

NHS zero tolerance zone – Key Messages

We don't have to take this

Resource sheet 1

The Government is determined to ensure that staff who spend their lives caring for others are not rewarded with intimidation and violence. 'Violence' means any incident where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health. The definition is not subjective – it is what is meant by 'zero tolerance'.



A recent NHS Executive survey found that, on average, seven violent incidents were recorded each month per 1,000 staff. That is equivalent to approximately 65,000 violent incidents against NHS Trust staff each year.

The NHS zero tolerance zone is a nationwide campaign to stop violence against staff working in the NHS. The campaign has been initiated by Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, and has the full support of Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, and Lord Williams, the Attorney General.

All violent incidents must be reported by staff to their managers at the time they occur or as soon as possible thereafter. By April 2000 all NHS Trusts are required to have systems in place to record incidents of violence against staff and have published strategies for reducing such incidents. A national target has been set for reducing incidents of violence against NHS staff by 30 per cent by 2003.

Violence against staff working in the NHS is a crime and employers will work with the police locally to prevent it.

Staff working in the NHS go to work to care for others. They do not go to work to be victims of violence. Aggression, violence and threatening behaviour do not go with the job and will not be tolerated any longer. Individuals behaving violently towards staff will be reported to the police.

Health service managers are responsible for providing safe working conditions for all staff.

They are committed to caring for the health and safety of their staff and will ensure that staff report all acts of violence to the police. They will also ensure that staff receive the necessary support when an incident is reported to the police and, in the event of a serious assault, when pursuing prosecutions against perpetrators.

Zero tolerance means ridding the NHS of intimidation and violence.