



Health and Safety Policy

Reviewed on June 10th 2025 - J Monk

General Statement

The Hastings & Rother YMCA (The Y Centre) accepts responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health and safety of their employees while in the Association premises or on Association business.

To this end the The Y Centre will:

1. Provide so far as is reasonably practicable a working environment, equipment and systems of work which are free from hazard and without risk of health.
2. Make arrangements for ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable, safety and absence of risk to health in handling and storing articles and substances.
3. Provide such training and instructions, information and supervision, as is necessary to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable and health and safety at work of their employees.
4. Ensure that the premises under the Association's control are maintained so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risk to health and with adequate access and egress.
5. Make adequate arrangements so far as reasonably practicable for facilities and arrangements for employees' welfare at work.
6. Provide and maintain so far as reasonably practicable arrangements for the emergency evacuation of premises under their control in case of fire or other emergency.

Responsibilities

Overall and final responsibility for health and safety in The Y Centre is that of the Board of Management.

The day-to-day responsibility is that of the Manager and Health & Safety Adviser. The name of The Y Centre's Health and Safety Adviser is shown on the staff notice board.

All staff and volunteers and staff engaged in the activities The Y Centre must be aware of their individual responsibility:

- to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and of the health and safety of their fellow employees who may be affected by their acts and omissions.
- to co-operate with the senior staff in carrying out any duty or requirement imposed upon them under the Act.
- not to interfere intentionally or recklessly with, or misuse anything provided in the interest of their health or welfare.
- to notify a member of management or the Health and Safety Adviser straightaway if they notice a health and safety problem.

Staff render themselves liable to disciplinary action if they fail to adhere to the above policy or to health and safety general arrangements and instructions which can be found on the staff notice board and in the Staff Handbook available in the Reception Office.

Policy on Personal Safety

The Y Centre does not accept violence and believes that staff and volunteers should not accept it as being part of their work. The Y Centre does not expect staff or volunteers to put themselves at risk whilst at work. The Y Centre recognises its responsibilities for the safety of its staff and volunteers and for the provision of a safe workplace and a safe system of working.

The Y Centre will make every effort to take steps to ensure that the work environment is made as safe as possible, to minimise the risk of violence and will undertake to make available to staff and volunteers any relevant preventative aids or practical help. The Y Centre also puts responsibility, where appropriate, on staff and volunteers to take steps to ensure their own safety.

Lone Working

Occasionally staff members will find themselves as a lone worker in the building. At these times it is important to have the portable work phone with you at all times and if no activities are taking place in the sports hall or green room then the gallery door should be kept locked. As soon as the building is empty lock the main doors before doing the final building checks and close down.

Personal Safety Guidelines

(Where the word "staff" is used, it should be read as staff and volunteers)

A waiting client should be made to feel that, however busy the office or the person they want to see may be, he/she is an important person at that time. A few minutes of sympathetic listening by the receptionist or worker, and clear and informative answers to questions at this time, can reduce tension and prevent aggression.

The positioning of the furniture should, wherever possible, be such that the member of staff can easily make a quick exit should it be necessary. Nothing which can be used as a weapon or missile e.g. a heavy ashtray, should be left in reception areas or interview rooms.

The Y Centre has a system of summoning assistance or raising an alarm should it be required. Every member of staff and all volunteers should ensure that they know the system, how it works and what they should do should an incident occur.

As a general rule staff are encouraged to report whenever they go off-site and when they return.

Serious Incidents

When an assault on a member of staff occurs, it must be reported immediately to the victim's line manager.

Following any incident, the immediate concern is the well-being of the victim and the provision of any necessary medical treatment. Where medical treatment is necessary, a written medical report should be obtained.

Other Incidents

Where threats or abuse do not fall into the above "Serious" category, it remains important that the matter is reported and the victim is seen by his/her line manager for an immediate debriefing.

In cases of verbal abuse, these should be recorded, but not under the Serious Incident Procedure, unless the victim feels that the verbal abuse directed at his/her is excessive or concentrated.

Referral to the Police

All members of staff and volunteers have rights as citizens to make complaints to the Police following assaults and threats.

The provision of counseling

Following all incidents of violence all staff involved should be debriefed by their line manager.

This is intended to:

- Support and comfort those involved.
- To learn from the experience
- To develop any changes to existing procedures or guidelines.
- To decide if any further action is required.

Training

Staff and volunteers will be trained, as necessary, to recognise potentially violent situations, to identify signs in individuals who are likely to be violent, how to cope when violence seems probable and in the use of physical restraint. It is also important that, in responding to violence, staff have an understanding of their legal position.

Appendix 4 is an aide memoire for staff when confronting violence and aggression - a simple code of practice in all situations. It also gives details of the legal position.

Appendix 4 - indicators of violence, responding to violence and aggression, use of restraint and the legal position

Not all violence can be predicted, but there are some things which can act as warning signs:

- people with a history of violence.
- mental health cases.
- people abusing drugs, alcohol or solvents.
- the presence of a dog.
- frustration and anxiety resulting perhaps from feelings of abandonment by relatives; loss of responsibility for own actions.
- the use of aggression, especially among children and young people, as a conditioned response to refusal of demands.
- peer group pressure, scapegoating of individuals by a group.
- testing out staff.

Signs in Individuals to be looked for:

- threat of violence or abusive language may be an indicator of potential physical violence and must be taken seriously.
- restless behaviour involving pushing, noisiness, jostling.
- deliberately provocative behaviour (name calling etc.).
- someone being unnaturally quiet and withdrawn or alternatively excitable and boisterous (a noticeable behavioural change from the norm).
- attention seeking conduct if ignored.
- over sensitive reaction to correction or instruction.
- change in voice pitch or volume.
- dilating pupils, changes in complexion and signs of muscular tension in the face and limbs.

What to do when violence seems probable.

Withdraw from the situation immediately if able to do so.

Call for assistance if the situation is getting out of hand, either verbally or by an agreed warning system.

Sit or stand between the person and the door - to allow a quick exit if needed.

Ensure that there are no items available to be thrown or used as weapons e.g. heavy object etc.

Consider adjusting clothing to avoid it being a danger e.g. remove tie etc.

Sit or stand in a way that will be least threatening to the person.

Responding to violence & aggression - simple guidelines

What could help:

1. Moving confidently - avoiding sudden movements.
2. Simple clear statements.
3. Voice - quiet, firm, assured.
4. Reducing your threat by sitting down or giving the person space.
5. Talking despite the client apparently not listening.
6. Re-assuring, offering comfort and security, physically staying with the person.
7. Trying to maintain eye contact.

What could make things worse:

1. Running (apart from situations where there is a clear need for retreat - see 'Legal Position' paragraph)
2. Using complex garbled statements.
3. Voice - shouting, loud.
4. Standing too close, crowding or cornering.
5. Speaking quickly using a high pitched or excited tone.
6. Threatening or attempting to reason by bombarding with questions or statements
7. Avoiding or prolonging eye contact.

Use of Physical Restraint

The use of physical restraint should only be used as a last resort in extreme circumstances, where staff or other users are at risk of damage. If the violence is directed at property, it is a matter of judgment as to whether restraint should be used, but it should only be considered if the damage is significant. If an attempt to control violence to property would place any person at risk, then the attempt should not be made.

If used, physical restraint should involve the minimum possible amount of force, and should seek to avoid injury to the person. He/she should be held in such a way as to avoid any interference with breathing or primary blood flow, or contact with sexual areas. If it proves necessary to restrain the person's arms or legs, he/she should be held above or below the main joints. This should increase control and reduce the likelihood of injury.

Restraint should be used for the minimum possible period of time sufficient to regain control of the situation, or for the person to regain control of themselves and should be undertaken by no less than two people wherever possible. Throughout the period of restraint, calm reassurance should be given. As soon as sufficient help arrives, relax the hold and attempt to gain control by talking rather than through physical means.

If involved in a youth activity when a child/young person tries to run away from the group and/or supervisors, then a judgment will need to be made as to the level of risk the child is placing him/herself in. This would be based on the age, the abilities, whether or not he/she is a special needs case or especially vulnerable. Unless there are special concerns, then restraint should not be used, and the child/young person's absence should be reported to the police and to his/her parents. This way of responding should be explained to parents prior to the activity.

Legal Position

In responding to violence, it is necessary for staff to be aware of their legal position.

Violence occasionally occurs very suddenly, without the opportunity to call for Police assistance. The use of physical restraint to repel violence is, in law, perfectly acceptable, subject to the qualification that the restraint must only entail reasonable force. (This means sufficient force to stop the attacker or prevent injury to yourself or others. It should be not greater.) Courts will expect you to retreat whenever possible and, if the choice is between hitting your attacker or running away, you should run away.

There are likely to be very few occasions when the only way you can protect yourself is by harming the attacker but, if this is necessary, "self-defense" is a defense at law.

Education - Excluded from School

It is the policy of The Y Centre to help and assist statutory agencies in returning children and young people excluded from school to mainstream education at the earliest possible time. This policy extends to helping and assisting statutory agencies in keeping children and young people in full time education.

The Y Centre works with statutory agencies to provide resources for those excluded from full time education or those who need support at schools where their attendance causes concern or conduct becomes unacceptable.

Help and Assistance to Statutory Agencies to support children and young people

The Y Centre's aim is to assist schools and support children and young people by providing projects that have as one of their main goals the participation of children and young people in mainstream education. In applying this The Y Centre organises projects that have as their main aim the return/keeping of children and young people to/in mainstream education. The provision of ongoing support is embedded in each project.

The Y Centre in its approach to its work with children and young people promote a healthy and productive lifestyle as means to equip them for their transition to adult life.

Nominated Health & Safety Officer for Hastings & Rother YMCA as at 10.06.2024 is:

Kim Francis

Supported by Chair Judith Monk

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Next review 10.06.26

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