**Dealing with Unreasonable, Violent   
and Abusive Patients**

At Dorridge Surgery, we have a duty of care to our staff, patients and visitors to the surgery & at no time will any violent, threatening or abusive behaviour be tolerated towards staff, patients or visitors.

Behaviour we may experience and how we may deal with this:

**Unreasonable behaviour**

There are many reasons why a patient’s behaviour may become unreasonable, including:

* Substance misuse
* If they are scared, anxious or distressed
* If they are frustrated, unwell or in pain

All staff at Dorridge Surgery may experience patients who are:

* Demanding
* Unwilling to listen
* Uncooperative

There are several factors associated with difficult and challenging interactions with patients, such as a lack of resources, waiting times and interruptions during consultations. For these reasons, the ‘demanding’ or ‘difficult’ patient can potentially consume a large amount of the clinician’s and manager’s time.

## Inappropriate behaviour

Inappropriate behaviour is defined as being unacceptable if:

* It is unwanted by the recipient
* It has the purpose or effect of violating the recipient’s dignity and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment

Inappropriate behaviour does not have to be face-to-face and may take other forms including written, telephone or e-mail communications or through social media. This is covered in the [Patient Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy](https://practiceindex.co.uk/gp/forum/resources/patient-social-media-and-acceptable-use-policy-for-england.1547/).

Some examples of inappropriate behaviour include, but are not limited to the following:

* Aggressive or abusive behaviour, such as shouting or personal insults, in person or via social media
* Discrimination or harassment when related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010
* Unwanted physical contact
* Spreading malicious rumours or gossip or insulting someone
* Stalking
* Offensive comments/jokes or body language
* Persistent and unreasonable criticism
* Unreasonable demands and impossible requests
* Coercion, such as pressure to subscribe to a particular political or religious belief

What constitutes inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour could be viewed as a subjective matter. Therefore, to ensure objectivity and prior to any further actions being taken, incidents of inappropriate behaviour will be discussed with a member of the senior management team.

Any person, be they staff, visitor or service user, who encounters unreasonable behaviour will be fully supported by senior management.

## Violent or abusive behaviour

It is acknowledged that a small minority of patients may become abusive or violent towards staff at Dorridge Surgery, making it difficult for the healthcare team to provide services. This organisation has a [zero tolerance](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/10/BW999-our-plan-for-improving-access-and-supporting-general-practice-oct-21.pdf) towards such behaviour and is committed to reducing the risk to staff and other patients resulting from such behaviour.

NHS England classifies violent or abusive behaviour as:

* Any incident in which “an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work” ([HSE 1996](https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf))

* The intentional application of force to the person of another, without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort
* The use of inappropriate or discriminatory words or behaviour causing distress and/or constituting harassment
* Behaviour that is hostile, destructive and/or violent

Classifications for assault are as follows:

* Physical assault is the intentional application of force to the person of another, without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort
* Non-physical assault is deemed to be the use of inappropriate or discriminatory words or behaviour causing distress and/or constituting harassment

Dorridge Surgery may respond to the above situations in one or more of the following ways

* **Speaking to the patient**
* **Writing to the patient**
* **Behaviour agreement**
* **Removal from the organisation**

Please could we ask that you treat our staff with kindness and respect going forward. They are doing their best to help you in spite of working within the ongoing severe constraints in the NHS that are well publicised. We all recognise the importance of a respectful relationship and hope we can work together well moving forward