

**JOINT STATEMENT: ZERO TOLERANCE**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to propose a joint statement is released to demonstrate both Council and Joint Trades Unions support a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, including verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment, or physical violence directed towards our employees. This proposal comes in the context of increasing reported incidents nationally. COSLA issued a national statement in September 2025 in response to increasing national concern. This statement shows a continued local commitment to ensuring our staff can carry out their duties safely without fear of aggression.
- 1.2 The Employee Joint Consultative Committee approved the joint statement contained at Appendix One on 20 February 2026.
- 1.3 It is recommended that Council -
- a. Note the national situation and the importance of making our position clear on how we expect our staff to be treated while they are delivering essential public services.
  - b. Approve the joint statement at Appendix One.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty of care to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and wellbeing of its employees. This includes protecting staff from violence, threats, and abuse in the course of their work.
- 2.2 The purpose of this report is to present a joint Zero Tolerance Statement, co-developed between Argyll and Bute Council and the recognised Joint Trades Unions, for Council approval.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Council -
- a. Note the national situation and the importance of making our position clear on how we expect our staff to be treated while they are delivering essential public services.
  - b. Approve the joint statement at Appendix One.

**4.0 DETAIL**

- 4.1 Incidents of aggression towards staff—verbal or physical—have become more prevalent across the public sector.
- 4.2 In September 2025, COSLA issued a national statement condemning such behaviour and emphasising employer responsibilities.
- 4.3 The proposed Statement sets out a clear message that abuse will not be tolerated.
- 4.4 The statement reinforces existing policies and reporting processes.
- 4.5 Once approved, the statement will be circulated:
- Circulated via internal communications
  - Displayed in relevant customer facing environments

- Shared through external communication channels where appropriate
- Embedded within induction and training materials

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Ensuring employee safety and wellbeing is a core priority for the Council and supports delivery of the “Providing a positive employee experience” outcome detailed in the Council’s People Strategy. The proposed Joint Statement provides a unified message of support clarity and expectation for staff and service users.
- 5.2 Approval of the Joint Statement will strengthen the Council’s stance and support proactive measures to prevent and respond to incidents of aggression.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy: Supports and reinforces Health and Safety and Dignity at Work policies.
- 6.2 Financial: Minimal costs associated with printing which can be accommodated within existing revenue budget.
- 6.3 Legal: supports delivery of legal duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated legislation.
- 6.4 HR: Promotes positive employee relations and supports employee wellbeing.
- 6.5 Customer Service: Sets clear expectations for behaviour in public service interactions.
- 6.6 Risk: Reduces risk of harm to employees by strengthening preventative approaches.
- 6.7 Climate Change: No direct impact.
- 6.8 Fairer Scotland Duty: Supports fair treatment for staff across all services.
- 6.9 Equalities - protected characteristics: Provides assurance for all employees, including those with protected characteristics who may be disproportionately impacted by abuse.
- 6.10 Consumer Duty: Clarifies expectations for customer behaviour.
- 6.11 Island Communities: Ensures a consistent message across all geographical areas.

6.12 Children's Rights and Wellbeing: In the context of those working with children and young people this statement aims to balance the rights and wellbeing of young people with the rights and wellbeing of Council employees.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Draft Joint Statement: Zero Tolerance

## **Appendix One: Draft Joint Statement: Zero Tolerance**

### **Zero Tolerance Statement on abuse towards council workers**

Argyll and Bute Council employees deliver services that local communities depend upon every day. Our employees have the right to do that safely, and without fear of aggression.

Argyll and Bute Council has a **zero tolerance approach** to abuse, including verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment, or physical violence directed towards our employees. Such behaviour is unacceptable in any circumstance and will not be tolerated.

Anyone who engages in abusive or aggressive conduct towards council staff may be asked to leave council premises, refused service, or have their access to council officers restricted. Where required, incidents will be reported to the police and legal action may be taken.

Our employees and the services they deliver are key to life in Argyll and Bute. We ask all members of the public to treat our staff with courtesy and respect, for everyone's benefit.