# Management of Violence and Aggression

# Protocol for vaccination sites

No one should have to deal with aggression within his or her occupation, but within healthcare environments, these incidents do happen.

All staff should complete the Conflict Resolution module on Bluestream to equip you with the skills and knowledge to manage any potential violent or aggressive situations.

The following top tips will help staff:

**Environment**

Staff should have an awareness of the environment and the impact on a patient's stress, anxiety or fear. Patients may be fearful of being overheard so privacy may be important. Noise levels, crowds and excessive light may be a contributing factor.

The positioning of patients in waiting areas is particularly crucial particularly during Covid. Ensure chairs are positioned with enough room to allow socially distancing. It is important to remember that patients coming to have their vaccinations will have a range of emotions including fear and anxiety which can all impact on their presentation.

A high-risk situation for any aggressive or violent patient is usually the waiting area. Remain friendly, welcoming and keep the atmosphere light and as calm as possible. If there are lots of people waiting for a long time and there are signs a person's anger is escalating, then you can acknowledge they are waiting and apologise for the delay. Sometimes, patients just want their frustrations validated.

***Your demeanour and body language***

Make sure you maintain eye contact that is appropriate for the individual as well as ensure your body language is open and relays both your interest and engagement to the person. For example, a slightly inclined head can show that you are interested, as well as be a non-threatening posture to have in these types of situations.

**Signs a patient may be showing signs of impending aggression**

- Apparently under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Wide eyes
- Staring at staff or a particular staff member
- Muscle clenching
- Sighing
- Increased raised voices
- Pacing walking around

The following tips are really important when managing any escalating aggression:

**Listen**

Listen to the person. Active listening can be an important component in the de-escalation process. The individual may be aggressive due to fear of their situation, or even due to the fact they have lost control of the situation, so listening to them is an important element of the communication process. And remember when you are listening, you also should avoid giving opinions on issues that are beyond your control. You can acknowledge their frustration and escalate this to the site manager.

**Acknowledge their anger**

Always remain calm, and always acknowledge the person's anger, even if you may not agree with their frustrations. Use reflective comments and use the words that are spoken by the aggressive individual but keep these comments brief. Don't use statements that can be perceived as devaluing the patients such as 'you shouldn't be angry', instead use statements like 'I can see you are angry'. This type of statement can also be a good opening to explore their feelings, giving them a chance to speak about how they are feeling. Often when an individual has an opportunity to express their anger, it can assist in lowering their levels of anger and therefore decrease the risk of a violent outburst.

**Verbal abuse**

Verbal abuse from patients and the public can be distressing, particularly where it relates to a protected characteristic e.g., homophobic or racist abuse. Always report incidents of verbal abuse using NICS incident form and inform the site manager. Where the verbal abuse contains a threat to harm this should be taken seriously and reported to the police

**Privacy**

Offer the person a chance to talk away from other patients if they wish to preserve their privacy and dignity, however, ensure you are not left alone with an aggressive patient and you maintain a safe distance (always ensure you are close to an exit)

**Empathy**

Paraphrasing can be a way to express empathy to the patient, and this also shows the patient that their concerns are being listened to and being taken seriously. This can also be a strategy to ensure the information staff are gathering from the patient is accurate Offer a drink of water-sometimes this simple gesture can be enough.

**Refusal to treat a patient**

You may refuse to vaccinate a patient if there is a serious threat of violence, but this needs careful consideration. It may be possible for a vaccination to be given whilst the patient's violence is managed.

Each situation needs assessment, and you should discuss this with your Site Manager and or Lead GP and the rest of the care team. NICS will always support you and we will support any decision not to vaccinate if you feel in imminent danger

**When to escalate further**

Never put yourself in harm's way if the situation escalates. If the person is continuing to escalate despite your input, then contact the Site Manager and/or the onsite security guard immediately and call the police if there are concerns or immediate threats of violence.

**De-Brief and reporting**

Always report any incidents, however minor to the Site Manager and complete an incident report.

Following any sort of incident that involves violence and aggression, it is important that any staff involved in the situation attend a debriefing session as well as be followed up to monitor their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing. It is also important that the incident is reported to ensure accurate data collection and for quality improvement purposes.