

Safer Staff: A Survey of Staff Experiences of Violence and Aggression at Work in Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership National Health Service Trust

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Abstract : Background: Workplace related violence and aggression seems to be considered an acceptable occupational hazard for staff in mental health services. There is literature evidence that healthcare workers in mental health settings are at higher risk from aggression from patients. Aggressive behaviours pose a physical and psychological threat to the psychiatric staff and can result in stress, burnout, sickness, and exhaustion. Further evidence informs that health professionals are the most exposed to psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Fear that results from working in a dangerous environment and exhaustion can have a damaging impact on patient care and healthcare relationship. Aim: The aim of this study is to investigate the prevalence and impact of aggressive behaviour on staff working at Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust. Methodology: The study methodology included carrying out a manual, anonymised, multi-disciplinary cross-sectional survey questionnaire across all clinical and non-clinical staff at CWPT from both inpatient and community settings. Findings: The unsurprising finding was that of higher prevalence of aggressive behaviours in in-patients in comparison to community staff. Conclusion: There is a high rate of verbal and physical aggression at work and this has a negative impact on the staff emotional and physical well-being. There is also a higher reliance on colleagues for support on an informal basis than formal organisational support systems. Recommendations: A workforce that is well and functioning is the biggest resource for an organisation. Staff safety during working hours is everyone's responsibility and sits with both individual staff members and the organisation. Post-incident organisational support needs to be consolidated, and hands-on, timely support offered to help maintain emotionally well staff on CWPT. The authors recommend development of preventative and practical protocols for aggression with patient and carer involvement. Post-incident organisational support needs to be consolidated, and hands-on, timely support offered to help maintain emotionally well staff on CWPT.

Keywords : safer staff, survey of staff experiences, violence and aggression, mental health

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