyone suspicious or someone who makes them feel threatened, they should contact a member of the Management Committee or another member of staff for support and advice.
- d. After any incident, the staff or volunteer concerned must report immediately to a member of the Management Committee, or another member of staff and make a report in the incident book, located in the Fairhazel office.

2. Home visiting by Co-operative staff or volunteers

- e. Home visits should only be carried out when the nature of the issue demands that you visit the home, e.g. repairs, or when the tenant has medical conditions or physical disabilities that may make it impossible for them to attend the office. A tenant who is known to be potentially violent or aggressive should be visited by staff and/or volunteers in pairs.
- f. Before any visit, whether to another organisation, or to someone's home, staff must leave in the office diary the name and address of their destination and the time they expect to be back at the office.
- g. Home visits outside daylight hours should be avoided whenever possible.
- h. If staff are not planning to return to the office after their visit, they should make this clear in the office diary and ideally let a colleague know about this as well.
- i. After any incident staff must report immediately to the management committee member(s), or another member of staff and make a report in the incident book on their return.

3. Signs to look for in someone who could potentially be violent:

- Restless behaviour involving pushing and jostling
- Deliberately provocative conduct
- Unusually withdrawn or boisterous
- Over-sensitive reactions to correction or instruction
- Personal frustration caused by severe illness or the effects of its treatment, or disability or severe stress
- A feeling of tension
- Testing you out
- Drug or alcohol use
- Threats of violence

4. Ways of dissipating a potentially violent situation.

- Mentally rehearse a potentially high risk situation.
- Be calm, reasonable and reassuring.
- Transmit that calm through your voice and body language by using relaxed and normal speed movements - don't raise your voice.
- Act in a calm, self-controlled and confident way.
- Appropriate eye contact is important - not eye balling.
- Use words that the person will understand.
- Try to divert the situation.
- Change the subject.
- Avoid confrontations.
- Avoid saying "calm down" as this may escalate a situation and sound patronising.
- Avoid aggressive body language such as finger-wagging.
- Avoid physical contact unless absolutely necessary, e.g. to restrain someone or to protect yourself.
- Bear in mind any relevant information you might have.
- If there are bystanders, break the gawping by giving clear and calm instructions to one of them.
- Know your escape route.
- Remember that it is easier for you to lose face than the other person.
- If a situation escalates or control is being lost, get out of it.
- Call for help if it appears necessary.