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North East Hampshire LG UNISON Branch

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North East Hampshire Branch Committee response the Chief Executive on the Violence at Work Charter

Dear Paul,

On 5 March 2017, a press release stated that 70% of housing association workers in a 12 month period reported that physical or verbal abuse is a daily reality according to a BBC report.

That is why at a Community service group conference UNISON agreed to launch a 'Violence at Work Charter', which would see employers commit to a series of interventions to reduce the number of violent incidents at work.

It was explained that council staff undertake training to deal with and breakaway from potential confrontations. They also receive support if they have been the victim of physical or verbal abuse. However, this is not always the case for staff working in the community and voluntary sectors.

At Rushmoor Borough Council (RBC), Management and UNISON take these issues extremely seriously and have worked together to come up with a comprehensive policy to limit the risks to their staff and members.

As UNISON branch secretary for North East Hampshire, I have again looked at our policy, together with the UNISON Health and Safety Representative and the Health and Safety Officer at RBC. We feel that we have covered the 10 points in the charter. This policy was overhauled as recently as October 2018, with input from all of the relevant parties. However, we are committed to revisiting the policy as and when the situation changes.

This Charter is not directly aimed at Local Authorities (LA's), who already have robust measures in place to protect their staff, which is evident by the lack of LA's who have signed the charter (it is only community and voluntary services who have signed up). For clarity the website states:

'We are pleased to announce that the employers named below have signed UNISON's third sector Violence at Work Charter and made the commitment to be vigilant about protecting their staff at work.'

Get more involved

*If you are a UNISON member and want to get your employer to sign the charter, please email our **community and voluntary sector team**.*

<https://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/community/key-issues/end-violence-work/end-violence-work-charter/>).

I have also consulted the branch committee and we unanimously feel that, although we would not seek to oppose signing up to the charter, we, at RBC, are more than capable of making any necessary changes 'in house' as and when appropriate for the welfare of our staff.

To quote the old saying, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. Why create more work for already overstretched services off the back of a charter not intended for us.

If there are any particular areas that any party feel are not being adequately addressed, UNISON would welcome comments. Janine.wraight@rushmoor.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Janine Wraight
Branch Secretary
North East Hampshire Branch