**MANAGING POTENTIAL AGGRESSION POLICY**

**Introduction**

Diverse Leap recognises that some of the people with whom we come into contact will be experiencing poor mental wellbeing and that this may, on occasion, result in aggressive behaviour towards volunteers. This policy covers Diverse Leap’s approach to decision making in the event of conflict or aggression and applies to all volunteers, including trustees, and should be read in conjunction with the Diverse Leap Safeguarding Policy.

**Guiding Principles of De-escalation**

The overriding principle, when faced with aggression, is to apply de-escalation techniques using the least restrictive method and certainly without the application of physical force unless this is essential to preserve life or prevent serious injury.

The essential goal of de-escalation is to prevent escalation to the crises phase by emulating a calm, respectful and safe environment. This approach is two-fold meaning that volunteers are responsible for recognising signs of escalating aggression and for approaching any conflict scenario calmly and appropriately. The strategies outlined below are gleaned from various sources; further information is available from the Reference List at the end of this policy document.

**Recognising Aggression**

It is important to be vigilant and aware of the body language in the environment to help indicate that a situation may be escalating. Some signs could be clearly linked to evolving aggressive behaviour or challenging to identify early. Recognising aggression could be a combination of physical changes including sweating, clenched teeth and jaws, shaking, staring, rise in tone of voice or behavioural changes including shouting, pointing, swearing, oversensitivity to or difficulty in concentrating on topic and an invasion of personal space.

**De-escalation Strategies**

If a volunteer finds himself or herself in a situation that could potentially lead to aggression, the following verbal and non-verbal strategies can be applied (see Figure 1). Remaining calm, professional and rational at all times is key. It is essential to use other volunteers present as a resource to safeguard both volunteers and attendees. Under no circumstance should volunteers use any physical restraint technique, as this requires formal intensive training by a qualified instructor.

It is important to ensure that volunteers and attendees always feel and are safe. If a volunteer finds that the warning signs are imminent, and that safety or the discussion will be compromised, a decision should be carefully made by the facilitator or lead volunteer about the next course of action. This could take the form of ending the session earlier to avoid potential safeguarding issues. Discretion is important in these instances.

Figure 1. Crisis Prevention Institute - De-escalation strategies[[1]](#footnote-1)

Any facilitator or volunteer who has been involved in a Diverse Leap event which has required the implementation of a de-escalation strategy is required to inform one of the nominated points of contact within the charity. Following an event, a full debrief should occur between all volunteers in order to dissect and reflect on the experience, source any further training and consider the structure of future group meetings. If appropriate, the aggressor should have the opportunity to reflect on the event with the Founder or Designated Safeguarding Lead and consider whether professional support is required. In these cases, signposting to services i.e., their GP, The Samaritans, Mind) could provide the additional support needed. Volunteers should not offer any formal counselling, advice or therapy under any circumstances.

**Points of Contact for Reporting an Event**

Any volunteer needing to report an event of aggression, conflict or requiring support should please contact Tara Leyshon (Founder) on 07553 080875. If the Founder cannot be reached, please contact Richard Castle (Designated Safeguarding Lead) on 07939 33295.

If the situation escalates beyond your control, please contact the Police (999) immediately.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees**

**28 January 2022**

1. [​Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI Training)](https://www.crisisprevention.com/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)