1. **OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE**

Violence and Aggression in the Workplace is one of a number of health and safety management standards forming the Trust’s Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy written arrangements in compliance with general duties under the [Health and](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents)  [Safety at Work Act 1974](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents)

Physical violence or aggressive behaviour directed towards Trust employees whilst they are at work is unacceptable. This Standard sets out the corporate policy and procedures to prevent and respond to work related incidents of violence and aggression.

1. **RESPONSIBILITY**

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this standard belongs to Executive Management, Development Managers and Development Officers who are responsible for ensuring arrangements are fully implemented within their areas of control.

Services will need to supplement this standard with written details of the local arrangements in place, including completed risk assessments where risks of violence and aggression have been identified and preventative strategies and interventions to reduce any identified risks as far as reasonably practicable.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires that reasonable steps are taken to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees whilst they are at work. This includes provisions to protect against violent and aggressive behaviour, as far as is reasonably practical.

Physical violence and aggressive behaviour directed towards Trust employees whilst they are at work is unacceptable. Any person abusing an employee of the Trust either verbally or physically may be subject to legal action and/ or a restriction in service provision.

The Trust’s ***Workplace Violence Policy Statement*** sets out Management’s commitment towards reducing incidents and supporting employees who are subjected to violence whilst at work. The Policy Statement and accompanying poster are included as appendices.

Executive Management and Development Managers have overall responsibility for ensuring suitable prevention and control strategies are in place to reduce the risk of violence towards employees. Managers/Officers must ensure that risk assessments identify any potential for violence and aggression towards employees and that appropriate risk control procedures and interventions are put into place to prevent or reduce those risks.

One of the best tools against workplace violence is awareness and prevention. Suitable crisis intervention training will therefore be made available to employees who have been identified as being at risk; enabling them to recognise the potential triggers for violence and aggression and thereby de-escalate or remove themselves from the situation, as appropriate.

# VIOLENCE AT WORK

* 1. **Definition of work related violence**

The Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) definition of work related violence is ***‘any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work’.***

Violence at work and the threat of it can affect both the psychological and physical wellbeing of employees and may lead to low morale, stress and absenteeism.

Workplace violence includes:

* + - Physical attacks
    - Threatening behaviour, such as throwing objects or destroying property
    - Verbal threats
    - Abusive language, such as racial/sexual abuse and derogatory comments
    - Posturing
    - Harassment or intimidation.

Incidents of violence can be:

* + - Instigated by service users, members of the public, children and young people or colleagues
    - A single incident or involve more systematic patterns of behaviour
    - Range from minor incidents to more serious acts, including criminal offences which require the intervention of the Police.
  1. **Who is at risk?**

People who deal directly with the public and lone workers are most at risk of violence in the workplace. Within Trust services, employees who are most at risk are those who work in:

* + - Frontline staff in public offices (both face to face contact and via the telephone)
    - Public places, for example working outside
    - Working in the community

Violence towards employees arises primarily because the work involves contact with a wide range of people in circumstances which may be potentially challenging or aggravating, including:

* + - Providing or withholding a service
    - Receipt of negative correspondence, for example debit recovery, upholding the no refund policy
    - Lone working
    - Out of hours working
    - Travelling and working in the community, including the Leisure at the Heart of Every Community Project
    - Carrying out inspections or enforcement duties
    - Working with children, young people and adults who have additional support needs or emotional or behavioural issues
    - Working with people under the influence of alcohol or drugs
    - Working with people with mental health issues.
  1. **Risk Factors**

The HSE have identified individual risk factors which could lead to violent and aggressive behaviour, including:

* + - Impatience
    - Frustration
    - Anxiety
    - Resentment
    - Alcohol/drugs and inherent aggression and mental problems.

Any of the above individual risk factors could lead to violent behaviour and therefore need to be considered within the risk assessment process. For example, it is reasonably foreseeable that people being held waiting in a reception area for prolonged periods will become impatient and frustrated, therefore clear processes need to be in place to assist people as quickly as possible to reduce this risk.

* 1. **Post incident response**

Managers of employees who have been subjected to violence at work should be aware of the affect that a violent incident may have on an individual and offer appropriate post incident support.

Following a violent incident, particularly if there has been a physical assault; the first priority must be for the wellbeing of the victim and the need for any medical treatment. Where required, an ambulance and/ or the Police should be called and the employee’s line manager notified as soon as possible.

It is important to gather as much information about the incident as possible, including the aggressor details and witness statements where possible to enable accurate reporting and, where appropriate, further investigation of the incident.

Incidents of violence and aggression towards employees should be reported through the SHE system.

Managers of employees who have been the victims of violence and aggression should meet with the employee as soon as possible following the incident to discuss the circumstances and offer support, including referral to the Trust’s Employee Counselling Service, where appropriate.

It is recognised, however, that in some circumstances a formal meeting will be neither practical nor required by the employee; for example in cases of non-threatening verbal outbursts (venting) or known behaviours, e.g. clients with special needs outburst.

In circumstances where the employee feels that a meeting is not required, it is sufficient to record the incident on the SHE system. However, in all circumstances where an employee feels a meeting with their manager to discuss an incident is necessary, this should be facilitated.

In situations, where incidents of violence and aggression are re-occurring and patterns are developing, for example, involving the same assailant or employee; Managers must follow internal procedures by supporting the person involved; reviewing the control measures within the risk assessment and ensuring that incident(s) are recorded on the SHE system. In appropriate circumstances, such as a serious assault against an employee a member of the Executive Management Team should be notified.

* 1. **Risk Assessment**

The first step in the prevention of violence is to carry out a risk assessment of the specific work locations, work activities or in some cases, individual service users where it is identified that there is a risk of violence occurring.

Assessments should be carried out by managers/officer with a thorough knowledge of the work activity. Trade Union representatives and/ or employees should be consulted throughout the assessment process and encouraged to contribute suggestions as to how risks can be reduced.

Types of violence in the workplace should be considered in the same way as any other hazard. The risk assessment should:

* + - **Identify** the risk of violence associated with the work location or activity and employees who are at risk
    - **Record** any risk control measure/s which are already in place
    - **Evaluate** the risk and potential severity of violence occurring
    - **Decide** on whether additional risk control measures are required to further reduce the risk to employees
    - **Communicate and implement** the completed assessment to employees at risk
    - **Monitor and review** the risk assessment to ensure it remains effective

The assessment process should not be restricted to violent incidents which have already occurred but should also consider whether there may be any known patterns of violence in other similar work locations or activities, both within and outwith the Trust.

Some employee groups may be more vulnerable to the risk of violence than others, for example new or expectant mothers, young or inexperienced workers or lone workers.

The information gathered during the risk assessment process should identify significant risks and enable management to:

* + - Clearly identify specific locations or activities where employees interaction with others could place them at risk from violence
    - Determine if risk reduction measures are sufficient or if additional risk controls/ interventions are required
    - Provide employees with information about minimising the risk to themselves through instruction, information and training

Following any adverse incident, the risk assessments must be reviewed and amended accordingly.

* 1. **Lone Working**

Lone workers are employees who work by themselves without any close or direct supervision. In some situations this may make them more susceptible to the risk of violence, particularly when working with people with unpredictable behaviour, providing services to people in their own homes or travelling and working in remote locations.

Lone working should be considered within the risk assessment process where it is identified that it could increase the risk of violence towards an employee.

The most common risks associated with lone working are:-

* + - Geographical locations. Certain areas where there is an increased risk.
    - Alcohol and drug use by clients or members of the public which the lone worker comes in contact with.
    - Nature of the job, for example Ranger.
    - Late evening/early morning work or unsocial hours.
    - Behaviour of the employee or member of the public. For example, highly emotional, unpredictable or aggressive.

As part of the process five key questions should be asked:

* + - Can the work can be undertaken safely by a single person?
    - Is there a “flag” or alert in place regarding attending a premises alone?
    - Is the employee medically fit and able to work alone?
    - Is the employee more vulnerable to working alone than others, for example new or expectant mothers or young/ inexperienced workers?
    - What arrangements are required to ensure the lone worker is at no more risk than employees working together?

These key questions will act as a helpful prompt when identifying the risks to employees who work alone from violence and aggression.

* 1. **Preventative strategies**

An effective method to eliminate or reduce the risk of violence is to **plan, design and organise** the work activity in a way which minimises employee exposure to potential risks.

Managers should therefore continually review the working arrangements to determine if the precautions in place are adequate or whether more could be done to further reduce the risk. It is likely that a combination of preventative strategies will be required to manage any identified risks effectively.

Factors which should always be considered when determining suitable risk control measures are:

* + - The physical environment
    - Security systems
    - The design of the work activity
    - Training and information provided to employees.
  1. **The physical environment**

It is important that employees working in Trust buildings feel safe. Good design and physical security planning can, in part, help to achieve this by reducing the risk of incidents of violence. The physical environment should therefore always be considered within the overall preventative strategy.

Public areas, such as receptions and service desks, should provide adequate security and protection for employees, whilst still allowing effective contact and communication with service users. These areas should be designed with good visibility and with methods to prevent unauthorised access.

Some other examples of ways the physical environment can help to reduce the risk of violence include:

* + - Corporate signage clearly stating that violence towards Trust employees will not be tolerated
    - Clear directional signage and instructions for visitors and service users to help prevent impatience and irritation
    - Avoiding any objects within these areas which could potentially be used as a weapon or thrown
    - Specially designed counters e.g. extended counters to prevent grabbing or striking
    - Protective screens around public interface/ cash handing desks

Positive environmental features which are known to reduce the risks from people becoming impatient and irritated, thereby reducing the risk of violent and aggressive behaviour, includes:

* + - The use of colour and lighting to influence mood e.g. bright and comfortable reception areas painted in pastel colours
    - Noise reduction
    - Provision of clear information screens

Environmental control measures need to be backed up with procedures which treats service users in a timely and respectful manner, and provides them with prompt and adequate information.

* 1. **Security measures**

There may be circumstances where the layout of the building or personal security issues increases the risk of violent incidents to employees. The risk assessment should take individual situations into account when identifying what security measures are required, and utilise appropriate procedures or systems to reduce the risk, for example:

* + - Restricting access, where appropriate
    - Restricting the number of entrance/exit points
    - Installing entry control systems
    - Installing surveillance systems
    - Installing fixed panic buttons
    - Issuing personal alarms
    - Means of communication i.e. phones
  1. **The work task/activity**

Where a work task or activity has an identifiable risk of violence occurring, managers should consider ways of altering or adapting patterns of work to reduce the risks to employees or others who may be at risk.

Suitable precautions should be put in place for those who work within the community, including the Leisure At The Heart Of Every Community Project or working in areas where violent incidents have been known to occur, for example:

* + - Leaving itineraries of visits/ working sites with a responsible person
    - Checking records for previous incidents of violent behaviour
    - Carrying out duties in pairs
    - Carrying a personal alarm and mobile phone
    - Periodic reporting back to base
    - Bringing service users into the base for meetings rather than meeting people in their home, wherever practical

Employees should always be provided with information to enable them to identify service users with a history of violence or anticipate situations which might make violence more likely.

* 1. **Employee responsibility**

Employees have personal responsibility for their own behaviour and should act in a way that does not provoke or increase the possibility of violence occurring. Techniques should be applied to help to de-escalate an incident i.e. trying to defuse a confrontational situation and avoid violence. These include:

* + - Acting responsibly at all times
    - Communicating effectively e.g. keeping people informed when they might be kept waiting
    - Avoiding confrontation, especially in front of an audience, the fewer the people involved in an incident the easier it is for the aggressor to back down without losing face
    - Giving the aggressor space, staying calm and speaking slowly so as not to be drawn into heated argument.
    - Allow the aggressor to have his or her say without interruption.
    - Avoiding aggressive body language such as standing in front of or moving too close to the aggressor or maintaining constant eye contact
    - Avoiding raising the voice
  1. **Training and Information**

Those who may be exposed to violence in the workplace need to be aware of the risks and how to deal with an incident should it occur. Appropriate conflict management training will enable employees to recognise the early signs of potentially violent situations and provide them with the skills necessary to avoid these situations or de-escalate any situations which arise.

Typically, crisis management training will include:

* + - The causes of violent behaviour
    - Warning signs
    - Preventative strategies
    - Managing confrontation
    - Interpersonal skills
    - Systems support
    - After incident support and care

Crisis management training may also include “enhanced” modules covering breakaway techniques and, where relevant, approved holding techniques.

Training should be provided which is proportionate to the risks which have been identified. For example, employees who work at a reception desk are only likely to require training on conflict de-escalation techniques, whilst those who routinely deal with challenging service users are likely to require enhanced training.

Some Sections within the Trust, due to the potentially challenging environments they work in, will require enhanced crisis management training and will also require to undergo refresher training on a rolling programme.

Further information on the training is available at: <http://eacintranet/Services/HealthandSafety/Bulletins/Bulletins-2016/Conflict-Management-Training-Info.pdf>

**It should be noted that crisis management training is not a substitute for safe systems and safe places of work;** it should be seen as part of an overall risk assessment and preventative strategy.

* 1. **Reporting incidents of violence**

All incidents of violence towards employees should be reported through the Trust’s incident reporting system (SHE). This enables trends, patterns or habitual offenders to be identified and helps to develop and improve strategies for the reduction of violence in the workplace.

Where a member of the public, resident, client or contractor is subjected to any kind of violence in a premises/activity under the control of the Trust, the details surrounding the incident should also be recorded.

Managers should follow up reported incidents and wherever practical, put in place suitable interventions to prevent or minimise the risk of reoccurrence.

For further information on the Trust’s incident reporting system go to the Health and Safety Intranet page [Incident Reporting](http://eacintranet/Services/HealthandSafety/SHESystemIncidentReporting.aspx)

1. **FURTHER INFORMATION**
   1. **Contact Information**

Health and Safety Strategy Group, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust

E Mail: [EALHealthandSafety@eastayrshireleisure.com](mailto:EALHealthandSafety@eastayrshireleisure.com)

Intranet: [Health & Safety](https://leisurenet/admin-docs/health-safety/)

Health and Safety Section East Ayrshire Council

E Mail: [healthandsafety@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

EAC Intranet:[Health and Safety](http://eacintranet/Services/HealthandSafety/HealthandSafety.aspx)

* 1. **External Sources of Information**

Further useful information about violence in the workplace can found in a number of Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance documents including:

***Preventing workplace harassment and violence***

[**http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/preventing-workplace-harassment.pdf**](http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/preventing-workplace-harassment.pdf)

***Violence at work: A guide for employers***

[**http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf**](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf)

***Violence in health and social care*** [***http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/violence/index.htm***](http://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/violence/index.htm)

***Working alone***

[**http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf**](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf)

***General information*** [***http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/information.htm***](http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/information.htm)

# WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY STATEMENT

Violence at work can be defined as *“Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”*

The Trust is committed to reducing acts of violence directed towards employees while at work. Executive Management and Development Managers view violent or aggressive behaviour as unacceptable and any person known to abuse Trust employees, either verbally or physically may be subject to legal action and/ or a restriction in service provision.

Violence and aggression behaviour directed towards employees will be reduced as far as is reasonably practicable. This will be achieved by adopting a risk assessment approach and having in place effective preventative strategies and interventions to minimise the risk to employees.

The guidance provided in the Violence in the Workplace Standard, supports this Policy Statement and is designed to help managers ensure that:

* The risks of violence to employees in the workplace are identified and assessed, as far as is reasonably practical
* Employees are actively involved in the risk assessment process and the outcome of assessments are fully communicated to those at risk
* Suitable preventative strategies and interventions are developed and implemented in Trust workplaces where there is a risk of violence
* Employees are provided with information, instruction and training to enable them to avoid and / or deal effectively with violence in the workplace
* Employees are actively encouraged to report incidents of violence through the Trust’s incident reporting system to enable trends, patterns or habitual offenders to be identified
* Post incident support mechanisms for individuals who have been the victim of violence at work are in place.

**WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POSTER**

