

Joint Statement on Safety of Staff

The well-being and safety of colleagues working across the NHS is paramount. We know there have been recent examples of patients and the public being violent, aggressive and abusive towards colleagues. Whilst we recognise that some of this may be as a consequence of health conditions or sheer frustration, we need to work collectively to ensure people working in our organisations feel safe and supported at work. The Yorkshire and Humber SPF (Y&H SPF) condemns in the strongest terms the recent violence and aggression towards NHS staff such as the attacks on GP practice staff in Manchester. The last 18 months have been challenging for colleagues working right across health and social care. Misinformed or malicious criticism of health care colleagues, whether through the press or social media, is totally unacceptable and should be challenged at all levels. Colleagues need to feel safe to talk about the care they provide, the challenges they face and about any mistakes without fear and in an environment of trust and learning.

Primary care colleagues have played a vital role in supporting the health system during these difficult times, despite coping with workforce shortages and delivering the bulk of the vaccination programme.

Demand for NHS services is high and will remain so over the coming months.

The results of the NHS Staff Survey over the last few years have consistently demonstrated that all NHS staff are subject to both physical and verbal abuse on a frequent basis. The scale of this problem is experienced by more than 25% of all staff but is higher in some groups due their ethnicity and gender. A recent BMA survey reported even higher rates with 51% of GPs and 30% of hospital doctors reporting having experienced verbal abuse in a survey with 2400 respondents.

We need to work in partnership to create cultures where people feel safe to report incidents, talk openly about the care they provide and receive support and backing when they are faced with violence, aggression or abuse. We are therefore asking NHS organisations, in partnership with their staff sides to review urgently their current policies/arrangements which are in place to address and minimise the risks to colleagues' safety. These should include:

- ensuring colleagues know that violence and aggression towards them will not be tolerated and they will be supported by their employer to address this problem.
- review and update all risk assessments to identify and recognise the risk of violence towards colleagues
- employment of sufficient security to cover the risks identified
- ensure all colleagues know how to call for effective security assistance
- access to conflict resolution training
- ensuring that their environment is well lit and safe, especially to remote clinical and rest areas
- ensuring that colleagues know how to access any dedicated and secure car parking when working at these times
- seeking the views of colleagues on measures to improve personal safety
- adoption of the NHS England and NHS Improvement *violence prevention and reduction standard* - <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/B0319-Violence-Prevention-Reduction-Standards.pdf>

The Y&H SPF will continue to support and evaluate all developments in this important area of our work

Signed

Charlie Carruth, Unison

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Elaine McAvoy, British Medical Association

Joint chairs of the Yorkshire & Humber SPF