

31 JULY 2019

End Violence at Work Charter

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In April 2018 Unison launched a campaign to end violence at work in the community sector, encouraging employers to publicly sign up to a charter.
- 1.2 At its meeting in February the Council considered the following motion,

“That Rushmoor Borough Council recognises its staff is its greatest resource, and, as a good employer, must ensure all staff feel safe and secure in their place of work. We therefore call on the Council to sign up to UNISON’s ‘Violence at Work Charter’.”

and agreed that the Motion be referred to the appropriate body to ensure that the Council was meeting the points in the Charter.
- 1.3 This report provides the background to the Charter and explains its intended focus. It sets out how the Council currently meets the standards in the Charter and sets out some options if Members still wished to take further action in relation to the Charter.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The End Violence at Work Charter is a campaign by Unison, a public services union, to encourage employers in the community sector (charities and housing associations) to take violence against staff seriously. The charter (Appendix 1) specifies 10 simple steps, covering training, prevention and support which Unison feel all employers should be able to take, showing they take violence against their employees seriously.
- 2.2 Unison, had conducted a number of surveys amongst their members and they found that almost half of their members working within the community sector had experienced an incident of violence or aggression at work in the previous two years.
- 2.3 Furthermore, data gathered by ‘Inside Housing’ also revealed that violent and verbal abuse of workers from housing associations is an acute problem.

- 2.4 As the incidence of violence and abuse was on the increase in these sectors Unison developed ten measures that they felt every employer within the community sector should be able to support. Through the campaign Unison is asking employers within the community and voluntary sectors to sign up, show their commitment to end violence and make changes to their practices to improve the safety of their workers.

3. THE COUNCIL'S POSITION

- 3.1 Whilst this charter is designed for the community and voluntary sectors and not for local authorities, the Council is committed to supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff and has in place comprehensive policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of employees.
- 3.2 Council data shows that the number of incidents of violence towards staff has increased over the past 3 years.

	2016	2017	2018
Verbal abuse / threat	14	20	24
Info / warning from third party	3	2	2
Physical attack	2	2	4
Animal attack	0	2	2
Other	0	2	4
Total	14	28	36

- 3.2 As a result of the campaign and interest by elected members Rushmoor's Unison representatives and managers have met to review how the ten standards identified in the campaign are currently addressed by the Council. Unison have confirmed that they are content with the council's position (See Appendix 3) and representatives have been invited to attend the PPAB meeting.
- 3.3 Appendix 2 sets out how the Council suggests it meets each of the standards set out in the Charter.

4. THE CHARTER AND THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 At the Council meeting it was clear that members wished to consider the role the Council might have in supporting the adoption of the charter by voluntary and community sector organisations operating in the Borough. A number of options have been identified and these are set out below.
- (1) The charter be raised at a future meeting of the Voluntary Sector Forum, the next Registered Providers Liaison Meeting and as part of general discussions with the major organisations the Council support's financially
 - (2) The Portfolio holder for Democracy, Strategy and Partnerships could write to all voluntary and community sector organisations and housing associations

operating in the borough, bringing their attention to the charter and encouraging them to sign up

- (3) To consider, in appropriate cases, when the Council is procuring services from voluntary and community sector organisations to require that health and safety measures similar to those set out in the Charter to be in place before any contract is issued.
- (4) To take (3) a step further as three UK councils – Liverpool, mid-Suffolk and Southwark – have done by making signing the charter part of their council's commissioning/procurement processes, showing they expect service providers seeking contracts to sign up to the charter.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Policy and Projects Advisory Board is invited to:

- (i) Note the ongoing commitment and supporting policies and procedures that the Council has in place to safeguard its staff against incidents of violence and aggression at work.
- (ii) Consider whether it wishes to recommend that Cabinet take any further steps in supporting the adoption of the charter by voluntary and community sector organisations operating in the Borough

KAREN EDWARDS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Contact: Karen Edwards, Executive Director Ext: 8800 Estelle Rigby, Interim HR Manager Ext 4420 estelle.rigby@rushmoor.gov.uk

List of appendices:

1. Unison – End Violence at Work Charter
2. Council assessment against charter standards
3. Unison NE Hants Branch Response

Rushmoor Borough Council assessment against Union's Violence at Work Charter Standards for the Voluntary and Community sector

1. The employer has a written violence and aggression at work policy, which is available to all staff. The policy should also cover lone working.

RBC have a number of relevant policies:

- Emergency Evacuation Procedures – Council Offices, this includes the response to violent incidents / attack and 'invacuation'
- Building User Guide - details general policy on use of building, hours, access control, badges etc
- Security Policy - details arrangements and policy for main reception area, response to violent incidents, CCTV and use of panic alarms etc
- Potentially Violent Persons Policy -details arrangements for reporting and recording incidents. This is in addition to the maintenance of an up to date register and 'red flagging' to front line services
- Lone Working Policy - general policy on assessment of risks and controls
- Risk Assessments - violence at work and lone working are addressed within team risk assessments to ensure local controls are in place to meet general policy

2. Responsibility for implementing these policies lies with a senior manager.

Guidance and advice provided by Roger Sanders, Principal Health & Safety Officer however policy sets out structure by which all policies / arrangements are implemented – that is by Heads of Service, with a named Lead Director for Health & Safety.

3. Measures are taken to reduce staff working in isolated buildings, offices or other work areas to a minimum

Local managers are committed to undertaking health and safety risk assessments, which are reviewed by the corporate health & safety team. This is required to take place at team level due to wide variability in roles, hours, ways of working etc.

4. Staff are encouraged to report all violent incidents and that are told how to do this

Clear policy and procedures in place and led by Corporate Health & Safety along with representatives in all services. The reporting system is available 24/7 via online portal and staff and managers are encouraged to report all incidents/information.

5. The employer collects and monitors data on violent incidents on a regular and ongoing basis

Data is collected, reviewed and monitored by Corporate Health & Safety team and discussed during health, safety and welfare group meetings. Quarterly stats are provided and considered by CLT.

6. Where they are in place, union safety reps are able to access this data and are consulted on solutions to issues relating to violence in the workplace.

Unison is represented at formal H&S meetings where data is shared and solutions discussed. Unison are a key stakeholder and asked to comment on all significant changes to policies and procedures.

7. Thorough risk assessments are conducted for staff placed in vulnerable situations.

As above, risk assessments are conducted locally in teams where staff may be in vulnerable situations. Review and support is provided by the corporate health & safety team.

8. The employer has support pathways in place for staff who are victims of violence at work, so that they know where to turn for advice and support

Line managers are involved in the reporting / investigation process and staff are signposted or can be referred to the Councils EAP (Employee Assistance Programme).

9. Training to ensure staff are aware of the appropriate way to deal with threatening situations

Those likely to face threatening situations receive training in Conflict Management – work taking place to ensure 'mandatory' status of this training. Encouraged to make mandatory for higher risk teams during discussion with corporate health & safety.

10. Where appropriate, independent counselling services are available to staff who are the victims of violence at work.

Independent counselling services are available to staff 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through the Employee Assistance Programme.