

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 021693
Date 16 February 2016

Safety of Social Workers and of Service Users

Request:


The aim of the research is to examine how the profession of social work is affected by work-related violence and if there is a need to change current policy context, legislation, procedures or practice.

One of the research questions is:

1. What is recent protection (legislation, recent policy context, practice and procedures) from work-related violence for social workers in the UK?
[Our in-house Learning Hub provides modules on 'Lone Working' and Personal Safety' which is a compulsory requirement for all staff to complete.](#)

To answer my research question I would like to kindly ask you to answer following two questions:

2. Which policy(ies) related to a prevention of Social work staff (children and adult service) from service user's violence do you have. If possible, please send your policy(ies) via e-mail as an attachment or please provide link to the online version of policy(ies)
[See below.](#)
3. Which training related to prevention, reduce and/or dealing with work-related violence against Social Workers was available for staff (children and adult service) within last 12 months.
[Please see link below:
<http://www.crisisprevention.com/en-uk/Specialties/MAPA-Management-of-Actual-or-Potential-Aggressio>](#)

HEALTH & SAFETY ARRANGEMENTS		Wolverhampton City Council 	
Safety Health & Wellbeing			
Lone Working	Issue:		1.1
	Date:		March 2015
	No of Pages:	5	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this document is to set guidance for the safety of lone workers, as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

2.0 ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibility
Manager	<i>the designated manager shall:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that risk assessments consider the impact of hazards upon lone workers and identify tasks that cannot be done alone • Provide all lone workers with communication methods to stay in touch with colleagues • Maintain arrangements to monitor lone workers throughout the shift • Provide information and instruction to employees about lone working arrangements
Employee	<i>the designated employee shall:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in the risk assessment process and provide accurate and honest feedback • Co-operate with all systems put in place to manage lone working, including keeping accurate and up to date diaries, and using the Alertcom device where issued • Inform their line manager of any issues that may affect their safety or wellbeing • Report all incidents of violence or aggression that they suffer

3.0 ARRANGEMENTS FOR HEALTH & SAFETY

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

Wolverhampton City Council (the employer) must comply with the following regulations in respect of risk assessment and risk management:

Risk Assessment (Regulation 3)

Make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of:

- (a) employees whilst they are at work; and
- (b) others not employed by WCC who may be affected by the work activities of the Council.

4.0 RISK ASSESSMENTS

Risk assessments should consider the impact and severity of hazards upon lone workers and identify tasks that cannot be completed safely alone.

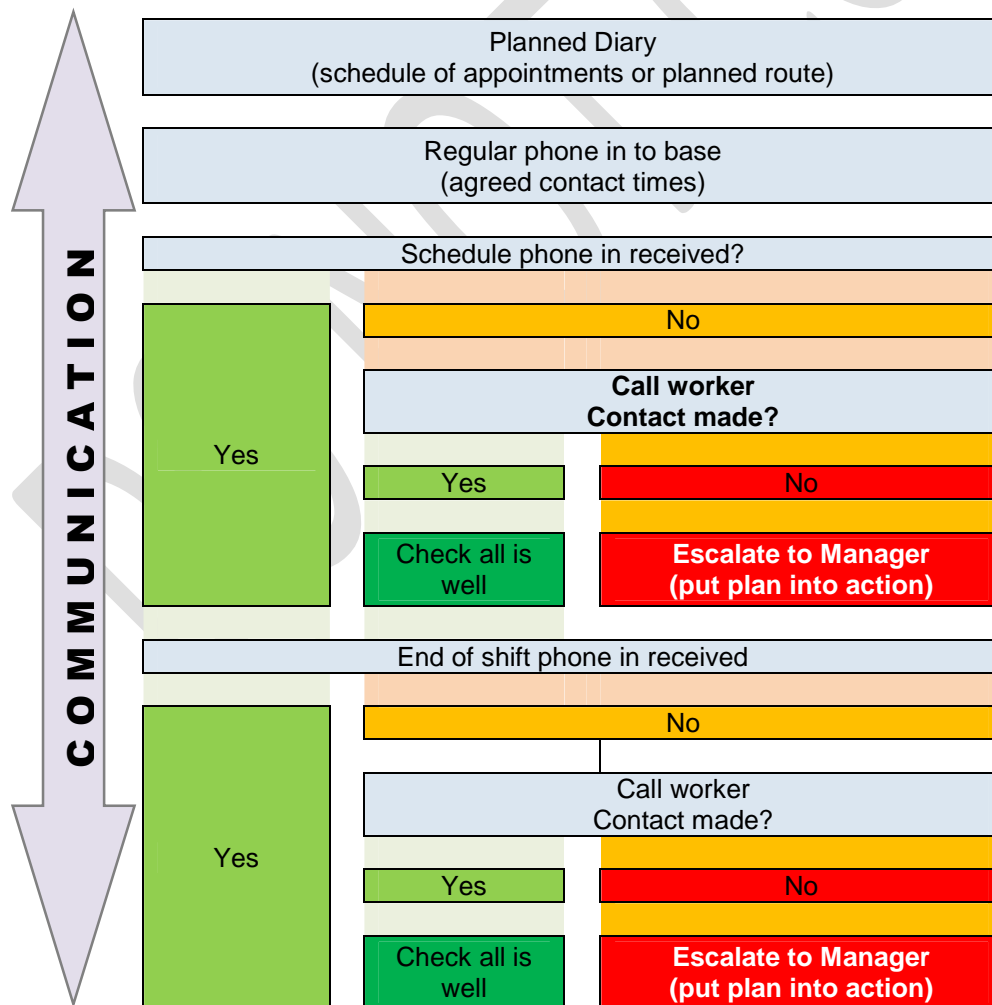
Where employees work alone regularly, the manager will ensure that a lone working risk assessment for the business/service area is carried out and create appropriate systems to ensure the continued safety of employees.

5.0 CONTROLS AVAILABLE

Managers will ensure that employees maintain up to date and accurate diaries so that their whereabouts are known, and they can be contacted when away from an office.

Managers will ensure that employees who work remotely have access to communication devices, and emergency contacts are available if required. A system to locate employees when in the field, e.g. scheduled phone contact, should be used where there is prolonged lone working.

Example system



Service areas that operate a Potentially Violent Person Register (PVPR) record acts of aggression or violence by known persons. Events are inputted onto the register which can then be interrogated by employees before visiting in the community, and take appropriate action where potential for violence exists.

To help safeguard employees who work alone, Wolverhampton City Council has contracted National Monitoring to provide a lone working management system (Alertcom).

The Alertcom GPS Device and Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) are accredited with all relevant security and British Standards by the National Security Service. The device incorporates GPS tracking and an SOS facility which when activated allows trained Alertcom ARC operators to actively listen-in and assess the situation in real time. An appropriate level of response is deployed by them (i.e. Police, Wolverhampton City Council etc.)

High risk employees as identified through a risk assessment will be issued with a device and instruction upon its use.

6.0 INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Information relevant to Lone Working can be found at:


- Information relevant to Alertcom Device can be found at: <http://hrintranet/mgr/Pages/Safety-Health-and-Wellbeing.aspx>
- Lone worker risk assessment aid-memoire can be found at: <http://hrintranet/mgr/Pages/Policy-Procedures-and-Forms.aspx>
- Further information relevant to lone working can be found on HSE web-site <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

The following provides practical guidance for lone workers:

Practical Guidance for Lone Working Assessment	
Where might Lone Working take place?	Assessment of risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An employee working alone in a small workshop, hub, or shop • Employees who work from home other than in low-risk, office-type work (separate guidance covers homeworkers doing low-risk work) • Employees working alone for long periods, e.g. in leisure centres, schools • Employees working alone in interview rooms, away from their normal desks • Employees working on their own outside normal hours, e.g. cleaners, security, maintenance or repair • Workers involved in construction, maintenance and repair, plant installation and cleaning work • Grounds maintenance workers • Social workers, lawyers, inspectors, licensing, out-of-hours officers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve employees when considering potential risks and measures to control them • Take steps to ensure risks are removed where possible, or put in place control measures, e.g. carefully selecting work equipment to ensure the employee is able to perform the required tasks in safety • Instruction, training and supervision • Review risk assessments periodically or when there has been a significant change in working practice • Be aware that some tasks may be too difficult or dangerous to be carried out by a lone worker • When a risk assessment shows it is not possible for the work to be conducted safely by a lone worker, provide suitable control measures
Where is Lone Working not appropriate	Specific Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in a confined space, where a supervisor may need to be present, along with someone dedicated to the rescue role • Working at or near exposed live electricity conductors • Working in health and social care dealing with unpredictable client behaviour and situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the workplace present a specific risk to the lone worker, for example due to temporary access equipment, such as portable ladders or trestles one person would have difficulty handling? • Is there a safe way in and out for one person, e.g. for a lone person working out of hours where the workplace could be locked up? • Is there machinery involved in the work that one person cannot operate safely? • Are chemicals or hazardous substances being used that may pose a particular risk to the lone worker? • Does the work involve lifting objects too large for one person? • Is there a significant risk of violence and/or aggression? • Are there any reasons why the individual might be more vulnerable than others and be particularly at risk if they work alone (e.g. young, pregnant, disabled or a trainee)? • If the lone worker's first language is not English, are suitable arrangements in place to ensure clear communications, especially in an emergency?
Monitoring	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers periodically review health and safety arrangements of employees working alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in

Practical Guidance for Lone Working Assessment

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-agreed intervals of regular contact between the lone worker and manager, using phones, radios or email, bearing in mind the worker's understanding of English;• Manually operated or automatic warning devices which trigger if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker, e.g. employee security systems• Implementing robust system to ensure a lone worker has returned to their base or home once their task is completed. | <p>uncertain situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training is also crucial in enabling employee to cope in unexpected circumstances and with potential exposure to violence and aggression• Ensure employees are competent to deal with the requirements of the job and are able to recognise when to seek advice from elsewhere |
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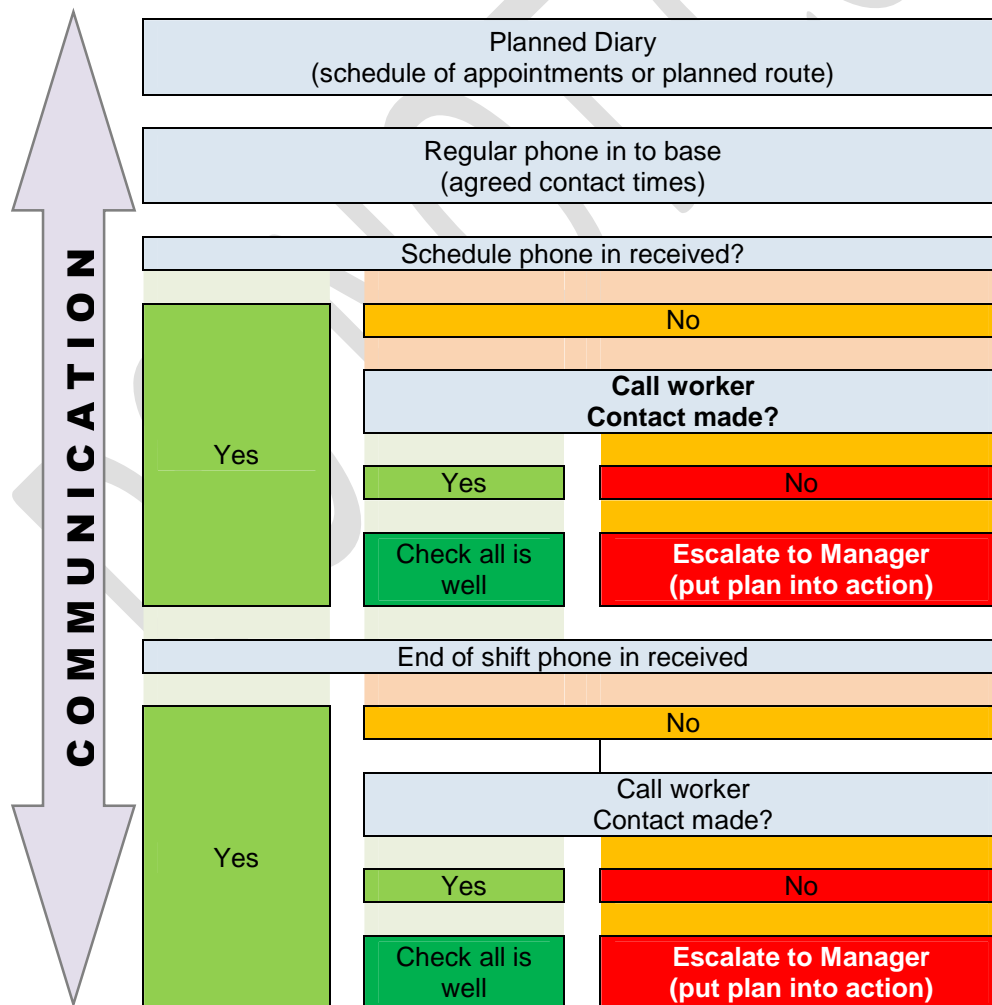
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AGGRESSION

Purpose

This Guidance Note provides general guidance on aggression and explains the corporate procedures in respect of Aggression at Work. It also includes notes to assist you in reporting any incident using the combined 'Accident & Aggression Report' form (IR1) (appendix 1).

This guidance should be read in conjunction with CSU Procedural Note #2 Risk Assessment, Procedural Note #1 Accident Notification and Guidance Note #10 Lone Working.

Please note: whilst some of the guidance has general applicability, the requirement to report aggressive incidents relates only to aggression directed towards staff by members of the public (including clients, service users, pupils, etc.) All other forms of aggression, for example, between staff, are covered by other Council and or departmental procedures.

General Introduction

Wolverhampton City Council is not prepared to tolerate:

- Verbal or physical harassment of its employees, including racial or sexual harassment, or harassment on the grounds of disability;
- Physical assault upon employees by clients or other members of the public, either during or outside working hours, which are as a direct result of their employment by the Authority;
- Attacks on, or damage to, the property of employees of the Authority that result from carrying out their duties and in the course of their employment.

Background

Wolverhampton City Council as an employer has a duty of care to provide safe working conditions and systems of work for all employees. It also has a duty to assess risks in the workplace and ensure that suitable controls are in place to minimise them; this would include the risk from reasonably foreseeable violence to staff.

Legislation

The following legislation is particularly relevant to aggression at work:

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

We have a duty under the Act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of our employees whilst at work.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The main requirement for carrying out risk assessment is set out in the Management of Health & Safety Regulations. These regulations require employers to assess risk and

ensure that effective arrangements are in place to protect employees from harm. Risks covered should include protecting employees from exposure to reasonably foreseeable violence.

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)

The (RIDDOR) Regulations require employers to notify their enforcing authority (which in our case is the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)) of any accidents at work to any employee that result in death, major injury or incapacity from normal work for three or more consecutive days. The definition of accident includes any act of non-consensual physical violence done to a person at work (see also CSU Procedural Note #1 Accident Notification).

What is Aggression at Work?

The Health and Safety Executive's definition of work-related violence is:

'any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work'.

Wolverhampton City Council classes a wide range of behaviour as aggression, including:

- Verbal aggression, e.g., shouting and swearing,
- Violence against objects, e.g., banging on desks or overturning chairs
- Written aggression and/or obscenities
- Aggressive and/or malicious telephone calls
- Threats of violence, both verbal and via menacing looks and gestures,
- Any behaviour that feels like bullying or intimidation,
- Pushing, poking or manhandling of staff in any way,
- Punching, slapping, kicking, etc.,
- Interference with staff belongings, e.g., damage to cars,
- Violence with any weapon,
- Animals used as threatening weapons,
- Sex-related aggression and violence,
- Racist language, taunts etc
- **Any act an employee feels to be abusive** - Note: a key factor is **how the incident affects the member of staff** (regardless of injury being sustained or physical violence being involved); an experienced member of staff may react differently to a new or junior member of the team, however, that should not mean the incident is not treated seriously.

Possible Impact

Physical attacks are obviously dangerous, but serious or persistent verbal abuse can be a significant problem too, as it can cause damage to employees' health through anxiety and stress. Both can represent a real financial cost - through low staff morale, increased absenteeism and high staff turnover. Further costs may arise from compensation payments and increased insurance premiums.

Assessing the Risk

Managers can influence and reduce the likelihood of violence and aggression in the workplace by ensuring that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are in place for all work activities that have the potential for violence and aggression.

The risk assessment does not need to be overly complicated but should involve checking hazards associated with the work. These could include issues such as room layouts (especially for interview rooms) along with working practices and procedures, e.g. arrangements for off-site visits.

Wolverhampton City Council bases its approach to managing risk on the best practice principles set out by the HSE in its 'Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 - Approved Code of Practice' and the guidance leaflet - 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment':

Step 1 - Find out if there is a problem, and identify hazards

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

Step 3 - Evaluate the risk by:

- Identifying what action you are already taking
- Deciding whether it is enough
- If it is not, deciding what more you need to do

Step 4 - Record the significant findings of assessments, and

Step 5 - Review the assessment at appropriate intervals

Step 1 – Find out if there is a problem, and identify hazards

The first step in risk assessment is to identify the hazards. With regard to violence and aggression, you may find it useful to think in terms of:

- **Tasks** - What tasks do staff undertake that are likely to upset or annoy people? Can delays or long waiting times lead to client frustration?
- **People** - Do staff work with individuals or groups whose behaviour may, on occasion, be unpredictable or unreasonable?
- **Places** - Are some of the places where staff members work inherently unsafe? Do staff work alone or away from their main base, where support may be limited? Does some of the work involve staff visiting people in their homes or business premises?
- **Times** - Are there times of the day when staff are more at risk?

Check Incident Reports

Individual incident report forms can be used to identify specific problems. In addition, incident statistics can be used to identify trends and more general issues that need to be addressed.

Ask your staff

When deciding if there is a potential problem, it is important to seek the views of staff, particularly those who deal with members of the public; they may have experienced violent incidents or situations with the potential to turn nasty. Don't just rely on reports of aggressive incidents. Not all incidents are reported and talking to staff can help to establish the true extent of any problem. It can also be an opportunity to stress the importance of reporting all incidents of violence.

Step 2 – Decide Who Might be Harmed and How

Any member of staff whose job requires them to deal with the public can be at risk from violence. Some of those most at risk are engaged in:

- Providing a service
- Providing care
- Education
- Handling money
- Security
- Inspection and enforcement
- Delivering unwelcome news

In addition, certain situations may further increase the risk of aggression:

- Dealing with people who are stressed or frustrated (possibly by the decisions we make)
- Dealing with people affected by alcohol or drugs
- Having to challenge members of the public
- Working alone, e.g., on home visits
- Working unsociable hours
- Poor communication

Often it is a combination of factors, rather than a single cause, that results in aggressive behaviour; think about the tasks, the people we deal with, the places and times we interact with them and also how our staff, as individuals (their attitudes, temperaments, experience and training), deal with them.

Remember new staff may be at greater risk because of inexperience or not knowing what to do in difficult circumstances.

Step 3 – Evaluate the Risk

If you find you have a problem you will need to evaluate the risk; to do this, look at each of the hazards identified and consider how likely it is that they could lead to violence and aggression. This will determine whether or not you need to do more to reduce the risk

further, e.g., by redesigning interview rooms, installing protective screens at counters, working in pairs, etc.

Consider if existing precautions are adequate. For example, have you provided:

- Adequate information, instruction and training?
- Safe systems or procedures?

If you identify that further action is needed you should ask:

- Can you **eliminate the hazard** altogether?
- If not, how can you **control the risks** so that harm is unlikely?

Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains. You will need to decide whether this remaining risk is **Low, Medium or High**.

Step 4 – Record the Significant Findings of the Assessment

You will need to record your risk assessments and must be able to demonstrate that you have complied with **Steps 1- 3 above**. This can be done using the council's general Risk Assessment Form (see CSU Procedural Note #2 Risk Assessment).

Once completed, staff must be made aware of all risk assessments that affect them.

Step 5 – Review the Assessment at Appropriate Intervals

All risk assessments should be reviewed periodically (e.g. annually) both to review their effectiveness and to ensure they remain valid.

To ensure assessments are effective, you should consult with those staff that the assessments are designed to protect. In addition, risk assessments must be revised periodically to take account of new or amended working procedures.

Assessment should also be reviewed following incidents to determine if the control measures in place are sufficient. Any changes made as a result of incidents should be noted on the outcome/action section of the incident report.

Preventing Violence

If violence and aggression is a problem, it is likely that the best solution will be a combination of measures rather than relying on a single 'fix'. For example, installing expensive security hardware, without reviewing outdated systems and procedures, is unlikely to be effective. It is important that any control measures put in place are appropriate, adequate for the task and cost-effective. Staff will also need to be made aware of them and trained where appropriate.

Factors Managers Can Influence

A number of factors should be looked at if managers are to effectively combat violence and aggression:

Information and Training

- Ensure that staff are made aware of any policies, procedures and risk assessments, and fully understand any systems that are put in place for their protection. This should be done at every opportunity e.g. induction, formal training sessions, team meetings, supervision sessions, etc
- Clearly indicate to the public that aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated e.g. via use of posters in reception areas, letters to customers, etc.
- Provide specific training for staff who deal with the general public. Training such as 'conflict resolution' or 'defusing techniques' is recommended and should include: recognising signals of aggression; how to behave non-confrontationally; the importance of good customer care; being polite and listening to clients. Wolverhampton City Council does not advocate 'self-defence' training as it conveys the wrong message, and can lead to an escalation, putting both the client/customer and staff member at greater risk of injury.
- Staff who deal with challenging clients may require more specialist training e.g., 'break-away', diffusion and de-escalation techniques, etc. This should be identified through risk assessment, and training must be provided via competent specialist trainers.
- Staff must be made aware of any information we have on potentially violent customers, premises or problem areas they may come into contact with. Note: systems for collating and/or sharing information on potentially violent customers must operate within current data protection regulation requirements.

Further information on training can be obtained from Corporate Training or via Service HR and/or Training Sections.

The Environment

- Are our premises and reception areas secure?
- Décor and lighting in public waiting areas should be welcoming and the areas themselves should be comfortable
- Ensure adequate queue management by using clear signage, and easy access routes. Customers should be made aware of any delays they are likely to face.
- Where possible, furniture in interview rooms should have a relaxed but safe layout. Try not to 'imprison' staff behind desks
- Consider moving chairs so that a more natural position is adopted (at an angle rather than face-to-face).
- Where desks are used as safety barriers, ensure that staff have unobstructed access to a suitable exit.
- Think about potential weapons that may be available, such as coffee mugs, staplers, etc.
- Plants can make reception areas look friendly; however, make sure they are in plastic, rather than ceramic, pots. Similarly, pictures can enhance an area, but avoid having glass in the frames
- Consider physical security measures such as CCTV, alarm systems and coded security doors. Install screens and wider counters, etc., in areas where staff are most at risk
- Provide bright lighting around buildings and remove possible cover for assailants' e.g. high hedges, overgrown shrubs, etc.

Job Design

- Wherever possible maintain staff numbers in the workplace so that lone working can be avoided
- Make arrangements for employees who work away from their base to keep in touch
- Ensure that employees' planned schedules are available and that staff leave details of any locations they will be visiting whilst away from their main workplace
- Check the credentials of clients when meeting away from the workplace
- Arrange for staff to be accompanied by a colleague when meeting potentially violent customers away from the office
- Bank money frequently, and vary the route taken to avoid the risk of robbery, alternatively contract the function out to a security company.
- Rotate high risk tasks so that the same person is not always at risk
- Provide additional staff for high risk mobile activities, and/or provide communication links back to base
- Consider providing personal alarms for high risk staff

Reporting Incidents

Managers must ensure that **all** incidents of violence and aggression are reported using the combined 'Accident & Aggression Report' form (IR1) (appendix 1). The reports must be submitted to CSU (usually via your HR or administration section) or directly to your health and safety officer as soon as possible. Notes to help you complete the form are reproduced at appendix 2.

Whilst staff will have differing tolerance levels to incidents, they should not be encouraged to view violence and aggression as an inevitable part of the job. Managers need to stress the importance of reporting incidents and must also be seen to be taking appropriate action to prevent or minimise the risk of further incidents. If staff see that action is being taken, they are more likely to report incidents.

Reporting incidents serves a number of purposes:

- Individual incidents are highlighted - managers are thus able to take appropriate remedial action and support staff as appropriate
- Spates of incidents can alert managers to 'hot-spots' which may require greater intervention than an individual incident
- In some circumstances, CSU or your health and safety officer may wish to be involved in the incident investigation - the reports ensure that incidents are brought to their attention
- Where staff suffer injury, the reports trigger, when appropriate, reporting under the RIDDOR Regulations
- Data from the reports is input onto a database, allowing the production of quarterly summary reports and annual statistics - see below.
- Copies of reports are vital for dealing with subsequent insurance claims.

Not reporting incidents causes a number of problems:

- Non-reporting of minor incidents can lead to a culture where incidents are ignored, rather than being acted upon. This can result in not spotting problems, and acting upon them, until they have escalated into major incidents

- Non-reporting also reflects directly on statistics; which can affect how senior managers, and others, perceive the extent of violence and aggression. This can have an adverse effect on setting priorities and allocating resources.
- If services are inconsistent in what they report, statistics become flawed. This can cause problems e.g. with analysis of trends, etc.

Quarterly and Annual Reports

All incidents are entered onto a database, which allows the production of quarterly summary reports and annual statistics

Quarterly Incident Summary

Each quarter, incident summary reports are presented to Service health & safety consultative groups and management teams detailing all the incidents of violence and aggression over the last three months. These are presented as summary reports rather than sets of statistics, since statistics over such short periods would have little validity and could be easily distorted by reporting blips. Reports are also made available to the Trade Unions for their input.

The narrative nature of the reports allows for two important checks. Firstly managers/supervisors should ensure that all incidents in their area of responsibility have been reported. Secondly, line managers should scrutinize the 'Notes' section against each incident to ensure that an appropriate investigation was carried out and suitable action was taken - the notes section contains a précis of what happened and more importantly what action was taken to prevent a recurrence. If no action was noted on the incident report this will be stated in the notes section and should prompt line managers to ask further questions.

Annual Statistics

In addition to the quarterly summaries, CSU produce an annual report highlighting statistical data on aggressive incidents. The report includes the following:

- The total numbers of violent & aggressive incidents reported to CSU, broken down by Service Group and category (physical assault, threatening behaviour, verbal abuse, other)
- Incident rates, calculated per 1000 employees, for both the Council as a whole and individual services. This allows more meaningful inter-department, year-on-year and inter-authority comparisons.

The annual statistics are reported to the Senior Officers Forum (Health & Safety) and are made available to Service health & safety consultative groups and management teams. They also form part of the corporate Health & Safety Annual Report.

Investigating Incidents

Following an aggressive incident, line managers must ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out to find out what happened and to ensure appropriate measures (review risk assessment, update procedures, arrange training, etc.) are put in place to prevent a recurrence. In many cases, the investigation will be straightforward

and might consist mainly of debriefing the staff involved; this may take place at the same time as the report form is being completed. However, in more complex cases you may need a more formal investigation (which might involve CSU and/or your health & safety officer) - CSU will be publishing guidance on accident/incident investigation; however, in the meantime please contact CSU or your safety officer for further advice.

Note: any action you take as a result of the incident must be noted in the 'Outcome/ Action Taken' section of the report form and any revisions to risk assessments must be brought to the attention of relevant staff.

Post Incident Support

Following aggressive incidents, it is essential that managers act quickly in order to avoid long-term distress to staff. An aggressive incident can be a sudden and frightening experience; the impact of which, on staffs' physical and mental health, can be long lasting and not always obvious. Staff may require support and care from both managers and work colleagues to help them recover; in some cases specialist counselling may also be necessary.

Managers should be aware that sending a distressed employee home to recover is not necessarily a good idea. Returning to an empty house takes staff away from the support and understanding that colleagues can provide; sitting at home, alone, can also cause staff to start to blame themselves. It is therefore important to consider employee's wishes before you take this course of action.

During and immediately following an incident staff are likely to suffer a number of symptoms which if not acknowledged and dealt with, could lead to low morale and inefficiency. Symptoms are likely to include:

- Anger
- General mistrust of strangers and wariness of customers/clients
- Fear and anxiety attacks, largely connected to a fear that the incident could recur - fear of returning to work is a common reaction
- Feelings of helplessness, isolation, frustration and vulnerability
- Guilt that they somehow contributed to the incident and are partly responsible
- Loss of confidence, loss of concentration and sometimes loss of memory. Despite this, recall of the event will generally be vivid and staff may need to talk about the experience
- Physical symptoms such as sleeping difficulties, loss of appetite, trembling and outbursts of crying

Initial Response

An initial response should take place as soon as possible after the incident has occurred. This can take the form of an informal group meeting, involving all those involved/affected by the incident, or may involve talking to individuals. This type of support does not have to be complicated; a simple chat, noting measures to be taken, or not as the case may be, may be all that managers have to do.

It is important that staff feel supported; managers should respond to their immediate needs and assure them that wanting support from others is a normal reaction and is not considered a failure on their part. It is also important that a key person, who has an understanding of the likely impact of the incident on staff, is involved in the support process.

An effective, initial response is crucial to an employee's ability to cope in the longer term. If carried out sensitively, it helps avoid loss of self-esteem, and can help avoid situations where staff feel they are unable to carry out certain tasks and duties.

In addition to giving staff an opportunity to express their feelings, the initial response should also cover practical issues such as:

- An outline of the incident reporting procedure
- What happens next, e.g., arrangements for investigating the incident, who will be responsible and how will the findings be reported back
- Police involvement - what assistance is available if required
- Further support available and how staff can access it
- Sick leave and pay arrangements if appropriate
- Legal advice and help in taking proceedings against the assailant, if desired.

Criminal Proceedings and Going to Court

Occasionally, aggressive incidents will result in criminal proceedings being taken against the perpetrator, which may end up in Court. Most staff will have little or no experience of the court and criminal justice systems, and will be worried about dealing with the police and giving evidence. In addition, the process may reawaken memories of the incident itself, which staff may find a distressing experience. Consequently, all staff involved in giving evidence or going to Court will need care and support at each stage of the legal process.

If required, additional support can be accessed via a number of routes, including HR, local Victim Support schemes (see below) and Trade Unions (see below).

Counselling & Victim Support

In addition to any initial support staff may also need extra time and help to overcome their fear, anger and stress. If further support is required, Occupational Health has access to an independent and confidential counselling service that allows staff to discuss their experience in a supportive non-judgemental environment. The service can be accessed through Service HR teams.

In some circumstances, staff may also wish to contact Victim Support. Victim Support is the national charity that helps people affected by crime. They provide free and confidential support to help victims cope with their experiences. They can also provide information on court procedures and, if required, someone to accompany the victim to court.

Contact details: **Victim Support:**
Telephone: 0845 30 30 900
Email: supportline@victimsupport.org.uk
Web site: www.victimsupport.org.uk/

Note: Victim Support can provide support even if the crime is not reported to the police.

Trade Union Support & Help

Union members may also wish to contact their union for practical advice, help and support. Unions have support mechanisms in place for staff who are victims of aggression, which includes access to legal advice through the unions legal service.

Staff should contact their local shop stewards, or union office for further information.

Legal Advice and Representation

Following an aggressive incident, the police may decide to prosecute. In addition, the employee affected may also consider bringing a civil action against the perpetrator.

Where an employee decides to pursue a civil action, only that individual employee can do so; the Authority may not act on their behalf.

In these circumstances, advice and support for employees will be available from Resources & Support's Legal Services and the following procedure should apply:

- The employee's Chief Officer in consultation with the Chief Legal Officer will review the facts and decide whether the Authority should support the employee or if alternative action should be considered.
- The Chief Legal Officer will determine whether there is a case for legal action, and will inform the Chief Officer of his/her decision.
- Available options include the following:
 - That legal representation should be provided by the Council's Legal Services; or
 - That the cost of the individual's private solicitor should be met by the Council (if a possible conflict of interest or other reason warrants it); or
 - That no action should be taken.
- The Council's decision as to whether or not to proceed rests with the Chief Legal Officer and is final.
- The Chief Officer will notify the employee of the decision regarding action to be taken. If the decision is not to provide legal advice/representation to bring a civil action s/he will explain the reasons and give information about any other options or course of action available to the member of staff.

In circumstances where an injunction against the perpetrator might be appropriate, application will be made by the council's in-house legal services or by the individual's private solicitor; with the costs being met by the council. Such circumstances will be rare and the decision to initiate such action will only be taken in the likelihood of further danger or attack. The appropriate Chief Officer will be responsible for taking such a decision in conjunction with the Chief Legal Officer

Any decision about withdrawal of Council services will be made between the relevant Chief Officer and the Chief Legal Officer.

Sickness Absence, Sick Pay and Insurance

Sickness absence resulting from an assault at work will be registered as industrial injury absence for National Insurance purposes. It will not, therefore, count against the employees entitlement to sick pay.

Staff covered by a bonus scheme will receive sick pay calculated on average bonus earnings during the period of absence.

The scale of allowances to which the employee will be entitled will be the same as for normal sickness absence, details of which are in the Conditions of Service for Local Government employees. Staff should contact their HR Officer for further details.

An employee who suffers a fatality, permanent physical injuries or disablement, as a result of assault at work, is entitled to make a claim against the Councils 'Personal Accident Assault Policy' - which provides a set lump sum payment to successful claimants. This policy also entitles employees to claim for loss, or damage to personal property. All claims must be made to the Insurance Section (Resources & Support). Payments made under the policy do not stop employees also taking out personal injury claims (employer's liability) against the council.

Note: to qualify for any of the above benefits the aggressive incident reporting procedure must be followed.

Notes

Central Safety Unit and Occupational Health Unit welcome comments on this Guidance Note and are able to provide further advice on aggression, risk assessment or any other health and safety or occupational health issue.

This Guidance Note supersedes all previous guidance on aggression issued by Central Safety Unit. In the interests of quality assurance, please destroy previous guidance.

Please contact Central Safety Unit if you would like to receive an electronic version of this Guidance Note.

Further Information/References

- *Preventing Violence to Staff*
- *Violence in the Education Sector*
- *HSG 133 - 'Preventing Violence to Retail Staff'*

Available from HSE Books or good book shops

- *INDG 69(rev) - 'Violence at Work a Guide for Employers'*
- *INDG 163(rev1) - 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment'*

Free leaflet available from HSE Books

WOLVERHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL ACCIDENT & AGGRESSION REPORT

IR1

Please refer to Health & Safety Procedural Notes #1 – 'Accident Notification'

Reporting Department:

Section/School/Depot:

Injured/Assaulted Person

Forenames:

Surname:

Home Address:

Tel:

Age:

Sex:

Do They Consider Themselves Disabled?

Y/N

Employee Job Title: Contractor Company:Client/Service User Student Visitor Other (Specify)

Ethnic Origin (tick appropriate box)

White	Mixed	Asian / Asian British	Black / Black British	Chinese / Other Ethnic Group
01 British <input type="checkbox"/>	10 White & Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>	20 Indian <input type="checkbox"/>	30 Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/>	40 Chinese <input type="checkbox"/>
02 Irish <input type="checkbox"/>	11 White & Black African <input type="checkbox"/>	21 Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/>	31 African <input type="checkbox"/>	
	12 White & Asian <input type="checkbox"/>	22 Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/>	39 Other Black background <input type="checkbox"/>	49 Other Ethnic Group <input type="checkbox"/>
09 Other White background <input type="checkbox"/>	19 Other mixed background <input type="checkbox"/>	29 Other Asian background <input type="checkbox"/>		

Incident Details

Location:

Date: - -

Time:

Reported To:

Date: - -

Time:

Type of Accident; or...

* see CSU Procedural Note #1

RIDDOR			Non RIDDOR		
3 Day* <input type="checkbox"/>	Major* <input type="checkbox"/>	Fatality <input type="checkbox"/>	Minor/Other <input type="checkbox"/>	'Near Miss'/Damage <input type="checkbox"/>	
Disease* <input type="checkbox"/>	Dangerous Occurrence* <input type="checkbox"/>		Treatment: <input type="checkbox"/>	1 st Aid <input type="checkbox"/>	Doctor <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital <input type="checkbox"/>
Hospitalised (Public)* <input type="checkbox"/> Note: Accidents to the public are only RIDDOR reportable if (a) the injured person goes straight to hospital AND (b) the accident was work related ; otherwise they are classed as 'Minor/Other'					

...Aggressive Incident (To Employees Only)

Verbal Abuse Threatening Behaviour Physical Assault Other (Specify) Police Involved? (Detail Over)In Addition Do You Consider This A Racial Incident?

If RIDDOR Applies*:-

RIDDOR Reporting Is Usually Done By Departments Centrally

Date HSE Notified: - -

By Whom:

Method:

Phone/Email/Post

Incident No.:

Assailant Details (If Relevant)

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Approx. Age:

Sex:

Other Relevant Details:

Accident & Aggression Report (IR1) – Notes for Completion

An IR1 form must be completed for:

- All accidents to staff,
- Accidents to visitors, students, clients, etc., where the cause of the accident is related to the way we work or the condition of our premises, etc.¹
- Aggressive incidents to staff.²

Filling in The Form

Hopefully the form will be largely self-explanatory, however the following notes may help:

Reporting Department; Section/School/Depot

Remember the form is going to someone, outside your Service, who does not know the structure as well as you. Please give enough detail to identify the source; avoid abbreviations and make sure you give a base location (e.g. as well as 'Night Visiting Service', indicate where the Service is based!)

Injured/Assaulted Person

Please give details of the injured/assaulted person. Please try to include all information requested including age, sex and if the person considers himself or herself disabled.

If the incident was to an employee - note their Job Title. If the incident was to a contractor - note the company.

Ethnic Origin is as per the current census categories and is needed for reporting aggressive incidents - it can be left blank for accidents.

Type of Accident; or... Aggressive Incident

If reporting an accident please tick the appropriate box(es) to indicate the type³ of accident and subsequent treatment.

When reporting an Aggressive Incident, tick the appropriate boxes. You can tick all that apply however please note that, to avoid double counting, Central Safety Unit (CSU) will only record the most serious type indicated i.e. **Physical Assault >Threatening Behaviour > Verbal Abuse**⁴

Note if physical assault resulted in injury please also include those details under *Type of Accident*.

Police involved - If the police are involved please tick the box and note the incident number in the general description of the incident, as this will be useful in any subsequent action.

Racial Incidents - Racial Incident is defined as "any incidents regarded as such by the victim or anyone else". Thus if the victim thinks the incident is racially motivated but the manager does not or vice versa, it should still be recorded as such.

¹ Please note: accidents due to a medical condition or someone losing their balance, etc., and injuries resulting from those types of incidents, are not reportable to CSU. In addition, incidents involving clients (e.g. in Social Service establishments) are only reportable to CSU if there is evidence that the accident was work-related - local guidelines have been issued.

Additional note for Social Services/Education: - some incidents that fall outside the remit of health & safety may still be reportable to CSCJ or OFSTED. Please seek local clarification if necessary.

² CSU only record **Aggressive Incidents to Staff** (by the public). The following examples of aggression are NOT reportable to CSU:

- **Staff on Staff** - this should be dealt with using the **Discipline, Grievance and Capabilities Procedures**
- **Staff on Public/Client, etc** - this should be dealt with using the **Complaints Procedure**
- **Client on Client** (e.g. 2 pupils or Service Users) - whilst these incidents should be recorded locally, and may also be recorded at a Service level, they are outside the remit of Health & Safety and do not need to be reported to CSU.

³ CSU Procedural Note #1 explains RIDDOR in detail

⁴ CSU recognise that in certain circumstances, verbal abuse can have greater consequences for the victim than physical assault. However, in most cases the above will be appropriate.

Note: recording something as a racial incident does not necessarily prove that it was!

In accordance with the City Council's Racial Incident monitoring procedures, where the incident is considered to be a Racial Incident, managers should note in the **Outcome/Action Taken** section of the form what further action was taken specifically to address the racial aspects of it.

If RIDDOR Applies

To ensure appropriate reporting, departments usually do RIDDOR reporting centrally (see Note 3 above).

Assailant Details

Please give details of the assailant(s) when reporting aggressive incidents.

Note we no longer collect the ethnic origin of the assailant since this is likely to be subjective. However, to aid identification (especially if the Police are involved) please note appearance, etc., under *Other Relevant Details*. The assailant's relationship to us (if any) should also be noted here (e.g. pupil, parent, client, public, intruder, etc.).

Witnesses

The names and addresses of any witnesses should be recorded and, where there is a potential for claim, a brief signed statement should be taken. In case of doubt, contact the insurance section for further clarification.

Describe What Happened...

Give an account of the incident including any relevant events leading up to it - e.g. in the case of aggressive incidents, what was the intent, if any, of the assailant? Note details of Police or other agency involvement. If staff subsequently have time off or were adversely affected please record relevant details.

Outcome/Action Taken...

Managers must ensure that all accidents/incidents receive a suitable level of investigation and should put in place measures to minimise the risk of similar accidents/incidents recurring. Any action taken should be noted and this section **must** be completed even if no further action is considered necessary or appropriate. Please also indicate any review of risk assessment(s) undertaken and any legal action to be pursued.

Reported By... Countersigned...

Most of the form should be completed by, or on behalf of, the injured/assaulted person and they (or their supervisor) should sign it. In addition, an appropriate line manager should ensure that the section on *Outcome/Action Taken* is completed and countersign the report to acknowledge they have seen it and checked the contents.

Once completed, one copy of the form should be kept on the site to which it relates and another copy sent to your HR Team/Administration Section who will forward a copy to CSU

Retention of Records

IR1 forms and any investigation reports need to be retained for insurance purposes. Insurance Section have advised that, given the timescale allowed to bring claims against the authority, the forms/reports be retained for at least 5 years or, in the case of children, until they are at least 18 (whichever is the greater)

In addition, it is recommended that RIDDOR reports be retained for six years following an incident.

Please note:

The primary duty to retain records for legal and insurance purposes rests with Services; copies sent to CSU are primarily used to produce statistical and other reports and should not be relied upon as a back up copy. In any case, CSU will only keep copies of reports for 5 years; all older records will be destroyed.

Procedure Following an Aggressive Incident

1. Firstly, ensure that all injuries are treated. Managers must ensure that suitable first aid is offered and/or the employee transported to hospital, as appropriate.
2. **All** incidents of violence and aggression **must** be reported to a supervisor or line manager immediately.
3. If the incident involves a criminal act, at the discretion of the member of staff, the line manager should notify the Police of the attack. In the event of a serious assault, the line manager may decide it is imperative to inform the Police irrespective of the staff member's wishes. Should a written statement be required at a Police Station, staff may be accompanied by the line manager, or union representative and/or friend.
4. If the Police decide not to prosecute, the staff member has the right to proceed with a civil action (see section - Legal Advice and Representation)
5. Line managers should ensure that an '**Accident & Aggression Report**' form (IR1) is completed immediately following the incident; whilst memories are still fresh. The report form must be submitted to CSU (usually via your HR or administration section) or directly to your health and safety officer as soon as possible. Note some incidents that result in injury may need to be reported under the RIDDOR Regulations to HSE (see CSU Procedural Note #1 Accident Notification); consequently, you should ensure there is no undue delay so that any report to HSE can be made within the timescales allowed.
6. Line managers must also ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out to find out what happened and to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to prevent a recurrence. In many cases, the investigation will be straightforward and might consist mainly of debriefing the staff involved; this may take place at the same time as the report form is being completed. However, in more complex cases you may need a more formal investigation - CSU will be publishing guidance on accident/incident investigation; however, in the meantime please contact CSU or your safety officer for further advice.

Note: any action you take as a result of the incident must be noted in the 'Outcome/ Action Taken' section of the report form.
7. Following any incident, line managers must review appropriate risk assessments and update them as appropriate. Any revisions must be brought to the attention of relevant staff.
8. Staff will need to be debriefed as soon as possible after the incident. In addition, any staff affected by aggressive incidents must be given the opportunity to discuss the matter with their line manager, supervisor or other appropriate person. Managers must ensure that staff have the opportunity to discuss the matter fully and should take the opportunity to advise staff of available supports/coping mechanisms, and how to access them.

Preventing Violence & Aggression to Staff - A Checklist for Managers

Ensuring that staff have adequate training and information will help them to respond appropriately in difficult circumstances. Staff, who are well informed, confident of the facts, know where back-up can be found, and are clear about the extent of their personal responsibilities, deal with customers more effectively and efficiently, regardless of the service being provided.

However, there will be occasions when staff, have to respond to situations that they have little control over. For example, decisions made that, of necessity, follow council or government policy may upset customers; resources might dictate that customers do not always receive the responses they want; and, on occasion, decisions made or actions taken by other departments (or other public bodies) can make customers respond negatively in all their dealing with 'the council' or 'authority' in general.

Training will help in these situations, but further management action may also be required, including clear communication to customers and appropriate support to staff on the receiving end of aggressive behaviour.

Whilst dealing with difficult customers is often unavoidable, staff must be aware that they do not have to put up with aggressive behaviour. They need to know that any concerns they have will be taken seriously, and that they will not be made to feel foolish or inadequate if they call for help or use the panic alarm.

Customers must also be aware that we will not tolerate violent or aggressive behaviour towards staff.

Managers must ensure that risk assessments are carried out and that appropriate controls are in place to minimise the risk of violence towards staff. Assessments must be regularly reviewed to ensure they are having the desired effect.

Managers must also investigate any incidents of violence and aggression to help identify any shortcomings and ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent or minimise the risk of recurrence.

Is the Customer Entitled to be Angry?

When looking at potential causes of violence and aggression it is worth looking at the services and the way they are provided - it may be possible to design out problems or to put in place controls to minimise the risk.

The following questions may help to identify potential problems - which should then be addressed:

- Does the customer have a legitimate complaint?
- Could the service, or its presentation, be improved to reduce customer frustration?
- Would changes in practice or improved staff training improve the service?
- Are employees put in impossible situations? (e.g., lengthy queues with few staff on duty inevitably leads to customer frustration)

-
- If delays are unavoidable, do you keep customers informed, and let them know how long they will have to wait?
 - Do staff have enough information to provide a professional service? Providing inaccurate information can lead to dissatisfaction, e.g., promising action that cannot be delivered).
 - Has the customer environment been considered (e.g. are there sufficient chairs in waiting areas, toys for restless children, access to public toilets etc.)
 - Is the Complaints Procedure clearly displayed? Do staff know what it is and how to advise customers?

Avoiding or Minimising the Risk from Difficult Situations

Addressing the following may also help remove or reduce the risk of violence and aggression:

- Do employees know how far to go with a problem before getting help?
- Is there someone responsible available to provide help if needed?
- Do both staff and managers know what to do if there is a problem? Are procedures up to date?
- How good is your security? Have controls such as screens, panic buttons, etc., been considered? Are they appropriate and do they reduce the risks to acceptable levels?
- Are designated staff assigned to respond to panic buttons or other calls for help? Is suitable cover available if they are out of the office?
- Is your procedure for handling money robust enough? Is it regularly reviewed?
- Is there a 'locations book' that details: - where staff are, how they can be contacted and their expected return time, when working away from their normal place of work?
- Is there a procedure for what to do if staff do not come back when expected?
- Is the safety of staff considered when planning new services or taking on new premises? Is staff safety a consideration when arranging work rotas, cover for holidays, budgeting, etc?
- Do staff have access to information about service users, clients or locations where there is a known problem? How is that information collected, recorded, relayed to staff and passed to other departments as appropriate?
- Are staff safety considerations taken into account when selecting rooms used for meeting and interviewing members of the public?
- Is there a clear escape route for staff to leave by if the necessity arises?
- Where staff are required to work alone, in isolated buildings, or outside of 'core' hours, can they contact someone to get help if needed?
- Is there a procedure for dealing with animals, particularly dogs, both brought into the workplace and encountered on home visits? Is information about premises where dogs are a known problem made available to staff before they undertake visits.
- Are incident report forms available to all staff? Are they encouraged to complete them?
- Is information fed back to staff about action that is taken following an incident?
- Are safety issues aired regularly, e.g. at team meetings, supervision sessions etc.
- Are there regular training and 'refresher' opportunities for staff in relation to all aspects of staff safety?
- Are there regular safety audits and reviews of safety procedures?
- Do you know what problems your employees face at work?

Dealing With Aggression - A Guide for Staff

Whilst dealing with difficult customers is often unavoidable, staff should be aware that they do not have to put up with aggressive behaviour. If there is a problem, staff should make their line manager aware of it as soon as possible and their line managers must ensure it is dealt with appropriately.

In addition, staff must feel supported and not made to feel foolish or inadequate if they call for help or use the panic alarm.

Customers must be aware that the council will not tolerate violent or aggressive behaviour towards staff.

Avoiding Danger

There are probably already systems in place to keep staff safe; however, the following may also help:

Planning Ahead

A little pre-planning can reduce the risk of aggression both at and away from the workplace.

- Some situations have a greater potential for danger than others; be alert and keep your wits about you at all times, particularly when: you are away from 'the office', away from support systems or in new or unusual situations.
- Before visiting customers in their home check, any information held on file. Also, check information on others who may be at the address. If the information indicates the potential for violence, you may need to rethink the visit or put further measures in place (e.g. go with a colleague or, in extreme cases, police support) to ensure your safety.
- Some staff feel uneasy when visiting high-rise flats and find both lifts and stairwells intimidating. Personal alarms can give some reassurance - if set off within stairwells, echoes within the stairwell itself can intensify their effects. If using lifts, trust your intuition and avoid sharing the lift car if you feel wary of other passengers.
- Wherever possible, arrange for potentially violent customers to visit you rather than vice-versa. This allows more control, however, be prepared for any disruption they may cause whilst on out premises.
- Think about ways to reduce the risk. For example, when meeting a customer in an interview room - if you suspect the customer may react negatively to what you have to tell them, ask a colleague to contact you after five minutes to check if you require assistance.
- All staff should be familiar with panic alarms, what they sound like and how they should respond if a colleague sets one off.

Meeting Customers

Most customers will cause no problems, however, when dealing with the aggressive minority:

- Trust your intuition - if you sense something is wrong, take action to reduce the risk, e.g., ask someone to join you, shorten the interview or, in extreme circumstances, withdraw from the situation.
- Avoid becoming 'piggy in the middle' - do not get involved in family disputes and definitely do not take sides.
- Do not behave like a 'victim' - if customers treat you in any way that feels offensive, be assertive and speak up. In public areas, this can result in the customer withdrawing (thus removing the problem) rather than risking embarrassment.
- Use 'code' systems, e.g. receptionists can alert staff about waiting customers who may be angry or upset by using agreed 'code words'; similarly, staff who require assistance can use 'code-words' to alert colleagues that they need assistance.
- If attacked, whilst 'on district/working in the community, do not fight for your case or bag - it is not worth risking injury and they can be replaced. If you suffer loss or injury, as a result of the assault, contact Risk Management & Insurance Services who will advise about the claims procedure.

Defusing Anger

If customers are frustrated or annoyed, it is important that staff do not inadvertently make a bad situation worse.

Customers might be frustrated for a number of reasons; they might have been kept waiting (by more than one department) or they may, in their eyes, have been 'fobbed off' by departments 'sending them in circles'.

Customers may have unrealistic expectations of the services we can provide; even so, they may not appreciate being told why we cannot comply with what they see as a "reasonable" request.

When faced with difficult situations, the following may help:

- First, try to remain calm and in control; the most effective way of doing this is to make your breathing more measured, deeper and slower. This will help overcome the effects of adrenalin and enable you to think clearly, so that your actions are more likely to be helpful and appropriate.
- Listen to the customer and 'hear them out', even if you have 'heard it all before', or you think they are 'trying it on'. The fact that you are paying them attention will often help calm the situation
- Show that you understand by nodding and saying "yes", where appropriate, and by summarising what they have told you to show you have been listening.
- Do not say "I know how you feel" - this may serve only to wind the customer up. Instead, try to empathise, for example state that you "appreciate their concerns" and then explain what options are available.
- Try to explain clearly and in non-patronising, jargon free language what the difficulty is in giving the customer what they want. Repeat what you have said until you are sure that they have understood it; people do not always hear the first time when they are angry or upset.

- Be sure of your facts - do not refer customers to other departments or agencies unless you are sure that they can help. Demonstrate your desire to help by offering to telephone and check before referring the customer on.
- Do not make promises that cannot be met - it may calm the customer in the short term, but the customer will only return, more frustrated, when they realise they have been misled.
- Discuss any alternative solutions with the customer, but ensure these are genuine and not just attempts to fob the customer off
- It might be helpful to get a colleague to talk to the customer; a second opinion, confirming what you have said may help to calm the situation. If necessary, tell the customer about the appeals or complaints procedure.
- Do not make angry customers wait unnecessarily. Leaving someone to "cool down" can have the opposite effect, particularly in a public waiting area where other people might get involved and further wind-up the customer. This can lead to situations that make it difficult for the customer to climb down or comprise, because of a perceived loss of face.
- You might want to consider removing the angry customer to somewhere more private so that they no longer have an audience. However, the benefits of this must be weighed against potential risk from being alone with the customer.
- When meeting the customer in private (e.g. in interview rooms), make sure you have a clear exit route and ensure that the customer is not between you and the exit.
- Avoid an aggressive stance, e.g., crossed arms, hands on hips, wagging finger or raised arm - this will only inflame the situation.
- Never turn your back on the customer - if you are leaving, move gradually backwards. However, if the situation becomes dangerous, get away as fast as you can - **never** remain alone with an actively violent person.
- If you cannot get away, then scream, yell, and activate the panic alarm. Try to attract attention, get help or scare off your attacker.
- Remember, you are more important than property. Do not risk your safety to protect money, equipment or premises. Make sure you are safe, and then report the incident.

Practical Tips

A few practical tips may also help reduce the incidents of violence and aggression:

On the Telephone

- Hear the customer out - try not to interrupt and wait until the customer is ready to listen to you.
- If someone is abusive, tell them clearly that you want help but will not accept abuse or threats. Explain that, if the abuse continues, you will have to hang up.
- If you are worried about the repercussions of cutting someone off, wait until you are speaking and then terminate the call. Since people do not tend to cut themselves off, the caller will assume it is a technical fault.
- Report the incident to your manager

Visiting Homes and Premises

When visiting customers, clients, parents, or service-users in their homes or premises, consider the following:

- **Information:**
 - Does anyone at the address have a history of violent or aggressive behaviour?
 - Is there a robust procedure for reporting and recording this?
 - How do you check this information?
 - Is information readily available and flagged up to the next member of staff who may visit?
- **Support:**
 - Do you need the support of a colleague or the police, etc. when undertaking the visit?
 - What support is available to you back at base?
 - How will you alert colleagues to any problems and enlist their support?
- **Am I traceable?**
 - Does your manager or colleagues know where you are?
 - In an emergency, can they contact you?
- **Plan where you are going:**
 - Try to be sure of the exact location of any address you are visiting before you set out. Wandering around, looking lost or asking for directions can leave you vulnerable.

Using your Car

- When driving it is advisable to keep the car doors locked, especially at traffic lights or busy junctions.
- Look out for anyone showing an unusual interest in your car and, if approached suspiciously, sound your horn.
- Keep your handbag, briefcase, jacket, laptop, mobile telephone, etc., out of sight e.g. under the seats, or in the boot.
- Do not stop to help anyone who has broken down, or who is asking for assistance - drive on and telephone the police if you think it appropriate.
- Think about where you park; ensure you leave the car in a well-lit place, ideally, facing the direction of escape if in a cul-de-sac, car park, etc.
- When returning to your car, check that there is no one inside before getting in.

- If there are people hanging about, or sitting on your car, do not ask them what they are doing; this will identify you as the driver and may bring unwanted attention - walk away and call the police.
- Have your keys to hand when returning to your car so that you do not have to fumble in bags or pockets.
- At service stations, lock your car before going inside to pay.
- Plan your journey; getting lost and asking for directions can leave you vulnerable.
- If you think you are being followed, keep driving and attract attention by flashing your lights and sounding your horn. Stay on main roads and drive to a police station or a service station where there will be other people about. Be specific when asking people for help, e.g., ask them to call the police.

On The Doorstep

Remember, you do not have to enter a property just because you are on the doorstep and have knocked on the door.

- Think about the type of job you are there to do - do you need to go inside?
- Do you know the history of the person you are visiting?
- Assess the reaction you receive from the customer when you identify yourself.
- If you assess the risk as unacceptable, change the purpose of the visit so you do not have to enter the premises at that time, e.g. make an appointment for yourself and colleague to visit at later date, or make an appointment for the person to visit you at the office.
- If you decide to enter the premises, invite the person to lead the way, telling them that you will close the door; this enables you to make sure the door is not deadlocked. It also means you are nearer the door than the customer and so can get out if necessary.
- When invited to sit down, choose as high a chair as possible as it is often difficult to get up quickly from a low sofa.

Dogs

- Even if you like dogs, it is always advisable to ask the person if they mind putting the dog out of the way while you are there. This is particularly important if the person you are visiting is likely to become upset, or angry, since the dog will pick up on this and may react.
- If the dog is aggressive in any way and the customer refuses to remove it, you should consider leaving. In any case, you should report this to your manager, who should then write to the customer insisting that the dog is removed, or tied up, during future visits.