

ABUSE AND VIOLENCE TOWARDS COLLEAGUES POLICY

Version Number	V12
Date of Current Version	July 2025
Approved by / Date	Executive Director of Corporate Services / July 2025
Annual Review Date	March 2026
Full Review Date	March 2026

Executive Summary:

Our policy on Abuse and Violence towards colleagues contractors or representatives recognises the challenges faced by colleagues contractors or representatives by a small number of customers. It outlines the processes involved that will reduce the risk, and support colleagues contractors or representatives in the event of an incident. We do not tolerate abuse or violence towards colleagues and others. With community partners and the Police, we aim to take appropriate legal action against perpetrators, whilst providing care and support to those affected.

Policy Grouping / Directorate	Corporate Services	
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EIA Completed	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Publication	Intranet <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Website <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes:		

1 Introduction and Aims

- 1.1 Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) colleagues, contractors or representatives, especially those in customer facing roles, may be subjected to threats of abuse or violence.
- 1.2 In certain situations, colleagues contractors or representatives may face abusive and potentially violent situations and RBH recognises that they should not have to work in those environments.
- 1.3 RBH does not tolerate verbal abuse, threats or violence of any nature towards its colleagues or contractors or representatives. This type of behaviour is deemed completely unacceptable and, in these circumstances, RBH will not hesitate to act against perpetrators to protect them. This policy aims to help tackle this behaviour, deal with it appropriately and ensure colleagues contractors or representatives feel supported.
- 1.4 The aims of the policy are that:
 - a) Managers will take responsibility for managing their teams in an effective way to ensure compliance with this policy and appropriate health and safety policies and procedures.
 - b) Colleagues will be responsible for ensuring that they follow the guidance and advice which is outlined in health and safety policy and procedures.
 - c) Contractors and/or our representatives will understand that we have a duty to protect them and that they protect themselves.

2 Context

2.1 Definitions

Abuse

Any incident, either verbal or physical in which a person is maltreated, threatened, insulted or is subject to hate crime, in circumstances relating to their work.

Violence

An unlawful act of physical force intended to hurt, maim, or kill someone.

This can also be defined as 'a violation of an individual's human rights and civil rights by another person or persons' in the workplace'.¹

RBH's working definition of abuse or violence to colleagues includes but is not limited to:

Physical Attack

Threats of physical attack or abuse, whether directed at a colleague, contractor or representative of the RBH. This might include attacks that are sexually or racially motivated, and includes those due to sexual orientation, or disability etc.

¹ [Human rights in the workplace | nidirect](#)

Verbal Abuse

When a colleague, contractor or representative of RBH feels an unacceptable threat has been made against them, including hate crime, sexual or racial abuse etc.

Animal Attack

Where an animal is used as a threat or method of actual violence

Attack Against Property

As a means of intimidating a colleague.

Personal Threats

Against the individual or against relatives or connected persons.

- 2.2 RBH is aware of and concerned that some incidents of abuse or violence go unreported.

One of the main reasons for this is that colleagues may perceive and accept that handling aggressive behavior is part and parcel of the job. RBH will not tolerate abuse and/or violence towards colleagues and adopts a zero-tolerance approach, requiring the reporting of all such incidents. It is a colleague's legal duty to report such incidents.

RBH will always support their colleagues, contractors, or representatives by taking appropriate action, whenever there is evidence that they have been subjected to threats of, or actual abuse or violence whilst carrying out their work. See section 2.5

- 2.3 Additional to the internal investigations process, RBH will involve the Police and other appropriate authorities, where necessary, and take appropriate legal action

- 2.4 Support for Colleagues following an incident

RBH Wellbeing Champions can be contacted via the dedicated email address, which is wellbeing.champions@rbh.org.uk, and details of the wellbeing champions and further support can be found on the Wellbeing page, in Connect. [People Matters - Home](#)

Further independent advice and support can be provided through MediCash, details available on Connect, or via the People Team. [People Matters - Home](#)

3 Values

Putting People First: We listen with empathy, respond with compassion, and make it easy for our customers to access our services. Our duty of care under H&S legislation requires us to consider and put people first, above operational needs.

Doing What We Say: We earn trust through honesty, integrity, caring and keeping our promises. This policy lays out RBHs responsibilities for colleague safety, our duty of care to them and others and how we will manage our arrangements and controls.

Working As One: We embrace our mutuality and work together to deliver great outcomes for the people living in our homes and communities. This policy relates to the safety of our colleagues and also our work with contractors and

others (volunteers etc.). Safety is a shared responsibility and by working as one we will gather data for improvements and the best safety outcomes.

Delivering Quality: We invest wisely in our people and make it easy for them to deliver services and create places that our customers are proud to call home. This policy includes training our colleagues and others (relevant inductions) to understand our approach to maintaining safe working environments

Open & Transparent: We are curious, embrace diverse ways of thinking and seek feedback to help us improve. This policy provides instruction and guidance but would and does allow for open and transparent feedback on how we deliver safety and protect health. H&S will always be on a continuous improvement journey.

4 Policy Statement

4.1 RBH is responsible for the provision of a safe and healthy working environment for its colleagues. RBH recognises that it has a moral and legal obligation to reduce risk to as low as reasonably practicable relating to threats of abuse and violence at work.

RBH will;

- a) Plan and implement measures to minimise the risk to colleagues- Particular attention will be paid to lone workers and reception areas and interviewing facilities.
- b) Provide relevant training for colleagues who may be at risk of abuse and violence at work.
- c) If requested or deemed appropriate, provide legal advice and support to victims of abuse or violence at work.
- d) Not tolerate verbal, physical, sexual or racial harassment or abuse of its colleagues. RBH will not tolerate actual or threatened assaults upon colleagues or their property by tenants or other members of the public either during or outside working hours, which occur because of their employment with RBH.
- e) Investigate all incidents of abuse or violence at work. Report, record and take any remedial, or legal action that may be necessary against those responsible.
- f) As 2.5 above, RBH will provide a 24-hour confidential telephone line, as below, or online advice with trained professionals for the victims of incidents or threats of abuse and violence at work.

Medicash EAP Tel: 0345 565 1851

Additionally, face to face counselling sessions with Medicash EAP can be arranged.

4.2 General Responsibilities in this Policy

4.2.1 Colleagues must take all appropriate and reasonable measures to ensure that they are working safely and maintaining personal safety whilst carrying out their duties. This is especially important when a colleague is lone working out in a Neighbourhood or visiting customers in their homes. This policy will be adopted

in conjunction with the 'Lone Working Policy' which includes relevant control measures.

This can be found on RBH Connect.

4.2.2 Managers are responsible for ensuring that colleagues have checked a customer's record in advance of a home visits, including a check for a safety (risk) marker that may impact on their ability to stay safe. If there has been a history of aggression or abuse there will be clear guidance on measures to take, i.e. two persons attending, within the Safety Marker Policy and Procedure. If a significant risk remains colleagues should arrange to speak to the customer in a RBH office environment with safety controls in place. i.e. panic buttons, CCTV and / or SOS fobs.

4.2.3 Managers are responsible for ensuring that colleagues are aware of their individual responsibility to read and understand all relevant risk assessments that are in place within their service areas, this includes lone working and visiting customers at home. Where a risk to health and safety is identified in a risk assessment, then managers have an active duty of care to ensure colleagues are following all control measures identified to reduce the risks to their health and safety.

4.2.4 As required within the Health & Safety at Work Act all RBH colleagues have a duty of care to ensure their own safety and to conduct their undertakings in such a way as not to expose themselves or others to unnecessary risks or harm.

4.3 **Sharing of Information**

4.3.1 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) does not prevent the sharing of data subject information, including special personal information, with third parties if it has been lawfully gathered, retained, and processed in line with current GDPR principals.

4.3.2 Partners, e.g., contractors who may have considerable contact with a customer whose details are noted within our Safety Marker system must be made aware of RBH's identified concerns, so that their employer can implement their own related policy, procedures and controls. Any such disclosure will be made on a strict case-by-case basis after full consideration of the data subject's rights. The Data Protection Officer for RBH should be contacted if there are any concerns about disclosing information. RBH must request that partners and their employees report any unacceptable behavior to RBH, so that this can be investigated, and action can be taken against the customer, if necessary. RBH's safety risk markers can then be updated.

4.4 **Training of Colleagues**

All colleagues will receive training in the application of this policy through e-learning, policy updates and training workshops on related subjects, e.g. Personal Safety and Conflict Resolution and use of SOS (lone worker) devices.

4.5 All colleagues who encounter a situation which gives rise to concern for their own safety or for that of a colleague, contractor or any other representative working in an official capacity on behalf of RBH, must report the situation through the separate process for raising a Safety Marker.

4.6 **Reports made to Neighbourhoods from approved third parties.**

If a third-party partner deems a customer, that is applying to rent a RBH property, a risk to RBH colleagues, and others they may make RBH aware of their risk data. Neighbourhood Team will verify and update the appropriate Markers.

5 Monitoring

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through consideration of the number of abusive or violent incidents reported and the outcome of those incidents. The information will be reported to the relevant RBH Health and Safety Committees on a regular basis.

6 Review

- 6.1 All RBH strategies, policies, service standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.
- 6.2 This policy will go through the full policy approval process every 3 years and will undergo a desktop review annually. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all relevant and statutory regulations.

7 Links with Other RBH Documents

- 7.1 This policy links to the following policies and procedures:
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Lone Worker Policy
 - SOS device user procedure
 - Team Specific Risk Assessments
 - Safe Systems of Work
 - Safety Marker Policy & Procedures

8 Inclusivity statement

- 8.1 We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all. We ensure that everyone is valued and respected. Our policies aim to be inclusive, and will comply with UK laws, including the Equality Act 2010, to create a diverse and supportive environment for people to thrive.
- 8.2 We understand not everyone absorbs information the same way. If you have any difficulty understanding or interpreting this document please email people@rbh.org.uk or call Freephone 0800 027 7769. We will work with you to ensure your individual needs are met.