



**Supporting  
women and children  
in West Cornwall**

## Protecting Staff from Abuse Policy

### Purpose

This policy outlines how we create a safe and respectful work environment for all staff members by preventing and addressing abusive behaviours from service users and third parties.

We are committed to ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of our staff. This policy details our approach to preventing, addressing, and responding to abusive behaviours from service users, contractors, suppliers, the general public, and any other third parties our staff may interact with during their work.

This policy is not contractual and may be updated as needed.

### Scope

This policy applies to all employees, workers, agency staff, contractors, and volunteers of the charity. It will also be clearly communicated to stakeholders, including contractors, suppliers, service users, and the general public.

This policy does not cover bullying or harassment between colleagues. Please refer to the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy for concerns related to workplace interactions between staff members. If abuse takes the form of persistent or vexatious complaints, including repeated threats to make complaints, this policy should be read alongside the relevant section of the Complaints Policy.

### Our Commitment

We are committed to standing with our staff against any form of abuse.

Experiencing abuse at work is never acceptable.

We recognize that many of the individuals we support may have experienced trauma, struggle with mental health challenges, or face difficulties related to substance use. Our commitment to compassion and understanding does not mean accepting abusive behaviour. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, including our staff.

### Understanding Abuse

To prevent and address abuse effectively, it is important to recognise what constitutes abusive behaviour. Abuse can take many forms, including emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse.

Some examples of abusive behaviours include (but are not limited to):

- Using disrespectful or offensive language in person, by email, via social media or over the phone
- Raising one's voice in an intimidating way
- Expressing anger or aggression verbally or through body language (e.g., pounding a fist on a desk)





## Supporting women and children in West Cornwall

- Making threats, either directly or indirectly
- Sending excessive or harassing messages (emails, texts, or voicemails)
- Invading personal space to intimidate
- Making statements or gestures that instil fear
- Threatening to make complaints to exert pressure on staff or influence an outcome (*Listing this as a form of abusive behaviour is not intended to obstruct or deter service users from making a complaint. Complaints should be made following the procedure set out in the Complaints Policy*)
- Humiliating or belittling someone in front of others
- Repeatedly engaging in passive-aggressive behaviours that create a hostile environment (e.g., purposefully ignoring someone when spoken to)
- Repeatedly providing unreasonable or non-constructive criticism
- Acting vindictively or retaliating against staff members for decisions made in their professional role

Some forms of abuse may constitute criminal offenses, and we will report such instances to the police as appropriate.

### Preventing Abuse

Everyone has a role in preventing abuse. Our approach includes:

- Clearly communicating our zero-tolerance policy to all service users and third parties.
- Asking service users to sign an agreement to treat staff and others with respect.
- Providing reminders of our policy through posters, our website, and other channels.
- Conducting risk assessments where there is a potential for abusive behaviour.
- Encouraging staff to report all incidents of abuse, including minor concerns, to their manager.
- Addressing low-level concerns early through discussion to prevent escalation.
- Taking action in response to serious incidents, which may include restricting access to services or premises.
- Ensuring that staff model respectful and professional behaviour in all interactions.

### Responding to Abuse

If you experience or witness abuse at work, take the following steps:

1. Document the incident – Write down what happened, including dates, times, and details of those involved.
2. Address the situation directly (if safe to do so) – If appropriate, you may choose to ask the individual to stop their behaviour in a calm and clear manner. Let them know the impact of their actions and that their behaviour





## Supporting women and children in West Cornwall

is unacceptable. You may also state that continued behaviour may lead to further action.

3. Report the incident to a manager – You should always report any instance of abuse to a manager. If, after initially reporting the abuse, the behaviour continues, you must report it again.
4. Risk assessment and follow-up – WCWAid will assess the risk posed by the situation and take appropriate steps to protect staff and prevent further harm.
5. Confidentiality and sensitivity – All reports will be handled with sensitivity and with care for the well-being of those involved.

### Support for Staff

We recognise that experiencing or witnessing abuse can have an emotional impact. Staff members affected by abuse at work will be offered support, which may include:

- Regular check-ins with a line manager
- A stress risk assessment
- Referral to Occupational Health for additional support
- Signposting to external resources, such as:
  - Your GP
  - MIND (<https://www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/supported-self-help/>)
  - NHS Talking Therapies (<https://www.cornwallft.nhs.uk/talking-therapies/>)
- Access to additional external clinical supervision, if required
- Employee free counselling helpline – 0344 893 9012

### Actions in Response to Abuse

When an allegation of abuse by a service user or third party is substantiated, WCWAid will take necessary steps to protect staff and prevent recurrence. This may include:

- Giving a formal warning about unacceptable behaviour
- Restricting access to services or premises
- Reporting the incident to the police if it constitutes a criminal offense

We will also ensure that affected staff members receive appropriate support and follow-up care.

### Raising Concerns

If you have any concerns about this policy, please speak to your manager in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with the response, refer to the Grievance Procedure for guidance on raising concerns formally.

If you need this policy in another format, please contact your manager.

### Document control





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Signed by Director	
Date of policy reviews conducted	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2025
Date of next formal policy review	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2028
Responsibility for reviewing and updating	CEO, Services Coordinator



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