Tackling Violence Against Staff

Best Practice Guidelines for Retailers

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Freedom from Fear

Foreword

This document has been developed by members of the British Retail Consortium's Tackling Retail Violence Working Group with the intention of providing helpful advice to retailers to help protect their staff from violence, threatening behaviour and abuse against their staff.

Retail is at the heart of local communities, employing close to three million staff across the country and providing important local goods and services to consumers. The sector is an essential contributor to economic growth and to the regeneration of areas affected by crime and disorder.

All too often retailers, their staff and their customers experience or witness crime and anti-social behaviour. The latest Annual Retail Crime Survey, published by the BRC in January 2014, showed that the direct cost of retail crime was £511m in 2012-13.

Although some progress has been made in tackling the issue, violence against staff remains an unacceptable threat to the health and wellbeing of the retail sector's three million employees. In 2012-13 there were 38 incidents of violence and abuse per 1,000 staff reported in the Retail Crime Survey.

In areas where there is a greater fear of violence and intimidation, retailers report a greater turnover of staff and higher incidents of sickness and absence. Unfortunately many employees now appear to accept this abuse as 'part of the job'.

Aim of Guidelines

The aim of the BRC's guidelines for retailers is to increase awareness of the impact that violence and abuse has on retail employees and to challenge the perception that it is acceptable. The guidelines will encourage greater reporting of incidents by outlining good practice examples of the support provided to retail employees facing violence and abuse in the workplace. The guidelines also promote greater prevention of offences by setting out good practice in identifying and responding to potential triggers for violence and abuse.

Who are these Guidelines for?

The guidelines are aimed to provide examples of proven best practice to help senior managers tackle increasing violence and abuse against retail staff.

What should they do with them?

The BRC Tackling Retail Violence Working Group strongly encourages the adoption and implementation wherever possible of the elements of best practice as described within these guidelines.

Guiding Principles

Although there are a number of suggestions within this document the most effective are often simple and cost little to implement.

The two high level guiding principles that retailers should strive to achieve are laid out below.

High Level Guiding Principles

There should be clear policies and procedures relating to violence in the workplace. These should be well communicated to retail staff so that they understand that violence in the workplace will not be tolerated and understand how the organisation will support them from violent or abusive acts. Training retail staff in conflict management helps them to identify potentially violent or abusive situations from escalating. Where practicable, training should be scaled according to the roles and responsibilities of individual employees.

Legislation

There are five main pieces of health and safety law which are relevant to protecting staff from violence in the workplace. These are:

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974 (HSW ACT)

Employers have a legal duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees, so far as is reasonably practicable.

THE MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK REGULATIONS 1999

Employers must assess the risks to employees and make arrangements for health and safety by effective:
- Planning
- Organisation
- Control
- Monitoring
- Review

THE REPORTING OF INJURIES, DISEASES AND DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES REGULATIONS 2013 (RIDDOR)

In the event of an accident at work to any employee resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for seven or more consecutive days, employers must notify their enforcing authority. This would include any act of non-consensual physical violence against a person at work.

SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES AND SAFETY COMMITTEES REGULATIONS 1977

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY (CONSULTATION WITH EMPLOYEES) REGULATIONS 1996

Employers must inform and consult with their employees in good time on matters relating to their health and safety.

What do companies and organisations need to do to comply?

Companies and organisations that take their obligations under health and safety law seriously are not likely to be in breach of the provisions.

Nonetheless, companies and organisations should keep their health and safety management systems under review, in particular, the way in which their activities are managed or organised by senior management.

What penalties will a company or organisation face?

Penalties will include unlimited fines, remedial orders and publicity orders. A remedial order will require a company or organisation to take steps to remedy any management failure that led to a death. The court can also impose an order requiring the company or organisation to publicise that it has been convicted of the offence, giving the details, the amount of any fine imposed and the terms of any remedial order made.

Assessment of risk

Tackling the risk of violence in the workplace is the same as dealing with other hazards, such as slips, trips and lifting heavy loads. By law employers are required to carry out a risk assessment.

To assess the risks of work-related violence retailers must:
1. Identify the hazards
2. Consider who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record the findings and implement them
5. Review the risk assessment and update it if necessary

Further information and advice can be found at:
www.hse.gov.uk/risk

Suggested simple risk assessment templates for small stores and higher risk employees can be found at:

www.brc.org.uk/downloads/
Example Individual Risk Assessment.docx

www.brc.org.uk/downloads/
Example Small Store Assessment.docx

Self-Assessment Survey

The following summary provides examples of recognised good practice from retailers when tackling violence against staff.

1.0 Developing a Policy

Ref No.	Guideline	Notes
1.1	**Retailers issue statement of intent**	The statement of intent makes it clear that violence against staff will not be tolerated.
	Good practice is to issue a statement which clearly shows endorsement from the CEO/Board.	
1.2	**Clear communication plan regarding work-related violence**	This raises awareness of reporting procedures, training and support services available for employees.
	Good practice is to include a clear definition of what constitutes work-related violence and inform employees of what will result from their reporting of incidents.	
1.3	**Robust reporting procedures**	This makes employees aware of the need to report incidents and informs them of what action will be taken once reports are received.
	Good practice is to regularly review reporting procedures and amend accordingly. Employees should be regularly updated and reminded about reporting procedures.	
1.4	**Support mechanisms**	Employees should be aware of how to access supporting mechanisms, for example occupational health, whistleblowing hotlines, victim support.
	Good practice is to ensure employees understand that access to support mechanisms is their choice and fully confidential.	
1.5	**Monitoring and review**	Risks should be regularly reviewed and processes/procedures amended accordingly. It is important to assess whether measures are having the desired impact and that tackling violence remains high on the agenda - regular discussions with employees and reviewing data sources on an on-going basis will ensure that appropriate action is taken where necessary.
	Good practice ensures that employees are aware of amendments and consulted on how and why decisions have been reached.	
1.6	**Resource to risk model**	Internal and external data sources can be used to inform the risk profile of the workplace and guide decisions on the appropriate level of protection required.
	Good practice is to ensure that employees are aware of how the model is used to provide appropriate protection/mitigation. Employees should understand the relationship between accurate reporting and provision of resource/protective security.	

2.0 WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Ref No.	Guideline	Notes
2.1	**Salesfloor layout**	Where possible ensure adequate visibility of the salesfloor area. Exits and entrances need to be kept clear of obstruction. Mirrors can be used to highlight blind spots.
	Good practice is to have a transparent shop front, free of clutter, making it possible to see what is going on both inside and outside the shop.	
2.2	**Security equipment**	CCTV and other security equipment should be in good working order. CCTV should cover all vulnerable parts of the store, including entrance/exit and till points. In an area of heightened risk panic buttons or cords can be installed. Personal alarms linked to a centralised control point could be considered for staff most at risk.
	Good practice is to ensure equipment is regularly reviewed, updated accordingly and provides a good level of evidence-based quality. Guidance on CCTV can be found at: *http://www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/data_protection/topic_guides/cctv.aspx*	
2.3	**Lighting**	Good lighting inside and outside retail premises creates a more secure environment and improves visibility.
	Good practice is to ensure good lighting of entrances/exits, customer parking areas and delivery areas.	
2.4	**Payment point**	Removal of cash from tills should be completed frequently and securely.
	Good practice is to ensure that there is an effective process to ensure that cash in tills is kept reduced to an acceptable level and that all till operators are security awareness trained.	
2.5	**Signage**	Signage makes it clear to staff and customers that abuse against staff will not be tolerated. It also indicates that CCTV is recording and will be used if necessary.
	Good practice includes using signage to remove triggers for abuse, e.g. clearly stating refund policies and where applicable, under age sales policies. (see also 3.4).	

BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM

3.0   PREVENTION

Ref No.	Guideline	Notes
3.1	**Plan of action**	Implementation of a plan of action ensures that managers and supervisors are available during peak trading times to deal with any potentially violent or abusive incident.
	Good practice is to plan staffing levels according to the risk profile and peak trading times.	
3.2	**Identifying and responding to potential triggers**	Employees should be aware of how to identify and diffuse situations that may lead to violence or abuse.
	Good practice is to ensure that all employees are trained in conflict management training. This should be scaled according to the roles and responsibilities of each employee and should apply to all staff including home delivery drivers and security guards.	
3.3	**Cash handling policies/ procedures**	Retail staff need to be aware of clear well documented policies and procedures on the efficient transfer of cash.
	Good practice is to reinforce staff awareness through regular staff training.	
3.4	**Signage**	Clear signage on refunds, age-related sales, CCTV and Civil Recovery ensures that customers understand the company policy and can stop incidents escalating into violence/abuse.
	Good practice is to ensure that visible signage in store supports staff to reinforce policies that may cause situations to escalate into violence, for example, clearly state the company's refund and age-related sales policies.	
3.5	**Lone working/key holder**	Robust policies and regular training of staff ensures that retail staff with key holder responsibility and/or lone workers are aware of how to effectively prevent and respond to violence/ abuse and the support networks available to them.
	Good practice is to ensure that a risk assessment has been conducted and discussed with relevant employees (see links to risk assessment templates on p.3). Appropriate measures should then be deployed to respond to heightened areas of risk, for example lone worker devices/outsourced key holding in areas of heightened risk.	
3.6	**Partnership working**	Developing effective relationships with police and local crime reduction partnerships ensures that key areas of risk have been identified and effective solutions reached. Contact details for local policing teams can be found via www.police.uk
	Good practice examples of partnership working can be found at: *http://www.tacklingretailcrimetogether.co.uk* *This includes Employer Supported Policing where retail staff are trained as special constables, thus have the knowledge and powers to effectively deal with violent or abusive situations.* *Guidance for stores on how to work with local policing teams can be found at:* *http://www.brc.org.uk/trct/downloads/Neighbourhood%20Policing%20Guidance%20for%20Stores.doc*	

4.0   TRAINING

Ref No.	Guideline	Notes
4.1	**Regular training of employees**	Staff should have training which enables them to clearly identify and diffuse potential situations from escalating to violence or abuse.
	Good practice is to ensure that training is provided to appropriate staff on induction and regularly updated and assessed. Different levels of training may be required depending on employee's responsibilities and in areas assessed as being at higher risk. It is important that retailers maintain a comprehensive record of training provided.	
4.2	**Travel**	If employees are required to travel for business purposes either in the UK or abroad they should be aware of how and where to obtain advice on potential risks.
	Good practice is to include travel for business purposes in risk assessments, whether this is in the UK or abroad. Retail staff should be provided with a list of general precautions and guidelines to follow when travelling – this should include a list of contact numbers that may be needed and information on how staff should get help in the event of a problem. *If travelling overseas the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website should be checked for specific risks for the country of travel and necessary precautions required -* *http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/*	
4.3	**Risk awareness communication/training**	Regular meetings with staff will ensure that they understand the risk profile of their workplace, learn to respond accordingly and have the opportunity to raise any areas of concern.
	Good practice is to ensure that training and communication is with all staff in and out of store, including home delivery drivers and security guards.	
4.4	**Identifying and responding to triggers**	Training can be adapted to ensure that employees are aware of how to deal with specific triggers for violence/abuse, for example, refusal of under-age sales.
	Good practice is to reinforce training with signage, such as Challenge 25 badges/posters and also by utilising till prompts.	
4.5	**Intervention**	Specific policies and training help to ensure that staff who are expected to use intervention techniques do so safely.
	Good practice is to ensure that the use of intervention is restricted to those who have been specifically trained in intervention techniques.	

5.0   REPORTING

Ref No.	Guideline	Notes
5.1	**Tackling under-reporting**	Employees should be aware of reporting processes (who and how to report). It is important that they understand how their reporting can make a difference i.e. extra resources/ security in areas with heightened risk.
	Good practice is to hold regular meetings with employees to allow them to raise concerns and request feedback on the reporting process/policies.	
5.2	**Reporting to police**	Reporting incidents to the police will heighten the awareness of the police and therefore ensure that where necessary, appropriate action is taken, including prosecution. While it is the employee's decision to pursue any action against the offender, they should be aware that they will be supported by the retailer throughout the process.
	Good practice is to encourage staff to complete a Victim Personal Statement (Impact Statement) when reporting the incident to the police. More information can be found at: http://www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/reporting_a_crime/victims_personal_statement.html

In addition to an individual Victim Personal Statement, an Impact Statement for Business can also be completed, to explain how a crime has affected the business. More information: http://www.police.uk/information-and-advice/impact-statement-for-business/ | |
5.3	**Evidence gathering**	When investigating a suspected criminal offence, evidence should be obtained as quickly as possible – this will provide proof of a criminal act and support any police investigation.
	Good practice is to gather as much evidence as possible from people who may have witnessed the offence taking place.	
5.4	**Banning offenders from store**	In addition to criminal prosecution, there are other legal options available to protect staff. Customers who are violent or persistently abusive or threatening can be banned from the store.
5.5	**Reporting of internal wrongdoing**	Employees should be aware of how to report incidents involving abuse or violence from colleagues within the workplace.
	Good practice is to provide information and advice on how employees can report wrongdoing by colleagues in the workplace on induction. This should be regularly reinforced.	
5.6	**RIDDOR**	Injuries connected with work activities, including those resulting from violence, may be reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).
	Good practice and further information on what to report and how to report can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/riddor	

6.0   POST INCIDENT

Ref No.	Guideline	Notes
6.1	**Supporting Mechanisms**	Employees should be aware of what support is available to them following an incident, for example, Victim Support, Occupational Health or through their trade union.
	Good practice is to ensure that there are clearly understood protocols to provide reassurance to employees affected by violence or abuse and that the support will be on-going throughout any sickness/ absence and if pursuing the case through the criminal justice system. Relocating employees on their return to work may need to be considered dependent on the circumstances.	
6.2	**Providing Reassurance**	Reassurance should be provided to employees who may also have been indirectly affected by the incident.
	Good practice is to ensure that concerns of employees are clearly understood. This can be achieved by use of 'listening groups'. Where practicable employees should be involved in discussions about how to prevent possible future incidents.	
6.3	**Review the Risk Assessment**	Following an incident the risk assessment procedures should be revisited, risk reassessed and any further control measures identified.
	Good practice is to involve employees affected as well as local police and/or crime reduction initiatives to ensure any remaining concerns have been identified and solutions sought.	

About these Guidelines

These guidelines are a current 'snapshot' of good practice. This will change over time and the document will be regularly reviewed. Suggestions for improvements are welcomed and should be made to the BRC. Our Heads of Security Group will approve changes annually following consultation with key stakeholders which will be carried out through the auspices of the Tackling Retail Violence Working Group.

Implementation of the guidelines is down to individual BRC members. Any dispute arising from the application of these proposals will be the responsibility of the individual companies concerned to resolve.

If you have any questions about the guidelines or would like to obtain further information on tackling violence against staff, please contact:

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