

G15 VIOLENCE AT WORK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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APPENDIX 1 – Zero Tolerance Posters

APPENDIX 2 – Zero Tolerance Posters

(for use specifically at customer contact points in Lincoln included within the Reception Alert & Warning system)

APPENDIX 3 – Employee Leaflet

1. INTRODUCTION

These are broad guidelines for managers. In some areas additional arrangements may be needed.

Violence at work is defined as any incident in which employees are physically or verbally abused, threatened or intimidated or where their property or personal belongings, or both, are damaged in circumstances arising out of their employment.

The County Council's policy is that its employees will not be expected to tolerate violence or abuse in the workplace. Customers will be informed that the County Council has a 'zero tolerance' approach in respect of violence or abuse towards its employees, e.g. by displaying posters, in customer service statements, by writing warning letters to customers who have threatened employees. In some cases the withdrawal of services may be considered, subject to this being justified as the only means of exercising the County Council's duty of care to its employees, and there being no impact on the Council's statutory responsibilities. Where there are statutory responsibilities towards service users, other options will be explored, following a full risk assessment to identify additional safeguards.

2. PRINCIPLES

A violent incident is one where employees are physically or verbally abused, threatened or intimidated or where their personal belongings are damaged in circumstances arising out of their employment.

Where violent incidents are foreseeable, a risk assessment will be carried out to identify the measures necessary to reduce that risk

The risk of violence at work will be minimised by measures such as physical separation, training for managers and employees, reporting and recording violent incidents and information sharing systems

“Help Us to Help You” posters will be displayed in public areas of our building informing customers that the County Council has a ‘zero tolerance’ in respect of violence and abuse towards employees see [Appendix 1](#).

NB – All customer contact points in Lincoln included within the Reception Alert and warning system **MUST** use the version available in [Appendix 2](#) which contains additional wording about the sharing of information of abusive service users with other customer contact points in Lincoln.

Employees who have been subjected to violence at work will be treated sensitively and compassionately, and in appropriate circumstances, provided with assistance such as counselling and advice on compensation.

If necessary the police will be involved where there has been a violent incident

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors and Assistant Directors

Assess the risk of violence at work in their service.

Ensure through their managers that appropriate control measures are implemented.

Communication of control measures to all employees

Corporate Health & Safety Team

Review and Revision of the Policy

Employees

Following instructions given to them on the avoidance or minimisation of violent incidents:-

Report all incidents of verbal abuse, threats or actual assaults to their manager.

Treat colleagues with respect and understanding.

4. IDENTIFYING THE AREAS OF RISK FROM VIOLENCE AT WORK

All workplaces should be given a preliminary risk assessment because all have some potential for violence. The following are examples of areas where violent incidents may occur because of the nature of the work, and where a more detailed risk assessment is required. Asking employees or their representatives if they know of any incident may help to identify other areas:

- receptionists and other front line employees dealing with members of the public in person or on the telephone
- meeting members of the public/service users in non County Council premises
- working with challenging service users or pupils

- providing teaching, training or advice
- carrying out inspection or enforcement duties
- travelling alone and/or on unaccompanied visits
- working unsocial hours
- Members of minority groups, for e.g. race, religion and sexual orientation
- Cash handling, lone workers, inexperienced employees and employees with disabilities/medical conditions.

The risk increases greatly where more than one situation applies, or where employees are tired.

NOTE: Violent incidents may take place outside normal working hours, but which may be connected with employees' duties. These should be dealt with in the same way as if they had happened at the workplace. The employee's family may also be affected.

5. MEASURES TO AVOID OR MINIMISE THE RISK OF VIOLENCE AT WORK

Job design can reduce the risk of violence. Examples of action that can be taken are given below. (NB - because of financial regulations it may be necessary to clear some proposals with the Director of Resources):

Design of Premises

- changing the layout of waiting areas. Better seating, decor, lighting and regular information about delays will help towards stopping tension building up
- using higher or wider counters, and raising the height of the floor on the employee side of the counter to give more protection
- installing video cameras
- installing alarm buttons in high risk areas, telling employees about their use and ensuring adequate response
- putting protective screens around employee areas
- using access control such as 'coded' security locks on doors

Organisational Arrangements

- changing the job to give less direct contact with the public, e.g. providing automatic ticket dispensers/collectors and cash machines. (Take care that this does not increase the risks of violence to service users because of the withdrawal of employees)
 - using cheques, credit cards or tokens instead of cash, making robbery less attractive
 - checking the credentials of service users and, if possible, controlling the place of/ and arrangements for meetings away from the office
 - making sure that employees can get home safely e.g. if employees are required to work late, arrangements should be made to enable them to drive to work and park safely or to provide transport
 - keeping details of employees' whereabouts when they work away from base and where necessary, introduce phone in procedures to verify that employees have returned safely
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- providing training for employees, to give them more knowledge and confidence while in their jobs, or to enable them to deal with aggression generally. The

employee leaflet "[Violence at Work - Staff Guidelines](#)" (POEL18) – see [Appendix 3](#) can help with this

- arranging for employees to be accompanied where the risk is high and other measures are not practicable, e.g. when responding to intruder alarms after hours
- arranging for potentially difficult persons to visit County Council premises rather than allowing employees to visit them in their homes or establishments;
- provision of identity cards so that employees from other areas of the County Council can be identified; (Identification badges should be renewed every two to three years)
- clear identification of employees may avoid potentially aggressive situations, although name badges may make employees more vulnerable to violence at work. If employees feel threatened by wearing a name badge, this should be taken into account and an alternative means of identification used, in some areas the use of first name only badges help to protect employees when not at work
- discuss with employees whose names will be known to potentially difficult persons the need for their personal telephone numbers to be ex-directory
- the provision of mobile telephones
- the provision of personal attack alarms and/or lone worker devices for employees at risk. (Consider supplying these alarms to employees on request, even if the risk is assessed as low, as this will help to allay fears of attack)
- make clear to public/service users that violent behaviour is unacceptable to the County Council and may give rise to legal action and/or exclusion from the premises or withdrawal of services
- the use of a formal internal and external exchange network such as that maintained by the Children and Adult Service Directorates. Any system must recognize human rights concerns and must not be a loose exchange of vague concerns. Any system must also be within Data Protection and Information Governance principles.

Employees must be encouraged to report all incidents, including bullying and harassment. Managers must take action in accordance with document [G4 Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences](#) and document [Grievance and Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure](#).

Learning from experience is a useful way of reducing the risks. Keeping detailed records of all incidents enables a picture of a problem to be built up. Information from reports of incidents should be circulated to managers and employees who may face the same problem. This will alert them to potential problems and provide an opportunity for avoidance/minimisation measures to be planned into any dealings.

All complaints must be reported, be taken seriously and be investigated by managers. Employees should be encouraged to report near misses in order that these incidents can be included in the monitoring and review processes. The detail of the investigation will depend on each case. Note should be taken of the nature of the incident and the views of the complainant, fellow employees, trade union representatives and managers. Enquiries can uncover problems not directly related to individual incidents.

The following is suggested as a procedure to be followed after an incident has occurred:

- the complainant should be interviewed as soon after the incident as possible. Distressed employees should be allowed to recover before being interviewed and should be invited to have a friend or trade union representative present. If a Trade Union representative is present and is an employee of the County Council, he/she will qualify for paid time off
- Form PO3 must be completed at an early stage, to enable the County Council to monitor incidents and review policy
- all parties including witnesses should be identified at this time. If those involved are work colleagues the County Council's [Disciplinary Procedure](#) should be followed
- where possible/practicable talk to the individual(s) who provoked the incident(s), and if they are an employee he/she must be interviewed
- consider a police report, particularly if an injury has been sustained or if the aggressor has a history of violence. If the employee who has been subjected to violence does not wish to involve the police, then they should be advised of their rights and the outcome recorded. This will not, however, automatically mean that the incident is not reported to the police. While employee views will be taken into account, the decision on police involvement is a management responsibility. (Where a report is made to the Police, this should be recorded on the PO3.)
- consider asking the Legal Division to send a formal letter to difficult persons warning them of possible legal action if violent or threatening behaviour is continued
- if the aggressor is a non-employee and may use the services of the County Council, the relevant Directorate/Division should be informed
- if trade union representatives have not been involved, you should consider advising them

Training

Risk assessment will determine the most appropriate level(s) of training: It is essential that training is matched to need, because over training can cause undue concern for employees.

Lincs2Learn – Conflict Management Training

An e-learning Conflict Management training course is now available on Lincs2Learn and is open for all employees to undertake. It's strongly recommended that all employees complete this basic level of conflict training.

Click [here](#) to access the Lincs2Learn – Conflict Management Training

Classroom based – Conflict Management Training

For large groups of employee or employees that are at a higher risk of violence at work a classroom based Conflict Management Course is available. Please contact the [Corporate Health & Safety team](#) for further details.

6. PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO VIOLENCE AT WORK

The County Council recognises the traumatic consequences of being subjected to violence, and is committed to providing full support to employees who have been subjected to violence and abuse at work.

Employees who are subjected to physical or verbal abuse at work should be able to seek advice, support and counselling in total confidence. Provisions for aftercare and counselling should be openly discussed, in order that employees know exactly what is available to them. The Employee Support and Counselling Service is available in all cases.

If an employee requests support or counselling, or there is obvious distress (including distress caused to other members of the victim's family or colleagues), then the Employee Support and Counselling Service should be contacted on the employee's behalf, but only with their agreement.

If a severe physical injury is sustained whilst on duty, resulting in disablement, employees may be entitled to an award/allowance under the County Council Scheme for Injury Awards. If they meet the criteria they must be made aware of their eligibility. See document [Injury Awards Scheme](#).

Advice should be taken from the [Insurance Section](#) if loss or damage occurs to the personal effects of an employee.

Employees sustaining an injury because of a violent attack may be able to claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA). To do this, the applicant must take all reasonable steps to inform the police. The CICA may also consider cases where another body or person has been informed, subject to this being appropriate. Medical expenses relating to a claim from the Authority may be reimbursed, at the discretion of the County Council. Application forms and full details of this scheme are available from:

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, Alexander Bain House, Atlantic Quay, 15 York Street, Glasgow, G2 8JQ
For more information see [Here](#)

Employees who are trade union members may also be entitled to assistance from their union.

7. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ABSENCE, LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

Time Off Work

Where employees request time off work because of a violent incident, for example to make a statement or attend court, this should normally be granted as paid leave. Where employees initiate civil proceedings and the County Council feels unable to support this, unpaid or annual leave provisions apply. Where the County Council is supporting an action, witnesses may also qualify for paid special leave.

Legal Assistance

Advice should be sought from [Legal Services](#) to determine whether legal advice/assistance is available.

Disciplinary Procedure

Where an employee has committed or threatened to commit a violent act the [Disciplinary Procedure](#) should be followed.

8. COMMITTEE REFERENCE

Personnel Sub-Committee 8 October 1993.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

[G1 Health and Safety Policy](#)

[G21 Employment of Young Persons](#)

[G4 Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences](#)

[Safe and Secure GEORGE page](#)

[Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

[Grievance and Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure](#)

[Injury Awards Scheme](#)

[Corporate Customer Service Policy](#)

Employee Leaflets are available from Business Services.

Further information is also available from the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk.

10. ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Please contact the [Corporate Health and Safety](#) team, or your HR Adviser if harassment or discrimination issues are involved.

11. LEGISLATION

The Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999