

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Management Arrangements

Core | Consider | Complex

Management of Violence and Aggression



1. Success Indicators

The following indicators will demonstrate appropriate compliance:

- a) Managers are aware of their responsibilities about the effective management of work-related violence.
- b) Unacceptable standards of behaviour and sanctions against unacceptable behaviour are communicated to staff, service users, pupils, and members of the public.
- c) Managers are effectively risk assessing and managing the risks associated with work related violence.
- d) Managers share specific information with all relevant staff and external parties.
- e) SCC Core Staff Employees identified as at risk of threat to life have been added to the Lone Worker Safety System.
- f) Employees have received suitable information, instruction, and where needed training.
- g) All work-related violent incidents are reported by employees.
- h) Managers investigate all work-related violent incidents and support staff post incident.
- i) Managers monitor and review local arrangements implemented to reduce the risk of work-related violence.

2. Overview

There is a legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that employees are protected from violence and aggression resulting from their work. Staffordshire County Council views acts of violence and aggression towards its employees or any other persons under its care as unacceptable.

3. Management Arrangements

These arrangements will apply to employees and contractors working on county council premises or when engaged in county council activities.

Work related violence is behaviour directed by a service user, pupil, their relatives or carers, members of the public, visitors or other person which produces damaging and hurtful effects, physically or emotionally in other people. This includes:

- Assault/abuse causing actual physical injury or distress.
- Verbal or written aggression which offends the individual.
- Damage to property.
- Assault to others including members of an individual's family.
- Stalking.
- Animal attacks.
- Threat or fear of any of the above.

Where the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff incidents will be addressed by HR Discipline Policy.

Risk Assessments

Managers must consider the potential for violence or aggression as part of the risk assessment process. Where a risk assessment indicates that a significant risk of violence and aggression exists,

actions must be taken to reduce the risk as far as reasonably practicable. Measures which prevent the occurrence of violent incidents are preferable to those that reduce the severity of the violent incident.

Managers and staff must work together to identify the potential for violence and aggression that may come from:

- the work environment,
- the job role,
- the actions of other people who work with you,
- the circumstances or individual factors of the service users with whom you normally expect to work with,
- the methods of communication or the way the service is delivered.

Good information is vital for ensuring the health and safety of persons exposed to the risk of violence. Managers should have access to relevant information including risk assessments, incident history and information relating to specific sites or persons. Communication and information sharing must be encouraged at all levels including external parties such as the police and NHS. Where appropriate information sharing protocols should be developed and the Information Governance Unit should be contacted for advice.

Threat to Life

Employees may become aware of information about a real and immediate threat to kill or seriously harm a colleague. Employees must immediately inform their manager who will contact the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service for support. A risk assessment will be completed, and control measures put in place to protect the personal safety of the threatened individual. Information will be shared with relevant authorities such as the Police. For SCC Core Staff as part of the personal safety control measures the threatened employee will be provided with access to the Lone Worker Safety System.

Lone Worker Safety System (SCC Core Staff)

The council has procured a Lone Worker Safety System to provide a centralized digital approach to personal safety. Further information on the Lone Worker Safety System is detailed in the guidance document "Risk reduction and control measures for lone working and violence & aggression".

Standards of behaviour

The council believes that all citizens have a duty to treat each other with dignity and respect and to behave in an acceptable and appropriate manner. In line with our commitment to equality, we strive to create an environment, free from harassment, where individuals are valued, and cultural differences are understood and appreciated. Unacceptable standards of behaviour and sanctions against unacceptable behaviour need to be communicated to staff, service users, pupils, and members of the public.

Unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Offensive language, verbal aggression, swearing, unwanted or abusive remarks which makes individuals feel unsafe
- Invasion of personal space
- Brandishing of objects or weapons
- Physical assaults
- Offensive gestures
- Threats or risk of serious injury to a member of staff, service users or visitors
- Near misses i.e. unsuccessful physical assaults
- Stalking
- Spitting at people
- Alcohol or drug fuelled abuse
- Unreasonable and/or abusive behaviour
- Any of the above linked to destruction of or damage to property

Staffordshire County Council recognises it has a duty to promote a safe and healthy working environment to provide support to any employee who is the victim of domestic abuse and to protect employees from the risk of violent attacks from partners, ex-partners, or family members while they are at work. Refer to the HR policy Domestic Abuse for more information.

The right to use reasonable force

Employees have a civil right to use reasonable force to defend themselves.

Physical Intervention

The expectation is that as far as possible council services will be restraint free. The use of restrictive physical interventions must always be an act of last resort and not normal practice and based on the best needs of the person (refer to Safety Interventions Management Arrangements and Guidance). Employees who undertake physical intervention must be provided with the appropriate level of information, instruction, and where appropriate training.

Incident Reporting and Investigation

Incident reporting is an essential element of preventing violence and aggression. A member of staff who has been the subject of violent/abusive behaviour must report the incident to their line manager as soon as is practicable. Staff must report all incidents of violence or aggression, even if they are of a minor nature. If an injury resulted from an incident the accident book must also be completed. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service will notify the HSE if a violent incident is reportable under the RIDDOR Regulations.

Where it is not practical to record every incidence of minor verbal aggression using the council process managers must put in place a local system for recording brief details of any incidents of perceived minor verbal aggression reported by their staff. The record should be a summary of the incident and should include date and time of incident, name of employees involved, name of aggressor and a brief description of what was said and the circumstances. This summary record

should be kept on site or with the line manager and will be audited by the senior manager. The information may be requested by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service at suitable intervals.

All incidents must be investigated thoroughly by the line manager as soon as possible after the event. Information from the investigation should be used when carrying out a post incident risk assessment.

Post incident management

Even with effective risk management strategies in place, incidents of violence, aggression and abuse at work may still occur. It is therefore an essential that appropriate procedures are in place following an incident.

The support that staff must receive will include:

- As a priority support with their immediate needs e.g. first aid or medical treatment.
- A debriefing for all employees directly involved. Debriefing allows the details of the incident to be established and provides emotional support. The intention of debriefing is to create a supportive system for employees to learn from the experience and to enhance the development of good practice. Debriefing will normally be in 2 stages details of which are available on the intranet. A record of the debrief including the support provided and actions required should be made.

Police Involvement

The role of the police in connection with violence and aggression falls into 3 main areas: -

- (a) During an incident the employee or the senior member of staff may make a judgement that assistance from the police is required. In these circumstances urgent help should be sought from the police by telephoning 999. Staff must be aware that the police will take charge of the whole incident upon their arrival.
- (b) Following an incident, at the request of staff, the police may be asked to investigate any potential criminal act. It is for individual to decide whether they wish to make such an approach to the police. If the incident involves service users, colleagues need to be aware of the inability of some individuals to understand their own actions and their potential consequences and therefore to be held legally responsible for their actions.
- (c) Staff have a civil right to report an incident to the police and management will inform staff of that civil right. In some cases it may be appropriate to report an incident to the police without requesting that they investigate but so that they can issue a crime reference number. The member of staff can, if they wish, proceed with a claim to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA).

Prosecution and Legal Assistance

- (a) If criminal charges are brought and any employee is required to give evidence in court, then paid leave of absence will be granted.
- (b) Whether or not the police prosecute, an employee may themselves pursue the matter by taking private legal action against the assailant.

- (c) Personal Accident (Assault) cover is in place for employees sustaining bodily injury by assault as a result of which death or disablement occurs independently of any other cause within 24 months of sustaining such injury. The injury must have occurred when the employee was engaged in official duties in connection with the County Council's business. This includes journeys directly connected with the duties and direct travel between private residence and place of duty.
- (d) Employees may seek legal advice from their trade union / professional association who may decide to provide the necessary finance to enable private proceedings to go ahead.

4. Training and Information

It is the responsibility of managers to carry out a training needs analysis to ensure that suitable training is provided and refreshed at appropriate intervals for staff in their role and the needs of the service.

Training can prevent conflict situations from arising or escalating into violence. Training provided to staff should be to the level they require. Training staff in (higher level) skills they will never use is not necessary and the skills are soon lost or may be used incorrectly. Assertiveness training (often part of customer care training) is invaluable to staff who work with individuals who use aggression to influence workers' decisions.

Supervision/Personal Performance Review

Staff Supervision/Personal Performance Reviews should address issues relating to the risk and fear of violence in connection with individual employees' work. It should also include a regular check on the staff member's awareness of local arrangements.

5. Monitoring and reviewing these arrangements

Incident reporting is an essential element of preventing violence and aggression as it allows for monitoring and reviews to take place. Manager must review reports of incidents to ensure:

- the effectiveness of control measures
- identifying and modifying those control measures in need of improvement or change
- the provision of appropriate resources and training
- identifying further action such as court orders
- the evaluation of trends.

6. HSW Supporting Information

- Lone Working Management Arrangements
- Safety Interventions Management Arrangements and Guidance
- Risk reduction and control measures for lone working and violence & aggression Guidance