

# Zero Tolerance Policy

June 2025

## Contents

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Contents .....	2
1. Introduction .....	3
2. Expectations of behaviour .....	3
3. Examples of unacceptable behaviour .....	3
4. Reporting abusive behaviour .....	4
5. Our response to abusive behaviour .....	5
6. Other documents and resources .....	5

## **1. Introduction**

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- 1.1 Bury Council is committed to ensuring that those working for us (including employees, contractors and volunteers) and our elected members are able to carry out their duties and work in an environment which is free of violence, harassment, and abuse.
- 1.2 This zero-tolerance abuse policy will outline our expectations for interactions between our employees, elected members and members of the public. The policy is not intended to stifle democratic debate or public interaction with the Council but to ensure that interactions with and between our employees, elected members and members of the public are respectful.
- 1.3 Any allegations that our employees or elected members have failed to comply with the provisions of the policy will be considered under our relevant procedures.

## **2. Expectations of behaviour**

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- 2.1 The safety of our employees, those working on our behalf and elected members should never be compromised.
- 2.2 We expect our employees, elected members and members of the public to engage in an appropriate manner with one another and in one which underpins mutual courtesy and respect.
- 2.3 Any incident where an employee or an elected member is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work or their elected duties, is unacceptable, will not be tolerated and will normally be reported to appropriate authorities.

## **3. Examples of unacceptable behaviour**

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- 3.1 Abusive behaviour can take place in person, but it can also occur over the telephone, via written communication or via technology such as social media and email. Aggressive or abusive behaviour includes verbal and physical abuse.
- 3.2 The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples of abusive behaviour (which may amount to a criminal offence) that will not be tolerated:
  - Physical violence
  - Verbal abuse
  - Cyber aggression/cyber bullying
  - Attack or damage to property or belongings

- Hostile or aggressive behaviour
- Abuse related to an actual or perceived equality characteristic
- Distribution of misinformation
- Being stalked, followed, or loitered around
- Sexual harassment or sexual assault
- Discriminatory abuse
- Threats, threatening behaviour or intimidation
- Bullying or harassment
- Malicious allegations
- Animal attack

## 4. Reporting abusive behaviour

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- 4.1 When abusive behaviour occurs, we would encourage all employees and elected members to disengage with the perpetrator(s). Where there is any immediate danger, we would encourage that the Police are contacted by calling 999 in the first instance.
- 4.2 Any employee who receives any abuse should report this to their immediate manager and our corporate health and safety team via our [online incident report form](#) in the first instance so that advice can be provided on the appropriate action. If you are an employee and you feel you are unable to, or that you do not feel it is appropriate to raise your concerns with your immediate manager, you should speak to your HR Business Partner. In the most serious cases, it may also be appropriate for incidents of abuse to be reported to the Director of Legal & Democratic Services to consider whether there is any legal action that the Council can take in response to the abuse and if it is necessary and proportionate and in the public interest to do so.
- 4.3 Elected members can report any abuse or incidents of concern even if they consider them to be 'minor' to the Head of Governance, who will log a report on the [online incident report form](#). This enables us to keep a record of the incident, undertake appropriate monitoring and recommend any further advice and guidance as appropriate. Contact with the police will be made if necessary and individual risk assessments undertaken where appropriate.
- 4.4 Employees and elected members are encouraged to keep their own record of any abuse. Emails, social media posts or letters should be copied, screen shot or saved. Where a telephone call or face-to-face discussion has taken place, a written note of the exchange should be prepared as soon as possible after the incident or recorded.
- 4.5 Where abuse is serious but not serious enough to warrant a 999 call, it may be appropriate for the incident(s) to be reported to the Police by calling 101. Even where the Police decide to take no action, having the incident(s) logged may be used in evidence to demonstrate a pattern of behaviour.

## 5. Our response to abusive behaviour

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- 5.1 Where abusive behaviour has occurred, action will be taken by the Council to stop or prevent the unacceptable behaviour.
- 5.2 Actions may be taken against the perpetrator(s) which could include, but are not limited to:
- Being asked to leave and/ or be removed from Council buildings or events.
  - Being limited to specific channels for communicating with us
  - Being banned from attending Council premises
  - Have services withdrawn
  - Reporting the incident and perpetrator(s) to the Police.
  - Civil proceedings (e.g. applying for an injunction)
- 5.3 We recognise that abusive behaviour can have a serious impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing. A wide range of wellbeing support is therefore available for our elected members and employees, including our [Employee Assistance Programme](#) and [counselling service](#).

## 6. Other documents and resources

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- Zero tolerance poster for display in public buildings
- [Councillors' Code of Conduct](#)
- [Employees' Code of Conduct](#)
- [Work Related Violence and Aggression Guidance](#)
- [Working Alone in Safety Guidance](#)

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