

Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression in the Workplace: Tools and Strategies



Healthy
Working
Lives



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Foreword

The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (SCHWL), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) welcome the opportunity to collaborate in producing this guidance, which aims to provide a tool for those working in local authorities, whether they are practitioners, managers, individual workers or elected members, in protecting staff from the very real threat of verbal abuse, threats and occasionally physical assault.

The protection of staff from third party violence and aggression in the workplace is not only an aspiration, it must be a societal imperative. Those who serve the public in any guise deserve no less, but this will not be achieved with simplistic responses to problems of acknowledged complexity.

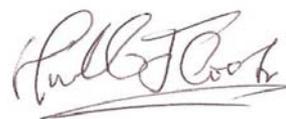
The impact of being on the receiving end of repeated insults and verbal abuse can be as significant as being physically assaulted, and can contribute to long-term health problems such as stress and depression. Being proactive in planning to help staff manage such violence when it occurs can dramatically improve not only their working lives, but their overall health and wellbeing. The associated benefits for the organisation are immeasurable.

In compiling this guidance, our approach has been to raise awareness of the reasons behind why some violence occurs, and to provide tools to manage it in a way that supports the health and wellbeing of staff.

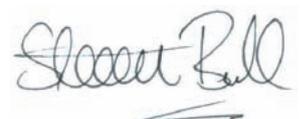
We value their contribution and participation in keeping the challenges this may present in many workplaces under review. For those working in areas such as learning disability and mental health it is unrealistic to promote a zero tolerance approach, but with careful management, risks can at least be minimised.

This guidance is intended to be used to compare its recommendations against existing standards, and to encourage the involvement of staff in agreeing and monitoring procedures. In so doing, it is hoped that this will contribute to reflecting a high level of health, wellbeing and organisational performance in local authorities, which will in turn promote the sector as an exemplar in good practice to which others can aspire. Indeed, the approaches set out will be of value to those working in other sectors.

Special thanks must go to those from a range of local authorities in Scotland, without whom this document could not have been compiled. The combined experience from health and safety and training specialists, UNISON, and the STUC has resulted in a document which is not only unique in its approach, but will serve to provide a baseline for local authorities and others, with which to compare standards for the foreseeable future.



COSLA signatory



HWL signatory



STUC signatory

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Introduction

Having a job is one of the most important aspects of a person's life. It doesn't just provide financial benefits; it allows development of occupational and social skills, experience, and gaining of confidence and satisfaction, particularly when it is related to serving the needs of the community.

Over one million people in Scotland deal with the public as part of their daily working routine, and for the majority of the time this is carried out in an environment of mutual respect or at the very least in a non-threatening way. However, if you work with the public, you are potentially vulnerable to being verbally abused or threatened and occasionally physically assaulted.

Current research shows that much of this will go unrecorded and often unremarked. However, the unseen psychological effect of single or repeated, unreciprocated incidents of verbal abuse can leave damaging effects. The attrition effect of verbal abuse can wear someone down, both mentally and physically.

If everyone else around seems to be coping, this can produce feelings of isolation, stress, fear and anxiety, which can easily tip over into depression. This can impact severely on the self-esteem and morale of those providing essential services to communities, and outweigh many of the benefits of having a job in the first place.

Many people, including employees and their managers, appear to believe that violence or aggression (often occurring as a product of consumer dissatisfaction, whether justified or not) cannot be prevented or is something that just has to be endured. The notion that any form of violence or aggression is acceptable needs to be challenged organisationally, whether it is held by employees themselves, managers, or elected members or the public.

Taking positive action to protect staff has been shown to benefit the whole organisation, through:

- ▶ reducing costly complaints - employers not only bear the direct cost of legal liabilities and lost work but have to commit resources to deal with this, in terms of direct costs of reduced efficiency and productivity
- ▶ lower staff turnover
- ▶ lower recruitment and pension costs
- ▶ reducing immediate and long-term disruption to interpersonal relationships
- ▶ reduced absenteeism due to stress
- ▶ improvements in the quality of service provided
- ▶ maintaining a positive reputation or image of organisation
- ▶ high morale
- ▶ enhanced productivity
- ▶ positive corporate image – being seen to be 'an employer of choice'.

The consequences of doing nothing, or having ineffective policies and procedures can have serious repercussions for the organisation. This could involve litigation costs, as well as affecting the wider community in terms of the costs of health care and long-term rehabilitation, unemployment and retraining for victims. It also contributes to social mistrust, a lack of unity, and fear.

Consequences at the workplace:

- ▶ Sickness absence.
- ▶ Immediate and often long-term disruption to interpersonal relationships.
- ▶ The organisation of work and the overall working environment, usually leading to deterioration in the quality of service provided.
- ▶ Compensation claims – employers not only bear the direct cost of legal liabilities and lost work, but have to commit resources to deal with direct costs of reduced efficiency and productivity.
- ▶ A deterioration in the quality of service provided, high staff turnover and difficulty in recruiting or retaining qualified personnel.
- ▶ Loss in reputation or image of the organisation.

Aims

By collating the advice and examples of good practice in this document it is intended to:

- ▶ provide a tool for departmental and line managers, trades union safety representatives and trainers, so that they can compare existing systems with those that have been identified as good practice. Appropriate systems can then be improved or put in place to protect and support employees once an incident has occurred
- ▶ encourage the participation of employees in developing local solutions to protect themselves and their colleagues
- ▶ suggest ways in which local authorities can enable employees, who may currently feel powerless, to manage situations.

To achieve this, the document has been drawn together in three distinct parts, each designed to be used in conjunction with any or all of those remaining. These are:

- ▶ **Section A**
A collation of good practice across local authorities in Scotland
A guide for practitioners to compare with existing measures
- ▶ **Section B**
Understanding, recognising and managing aggression for frontline employees
Information for use by employees to help maintain their own safety
- ▶ **Section C**
Appendices
Examples of resources considered to be good practice, which can be used and adapted freely.

A number of terms have been used throughout to avoid unnecessary repetition:

Term	Description	Example
Service user	A person who interacts or has an interest in receiving services, or for whom engaging with such a person falls within the remit of the job	Clients, their families/friends or other third parties Members of the public
Strangers	Random contact, where perpetrators have no interest in receiving the service provided	Passers-by Opportunists committing a crime Opportunists intervening in transactions with service users
Employee	Anyone involved with, employed by, or contracted to delivering a service by the organisation	Staff members Contractors and their employees Elected members
Managers	Those involved in formulating policy and/or procedures or guidance to employees	Chief executive Departmental managers Team/line managers Trades union safety representatives

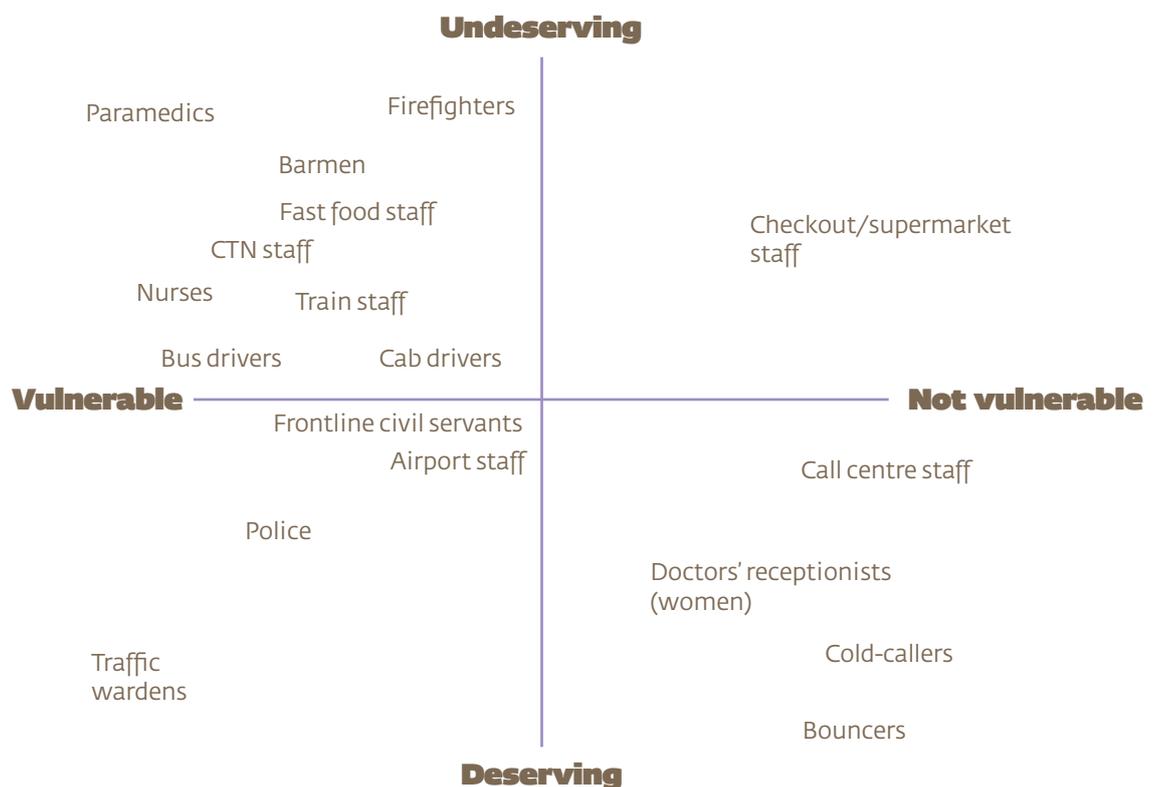
Statistics and research

Scottish Government research in 2005 indicated that many thought putting up with violence was just part of the job and were unaware of what can constitute a crime, e.g. spitting or verbal abuse. Consequently it is difficult to assess the exact level of abusive behaviour in Scotland. Anecdotally, this would appear to be high, but statistics – where they exist – need to be treated with caution due to a known culture of under-reporting.

The Scottish Crime and Victimisation Survey in 2006 assessed the level of violence against public-facing workers as 10% being physically assaulted and 38% verbally abused each year.

In its annual survey on Violent Assaults on Public Service Staff in Scotland (2008), UNISON estimated that those assaults that were reported against people working in local government had risen by nearly 3,000 in the previous year.
www.unison-scotland.org.uk/safety/violencesurvey.pdf

Disturbingly, research carried out as part of a Scottish Government marketing campaign demonstrated that the public regard some public-facing workers as legitimate targets, believing that this 'goes with the job'. An illustration of the results is shown in the graph below:



NB: Points on the axis are relative rather than actual.

Source: TRBI (The Research Business International) (UK), Attitudes towards workers who deal with the public

Obviously this is unacceptable, but it makes sense to fully recognise the extent of the issue by being aware of the perceptions of the public and employees themselves, who away from work are also customers or service users. The need to minimise the extent of the problem, and actively promote a clear message to potential abusers that such behaviour is unacceptable, is absolutely imperative. However, with robust control measures, effective training for staff and managers and a positive atmosphere in the workplace which supports employees, this can be effectively managed.

In 2006 UNISON commissioned research to investigate the experience and impact of violence on care workers in a local authority area and their views on current practice and policy pertaining to violence in the workplace.

From the research, carried out by the Glasgow Centre for the Study of Violence at Glasgow Caledonian University, it is clear that carers often experience their jobs as violent. Physical aggression was experienced only occasionally; sexual harassment was more common, while verbal abuse was a frequent occurrence for most. Carers also feared the possibility of violence in the communities they visited when working alone and at night.

Aggression appeared to be more likely from service users and their families who failed to understand the role and duties of carers, as often these individuals had developed unreasonably high expectations of the service and became frustrated and confrontational when these expectations were not met.

There are clear comparisons with the hospitality industry in terms of the ethos of service and servitude, gender similarities and hierarchical work relationships. It has been noted that, 'Their status is also threatened by the ease with which service and servitude can be conflated, commodifying staff and providing opportunities for disrespectful treatment from those with more power, such as managers and customers. Service employees are often required to be compliant and deferential to customers and work in subservient roles.' (Poulston 2008).

Yet it is as difficult to obtain accurate figures on levels of violence in local authorities as it is in other sectors, due to a number of factors. The HSE note that the FIT3 employee survey (HSE 2009) suggests that 16% of workers have been subject to abuse or violence in the last three months, with 67% repeat assaults by the same perpetrator. The report, however, estimated that at least 33% of incidents at work are not reported. A number of reasons were identified in the FIT3 survey for non-reporting.

Table 2: Reasons for non-reporting. FIT3 Survey

Reasons for non-reporting	Percentage
Victim dealt with it themselves	44%
Too trivial to report	29%
Management would not have acted	14%
Victim didn't want to cause trouble	8%
Victim concerned it would make things worse	9%
Private/personal/family matter	1%
Something else	15%
Don't know	1%

Of note is that 23% of workers felt that management would not have acted or that reporting would have made things worse. Employees can believe that reporting will not benefit them, or fear that employers might deem the assaults to be the result of the worker's poor job performance (OSHA 2004).

Top-level support and commitment

Violence to employees at work is increasingly becoming a concern for those working with the public, and in local authorities there has never been a greater need to ensure that work practices effectively protect employees in the workplace from many different types of abuse, ranging from physical assaults to all forms of verbal and written abuse.

Those in other sectors look towards local authorities as exemplar employers, which necessitates a need to be constantly aware of new developments and how changes in our society are reflected if this part of the public sector is to continue to lead the way.

While most local authorities have taken steps to address the risks involved, the lack of consistency in the differing solutions offered, which are often produced in a 'one size fits all' format, is a cause for concern. Opportunities to share information and resources appear to have been missed, as well as the need to apply regular scrutiny to ensure that procedures are fit for purpose and designed to deal with the increasingly changing face of our communities or the environment in which local authority employees operate.

As a result, some employees can be left in distressing situations which impact on their health, their family life, the morale of colleagues and of course the organisation.

As with all workplace issues, senior management commitment provides the motivation, resources and time needed to address workplace violence effectively. Ensuring the success of a robust policy protecting employees from violence means

careful planning on an ongoing basis, with continuing active support from senior managers and elected members. A high profile joint approach, which values the commitment of employees and prioritises their safety can expect to:

- ▶ demonstrate organisational concern for employees' emotional and physical safety and health and wellbeing
- ▶ commit to the safety and health of the service user
- ▶ commit resources and be willing to support those changes in the work environment that will reduce the likelihood of violence
- ▶ involve all levels of employees as well as representative bodies in the development, implementation and ongoing operational management of the programme
- ▶ assign responsibility for various aspects of the workplace violence prevention programme to ensure managers, supervisors and employees understand their obligations.

Without support from senior managers, workplace violence prevention measures are likely to fail, employees may be needlessly harmed, property damaged or destroyed and services disrupted.

For success, however, senior management's commitment and drive for change is essential to maintain effective implementation on an ongoing basis.

Elected members - experiences and responsibilities

Elected members often have to deal with hostile and confrontational members of the public, constituents and users of council services. It is not unusual for this to take place in circumstances where an elected member is isolated from support and would be considered to be lone working if he or she were an employee.

Not only are elected members often placed in a position where they are at risk, they can also inadvertently contribute to creating risk for employees who have to deal with the issues brought to them by constituents.

All of this has to be carried out in a climate which recognises responsibilities under health and safety legislation that is specific to elected members as workforce managers.

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in *Think About Health and Safety* (2009) recommends that training programmes for elected members should include the same material as for any other employee, but must also make clear their responsibilities with regard to the need to protect staff, and that training therefore should reflect the development for elected members of:

- ▶ awareness of approaches to protect their own personal safety
- ▶ awareness of their role in promoting an organisational culture that is free of aggression and violence between employees or within management structures.

Unfortunately, it is apparent that take-up of existing training appears to be low across most authorities in Scotland. The causes for this 'lack of interest' have not been investigated, but it is clear that many may not be aware of the risks or responsibilities involved, and positive efforts are required to inform and persuade them to access this.

Information contained in Sections A and B of this document are as relevant to elected members as they are to employees, with regard to being aware of the dangers of their role and protecting themselves from aggressive behaviour, whatever the cause.

Responding to constituents

Clearly being an elected representative can be a complex and often thankless task. When demands of service users exceed the service available, elected members can be seen as an easy option to force the desired result. Aggressive insistence relayed through elected representatives can not only have an impact on the service delivered to others, but have a direct impact on those employees at the point of delivery.

Interacting with and supporting employees

Without doubt, elected members have to balance the needs of both service users and employees to maintain a delicate balance between the needs of constituents and the health and wellbeing of staff. As such, they have a crucial role in developing a culture where aggression and violence are recognised and addressed.

In summary, it is hoped that a constructive approach can be adopted, not only to make sure elected members are aware of their responsibilities to employees and constituents, but also to ensure they know how to maintain their own personal safety.

Section A

A collation of good practice across local authorities in Scotland

What do we mean by workplace violence?

Workplace violence is described by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as:

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

The European Social Partnership Agreement launched in the UK in 2009 recognises that harassment and violence can potentially affect any workplace and any employee and can:

- ▶ be physical, psychological, and/or sexual
- ▶ be one-off incidents or more systematic patterns of behaviour
- ▶ be among colleagues, between superiors and subordinates or by third parties such as service users, customers, patients, pupils, etc.
- ▶ range from minor cases of disrespect to more serious acts, including criminal offences that require the intervention of public authorities.

Third-party workplace violence (perpetrated by a member of the public) can occur to anyone working in local authority premises or at work in the community including employees, elected members or contractors in many different contexts. This includes outside the traditional workplace when performing a job-related function, or during non-work time.

Types of workplace violence

In general terms, defining and achieving agreement on what constitutes violence is notoriously difficult. Waddington and Bull give three key reasons for this in *Appraising the Inclusive Definition of Workplace 'Violence'* (2005). Firstly, that violence occurs in a wide range of settings, and secondly, assigning 'meaning' to either the perpetrator or victim may be context-specific. They cite the example of acts which might be seen as innocuous in wider society, but interpreted as disrespectful and thus aggressive in the workplace. Thirdly, they argue that there is no simple or consistent relationship between the nature of the violence experienced and the consequences for the individual.

While physical assault may lead to immediate harm, the result of chronic exposure to verbal abuse or threats may have a greater impact in the longer term, on some individuals.

The National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety report, *Workplace Violence; Prevention, Strategies and Research Needs* (NIOSH 2006) presented a model of workplace violence, using a typology drawn from the work of the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration. An important feature of this typology is that the descriptive focus of each category of the model concentrates on characteristics of the perpetrator and identifies the common targets.

Table 1 California Occupational Safety and Health Administration categorisation

Type	Description
Type I: criminal intent	The perpetrator has no legitimate relationship to the business or its employee, and is usually committing a crime in conjunction with violence. These crimes can include robbery, shoplifting, trespassing, and terrorism.
Type II: customer or service user and/or their family, friends or carers	The perpetrator has a legitimate relationship with the business and becomes violent while being served by the business. This category includes customers, service users, patients, students, inmates, and any other group for which the business provides services. It is believed that a large portion of customer/service user incidents occur in the healthcare industry, in settings such as nursing homes or psychiatric facilities; the victims are often patient caregivers.
Type III: worker-on-worker	The perpetrator is an employee or past employee of the business who attacks or threatens another employee(s) or past employee(s) in the workplace.
Type IV: personal relationship	The perpetrator usually does not have a relationship with the business but has a personal relationship with the intended victim. This category includes victims of domestic violence assaulted or threatened while at work.

This guidance aims to cover violence types I and II, where local authority employees may experience third-party violence, which includes verbal abuse, threats or physical abuse **from the public** while carrying out their jobs, with the exception of that which is covered by well-established professional training and expertise, such as the use of restraint in some care situations.

The necessity to engage in physical restraint or breakaway should already be identified and addressed in local policy arrangements. Of course sometimes, some people will need to consider appropriate factors in relation to training around restraint or breakaway. However, for situations covered within this guidance, the emphasis should always be on training employees to remove themselves from the situation by ensuring escape routes and other precautions are maintained.

Third-party workplace violence as a problem interacts with, and may be exacerbated by, other forms of workplace violence, including bullying and harassment from co-workers (Bowie 1998). While we have not aimed to specifically cover these policies, it is envisaged that the same principles will be applied ensuring that these run parallel to maintain and promote a consistent message across an organisation.

Defining types of violence and aggression

Interpretation of results of non-fatal violence across studies may be hindered by disagreements about how to define, categorise, or quantify violent incidents.

It may be tempting to produce extensive lists of the types of behaviour that can be regarded as 'violent' within an organisation. However, good practice among those consulted in the formation of this document showed that where violence is described in general terms, permitting a level of self assessment of what was abusive in the situation, with the encouragement to report incidents, is a practice that employees respond more positively to.

Lists can give the impression that one type of assault is more serious than another, or that only certain types of abusive behaviour need be reported. It is important to recognise that no policy can individually address all situations that occur in such a diverse group of employees. Empowering individuals to decide for themselves what should be reported, knowing that they can expect to be supported, is more likely to produce realistic results.

Encouraging employees to report all incidents where they felt insulted, abused, uncomfortable or threatened, and supporting them when they decide to do so enables managers to make more effective arrangements to protect them in the future.

It is important to stress the need for employees to report all forms of violence. Threats, verbal and written abuse need to be given the same priority as physical violence which often follows a pattern of escalating behaviour – agitation, expressed anger or frustration and intimidating body language, to verbal abuse and threats, physical threats or assault. Prevention of physical assaults can often start when the first verbal exchange takes place.

Evidence has been emerging in recent years of the harm caused by non-physical forms of violence, including threatening behaviour and verbal abuse. It may be one unexpected incident or a series of repeated incidents. Over time this kind of violence has detrimental effects on the health and wellbeing of the victim.

Racial and sexual abuse are probably the most common types of 'verbal violence', but due to social pressures are probably the most under-reported. Verbal abuse can also include patronising and derogatory comments, including swearing.

However, verbal abuse does not need to include swearing to be perceived as abusive. Swearing can be considered offensive by some, but those working in call centres are able to give many examples of threats made all the more chilling due to the complete lack of bad language.

Phone rage

Many employees in local authorities deal with service users and others on the telephone, including some who work in contact centres.

Given the very high volume of calls received, the chronic exposure of being on the receiving end of multiple calls involving verbal abuse can be considerable and should not be underestimated. Information provided by Capita UK on the **Top 10 triggers of phone rage** is available in **Appendix 1**.

Further information specifically on dealing with phone rage, including a toolkit to recognise and deal with the issue, is available from the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives, www.healthyworkinglives.com or 0800 019 2211.

Written forms of abuse

The Internet can provide an ideal medium for cyberbullies. Abusive emails and postings on websites, social networking sites and others are increasingly being seen as a means of highlighting dissatisfaction with an organisation and targeting the employee seen to be responsible.

Often, the sender can be identified, particularly when in the form of emails, but the Internet also offers anonymity for those with the knowledge and ability to post information about individuals, along with inaccurate or exaggerated information.

Clear policies outlining steps to be taken can help employees respond appropriately and provide a means to assess the level of the problem and take appropriate action. Some tips for individuals along with the advice to contact their employer's IT department are contained in the chapter entitled **Personal safety** on page 79.

Working from home

For an increasing number of workers, their home is also their workplace for some or all of the time. One potential consequence of the increasing prevalence of the practice, however, can be that the worker spends a greater period of time in a home setting where domestic violence is an issue.

Support for those who are in this situation or experience telephone or email threats and aggression needs to be planned for.

Who is covered?

Certain groups and sectors are often thought to be more at risk of violence, for example protective service occupations. The British Crime Survey (BCS) shows that high rates are also experienced in the transport, health, retail and leisure sectors.

Some departments within local authorities would commonly expect to come across violence or abusive behaviour regularly, due to the type of work or the service user base. Others may not automatically be associated with the issue.

The variety of local authority roles, where there is a need to protect staff from violence, means that risk-assessing and planning for protective measures should be a default position for every role. The following list, produced with the agreement of the National Forum for Risk Management in the Public Sector, is not exhaustive, but serves to demonstrate the diversity of roles in local authorities affected by this issue.

Public sector employees who could potentially be exposed to personal safety hazards (by service):

Service	Employees	Service	Employees
Valuation/legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Valuation officers Inspectors ▶ Licensing employees ▶ Electoral services officer 	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Building control officers ▶ Planning officers, including enforcement employees ▶ Local plans employees
Environmental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enforcement employees, e.g. food, complaints, trading standards ▶ Pest operatives ▶ Dog wardens ▶ Inspectors (for HMOs) ▶ Inspectors/advisers (for grants) ▶ Health and safety officers 	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Rent collectors ▶ Caretakers ▶ Wardens ▶ Control centre employees ▶ Contract managers ▶ Visiting employees ▶ Maintenance inspectors ▶ Homeless hostel employees
Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contract managers, including clerk of works ▶ Architects/quantity surveyors ▶ Structural engineers 	Contract services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All tradesmen ▶ Supervisory employees ▶ Cemetery employees (grief being a common factor) ▶ Grounds maintenance employees ▶ Park rangers ▶ Cleansing employees, refuse collectors, street cleaners ▶ Parking attendants
Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Beach wardens/attendants ▶ Information employees ▶ Sports centres – shift managers ▶ Coaches/instructors ▶ Car park inspectors/attendants ▶ Refreshment/bar employees ▶ Public hall caretakers ▶ Museum and library employees/volunteers 		

Service	Employees	Service	Employees
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Housing benefit visiting officers ▶ Housing benefit investigation employees ▶ Council tax avoidance inspectors ▶ Cash handlers 	Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Home employees ▶ Community wardens ▶ Environmental health officers ▶ Administrative offices – superintendent cleaners ▶ Housing repair technicians ▶ One-stop shop employees ▶ Harbour masters/pilots ▶ Elected members ▶ Administrative employees working overtime ▶ Those who drive for work (road rage)
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Teachers ▶ Caretakers ▶ Administrative employees at reception ▶ Peripatetic music teachers ▶ Youth and community education employees ▶ Employees present during holiday periods ▶ Grounds maintenance employees ▶ Classroom assistants ▶ Truant officers 	Reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Receptionists ▶ Call centre employees ▶ Ancillary employees
Social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Home care assistants ▶ Family support employees ▶ Social employees ▶ Community resource employees ▶ Placement officers ▶ Occupational therapists ▶ Community care employees ▶ Physical disability enablers ▶ Hot meal delivery 		

Appendix 3, Personal safety checklist contains information that can be useful in opening discussion with employees about the needs of being alert to personal safety issues and dealing with aggressors.

Case study

Dave* had worked as a gravedigger for a number of years and had witnessed various near-misses when he or colleagues were threatened, often by mourners who were upset or aggrieved regarding an issue around their relative's grave. Drug users using the cemetery were also a source of aggression when caught in the grounds and could become threatening or physically aggressive.

These incidents had been reported to Dave's line manager as they occurred and the police were informed of the drug user activities, although no reports were ever made with regard to the threatening behaviour.

Dave and his colleagues had been mistakenly informed that they did not have the right to report individual incidents to the police themselves. They were therefore reliant on the view of their manager (who very often had not been present) as to whether or not an incident should be reported.

Other aspects of the job had been risk-assessed and regularly reviewed but no action had ever been taken to help staff deal with aggressive situations, as these workers were not considered to be vulnerable to aggression.

One day, Dave and his colleague were at work when they were approached from behind by a member of the public. Dave turned and saw the man coming towards them with a shovel, which had been left on the path. He subsequently brought the shovel down on Dave's colleague's head. Both men were signed off work, one through physical injury for over six months, and Dave through the stress involved in the incident itself and fear of recurrence.

The attacker was prosecuted but due to the fact that he had been grief-stricken when he thought his young daughter's grave had been tampered with, he was admonished. A risk assessment was subsequently carried out for the likelihood of violence and aggression involving safety reps and the workers themselves who were able to inform the process by relating previous experiences. Working practices were changed to prevent a reoccurrence.

(*names have been changed)

Relevant legislation and legal remedies

There is no specific health and safety legislation addressing work-related violence. However, the following legislation applies to both issues:

The Health And Safety At Work etc Act 1974: places general duties that are applicable to work-related violence and personal safety on both employers and employees. The three primary examples are:

Section 2 (1): It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees.

Section 2 (2)(c): Employers must provide adequate information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

Section 7: Employees must take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others and must cooperate with employers so far as it is necessary to enable them to meet their own obligations.

Management of Health And Safety At Work Regulations 1999: Employers must assess the risks to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review.

Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires risk assessments to be undertaken. Any lone working, violence at work and/or personal safety issues must be taken into consideration when conducting such assessments and, where any significant hazards are identified, specific risk assessments should be initiated.

Reporting of Injuries, Disease And Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR): many of the incidents referred to in this guidance may not be reportable under RIDDOR. However, for those that involve physical injury, employers must notify the local authority of an accident at work resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for more than three consecutive days. This includes any act of non-consensual physical violence inflicted on a person at work. This can be reported in a number of ways; email, by telephone, or in writing to the Incident Contact Centre, where a unique reference number will be allocated and the report forwarded appropriately.

Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (a), Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (b): Employers must inform, and consult with, employees in good time on matters relating to their health and safety. Employee representatives, either appointed by recognised trades unions under (a) or elected under (b) may make representations to their employer on matters relating to the health and safety of those they represent.

Employment and Civil Law includes:

- ▶ Race Relations Act 1976
- ▶ Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- ▶ Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- ▶ Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003
- ▶ Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations 2003

These regulations create the framework that obliges employers to protect employees from harassment from the public and allow the employee to take their employer to an employment tribunal.

Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended, (EWA) makes it a specific offence to assault, obstruct or hinder someone providing an emergency service - or someone assisting an emergency worker in an emergency situation.

The EWA is generally used for less serious assaults. More violent incidents can be prosecuted using a range of common law offences from assault to murder.

Pursuing a legal remedy

In Scotland, all violent offences are dealt with under Scottish Common Law (Common Law Aggravation). Guidance from the Lord Advocate also provides for an assault on a public service worker to be regarded as an aggravated offence. This should result in a heavier sentence if convicted.

One of these remedies is the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. The provisions of the Act apply to workplace situations. The general principle behind the Act is to protect persons from harassment. This is particularly so against the background of traditional remedies of actions for damages and interdict which are not always effective and can be costly. The relevant sections applicable to Scotland in the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 are Sections 8 to 11. The Act was further amended by Section 9 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003.

In terms of Section 8 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003, every individual has the right to be free from harassment and the person must not pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another. The course of conduct must either be intended to amount to harassment of the person or occurs in circumstances where it would appear to a reasonable person that it would amount to harassment of that person.

- ▶ The 'course of conduct' must involve conduct on at least two occasions.
- ▶ The 'harassment' includes causing the person alarm or distress.
- ▶ The 'conduct' includes speech. This means that the conduct in question is therefore not confined to physical abuse or violence. It also applies to verbal abuse.

If there is conduct which does qualify as set out above, then it is open to the person in question to take out civil proceedings known as an action of harassment. Like any personal injury case, civil proceedings could be threatened where harassment in terms of the Act has occurred and a settlement achieved.

Damages which may be awarded in an action for harassment include damages for any anxiety caused by harassment. The reference to damages for anxiety alone is a real distinction from damages which may be awarded in terms of personal injury. In a personal injury case, damages for anxiety would have to be confined to a psychiatric or psychological disorder unless there were some physical element present. In addition, in a stress case, it would also not be necessary to prove foreseen ability on the part of an employer that the harassment would cause injury or even knowledge that it is taking place. It would simply be enough to demonstrate harassment in terms of the Act.

The awards may of course vary from case to case but where anxiety only is present, the House of Lords case stated that they are 'likely to be modest'. In certain circumstances, harassment can give rise to vicarious liability (responsibility for negligent acts or omissions by employees in the course of employment) on the part of the employer. In line with vicarious liability cases, the court would have to be satisfied that the wrong was closely connected with the acts the manager was authorised to carry out in order to find the employer liable for those acts. This principle may be able to be applied to an employee of another employer.

Non-harassment order

The second and more immediate remedy for the court in such civil proceedings is where it can make an order known as a non-harassment order (NHO) requiring the harasser to refrain from conduct in relation to the person in question. The consequences of breach of an NHO are that it is automatically a criminal offence in terms of Section 9. The maximum sentence for such a breach is imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years, or a fine, or both. This is different from interdict which would also be available to the court (as an alternative but not in addition to an NHO). The problem with an interdict, interim or otherwise, is that a breach is not automatically an offence. A full application has to be made to the court alleging the breach. This may or may not necessarily lead to a finding of contempt of court. Very often it is sufficient for the person alleged to have committed the breach to give undertakings to the court that it will not happen again, or further conditions to be put on to the interdict, etc. In practice, a contempt of court finding is made only in very few cases.

Another advantage of an NHO is that there are powers of arrest under Section 9 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 which amended the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. This gives statutory powers of arrest to the police for breach of an NHO. No warrant is necessary and they have the power of arrest where a person is reasonably suspected of breaching an NHO. It is specifically provided that the power of arrest exists where the NHO has been granted in civil proceedings. A power of arrest does not exist for interdict breach. Provided the arrest is carried out on the above basis, it may be more than enough to ensure there is future compliance with an NHO.

Case study

Mary* was employed in the education department of a West of Scotland local authority. She worked as a classroom assistant in a mainstream primary school.

The class in which she worked included a pupil who displayed very aggressive behaviour. He assaulted her and other staff on several occasions and these were reported informally and then formally through the violence at work policy. There were several internal discussions within the school involving the head teacher on how to tackle this behaviour and the pupil's parents were also consulted.

The consensus view of staff in the school was that the pupil needed intensive support that could not be provided by the school. However, the pupil's parents were strongly opposed to this approach as they wanted him to be educated in a mainstream setting. The head teacher was reluctant to challenge the parents'

position, and no significant action was taken. The severity of the assaults increased and two members of staff had periods of sickness absence due to stress and minor injury. The head teacher still refused to take action primarily because of the aggressive lobbying and threat of legal action by the parents. Some weeks later the pupil grabbed an implement in the classroom and struck Mary several times on the head and shoulder. Mary was taken to hospital, treated for the physical injuries and was off work for some seven months with stress.

Despite this incident, the head teacher still refused to seek a move because the parents refused to accept that this was in the best interests of their child. Following representations by Mary's trades union, the local authority intervened and the pupil was moved to a specialist educational setting where he could receive proper support. A personal injury claim was submitted by Mary's trades union on her behalf, and she received substantial damages.

The course of events was clearly foreseeable and the employer's inaction was negligent. Sadly, this trauma and the consequent cost to the authority could have been entirely avoidable if a proper violence at work risk assessment had been undertaken at the outset.

(*names have been changed)

Risk-assessing for violence

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published guidance explaining how employers should tackle violence at work (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf) as well as guidance for particular sectors which can also be found on their website. Local authorities have established risk assessment processes in place but for readers from outside the sector **Appendix 2, Model risk assessment form** provides guidance along with links to supporting HSE and the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives (SCHWL) resources.

The five steps follow the well-established process of risk assessment, followed by the introduction of prevention and control measures and regular review. These are as follows:

1. Identify the hazards.
2. Decide who might be harmed and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions.
4. Record findings and implement them.
5. Review assessment and update if necessary.

While the responsibility for risk assessment rests with managers, the benefits from involving employees involved and trades union safety representatives can ensure all relevant issues are addressed in light of the wealth of experience available.

Often risk assessments can be carried out from the service user's point of view, forgetting that the purpose is also to preserve the safety of employees. The duty of care to employees is as important as that for service users.

For example, as all of the risks may not be obvious, it would not be particularly effective to carry out a risk assessment during the day for care employees involved in 'tuck-in' procedures in the homes of service users. Those working in the community, such as refuse collectors or street wardens, will be aware of the areas where they feel most at risk.

Perceptions of employees themselves are also important. Whether or not these reflect reality, they can still affect the ability to carry out tasks. The BCS highlighted that 22% of employees who had contact with the public thought it likely or very likely they would be threatened at work in the next year. 9% of employees with face-to-face contact with the public thought it likely or very likely that they would be assaulted. This should therefore be as important a factor in the risk assessment process.

Reports of previous incidents are an obvious place to look when trying to assess the level of abusive behaviour. However, it is important to remember that existing reporting may be patchy, as research has demonstrated that many incidents are not reported for many different reasons. Results therefore should not always be construed as presenting an accurate picture of the extent of the problem but more as a base line for assessment.

A good starting point might be to look at each incident that has occurred and evaluate what happened, why it happened and how effectively it was handled. An employee survey is one effective way to include employees in the process. **Appendix 4, Model employee survey** can be adapted freely for use.

Suggested ways of including past experiences are included in **Appendix 5, Review of past incidents checklist**. In this way, trends can be identified and steps taken to stop or mitigate this in the future. Many incidents are often the result of long-developing, identifiable trails of problems, conflicts, disputes and failures.

Even if there is no clear-cut trend identified, the collected information is still useful if employees are aware of it, and the steps taken to prevent a recurrence.

A crucial part of the health and safety management system is that any significant risks identified are communicated to those who make and implement policies and procedures as well as those expected to perform the actual tasks.

Indicators of high-risk behaviour

Unfortunately, there is no test, instrument, or method that can accurately predict violence. The media and other sources often refer to the 'profile' of a person who may become violent. Many people who fit the 'profile' will never become violent, while individuals who do not fit may do so. While past behaviour will quite naturally influence responses, profiling is not appropriate and may be discriminatory. It is important to understand that identifying higher-risk individuals does not equate with predicting violence.

The HSE website contains information in relation to good practice in particular roles where violence has been identified as a substantial risk. Some of those relating to lone working are relevant to local authority employees (www.hse.gov.uk/violence/loneworkcase.htm)

Some environments can increase the likelihood of physical or verbal assault from customers or service users. Often the problem involves a combination of factors rather than a single cause, and can include:

- ▶ certain geographical areas or troublespots
- ▶ carrying hi-tech or expensive equipment
- ▶ handling money or valuables, cashing up or closing premises
- ▶ driving at the end of the day, in the rush hour or after pub closing hours
- ▶ racial or sexual abuse
- ▶ visiting unoccupied buildings
- ▶ working alone or away from other employees
- ▶ working at isolated properties
- ▶ working in other people's homes
- ▶ working in a workplace that is badly lit or has poor security arrangements
- ▶ working in multi-occupied premises.
- ▶ working late in the evening or early in the morning or unsocial hours
- ▶ working on another employer's premises
- ▶ working with people who have feelings of anger, resentment, frustration or failure
- ▶ dealing with complaints
- ▶ dealing with customers with unrealistic expectations
- ▶ providing care, advice or information
- ▶ working with service users or customers by telephone or email
- ▶ working with service users or customers who have taken alcohol or drugs
- ▶ having the power to act against the public such as inspecting premises and enforcing legislation or controlling entry
- ▶ working with crowds
- ▶ working in emergency services

- ▶ coping with angry and distressed service users or relatives
- ▶ working with service users with special needs or with mentally ill, confused or potentially violent people.

When risk assessments are being carried out and control measures developed it helps to consider the following:

- ▶ The workplace – access and egress, general layout, public areas, waiting and interview rooms, reception areas, the street (if the activity is carried out in the community).
- ▶ Work activities – reception, cash handling, service provision, time of day or night.
- ▶ Staffing levels and competence/experience.
- ▶ Level of training.
- ▶ Security, alarm systems, communication systems, regular testing and drills.
- ▶ Response procedures – how employees are helped after an incident .
- ▶ Lone working.
- ▶ Remote working, including working from home.

If there are several locations or activities where employees may be at risk, it may be necessary to complete more than one risk assessment form.

If any special equipment is provided as a control measure, steps should be put in place to monitor and maintain the efficiency of the system. All employees, not just an immediate few, should be made aware of the existence of panic buttons and alarm systems and what to do when they are activated. Similarly, the system should be regularly checked and drills carried out to ensure it is operating properly.

It can be beneficial to designate one member of staff in a department or team as a Workplace Violence Coordinator to collate reports of incidents. By collating this evidence across an organisation, future trends can be identified and expertise developed.

In conclusion, risk assessment is not only a legal requirement, it is also an obvious part of the solution to protecting employees from violence and aggression. Where the process is used, the following should be considered:

- ▶ Take into account all relevant factors for each task.
- ▶ Ensure that the risk assessment is a living document which is visited regularly – this will ensure continuing relevance and takes account of recent developments and occurrences.
- ▶ Making sure that control measures and appropriate training are suitable for the tasks carried out by staff.
- ▶ Promoting the results to employees so that they are aware of recent incidents, the outcomes and the steps taken to prevent this happening in the future.

Appendix 6, Home visiting risk assessment guidance and **Appendix 7, Interview room safety checklist** provide examples of tools which can be used by staff themselves to dynamically risk-assess for their own personal safety.

The home visit guidance is in two parts, the first for making an assessment before the visit and the second for recording how the visit went, and steps that may have to be taken in the future to avoid further risk. This format can easily be transferred to other specific tasks.

Case study

Following two incidents occurring within a short time to two trading standards officers (TSOs), the opportunity was taken to review policies and risk assessments to determine what worked or didn't work and what could have been done better.

In the first incident, the TSO had been driving alone in a small council van when a wheelie bin was thrown at the vehicle. The bin struck and damaged the van, alarming the TSO, and leaving him badly shaken. The individual who threw the bin was later apprehended by the police.

A TSO from the same office, undertaking regulatory duties, was subjected to a confrontational outburst from a proprietor. The TSO tried to leave and the dispute continued into the street with the proprietor becoming verbally irate and aggressive. The proprietor made physical contact with the TSO, while the TSO moved away. The incident was reported to the police and the individual detained. Both management and unions took time to review and examine the potential consequences if these incidents had developed further.

As a result, the lone working policy has been reviewed, tailored to suit the requirements of the service and a workable risk assessment methodology agreed.

There has been an agreement to review the system in six months and decide if it has worked, or if it could be improved.

Would your staff or colleagues know what to do in these situations? Would they be missed if they didn't report back? Were there signs that could have pointed to a need for staff in these locations or dealing with one individual to be more cautious?

Case study

Concerns were raised about a violent incident involving social workers and a service user (who was a child) at the service Health and Safety Committee. Further investigations were undertaken.

Summary of the incident

A child protection review meeting was due to take place with the service user, including the attendance of the police. However, the start of the meeting was delayed as the police were not in attendance. Two social workers came to the reception desk to explain the reasons for the delay to the user, but during these discussions the service user threw a can of drink at the reception desk and attempted to climb over the lower section of the desk before she was pulled back by her mother. She then managed to gain access to the main open plan office area through the connecting door as it was closing as an employee left the office.

When she began using threatening and aggressive behaviour towards the social workers, including kicking the office door, they had to lock themselves inside their office to avoid being hit. Admin staff nearby attempted to intervene. The police were called and escorted the service user from the premises.

Risk assessment

A risk assessment was undertaken, involving all employees and the safety rep of security arrangements within the building, including the reception area of the social work office. As a result the following changes have been implemented to improve the control measures:

- ▶ A suitable security screen was installed around the reception desk.
- ▶ Entry arrangements for visitors into the building were reviewed and improvements made to communication discipline between the reception staff and visitors. This included more effective use of the intercom system prior to granting visitors entry into the building.
- ▶ A senior management team member has been identified to promote cooperation and consultation across the services using the building.
- ▶ Improved procedures for dealing with violent or potentially violent incidents that may arise within the building have been implemented. For example, responding to any alarm raised by reception staff or those meeting with service users in interview rooms.
- ▶ A training needs analysis is being undertaken and employees have been given information and instructions relating to arrangements to be put in place.
- ▶ Additional CCTV cameras have been installed in the reception area and interview rooms. CCTV is monitored by the reception staff.

Dynamic risk assessment

While risk assessment is a vital part of the process, employees can still be faced with situations which may not have been addressed or that they are unaware of.

Dynamic risk assessment (DRA) is the continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risks, taking action to eliminate or reduce risk, monitoring and reviewing, while carrying out associated tasks.

By preparing to dynamically risk-assess (although this terminology may be off-putting for some and a local equivalent term might be preferred) employees can begin to be prepared to recognise the potential for aggression and remove themselves from the danger before it occurs.

One approach to dynamically assessing risk is called the P.E.T. Analysis, and is used by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. It is contained in **Appendix 8, Dynamic risk assessment.**

This flow chart is designed for personal use by an employee. It depicts common sense action which should be taken before commencing any part of day-to-day work. It is unfortunately true to say that common sense is not always turned into common practice. Complacency and assumptions can take over - hence the dynamic risk assessment model simply reminds us to turn on our 'personal safety radar', remaining aware and taking action to remove ourselves from an unsafe situation when necessary.

Using the P.E.T. Analysis, potential risks are divided into one or more of three areas of concern:

- P** The person or people you are dealing with
- E** The environment you are working in
- T** The task you are carrying out

A more detailed explanation is contained in the chapter of this document entitled **Personal safety** (see page 79).

By examining these three areas, it is easier to decide where the threat is coming from and how it can be dealt with. Once this has been established, the next obvious step is to ask 'Can the risk be avoided or minimised so that you feel confident to proceed?'

Where this can be done, the individual can proceed with caution. Where it cannot, they should know that they will be supported in removing themselves from the situation, and advise a line manager accordingly.

Once employees have become familiar with the process, it can become an automatic reaction to all situations involving contact with service users or strangers. It is intended to reinforce the need for vigilance and places users in a better position to plan their response, should anything untoward occur. Of course circumstances can change and the process can be used throughout the situation being dealt with.

Maintaining contact when lone working

Lone working has obvious overlaps with preventing work-related violence and personal safety issues, and others who might not normally be classified as lone workers (such as those who may be first in to the workplace or last to leave) can be just as at risk.

While some investment may have already been made in electronic or other systems for those classed as lone workers, it will not always be the case that there is the opportunity for such investment. A buddying system is often a good way of ensuring that the whereabouts of employees can be identified, and colleagues or managers made aware of problems more quickly.

A model system is contained in Appendix 9, Minimum standards for a successful buddy system. Using this system, if the lone employee fails to contact their buddy following a visit or at a designated time, the buddy would follow a procedure informing the appropriate individuals, and in some cases the police.

Appendix 10, Lone worker data sheet supports the buddy system by way of a lone employee data sheet designed to be kept up to date with contact details, descriptions and photographs. This is to be handed to the police, should someone go missing or fail to return.

Case study

Lisa* visits elderly service users in their own home to assess them for any support they might need to continue to live independently. Lisa is expected to send a text message to a central contact at her base before going in

to meet the service user and again when she leaves their home. Her electronic diary has the name, address and contact number of the person she is visiting.

On one occasion, the door was answered by the elderly lady who had requested the visit who welcomed her in. Halfway through the interview, the lady's son appeared, apparently from upstairs, with a baseball bat and sat down opposite Lisa, staring at her intently.

Lisa made an excuse to phone her office to ask about the availability of an item of support the lady might require but the son then became agitated. He grabbed Lisa's phone and began swinging the baseball bat. The lady became very upset, and tried but failed to persuade her son to calm down. Both she and Lisa were unable to remove themselves.

When the time for the 30-minute interview had elapsed, Lisa's colleague in the office began the process of calling her on her mobile phone (which was left unanswered) and then tried the home phone of the service user. When the son was distracted speaking to the office on the home phone, Lisa was able to get out of the building, contact her office and make arrangements for the protection of the service user.

Although Lisa's experience was frightening, she had the knowledge of the process which would be followed and used the opportunity to prepare her plan of action. As she had been dynamically risk-assessing as the 'meeting' went on she was in a good position to take full advantage when a distraction arose.

(*names have been changed)

Reporting, recording data and feeding back to employees

Only when active reporting is taking place can risk assessments reflect an accurate picture, and as such setting up a robust reporting system is another crucial step in preventing violence at work.

It is important, therefore, to ensure that managers and employees understand why reporting of all types of abusive behaviour is necessary, i.e. to help establish measures that will be designed to protect them in the future. Reporting, particularly in care services, can be seen as unnecessarily stigmatising, or blaming service users who may not be able to modify their behaviour.

The primary reason for reporting should always be the safety of staff, so that local risk assessments always take into account actual instances where staff were abused or threatened. The fact that violence and abuse can be caused by a variety of factors need not mean that solutions need be over-complicated.

It is important to remember that improved reporting may lead to an initial increase in the short term in the number of incidents being reported. Seemingly higher reported incident rates mean that employees are involved in the process, are aware of the dangers and are participating positively in protecting themselves and their colleagues at work. Low incident rates do not necessarily mean that good practice is being followed.

Unfortunately, at present every local authority in Scotland has their own methods of reporting and their own criteria for doing so. While there would be definite benefits in streamlining reporting across all Scottish local authorities so that the extent of the issue can be quantified, there are considerable obstacles to doing so.

Keeping it simple

Over-complicated or multiple forms have been identified as discouraging reporting of other than the most serious incidents, producing a flawed picture of actual risk. Using a simple, easy-to-use system where relevant incidents can be investigated at a later date if appropriate can help to encourage compliance of relevant employees. A model form which can be adapted for local circumstances is contained in **Appendix 11, Model report form.**

In reviewing reporting procedures and comparing the results it was found that where there were complicated reporting forms (some were over six pages long), the results demonstrated that the types of incidents reported tended to be those involving physical violence, where it was necessary to report this to the police or where they were legally reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995). Almost none referred to threatening behaviour or verbal abuse.

This would seem to indicate that complicated forms, rather than being an integral part of the risk assessment process to prevent future incidents, were completed only when they were required for a specific purpose other than the collation of incidents occurring.

When the process of reporting is simplified and employees positively encouraged to do so, managers and employees themselves can take advantage of immediate availability of information related to incidents and use basic information to make assessments based on actual situations.

The savings to be brought to the organisation, and more importantly the protection and support for individual members of employees, are immeasurable. However, a very real benefit is the health and wellbeing this type of activity can convey as employees feel valued and supported.

Experience in other sectors, such as transport, retail and government agencies, has shown that where managers and employers have arrangements put in place to regularly promote to their employees the reporting system itself, the reasons for it, and what employees can expect in return, the response has been positive. Information such as the following allows employees to be aware of issues as they occur and take this into consideration as they go about tasks:

- ▶ statistics of incidents per team or department
- ▶ resulting changes to risk assessments and procedures or methods of working
- ▶ successful prosecutions.

By using an effective system and asking for employees' cooperation, trends can be identified and planned for, such as specific times of the year, days of the week, or common operational situations.

The HSE suggests that the following information is gathered in a reporting form as a minimum:

- ▶ An account of what happened.
- ▶ The circumstances in which the incident took place.
- ▶ Details of the victim, the customer and anyone else involved .
- ▶ The outcome, including working time lost to the employee and organisation.

Reporting incidents to the police

All employees have the legal right to report any incident in which they have been involved to the police. They are entitled to expect the positive support and backing of their management should they wish to exercise this right. All managers and supervisors should therefore clearly understand their responsibility to assist in reporting the matter and, if requested, to do so on behalf of the employee affected.

Case study

Alan* and his crew of refuse collectors had been having significant problems for some time with collecting refuse in one particular area of town where there were known problems. Crews were regularly verbally abused and the crew tended to stay together as much as possible for mutual support, trying to ignore the behaviour. No official report had been made of the verbal abuse and managers were aware that there were issues, but as no physical attack or threat had been made, they took no action other than to say that they should be informed if the situation worsened.

As time went on, however, threats began to be made and occasional bricks were thrown, possibly to get a reaction from the crew. One narrowly missed the shoulder and neck of one of Alan's crew and finally a written report was made.

A risk assessment process was undertaken and among other control measures, a reporting mechanism was put in place to cover all areas of the round. At a staff meeting, employees were informed by management and safety reps of the control measures implemented as a result of the incident involving Alan's crew. They would now be asked as a matter of course to report all instances of abuse, verbal and physical on return to base. They were asked to note when this occurred, the location of the incident and the time. Any special circumstances that may have contributed to the situation were also to be recorded.

Along with the instruction, employees were advised how this information would be used, when an overall picture was known, what feedback they could expect and in what timescale.

As a result of the reporting exercise and cooperation with local police, a number of locations were identified as requiring special attention in term of protective measures to help crews. Specific times of day, when the risks of abusive behaviour was more likely, were also noted. Using this information, routes were altered to ensure that employees were not put at undue risk.

(*names have been changed)

Sharing sensitive, personal information of repeat aggressors to protect frontline employees

When there is a need to protect employees from assault or verbal aggression, there can be strong pressures to share personal information on service users with a history of aggressive behaviour within organisations and with others. Every organisation has a legal responsibility to ensure that their risk assessments are suitable and sufficient, yet it is often not the case that all information is available, because of a belief that personal information cannot be shared.

It is a common misconception that data protection legislation protects the rights of the aggressor, takes priority over the rights of the employee, or that personal information cannot and must not be shared. Yet the sharing of personal information is often essential to enable adequate risk assessment for the safety of everyone concerned. The HSE suggests that employers should question how staff are asked to work, the circumstances in which they work, and the system in place for sharing information about clients.

It is perfectly legal to share information if the purpose is to protect the health and safety of employees, although it is necessary for organisations to have arrangements in place to ensure that the information kept is accurate and fair.

The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) is intended to form the basis of data management and is not a barrier to sharing information for legitimate reasons. All local authorities will be familiar with legal requirements, as they will have arrangements in place for other purposes. It is therefore not intended to cover these in detail here, but further information can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website, www.ico.gov.uk

An organisation's decision to share information does not negate its duty to treat people fairly. Prior to sharing information, the organisation holding it must consider carefully how any recipient organisation or department is going to use it, and what the effect on people is likely to be. It is good practice to obtain a written assurance about this.

The guidance provided here is based on the ICO Codes of Practice. It is intended to assist local authorities to comply with legislation, while sharing such sensitive information in a fair and lawful manner to protect employees in line with their legal obligations.

Preparing to share personal information

Any information collected must be used fairly and transparently. The law says that the information must:

- ▶ state the identity of the organisation that is collecting the information
- ▶ say what the information will be used for
- ▶ provide any further details necessary to make the processing of the information fair in the circumstances.

These details should be drafted so that the people they are aimed at, the subject and who the information is being shared with can understand them. The use of jargon or legalistic language should always be avoided.

Fairness and what the law says - some key points about fairness

Fairness means different things in different contexts, and depends on factors such as a person's expectations. In the DPA, fairness has two main elements:

- ▶ Information should be used in a way that people would reasonably expect.
- ▶ Telling people how you are going to use their information does not have unjustified adverse effects on the company or organisation.

Making sure people understand

It is crucial that any notice is simple, clear and genuinely informative, and that it lets people know:

- ▶ if you intend to pass on any personal information to other organisations, and if so, the reason(s) for the disclosure, the identity of other organisations and details of what they will do with the information
- ▶ how long your organisation will keep the information
- ▶ whether replies to questions are compulsory or voluntary
- ▶ the consequences of not replying - for example, non-receipt of a benefit or service
- ▶ what measures are in place to ensure the security of personal information
- ▶ people's rights and how they can exercise them – for example, the fact that a person can obtain a copy of their personal information (subject to certain exemptions)
- ▶ how to complain or find out more about how information will be used
- ▶ the right to complain to the Information Commissioner if there is an issue.

Informing a person you are going to share their details for the protection of employees.

This can be provided in a number of ways:

- ▶ Orally: face-to-face or by telephone – it's a good idea to document this.
- ▶ In writing: printed media; printed adverts; forms, such as financial application forms or job application forms, can promote the fact that you will take this action should it become necessary
- ▶ Electronically: in text messages; on websites; in emails.

Transparency and consent

There is a fundamental difference between telling a person how you're going to use their personal information and getting their consent to this. In many cases that involve aggressive service users, positive agreement will be needed.

In such cases, choice may not be an issue, because the individual cannot expect to receive what he or she has asked for unless any necessary processing of personal information takes place.

Even if individuals have no real choice, the collection of information about them still has to be fair and transparent.

Keeping shared information under review

It is considered unfair and misleading to share information that is not accurate or up to date. It is good practice, therefore, to keep this under regular review to check for accuracy and rectify any mistakes.

The benefits of a policy that is easy to understand are that it will improve trust and relationships with employees who know the process and the reasons behind it, and reduce the risk of queries, complaints and disputes about the use of personal information.

Case study

James* managed a local office dealing principally with facilitating access to services, payments and complaints. One particular service user visited the office frequently, to access services and pay bills. On each occasion he would use the opportunity to verbally abuse employees working in the office and would raise his walking stick as if to strike members of staff, often striking the desk instead. As some of the staff lived locally he would also occasionally make personal comments about them or their family.

On one of his visits, the employees were already feeling strained due to a number of previously aggressive incidents that week. The service user launched into his usual 'tirade', and one of James's staff finally snapped and began to shout at him. She burst into tears and walked out of the office. She was subsequently on sick leave for a number of weeks.

Following this and other incidents, a procedure was introduced where a robust reporting system set out the responsibility of managers to act on all incidents of abusive behaviour. This involved following up each incident centrally with a letter to the service user, saying that the incident had been recorded and that a repeat could mean sanctions on access to service. It also said that in these circumstances, offenders would be considered a special risk when accessing other departments of the organisation.

Details of the appeal process were also included in the letter sent out. However, it has been found that, of those who had been sent letters, only approximately one third responded. Some resulted in deficiencies in service being identified as having contributed to the abusive situation which informed the risk-assessment process positively.

Where the behaviour continued, there were clear processes so that employees would know that steps were being taken to protect them from further incidents. Morale and productivity increased as staff not only felt safer but valued by the organisation.

(*names have been changed)

Training

Manager training

Where a staff member has been affected physically or mentally during the course of their employment, it is the responsibility of their manager or of the most senior management representative available to take reasonable steps to ensure the care and welfare of the employee.

Developing procedural matters can help enable managers to know what to do immediately an incident occurs, but there can be no substitute for training to be able to understand the impact this can have on individuals and support their return to good health. Without training in the associated mental health issues which may occur, it is unrealistic to expect managers to instinctively know how to provide understanding or have knowledge of local support agencies. These agencies could effectively support those members of staff who have may be affected by violent or aggressive acts during the course of their work.

Free Mentally Healthy Workplace (MHW) training for managers can be accessed through the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives. This aims to give employers and managers the understanding, knowledge and skills to address a wide variety of issues relating to employment and mental health. It can also help reduce barriers to employment by addressing stigma, discrimination and negativity around mental health issues in the workplace.

It is designed to encourage good practice in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, thereby contributing to a more open culture that puts mental health on the agenda alongside physical health, social inclusion and productivity.

More information on the training provision and how to register are available on the Healthy Working lives website, www.healthyworkinglives.com or from the Adviceline, **0800 019 2211**

Other staff training - a good practice example

Due to the diverse range of workplaces existing in local authorities, no attempt has been made here to evaluate or recommend specific training. Instead, different approaches to training will be identified, to take account of the particular needs of the workforce.

Later chapters of this document, entitled **Understanding, recognising and managing aggression** and **Personal safety** outline some of the aspects of the psychology of anger and rage. These can help empower employees to learn how to manage situations to a successful conclusion and minimise the risks to themselves of both experiencing the emotional and psychological effects of feeling 'under attack' and safeguarding their own personal safety.

Employees know better than most where the potential risks for violence exists and what some of the possible solutions may be, and are often the best source of information on identifying strengths, weaknesses and

opportunities to reduce incidents. It makes sense, therefore, to involve them in any planning with regard to training that will make this safer and more effective. Active employee involvement also produces a greater commitment to the programme. We have used an example of this from a Scottish local authority where, in conjunction with their customary training provider, the process was judged to have had a positive impact on employees and the service.

An example of good practice

When it was decided to review existing arrangements on the protection of employees from aggression and violence, the views of employees on formulating a robust procedure was considered crucial. This would ensure buy-in from those in the front line working directly with service users and the public.

The aim of the training was to achieve for all employees:

- ▶ **Self-reliance** in safe and confident lone working.
- ▶ **Confidence** to take responsibility to deal with day-to-day issues.
- ▶ **'Buy-in'** to the concept of safe lone working policies and procedures.
- ▶ **Positive team building**, within the luxury of 'time out' for the whole office.

The following remit and background were agreed:

1. Wherever possible, whole office teams would be trained together – a mixture of administrative and clerical staff, plus neighbourhood officers (NOs).
2. Most NOs carried out home visits as well as working in the community. Some employees (e.g. conflict resolution, technical officers) worked out of hours.
3. One session would be focused on line managers (LMs) and one session focused on senior neighbourhood officers (SNOs).
4. Recent experiences, which had contributed to a higher than usual level of anxiety among some employees, would be included.
5. Current developments such as a new IT system and the trialling of lone working software would feature in the programme.

Employees training content was divided into three areas:

Responsibility

- ▶ The law and reporting procedures
- ▶ Responsibilities – management and employees

Risk

- ▶ Employees' identification of perceived risks
- ▶ Employees' solutions to these perceived risks
- ▶ Discussion as to actual risk

Practical lone working

- ▶ Dealing with difficult people and avoiding escalation
- ▶ Discussion re traceability
- ▶ Practical working guidelines
- ▶ Safe exits

Two senior managers joined the group at the end of each session. Employees (who had not been informed this would happen) were encouraged to write any thoughts as they occurred on a flip chart in the training room, under the title of **'What Management Needs To Know!'**, and those attending were urged to place comments on the chart, whether positive or negative. When the senior managers came in, they were able to discuss issues with employees openly. In this way, information about changes within the sector was communicated clearly, and difficulties like staffing, budgets and different procedures were brought out into the open.

Employees were in the main positive and professional during training. Indeed, most wanted to make the point that really bad incidents were few and far between and that the majority of service users caused no problems at all. All discussions were delivered in the context of care for service users.

The points that follow, therefore, should be seen as employees trying to contribute positively to ideas about their working practice, so that it could improved for everyone.

The main issues which developed during training were:

- ▶ historic lack of communication
- ▶ reporting procedures including under-reporting of incidents
- ▶ lack of consistency between teams as to policies and procedures.

Suggestions from line managers in what should be reinforced included:

- ▶ information on further training courses
- ▶ identifying escalation before safe exit
- ▶ employees' body language – entering with the expectation of trouble
- ▶ employees' approach to service users
- ▶ taking the lead in conversation, avoiding manipulation or lack of focus
- ▶ making employees aware of their own responsibilities.

At each session:

- ▶ Employees were encouraged to discuss reporting procedures in groups and to note down 'barriers to reporting' on post-it notes. These went to build a 'barrier wall' (all post-it notes were collated at the end of training sessions and included in a final report for senior management).
- ▶ Each team had a session of writing down their good working practices, under the banner of 'What I should need to know if I were new to the team'. The team usually divided up into administrative and clerical employees, and those employees going out and about in the community.
- ▶ Each team also had an option of a 'solving the problem' session, where they had a chance to think about issues within their own team and then found realistic solutions to these.

Conclusion

After each training session, all flip chart material (including the above) was taken back, written up in report form and sent to all trainees, plus a 'Hints and tips' page for lone working. All (anonymous) evaluation sheets were collated and a report was sent weekly to senior managers. Evaluation of the training was extremely positive – 96% rated the day as being very good or excellent.

Key points from the training:

- ▶ 'Knowing that we are being listened to'.
- ▶ 'I'll now re-evaluate my work to make my environment safer'.
- ▶ 'Learning what is unacceptable behaviour'.
- ▶ 'Being more confident in my own working practice'.
- ▶ 'Finding out what to report'.
- ▶ 'Highlighted proactive team working'.
- ▶ 'Awareness of health and safety issues'.
- ▶ 'Great practical solutions'.
- ▶ 'Brilliant brainstorming'.

At the end of the thirteen training sessions, all the teams' good working practices were collated by the trainer and made into a *Good Practice Guidelines* booklet, which was circulated to all employees in the council housing sector. It is hoped that this will achieve buy-in of consistent procedural working, since all the ideas contained in the booklet came from the employees themselves.

A final report was sent to senior managers, highlighting issues raised in training and suggestions (some from employees) of how these could be taken forward. Senior managers and senior neighbourhood officers have taken all points on board and are now working together on their implementation. Refresher training will take place as and when needed.

Supporting recovery

The impact of violence on a victim can depend on the severity of the violence, his or her personal experiences, skills and personality. Occasionally, one seemingly minor incident can produce an extreme reaction due to a build-up of negative experiences or other (sometimes unexplainable) factors which are not immediately apparent.

Mental and physical ill health are a personal loss to individuals and the organisation whether they mean sick pay for those who stay at home, or poor performance from those who come to work.

Presenteeism, the loss in productivity that occurs when employees come to work but function at less than full capacity because of ill health, can also be a major cause of mental health problems. Measurement is difficult, but accumulating international evidence suggests that such losses in on-the-job productivity may be several times larger than the losses caused by sickness absence. *Mental Health at Work: Developing the business case* (2007, The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health)

The Royal College of Psychiatrists, in its report *Mental Health at Work* (2008), recommends that:

- ▶ 'For people who have common mental disorders that are affecting their work, brief individual therapy, mainly cognitive behavioural therapy, in short courses of up to eight weeks may be beneficial. Booster sessions may be needed subsequently.
 - ▶ 'Interventions should be comprehensive and address both individual and organisation-level factors. There is little evidence on organisation-level interventions alone and what there is shows mixed results.
 - ▶ 'Training should be provided for workplace line managers in how to recognise mental distress or ill health and how to respond in ways that do not lead to unnecessary exclusion from the workplace.
- People react to stressful situations differently and this can damage physical health, social relationships and the way we function at work and at home.
- These reactions may include:
- ▶ **physical signs** - like headaches, insomnia, indigestion, high blood pressure, alopecia, loss of appetite (remember that physical symptoms of anxiety may be mistaken for another health problem which exacerbates their anxiety state further and can in the long term lead to depression)
 - ▶ **emotional factors** - such as irritability, lack of concentration, anxiety, depression, loss of confidence, low morale
 - ▶ **behavioural aspects** - such as poor work performance, accidents, poor relationships at home and work, dependence on tobacco, drugs and alcohol.

Feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, guilt, embarrassment and of being 'out of control' may be evident through inappropriate responses and the person may display physical symptoms. In the longer term, they may suffer with sleeplessness, 'reliving the event', and have a fear of returning to work. These reactions should be recognised and managed quickly after the episode to reduce the risk of psychological harm.

Sometimes recovery and/or return to job effectiveness will happen almost immediately. However, more often this may take some time longer, particularly after a series of such incidents in which the employee may require time off work, the assistance of their GP or more specialist support. In all of these scenarios, the enlightened support of managers and colleagues can greatly enhance the recovery of the person involved.

There is good evidence that mental ill health, including stress, serves as a risk factor for a range of physical health conditions including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and asthma. The impact on a person's life is also significantly greater when physical illness is accompanied by mental ill health, compared with physical illness on its own. *Mental Health at Work: Developing the business case* (2007, Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health).

Employees need to know what support is available:

- ▶ during and immediately after an incident
- ▶ in the short term
- ▶ in the long term.

During and immediately after an incident

Employees affected, including witnesses, need to know they have the support of their manager and colleagues. Employees may require:

- ▶ first aid and/or a medical assessment; debriefing sessions can be useful, but of course this should depend on the reaction of the employee and colleagues who may be witnesses
- ▶ a colleague asking if they are OK
- ▶ an informal chat with their line manager, who should make sure the incident is recorded and investigated. The criteria for the format and recording of questions, etc. should be agreed beforehand so that employees know what to expect in these situations
- ▶ a coffee/tea break
- ▶ to go home – unless it is felt that the employee is able to be on their own, they may need to be accompanied.

Short term

It may be necessary in the short term to:

- ▶ change the work area or the type of work if the victim agrees
- ▶ regularly meet with their line manager to talk about any problems
- ▶ discuss what can be learnt from the incident
- ▶ get advice from an occupational health provider
- ▶ get advice from safety reps.

Long term

Sometimes individuals may experience long-term symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder. In such cases, employees will require support from occupational health services. They may also require time off rather than be compelled to take sick leave under sickness absence procedures.

Time off should be agreed in advance and the employee should be made aware of this. As with the return to work criteria, a specific format of dos and don'ts should be established and everyone involved should be clear on the objectives and roles they play. Referral for specialist advice should be made as soon as possible as the employee may require the additional input of psychological or counselling services. It is essential that regular and appropriate contact is maintained with the employee during any leave following an incident.

However, the knowledge that their incident has been treated with the seriousness it deserves, that lessons have been learned and measures have been implemented to prevent reoccurrences can often provide a positive spur to improve the employees return to fitness and work. The sufferer can often feel very alone and isolated following a violent occurrence. They may have little or no evidence on which to base the fact that their manager and colleagues or organisation has taken the matter seriously and instigated an appropriate response. It can therefore be a natural reaction to descend into poor mental health and possibly depression.

The role of the immediate line manager is especially important, because that person most powerfully represents the organisation to the employee. There is a strong responsibility to convey personal concern for the employee as well as the concern of the organisation. It is important that the employee does not feel abandoned if they are to make a speedy recovery. Feelings of worthlessness are a common occurrence and these need to be dispelled.

Simple expressions of kindness from friends and colleagues – a visit, an email or phone call can help the person regain their confidence. There are other ways in which you can demonstrate your support if you are a manager or colleague. These are listed below:

- ▶ If the employee is hospitalised – arrange a visit (after seeking agreement), send cards, and convey other expressions of concern. The nursing staff can advise you of the length and type of interaction that is most appropriate. If the person is quite ill, a very brief visit and a few words of concern may be enough. As recovery continues, sharing news from the workplace will help the person continue to feel part of the organisation.
- ▶ Encourage colleagues to show support. As they recover, the employee will probably need to tell the story of the assault, possibly more than once, and may find it easier to discuss this with colleagues who are familiar with the work setting and may have had similar experiences. Colleagues will also require debriefing, dependent on the risk assessment/criteria or severity of the incident. Remember, colleagues can be very badly affected and in turn may suffer anxiety themselves, which could progress to long-term depression.
- ▶ The employee's family may need support. If the situation has received media attention, the family may need assistance in screening phone calls and mail. Helping the family to visit hospital or carrying out other tasks usually undertaken by the employee can go a long way in showing that the organisation and its workforce not only cares for its members, but values the contribution of employees and regrets the fact that this has had such an impact.
- ▶ When the employee is ready, help plan their return to work. The sooner the employee can return, the easier it will be for them emotionally. This will also mean that they will have been absent for a shorter period of time, and this will enable them to get back to a normal routine more quickly. However, a flexible approach which does not expose the employee to too much stress at once, such as part-time work or working with a colleague for a short time for support, can often help overcome anxiety and may facilitate a return to work sooner than would otherwise be possible.
- ▶ Some areas will require a more in-depth, longer period of support. Always take professional advice on restrictions, function ability, workplace planning, and staffing levels, as although the employee may still be at work, they cannot be expected to function fully in their normal capacity. This will, on the whole, be a short-term measure. If changes are made according to the review of the risk assessment then make sure they are implemented and adhered to.
- ▶ The employee's physical needs should be clarified with healthcare providers, e.g. the supervisor and employee should understand precisely what is meant by phrases such as 'light work'. It would be extremely useful to have a pre-employment health check undertaken before someone enters employment with the organisation. This will identify particular areas for support, ensuring that they are physically and mentally fit for the job role that they will be undertaking and that they are suitable for the type and range of work activities.

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- ▶ A flexible approach for a recovering employee may seem to take time and energy, but in the long run will pay dividends in ensuring the retention of an experienced employee as an integral part of the work group and demonstrate a commitment to their colleagues that the organisation takes its responsibilities seriously.
 - ▶ However, individual preferences and differences should be respected. Some may find that they can recover quickly with their own circle of friends and family. Others may feel the need to access specialist support but not until some time later.
 - ▶ Even with excellent support, employees who have been assaulted may sometimes decide to seek an alternative occupation. It may also be necessary to reassure other members of employees that their efforts contributed to the individual's recovery, and that the decision is not a rejection of them.
 - ▶ Make sure the employee is given information on how to look after themselves and survive their experience. (See '**A Personal Survival Plan**')

Useful websites:

Work Positive (external site)

Developed by NHS Health Scotland and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA Ireland), this step-by-step process assists workplaces to identify and reduce potential causes of stress.
www.healthscotland.org.uk/workpositive

WellScotland (external site)

Website of The National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing. The site provides news on mental health in Scotland, details of research, a database of support agencies and services, practical top-tips for maintaining positive mental health, and a useful glossary of common terms.
www.wellscotland.info

Breathing Space (external site)

Breathing Space is a free and confidential phoneline service for any individual who is experiencing low mood or depression, or who is unusually worried and in need of someone to talk to. Call 0800 83 85 87, 6 pm–2 am.
www.breathingspacescotland.com

Samaritans (external site)

Provides confidential, emotional support for people experiencing distress or despair. Also provides a number of courses for businesses to help tackle stress in the workplace.
www.samaritans.org

Supporting employees through prosecutions of attackers

Where a prosecution is involved, employees need extra support to help them through the intervening period prepare them for a court appearance.

Employee advisory services, where available, are an obvious and valuable way to support employees. However where these are not available, there are a number of resources from other sources to support those who might be witnesses to an incident which is being taken through the justice system. These are outlined below:

- ▶ **Victims of Crime in Scotland** is a Scottish Government website which provides details of support organisations which may be helpful to employees. However, its main function is to provide an explanation of the court system, including information on sentencing, mitigating and aggravating factors and the options available to the courts along with a jargon buster.
www.victimsofcrimeinscotland.org.uk
- ▶ **Witnesses in Scotland** is an associated site which explains in detail the processes involved in being a witness, going to court and giving evidence, and has downloadable resources in a number of languages.
www.witnessesinscotland.com

Sometimes, due to a number of factors including evidential requirements, a decision may be taken not to proceed with a prosecution. In these cases, the victim of the assault has the right to seek an explanation for the decision. To do so, the victim should write to the Procurator Fiscal directly.

There are a range of more specialist organisations in Scotland which will support victims of crime:

- ▶ **Victim Support Scotland** provides practical advice, emotional support and assistance to victims of crime.
www.victimsupportsco.org.uk
- ▶ **Citizens Advice Bureau** gives advice about the rights of individuals.
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- ▶ **The Samaritans** is a source of help for people in need. www.samaritans.org
- ▶ **Scottish Women's Aid** is the national office for Women's Aid groups throughout Scotland providing information, support and a safe refuge for women, children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.
www.womensaid.org.uk
- ▶ **Domestic Abuse Helpline** (when an incident occurs as a result of a domestic situation of the employee) 24-hour line - provides confidential information and support and this freephone number doesn't show up on itemised phone bills.
0800 027 1234
- ▶ **Rape Crisis** The national office for rape crises and sexual abuse centres. The centres offer free, confidential support to women and girls who have experienced any form of sexual violence at any time in their lives.
www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Section B

Understanding, recognising and managing aggression for frontline employees

On the front line - employee guidance

Most of the time that you are involved in serving the public, helping them to pay for or access services, you will be dealing with polite and respectful people, their friends and family accessing the service you are providing.

However, there will always be times when feelings run high, particularly when a service is being denied or does not reach the expectations of the person you are dealing with. Sometimes it is even understandable how this occurs.

Anger, frustration, having to wait and/or external life events can mean that by the time the person gets to you they are ready to vent their anger, or sometimes even rage, on you as a representative of the organisation. It is very rarely personal, but should it become so, then it is time to consider removing yourself from the situation and seeking assistance from colleagues. Despite the fact that many find it difficult to express anger other than becoming personally abusive, this is never acceptable.

These pages will explain how these situations can be managed as well as when you need to be able to remove yourself without fear of reproach from managers.

However, if we understand the reasons people become angry, then we can often manage the situation to an outcome which may or may not satisfy them, but will demonstrate that we have done everything possible to help and in doing so the reason for their anger has been removed, at least to some extent.

Anger and frustration are entirely natural reactions but when these are recognised they can be managed effectively while maintaining normal high levels of service. However, dealing with personal abuse is not part of the job. Knowing when to draw the line is important. This means putting yourself in a position to maintain your own personal safety as much as possible, even when someone is making personal comments about you or threatening you. You also need to prepare for this type of situation. Often rage can build up from understandable anger if the person delivering the service does not know how to respond appropriately.

This section will briefly guide you through an explanation of why these situations can occur and provide tips to manage aggression and threats in the workplace. This will **not** involve restraint but is designed to provide you with tools to recognise situations which might lead to violence or aggression before they start. It will give you the confidence to move away from them if it is not possible to defuse this to protect your own safety.

You will also find examples of tips on maintaining your personal safety provided by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, and a personal survival plan from the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives.

Understanding, recognising and managing aggression

Unless we (organisations and the individuals that work in them) understand the emotions of an abusive service user, and how or why they are feeling the way they do, then it will be difficult to reduce incidents happening or prepare to manage them.

Often, the entirely natural reaction is to retaliate, which only makes the situation worse. If verbal abuse and threats, which may or may not lead to physical violence, are to be reduced in workplaces, it is necessary to find ways of dealing with our own natural anger when these types of situations occur.

Once we appreciate what makes people act in this way we can begin to manage these situations more effectively.

This chapter will focus on explaining some causes of this type of behaviour, how to identify where it might occur, and provide tips on how to manage it. It is important that this is also supported by relevant training which identifies the risk areas in your workplace so that these can also be managed.

There will always be occasions where individuals, for their own reasons, come into workplaces to deliberately cause trouble. Thankfully this is comparatively rare but when these individual incidents are reported to managers, and where necessary the police, effective action can then be taken to prevent this happening in the future. Reporting of all instances can enable a picture of offending to be built up which can provide evidence in the future to take action against persistent offenders.

The breakdown of situations involving normal everyday tasks while interacting with service users is more usual and there are many causes that can be anticipated and planned for.

Causes of aggressive behaviour

Violence and/or aggression are rarely justifiable. There can, however, be many reasons that provoke people to be offensive, threatening, rude or abusive; for example:

- ▶ Unrealistic expectations or inaccurate perceptions of the service.
- ▶ Lack of information.
- ▶ Believing that only aggression guarantees satisfaction.
- ▶ Believing that the customer is always right.
- ▶ Not valuing the person providing the service.
- ▶ Anger and resentment not necessarily associated with the organisation.
- ▶ Tiredness or lack of sleep.
- ▶ A medical condition.
- ▶ Personal matters.

Recognising aggression

Noticing the service user's appearance or interactions will often help to assess the need to be vigilant and ready to manage the situation to a successful conclusion. Examples could be:

Person's appearance

- ▶ Altering facial expression
- ▶ Generally restless, foot tapping, etc.
- ▶ Beginning to tremble or perspire

Person's behaviour

- ▶ Glaring
- ▶ Clenching fists
- ▶ Finger-pointing
- ▶ Seeking support from other service users
- ▶ Thumping tables or walls
- ▶ Pacing about
- ▶ Invading space of employees

The way the person communicates

- ▶ Demanding rather than requesting
- ▶ Speaking with a loud voice or shouting
- ▶ Using racist or sexist language

Responding using anger, either in words or actions or perhaps showing fear will only provoke the situation further. By being more in control of our own reactions we are in a better position to influence the aggressor's behaviour for the better.

Distinguishing between anger and rage

Anger and rage may be related but they are not the same. Many people today are unable to express anger in a purposeful and constructive manner. We all allow anger to influence us and control our behaviour to some level.

Anger may create violence, but while it is unacceptable to be violent, it may often be acceptable to be angry, depending on how it is expressed and the situation.

In most situations when people are angry it is not directed at us personally. Whoever was on the receiving end would be treated in the same way. We are not always in a position to change the aggressor's behaviour immediately, but at least we can stop ourselves being drawn in or feeling a 'victim' by 'counter-attacking'.

Anger is a natural response to threats; it inspires powerful, often aggressive, feelings and conduct, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked.

Anger is not a bad emotion. However, if not handled properly, anger can lead to rage. It's easy to take anger from others personally. This can make a bad situation escalate.

Rage is never acceptable. It can be defined in a number of ways as:

- ▶ violent anger or fury
- ▶ intense anger expressed by shouting, swearing or belittling language - storming
- ▶ anger which is apparently out of control, beyond reason
- ▶ physical or verbal violence which physically or emotionally harms the recipient, makes them feel personally attacked or, in some cases, personally abused
- ▶ behaviour which leaves the recipient outraged
- ▶ threats to the organisation or person.

When comments become personal or personally insulting, it is time to remove yourself from the situation.

Physical reactions to stressful situations

Our bodies have been geared up to fight or run away since ancient times. This is often called the 'fight or flight' response. When this happens:

- ▶ pupils dilate and the mouth goes dry
- ▶ endorphins are released to protect the arteries and ease pain of any injury that might be sustained in a fight. This causes the neck, shoulders and muscles to tense up
- ▶ the heart pumps harder and may even cause palpitations
- ▶ sweating increases
- ▶ muscles prepare for battle and breathing increases, sometimes causing hyperventilation
- ▶ blood pressure rises and the liver releases glucose to provide energy
- ▶ digestion slows or increases.

The release of adrenalin and cortisol (for the regulation of blood pressure and metabolism) can be the equivalent of drinking seven cups of coffee all at once.

In stressful situations we go through the same process. Anyone in conflict either face to face or over the telephone, will have some of these body responses after each incident:

- ▶ The tummy may be upset as the digestive system kicks back into action.
- ▶ Muscles in the neck or back may feel tight.
- ▶ Unused adrenalin in muscles is like a strong toxin and if unused will lead to a general feeling of being unwell.
- ▶ Feeling physically drained and tired as though the body has been in a fight.

While each incident will have to a greater or lesser extent some impact on the body, the long-term effects on the health and wellbeing of individuals regularly exposed to this can be severe.

In most cases today, once our fight or flight response is activated, we cannot flee. We cannot fight. When we are faced with people being aggressive or threatening, we have to control ourselves and 'deal with it.' This can cause us to become aggressive, hypervigilant and over-reactive. All three can cause us to act or respond in ways that are actually counter-productive.

By recognising the symptoms and signs of being in fight or flight, we can begin to take steps to handle the stress overload, protecting ourselves and managing successful outcomes.

Preparing to respond

In situations when we engage with other people, we will usually be rational and objective, but depending on circumstances we can all descend into negative behaviours which can lead to the breakdown of the situation.

By understanding what is happening and remaining calm, rational and focused, it is possible to defuse this and manage it to a conclusion, minimising the impact on themselves and the service being provided.

Often when a situation is likely to deteriorate, the abusing person will adopt one of two negative approaches, either becoming authoritarian (parental) or childlike.

Parental - at its most negative in conflict situations, the parental approach is controlling, stifling of other individuals and can be sarcastic and hurtful.

Those trying to influence using this approach will be dictatorial, finger-pointing and try to talk down to the person providing the service, making them feel belittled and childlike.

Parental phrases sound like 'Have you any idea what you are doing?' or 'Get me someone who knows what they are doing'.

They may be designed to make you feel hurt, aggrieved or humiliated. The individual needs you to descend into responding in a negative way to maintain the upper hand and believe by doing so they will get what they want, even when their expectations exceed what is realistic. A natural response might be 'It is not my fault'.

Child-like - these are behaviours, thoughts and feelings replayed from childhood, especially if shouting and tantrums achieved goals then.

Someone using a negative child ego state will try to portray themselves as victims using phrases like 'If my children starve, it will be your fault' or 'Nobody told me...'

These are designed to portray the individual as a victim or provoke sympathy but are more likely to stimulate a parental response such as 'if you had done as you were asked, this wouldn't be happening.' Again a response here only maintains negativity and allows the situation to deteriorate.

Remaining objective

It is important to realise that by refusing to be drawn in and remaining objective (in an adult frame of mind), unemotional and rational, by not responding to trigger words and phrases and being able to maintain objectivity and the other person will begin to see that their approach is not having the desired result.

The goal is to move the customer back to a calmer state of mind towards adult dialogue, where solutions or future actions can be identified and agreed upon. When both parties are in adult ego state results can be achieved quickly and efficiently.

Being negative can only prolong the process. In these situations, the person maintaining the adult state will avoid or at the very least minimise the physical effects of going through the effects of fight or flight.

Active listening (Really **listening** to what the person is saying to you)

This four-step approach to managing building aggression whether face to face or on the telephone will help you to remain in the adult state.

Pause

- ▶ Give yourself time to think.
- ▶ Tell your brain you are not under threat.
- ▶ Take a deep breath.
- ▶ Let the service user blow off steam.
- ▶ Don't take it personally.

Acknowledge

- ▶ Make noises to show that you are listening.
- ▶ Keep tone warm and friendly.

Clarify

- ▶ Listen for clues in the customer's statements.
- ▶ Paraphrase what they are saying so you are clear.
- ▶ Ask open questions – who, why, what, where, how.
- ▶ Summarise what they have said.
- ▶ Get them to agree a way forward.

Respond

- ▶ Tell them what will happen next.

By recognising that there are usually identifiable causes of violence which can be anticipated, justifiable anger may be acknowledged and the descent into unacceptable abuse avoided. Strategies which enable employees to maintain composure and manage otherwise confrontational situations to a suitable conclusion can then be used.

'Red rag' statements and triggers of rage

If someone is in a situation which is causing them distress or they are suffering from one of the causes of aggressive behaviour listed on p67, then by using the adult ego state to remain calm and rational and empathising as soon as possible such as: 'I can hear that you sound really upset by this. I am sorry, what was your name?'

A parental or child-like response will only lead to the situation descending into rage which will be more difficult to manage.

Careless statements can often contribute to the situation and trigger an aggressive situation, so it is important that those in the front line are aware of the need to be on guard when engaging directly with service users.

- ▶ 'Why didn't you let us know you had moved?'
- ▶ 'Don't blame me; it was somebody else who dealt with you the last time.'
- ▶ (Sigh), 'We're just going round in circles.'
- ▶ 'Can I speak now?'
- ▶ 'I think you should calm down.'
- ▶ 'Have you bothered to read the letter we sent you?'

Examples of empathy statements that help to manage aggressive situations:

- ▶ 'I can hear you are very upset by this and I would like to help, but I need to be clear about what is required'
- ▶ 'I really want to help you sort this out, however I can't do so while you are shouting at me'
- ▶ 'Mrs Swann, I am trying to help you but I am finding it difficult to concentrate when you are shouting at me'
- ▶ 'Mr Smith, I personally find that language offensive so I am asking you not to swear so I can concentrate on helping you'

Dealing with phone rage

With permission from Capita UK, their guidance on the **Top 10 triggers of phone rage** are contained in **Appendix 1**.

Further information specifically on dealing with phone rage is available from the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives www.healthyworkinglives.com or 0800 019 2211.

Dealing with road rage

Serious road rage incidents are very rare, despite media perception. Advice on dealing with road rage is available from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents website, www.rospa.com/RoadSafety/advice/driving/roadrage.htm

Cyberbullying

The Internet is increasingly being used as a means of highlighting dissatisfaction with an organisation by targeting the employee seen to be responsible. Your employer's IT team will usually be able to stop emails being received and take action against the sender.

Often, the sender can be identified but the Internet also offers anonymity for those with the knowledge and ability to post information about individuals, along with inaccurate or exaggerated information. More information on cyberbullying can be found on www.direct.gov.uk

What do I do when I get an abusive email or text?

- ▶ Don't respond
- ▶ Don't interact
- ▶ Don't engage

This is not as easy to do as it sounds. It's natural to want to defend yourself but doing so only inflames the situation and provokes further responses.

Keep all abusive emails or evidence of other cyberbullying.

Create a new folder and move the mail into this folder. You don't have to read it. When the time comes, this folder can be used as evidence.

Persistent abusive emails can also be forwarded to abuse@isp where 'isp' is the Internet service provider the abuser is using, eg 'aol.com' or 'yahoo.com'.

Although Internet service providers may not act on every complaint, the more they receive about a particular individual (with examples of abusive email) the more likely they are to close down an account.

Personal safety

As discussed in the chapter of this document entitled **Understanding, recognising and managing aggression**, being assaulted or verbally abused on the job can lead not only to physical injury, but also to emotional distress.

The most important concern for individuals at work who engage with the public or service users and their families is personal safety and survival; property can be repaired or replaced, people cannot.

Each incident of workplace violence is different, so providing detailed directions to be taken is not always a good idea; specific steps that may be effective in one situation may be dangerous or ineffective in another. Simple tips that are easy to remember are useful in helping to defuse situations when needed.

Appendix 3, Personal safety checklist will help you decide the areas where you are perhaps more vulnerable and where steps need to be taken to maintain your personal safety. Although this is designed for group use, you may also find it useful to refer to **Appendix 4, Model employee survey** and **Appendix 5, Review of past incidents checklist**.

The list below is intended to be used as a guide to help plan how you will deal with situations when they arise.

- ▶ Put yourself in the safest position possible. This may include going to a 'safe room', remaining at a workstation, using furniture as a shield, or exiting the building.
- ▶ Establish an escape route. This escape route usually should be the same as that used for fire drills and bomb threats. This way you do not have to remember different procedures for different emergencies. The escape route should not be used until it is safe to do so.
- ▶ A team code word or phrase should be established, so that employees who feel threatened or need assistance can get help without alerting the perpetrator.
- ▶ Try to remain as calm as possible. Use the techniques explained in the chapter entitled **Understanding, recognising and managing aggression** in this document to assess the ego state of the aggressor.
- ▶ Show that you are giving the person your complete attention, nod and keep eye contact. Stand to the side of the person and not face to face, so you are less of a target.
- ▶ Pause before responding to give time to collect your thoughts, clarify what the person actually wants, make noises to show you are listening, and summarise what they are saying to ensure you are clear.

- ▶ Tell them you will try to help as much as you can and explain what you can actually provide.
- ▶ Never attempt to disarm the individual, if a weapon is being used.
- ▶ Do not attempt to protect property or possessions over your own personal safety.
- ▶ Remember, people may be right to be angry about a situation but that does not give them the right to abuse you.
- ▶ All threats and reports of threats should be taken seriously and responded to immediately. Be vigilant with regard to caution and safety, as it is not usually possible to determine if and when an individual may carry out a threat that has been made.
- ▶ If the threat is made in person, employees should be advised to try to get witnesses. Depending upon the nature of the threat, it may be appropriate to contact the police.

Tools to help employees plan to maintain their own personal safety are contained in **Appendix 6, Home visiting risk assessment guidance, Appendix 7, Interview room safety checklist,** and **Appendix 8, Dynamic risk assessment.**

These help in making an assessment before the visit, recording how the visit went and steps that may have to be taken in the future to avoid further risk.

The dynamic risk assessment flowchart is based on the Suzy Lamplugh Trust P.E.T. Analysis. It depicts common-sense action which should be taken before commencing any part of day-to-day work. It is unfortunately true to say that common sense is not always turned into common practice. Complacency and assumptions can take over, hence the dynamic risk assessment model simply reminds us to turn on our 'personal safety radar', remaining aware and taking action to remove ourselves from an unsafe situation when necessary. The P.E.T. Analysis, divides potential risks into one or more of three areas of concern:

- P** The person/ people you are dealing with
- E** The environment you are working in
- T** The task you are carrying out.

People

This relates to anyone who is potentially involved in the interaction, including service users, relatives, colleagues, others and us. Finding out as much information about the people that we will need to interact with is of paramount importance, as is the consideration which we should give to our own ability to carry out the task. Throughout the interaction we must remain constantly aware of changes or 'trigger' signs which may be shown by others and respond accordingly to remain safe.

Environment

Gathering information and remaining aware of the environment that we go into is essential. A few examples could be parking near street lighting because we recognise that we will return to the car in the dark, visually assessing safety within an interview room before commencing an interview, or being vigilant for potential weapons and maintaining a safe exit when carrying out interviews and home visits.

Task

Due to time constraints there may be a tendency to get on with the task at hand immediately. However, first we need to give this some thought. For example, what news are we about to deliver to the people we are meeting? Could the letter or refusal of service act as a potential trigger to aggression? If so, how can this be controlled? As we carry out the task we must remain aware of the response of others to what we are saying or doing, taking action to calm the situation or to get out if this escalates. By examining the three areas it is easier to decide where the threat is coming from and how it can be dealt with. Once this has been established the obvious next step is to ask 'Can you avoid or minimise the risk so that you feel confident?'

Hints and tips on de-escalation and safety advice when out and about are provided by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust in **Appendix 12, De-escalation – hints and tips checklist**, and **Appendix 13, Safety advice when out and about**. Further advice on personal safety is available on their website www.suzylamplugh.org

Buddying

If you work alone, it is always a good idea to arrange to buddy a colleague or colleagues, so that someone always knows where you are going or what time you should return. Informal systems probably work best because they are designed to suit particular situations, but if your employer has a system it is your responsibility to make sure you use it. If not, you may find the model buddying procedure **Appendix 9, Minimum standards for a successful buddy system** helpful in setting up your own in the meantime.

Reporting all instances of aggressive behaviour

Many people do not feel it is worthwhile to report to employers when incidents of threats and verbal abuse occur. Many reasons are given including:

- ▶ reporting processes too cumbersome
- ▶ believing taking abuse is part of the job
- ▶ nothing will happen
- ▶ fear of being thought not competent
- ▶ service user has a disability which contributes to the behaviour
- ▶ no wish to 'stigmatise' the person
- ▶ some managers or other colleagues may discourage reporting
- ▶ differences in opinion on whether verbal abuse should be reported.

Reporting can often be seen as something that punishes others rather than as a way to protect yourself and your colleagues in the future. Your employers have a duty to protect you in the workplace but they can only do so effectively if they know what is happening to you.

By making sure your managers are aware of the levels of abusive behaviour you are encountering, you are making every effort to protect yourself. If your manager doesn't respond, for whatever reason, then raise this with them again and make sure they know you will take this either to their manager, your trades union and/or the safety representative. They may have just overlooked this or not been aware of the issues. Take this document with you. You have the right to escalate this through internal procedures or through your trades union.

If you work in an area where abusive behaviour is fairly common, it can be a good idea, in addition to reporting this to managers, to keep your own record of how often this happens. You may be surprised when you see the results. If this is affecting your health this will be very useful to your GP and others in estimating how to help.

Reporting can also be very useful to the police when a prosecution is necessary. Many cases do not get to court due to the lack of supporting evidence around the final incident which caused them to be involved. Records of past instances involving a particular person can enable this to be taken forward.

A personal survival plan

A personal survival plan

Often when incidents occur we feel somehow at fault, have feelings of failure and end up taking time off work. This is an entirely natural reaction, but we can feel alone and depressed. Support should always be available from your employers and colleagues, but the personal survival plan at the end of this chapter will help you to help yourself get back to normal so that you can get the most out of your life and your job.

If you have to take time off work following an incident or a series of incidents, then realising that this is entirely natural is the first step to getting better and returning to normal. You may feel alone or want to play down your situation for fear of appearing silly. Again this is entirely natural but it is important to get some help as soon as possible as not doing so will only lengthen the time you take to make a recovery.

Feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, guilt, embarrassment and of being 'out of control' are common responses to these types of situations. Examples of physical, emotional and behavioural responses are contained in the chapter of this document entitled **Supporting recovery**.

Here are a few pointers to help you make sense of your experience and prepare to move on by getting back to normal:

1. Make an appointment with your doctor and tell him or her what has been happening to you at work, not just the last incident. If it is not too upsetting, take the opportunity to note these down beforehand. Not only does this give a better picture to the doctor, but provides you with your own evidence to confirm why it is necessary to do so. Noting down thoughts and feelings can also be very beneficial in helping you mentally move on.
2. Follow medical instructions and let your line manager know. People can't be supportive unless they know what is happening. Again, noting things down can be beneficial, so write down what you want to discuss with your line manager. Remember that any prescribed medication may have effects on personal safety in the workplace.
3. If counselling is felt appropriate and is available at work, make an early appointment to talk through your experience. Counselling services can be an invaluable tool to help you make sense of your experience and move on in the future.
4. If no workplace counselling is available then check to see if your medical practice has a counselling service. If not, then contact the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives Adviceline who may be able to find one in your area.

5. Make a conscious effort to eat a well-balanced diet and try to avoid the over-consumption of alcohol.
6. Learn to relax. Your doctor will be able to help.
7. Maintain contact with friends outside work. You will need a good listener.
8. Make time to do the things you enjoy outside work.
9. Give yourself treats and keep your sense of humour.
10. Get in touch with your trades union or a similar organisation who can advise and support you.

You may also find these websites useful:

WellScotland

Website of the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing. The site provides news on mental health in Scotland, details of research, a database of support agencies and services, practical top tips for maintaining positive mental health, and a useful glossary of common terms.

www.wellscotland.info

Breathing Space

Breathing Space is a free and confidential phonenumber service for any individual, who is experiencing low mood or depression, or who is unusually worried and in need of someone to talk to. Call 0800 83 85 87, 6 pm–2 am.

www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk

Samaritans

Provides confidential, emotional support for people experiencing distress or despair. Also provides a number of courses for businesses to help tackle stress in the workplace. Call 08457 90 90 90, 24 hours a day.

www.samaritans.org

Section C

Appendices

Appendix 1

Top 10 triggers of phone rage

Capita UK (www.capita.co.uk) estimates that these are the 10 top triggers of rage for customers on the telephone:

1. Call not being answered

- ▶ The phone is not answered in reasonable time. The caller is uncertain they have dialled the right number, but dare not try again in case they have to go back to the bottom of the queue.
- ▶ The call is answered and then put into a queuing system. Some callers are annoyed that they have to pay the phone costs when being kept on hold. However, many callers say that they prefer this to not knowing if there is anyone likely to answer the call at all, with the phone just continuously ringing.
- ▶ The caller has been waiting a long time while the phone is ringing, then the line goes dead or the phone is apparently lifted, but no-one speaks.
- ▶ Being put on hold without being kept informed – one minute on hold feels like ten to a caller.
- ▶ A line that is constantly engaged, with no apparent alternative numbers to try.
- ▶ No means by which to leave a message after hours (very important in internationally-based companies and in an era of changing working patterns).

2. Dealing with machines, not people

- ▶ The customer feels processed, or the victim of a faceless corporation.
- ▶ Lengthy menu of options, the customer often ends up where they started.
- ▶ Voicemails or answerphones – seen as a ‘black hole’ for losing customers and not having to deal with customers when they need you.

3. Insincerity

- ▶ Standard greetings and pleasantries which do not sound sincere.
- ▶ Scripted conversations, especially from sales people.
- ▶ Overuse of names and/or inappropriate use of first names.

4. Being treated impersonally

- ▶ Abrupt, bored or generally unreceptive voices taking the call.
- ▶ Being made to feel processed, e.g. name, number, address, postcode.
- ▶ Being made to feel guilty or rushed when the caller has rung at the end of the working day or just before lunch.
- ▶ No use of names or acknowledgement of the caller's long-term relationship with the company.
- ▶ Feeling a victim of bureaucracy – form-filling, being bombarded with jargon.

5. Customer adviser not taking ownership of problem

- ▶ Being passed around, with nobody taking responsibility or the initiative to find the right person or call the customer back so the caller ends up having to do all the work AND all the waiting.
- ▶ Caller has to repeat their name and reason for calling, several times to different people.
- ▶ Employees blaming each other as if they are not part of the same organisation.
- ▶ Adviser withholding his or her name from the customer.
- ▶ Dealing with different people every time – seen as annoying when the customer has to spend time re-explaining situations to someone different, especially when there doesn't appear to be any handover of information or common access to records.

6. Not being kept informed

- ▶ Being put on hold or kept on hold without being told what's happening.
- ▶ No transfer phrase when the caller is being put through to someone else, instead of 'I'm transferring you to...' Or 'David's line is ringing for you now' - all the customer hears is a click and then silence so they assume they have been cut off.
- ▶ Some customers find music annoying when on hold. However, most people prefer to hear music rather than nothing at all. It also depends on the music.

7. Promises not being met

- ▶ Calls not returned when promised.
- ▶ Several calls made, reassurances given (e.g. goods dispatched) – no response.

8. Lack of authority

- ▶ The person receiving the call lacks the knowledge or authority to resolve the caller's problem.
- ▶ Instead of passing the call to the best person to help, they 'flannel' the caller.

9. Denied access to member of staff

- ▶ Caller is 'fobbed off' – 'he's in a meeting', 'too busy to speak to you, can you call back?'
- ▶ Screening process, making customers feel as if they are being kept out, e.g. 'who's calling, 'what's it about', 'just one moment and I'll see if she's in'.

10. Rudeness of staff

- ▶ Rudeness, impatience and inflexibility of staff.
- ▶ Making the customer feel belittled.
- ▶ Inferring the customer is lying. 'Are you sure...?'
- ▶ Trying to catch the caller out.
- ▶ Threatening phrases, 'Now you do want this work done today, don't you?'

Appendix 2 Model risk assessment form

This is the manual handling assessment form, which is available on the Healthy Working Lives website www.healthyworkinglives.com

Manual Handling Risk Assessment

Adviceline: **0800 019 2211**
www.healthyworkinglives.com





Company/Organisation **Assessor**

Manual Handling Activity/Task *Complete the relevant details of the activity being assessed*

Hazards *All hazards associated with the activity should be entered here. Task, Individual, Load, Environment. See over*

Those at risk
Staff, public and others

Current control measures *List current control measures*

With these controls the risk is (circle)

Unacceptable	Further controls required	Adequately controlled
--------------	---------------------------	-----------------------

Further control measures required
List further action needed to adequately control risks

Date					
Initial					

Appendix 3

Personal safety checklist

This checklist is designed to identify issues which impact on your personal safety in your daily duties. It should help focus your mind on how your actions can be improved to ensure your safety is not compromised. Tick the appropriate box in response to each of the questions.

Description	Yes	No
I regularly work alone		
I regularly conduct visits outside normal working hours		
I regularly come into contact with violent /aggressive /abusive people		
I always take a colleague with me when visiting service users who have a history of aggressive behaviour		
I have been the victim of violence or threatening behaviour		
I am confident that departmental arrangements concerning my personal safety are adequate		
I always leave a diary of visits at my base		
I am provided with a personal attack alarm which I carry at all times when I am out of the office		
I have been provided with a mobile phone which I carry at all times when I am out of the office		
I maintain regular contact with my base throughout the day when out of the office		
I always advise my supervisor or colleagues when my daily duties are completed		
I always risk-assess service users for potential problems (e.g. violence or aggressive behaviour) before conducting a visit		
I always keep records and report details of violence or aggressive behaviour and inform my colleagues accordingly		
I often handle large sums of money		
I am familiar with departmental policies and codes of practice in relation to violence, aggression and personal safety		

Appendix 4

Model employee survey - experience of violence at work

Date of survey		Name (optional)	
Department		Work location	
Employee experience	Yes	No	Don't know
Violence, verbal abuse or threats are accepted as 'part of the job' by managers, supervisors and/or employees			
I communicate information about potentially assaulting / threatening visitors/ service users to appropriate people in the organisation			
I am regularly informed regarding violent incidents that have occurred			
I feel management, other employees, visitors and service users (and their families where appropriate) treat me with respect			
I am basically satisfied with my job			
I am basically satisfied with the management of violence and aggression within the organisation			
I generally feel 'safe' at work			
I am familiar with my organisation's Managing Violence policy			
Potential risk factors			
I work in a high crime area			
I work with people who misuse alcohol and/or drugs			
I work with cash			
I work with people who have a history of violent behaviour and/or behaviour disorders			
I work in isolated areas or with a small group of people			
I work with customers who are seeking social services			
I have direct contact with the public			
I work with the delivery of passengers, goods or services			
I have a mobile workplace, e.g. local authority transport, leased or privately-owned vehicle			
I work late at night or early in the morning			
I guard valuable property or possessions			
I work in community-based settings			
The office or site has adequate lighting to and from and within the workplace			
Access and freedom of movement within the workplace are restricted to those who have a legitimate reason for being there			

Employee experience	Yes	No	Don't know
I wear photo ID			
Alarm systems such as panic alarm buttons, silent alarms, or personal electronic alarm systems are used for prompt security assistance			
Alarm systems are regularly tested			
A security escort system is provided after hours			
Visitors are signed in and out			
Visitors are given appropriate identification			
Exits are accessible and clearly marked			
Emergency equipment is in existence			
I can locate emergency equipment when necessary			
I can locate mobile phones and /or radios for emergency communication			
I know the correct procedure if a bomb threat is announced			
There is an emergency call-back system which is kept up to date			
I provide privacy to reflect sensitivity and respect for service users			
I use a buddy system to work together if problems arise			
I have a mobile phone or other ways of contacting with my base if I need help			
Staffing levels are appropriate			
A safety committee is available to respond to concerns over violence at work			
Training			
I have received training on the authority's workplace violence prevention programme			
I have been trained to recognise and handle threatening, aggressive or threatening behaviour			
I have been trained in verbal de-escalation techniques			
Incidents and reporting			
There have been previous incidents of violent or threatening behaviour or verbal abuse from service users and/or their families			
There have been previous incidents of violent/threatening behaviour or verbal abuse from complete strangers			
Employees are required to report incidents or threats of violence regardless of injury or severity; the reporting system is clear			

Appendix 5

Review of past incidents checklist

Please tick the appropriate response and provide clarification in the right hand block

	Yes	No	Clarification
Were there similarities in circumstances that allowed for the situations to occur?			
Are there any identifiable common factors in events leading up to incidents?			
Were there safety measures in place?			
Is there a category of perpetrator(s) that presents the highest risk for employees?			
Were there any relationships between workplace assault victims and the offenders?			
Are there similarities in the services provided by the employee(s) involved in the incidents?			
Are there tasks and environments that place employees in the greatest risk?			
Did the actions of the victim influence the outcome of the attack?			
Are there any effective prevention strategies?			
Are there steps being take to implement prevention strategies?			

Appendix 6

Home visiting risk assessment guidance

The following guide to risk-assessing is intended to be a flexible tool and should be adapted according to your service needs

Service user's name		Employee's name	
Home address		Base address	
Place being met		Date of visit	

Part 1. To be completed in the planning stages prior to a home visit and thereafter at any time, if necessary

	High risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
Does the person have a history of antisocial behaviour including violent or aggressive tendencies towards employees?			
Are they likely to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs?			
Will you be withholding or altering a service?			
Does the patient have a history of mental health problems?			
Does the patient have mobility complications that require you to assist them to move or transfer?			
Will you have to operate moving and handling equipment such as a hoist?			
Does the location of the visit give you concerns that make you feel vulnerable?			
Have the relatives or friends of the patients ever posed any problem to employees?			
Are you carrying any injury or illness at this time that may affect your prompt response in an emergency situation?			

What actions have you taken to reduce risks?

Action to be taken	Tick
Visit the service user with a colleague	
Find out more information from other agencies/documentation	
Seek advice from risk management advisers	
Activate a buddy system	
Other:	

Part 2. To be completed after the home visit

Were there any unforeseen risks?

NO (sign form and file in service user notes) **YES** (Tick and comment below)

Reason	Comments	Tick
Required a second member of employees on the visit		
Insufficient information given on referral		
Moving and handling of equipment		
Moving and handling of service user		
Deterioration of service user's medical state		
Verbal abuse, violent or threatening behaviour		
Service user under the influence of alcohol or drugs		
Problems with relatives/ friends of service user – state who		
Transportation or vehicle problems		
Communication problems – no phone, etc.		
Problems getting to location, e.g. dark, isolated, etc		
Pet problems		
Other		

IMPORTANT- An occurrence recording form must be completed for any adverse incident or near-miss

Are any other health or social care employees at risk when visiting this service user?	
--	--

Have they been informed?	
--------------------------	--

Signature		Date	
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Appendix 7

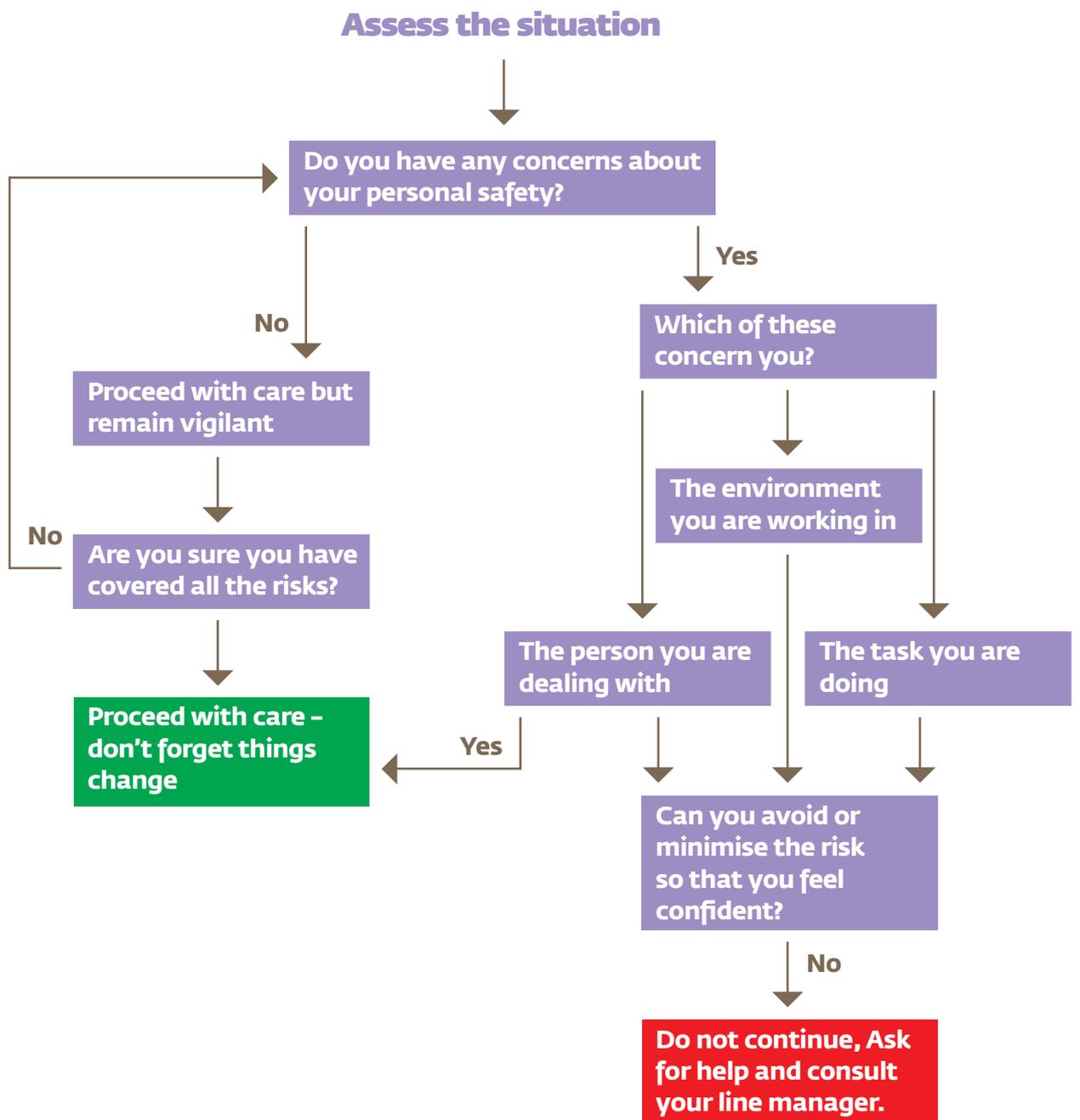
Interview room safety checklist

- ▶ Do not use rooms or offices that are not suitably equipped to facilitate the management of aggression.
- ▶ Chairs should be comfortable, of the same height, similar design and arranged to allow the worker to be nearest the exit, rather than the client. There should be an appropriate space between the chairs and both chairs should have unobstructed access to the door, to ensure that there is no feeling of entrapment for either party.
- ▶ Remove all loose objects that might be used as weapons. Replace them with softer alternatives or cushions, which could have a protective function.
- ▶ Furniture should be heavy enough to avoid being picked up and used as a weapon.
- ▶ Ideally the room should have a vision panel/window to allow occasional unobtrusive observation.
- ▶ The room should have unobtrusively located silent alarm button(s), which are easily accessible for the worker. The alarm must be regularly tested, should be different from other alarms sounds, and part of a rehearsed procedural response. Appropriate records of test and staff awareness training should be kept and easily accessible.
- ▶ Thought should go into the ambience of the room, creating a safe but comfortable environment.
- ▶ The worker should have easy access to a telephone and a rehearsed 'code word' identifying the need for assistance, should be communicated to all relevant staff.
- ▶ If interviewing is taking place in an unfamiliar office location, confirmation of safety procedures should be sought before commencing the interview.

Appendix 8

Dynamic risk assessment

The chart below has been developed by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust for use in assessing personal safety.



Appendix 9

Minimum standards for a successful buddy system

A buddy system is the terminology used to describe a system where one employee keeps a check on another employee or a number of employees (lone worker(s)) for safety reasons. If the lone worker fails to contact their buddy following a visit or at a designated time, the buddy would follow a procedure informing the appropriate individuals and in some cases the police. The system ensures that lone workers' whereabouts can be identified earlier and colleagues/managers are aware of problems more quickly. The system is not designed to be like Big Brother; it should be friendly and used only for safety purposes.

Buddy systems - minimum requirements

Buddy systems will differ between services, but common themes should exist between each. The following are the minimum requirements needed to ensure a successful buddy system.

1. There needs to be a process that the buddy and the lone worker must adhere to.
2. If possible, the buddy should not be a lone worker or not lone working at the same time. The buddy must always be available to take a call and respond appropriately.
3. The buddy may have to change as circumstances change. However, if possible try to keep the same buddy for continuity.
4. Workers need to have a system for assessing risk before going on a home visit which prompts them to instigate a safe system of working. This is the manager's responsibility.
5. There needs to be an effective method of communication between the lone worker and the buddy, ideally via telephone.
6. Diary or visit details must be available to the buddy 24 hours per day. The details must include names and addresses of visits and contact numbers, as well as when and how long the lone worker intends to be there.
7. There needs to be a sequential protocol in place for the buddy to follow, that will alert colleagues and if necessary the police of a missing lone worker.
8. The buddy must know the contact numbers for the individuals responsible for the lone worker. This should include a minimum of three people, however up to five names may be appropriate. The initial contact should be the lone worker's manager and then the next manager in line, and so on.
9. There must be accurate information held about the lone worker that can be accessed 24 hours per day and handed to the police so they can start their investigations without delay. The information should be kept secure and only accessible by managers during time of annual leave, etc.

The process

1. The lone worker should always be able to contact the buddy.
2. The buddy should have access to details of the lone worker's visits for the day. This may be presented in diary form, but details must be documented, including:
 - ▶ the visit address
 - ▶ the name of the service user
 - ▶ a contact number at that address
 - ▶ the time when the lone worker intends to be there
 - ▶ an estimate of how long the visit will last for
 - ▶ the lone worker's mobile phone number
3. The lone worker and the buddy must agree on the arrangements between them at the beginning of the relationship or as often as daily if situations change. Different scenarios may include:
 - ▶ the lone worker contacting the buddy at the beginning and end of each day and if necessary at any point during the day

OR

- ▶ The lone worker contacting the buddy before and after a particular visit.

4. The lone worker must be the instigator of all communication and the buddy should follow up if no communication has been received.
5. The buddy must be informed of any changes to visits as they arise.
6. The buddy must know the procedure to follow if a lone worker fails to make contact with them at the agreed time.

Guidelines regarding missing lone workers

1. If the lone worker fails to contact the buddy at the agreed time, the buddy should contact the individual, trying their mobile telephone number, office number, home number and pager (if applicable).
2. If the lone worker fails to answer the calls, the buddy should notify the next responsible person. This would be the lone worker's line manager in most circumstances. If they do not respond then the buddy should notify the next identified individual on the contact list.
3. The line manager must collate all visit details for the lone worker for that day and the contact number for the lone worker.
4. The line manager should contact the service user that the lone worker is due to be visiting at that time. The manager should ascertain if the individual is there, has been there or has contacted the service user.

5. If the lone worker has not been seen at that visit, the manager should work through the diary to identify which service users have been visited. During this time the buddy should continue to try to make contact directly with the lone worker via telephone. The individual may be in a mobile phone black spot, so time may be allowed for them to reach their next visit before contacting this service user via landline. Every effort must be made to keep trying the individual during this time.
6. If no contact can be made with the lone worker and they cannot be located, the line manager should notify the senior manager for the service.
7. The senior manager should collate the diary, visit details and lone worker details for the police immediately.

Appendix 10

Lone worker data sheet

The following information will be held in confidence and only shared with the police in an emergency situation.

Employer:

Base address	
Manager's name	

Attach
Photograph

Employee details:

Name		Surname	
Home address			
Home phone no.		Mobile phone no.	
Maiden name		Date of birth	
Height		Build	
Complexion		Eye colour	
Hair colour		Distinctive marks	
Designation		Work dress code	

Next of kin name and address:

Name	
Home address	
Home phone no.	
Work contact details	

Car details:

Colour	
Make	
Model	
Registration no.	

Appendix 11

Model report form

Staff name		Job title	
Date		Time	
Location of incident			

Type of incident, whether face to face or by telephone:

Physical abuse		Verbal abuse		Verbal threat	
Physical posturing		Physically armed		Spitting	

Any other form of violence, please describe below:

Account of what happened (including details of injuries and damage)	
Name of assailant (or description if name unknown, see overleaf)	
Names and contact details of witnesses	

Further investigation required:

Date RIDDOR form submitted to enforcing authority		Police incident no. (if applicable)	
Details of preventative measures implemented to prevent recurrence			
Date employee informed of preventative measures taken to prevent recurrence			
Line manager/responsible person			
Date		Signature	

If the attacker or aggressor is not known please use the pro-forma overleaf to give as much information as possible as to their description.

Description of person responsible

Sex

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
------	--------------------------	--------	--------------------------

Age

Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	16-30	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	over 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
----------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	---------	--------------------------

Build

Slim	<input type="checkbox"/>	Proportionate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heavy	<input type="checkbox"/>
------	--------------------------	---------------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------

Ethnic appearance

White	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/>
-------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------

Facial hair

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

Glasses

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

Hair colour

Blonde	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Red	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dyed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please describe	<input type="text"/>		

Accent

Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please state	<input type="text"/>
-------	--------------------------	-------	--------------------------	--------------	----------------------

Tattoos

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please describe	<input type="text"/>
----	--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	-----------------	----------------------

Scars

No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please describe	<input type="text"/>
----	--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	-----------------	----------------------

Clothing

Please describe	<input type="text"/>
-----------------	----------------------

Other witnesses

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

If yes, please give details	<input type="text"/>
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Appendix 12

De-escalation - hints and tips checklist

Contributed by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust
www.suzylamplugh.org

1. Think about your own words, tone and body language and the environment you are in:

- ▶ Remember that personal space should be maintained – keep a safe distance.
- ▶ Maintain an exit strategy – ensure you are nearest to the door/escape route.
- ▶ Carry out a ‘dynamic risk assessment’ to assess potential weapons available to the aggressor. Remain aware at all times.
- ▶ Avoid being isolated with the aggressor and alert others that you may need assistance.
- ▶ Recognise that you may start to feel anxious – use keep calm strategies, for example controlled breathing, to allow you to act and speak confidently. This can help the situation to feel less out of control to both you and the aggressor.
- ▶ Take time to think about what you are going to say and say it clearly and calmly.
- ▶ Ensure that any instructions or requests are made in a clear manner and that the aggressor knows what is acceptable and unacceptable.

- ▶ State your position about the unacceptable behaviour and give consequences, for example, that you want the person to stop shouting. If he/she does stop shouting, you will try your best to help – if they don't then you will not continue the conversation. Remember to carry out the stated consequence based on their chosen action.
- ▶ Do not stay longer than is safe – continually assess your capabilities and the situation – GET OUT and stay out if necessary.

2. Think about the aggressor:

- ▶ Do not allow the aggressor to ‘play to an audience’. Move away from unhelpful onlookers.
- ▶ Be aware that aggression can be a sign of worry, frustration nervousness, etc.
- ▶ Be careful to allow the aggressor plenty of space – adrenalin can make the aggressor perceive you as closer, and therefore more threatening.
- ▶ Make good eye contact but not a stare down.
- ▶ Consider what you know about the person – are they inclined to this sort of outburst? What has helped before?
- ▶ Read the aggressor's words, tone and body language – can you pick up indicators of triggering or escalating aggression?
- ▶ Encourage the person to talk – don't trivialise their issues or feelings.

Appendix 13

Safety advice when out and about

All journeys will be safer and more enjoyable with careful planning – remove uncertainty and you remove stress. Plan ahead!

Prepare for the journey, wear sensible clothing, know the route, tell someone where you're going.

Look confident – radiate non-vulnerability; be aware of what's going on round about you – limit use of mobiles and iPods; think about carrying a personal alarm. If you change your plans – tell someone.

Never assume that it won't happen to you or 'it's only a short journey, so it's not important'. Never assume other people are OK because they look respectable.

Walking

Try to walk facing oncoming traffic. If a car follows you, turn around and walk the other way – you can turn much faster than a car.

Try to keep to well-lit or busy streets. Does someone know where you are?

Avoid short cuts such as alleyways and deserted areas. How much time would this actually save you?

If walking in an unknown area, download map, then write main streets in big letters on to an old greetings card. You can walk with this in your hand and look at it without seeming lost.

If you think someone is following you:

- ▶ make sure your personal alarm is in your hand
- ▶ ensure your mobile phone is easy to find
- ▶ try crossing the road to check that they are still following – more than once if necessary
- ▶ if they are still behind you, make for somewhere you know will be busy where you can seek help
- ▶ returning home if you are being followed may not be the best thing to do – go somewhere crowded.

If you feel threatened by the person following, phone the police and alert them. The 999 operator will keep you on the line and at least hear what is going on.

In the unlikely event of an attack, use your personal alarm. Remember it will disorientate the attacker for only a few seconds – use that time to get away.

Beware of someone who warns you of the danger of walking alone 'in this area' and then offers to give you a lift – especially if you are cold, wet, tired, with sore feet and low defences!

Split your resources – don't keep all valuables (wallet, keys, etc.) in one place. Use pockets or money belt.

Using public transport

- ▶ Know your timetable.
- ▶ Where are you going? Which stop do you need?
- ▶ Does someone know where you are?
- ▶ Don't stand around isolated bus stops. Walk purposefully and confidently to the next one which may be better lit or has more people standing nearby
- ▶ Don't flash your wallet around – have change or a ticket ready.
- ▶ Sit near the driver, beside a group of people or near train doorway where alarms are situated.
- ▶ If necessary, change compartment, get off train, alert guard and get on train again
- ▶ If you are sitting at the back of the bus because it's crowded, and then lots of people get off, be aware that you may look like a target because you are sitting alone. Move seats to somewhere nearer the front.

Be discreet in conversation with others – don't give out personal details; you don't know who is listening.

If you feel threatened, make as much noise as possible to alert other people.

Hotel Wise

- ▶ Park near reception if possible.
- ▶ Be discreet in conversation – don't let people hear personal details.
- ▶ Don't let staff tell you your room number verbally – it should be given to you in writing only, especially if you are lone female and the reception desk is busy.
- ▶ Avoid ground floor rooms because of privacy and window security.
- ▶ Use security chains on doors. Consider getting a door alarm, if you use B&Bs without door chains.
- ▶ Don't answer your room phone by giving your room number.
- ▶ Going out for a jog? Leave your room key and let reception know what time you'll be back.

Car Wise

Again – plan ahead. Make sure car is serviced regularly and join a breakdown scheme.

- ▶ Fuel, oil – can you top up water and change a tyre?
- ▶ Carry a basic safety kit – and consider a pen/paper and disposable camera as well (very useful for recording details of accident damage) plus water and food.
- ▶ Bad weather kit – spade, rug, de-icer, wellies, extra warm clothes
- ▶ Plan journey, use route maps like Multimap – but carry a road map as well in case you have to divert.
- ▶ Allow plenty of time – rushing means you are stressed and not able to make rational decisions. If you are running late, pull over and phone to let someone know. This takes the heat off and you will be able to drive more safely.
- ▶ Keep valuables out of sight. Don't open windows wide and consider locking doors – especially when in urban areas and essentially at traffic lights. Lock the car even when you are paying for petrol.
- ▶ Reverse into parking bays to make it easier to drive off without delay.
- ▶ If you are parking in daylight hours, consider the area – will it be safe to come back later in the dark?
- ▶ Multi-storey car parks – park as near to exit or doors as possible. Failing that, park near ticket machines – they usually have a 'Call for Help' button on them.
- ▶ If you break down on a motorway, police advice is to get out of car and call for help on your mobile or on emergency telephones (follow arrows on marker posts every 100 metres).
- ▶ If you feel uneasy (e.g. someone pulling in behind you) get into the passenger seat, lock the doors, smile and say that your partner is coming with breakdown van. (10% accidents on motorways are collisions with cars on hard shoulders).
- ▶ Watch out for 'fake' breakdowns or accidents – people flagging you down or even lying down on the road. Drive on and phone the police if you are not sure.

Police stopping procedures

In marked traffic or panda cars, the correct stopping procedures are:

The police will follow you at a reasonable distance (not tailgating you) and give you a signal to stop by flashing their lights and/or blue flashing lights – possibly using the siren.

The police may drive alongside you and point to the kerb. However, a genuine police car will always stop behind you - unless they are trying to stop you for committing a crime!

If you are travelling at night, do not stop until you see the blue flashing light. Once you have stopped, stay in the car with your doors locked. Do not apply handbrake or switch off the engine; stay in gear and be prepared to drive off if necessary. Ask for their ID card and police station phone number. You can then check if they are genuine.

All police officers who stop cars will be in uniform, even those in unmarked cars.

Stopping procedures for unmarked cars will be as marked cars (above) but always wait for blue flashing lights to be switched on – they will always be fitted to unmarked police cars, usually behind the front grille.

If there is any difficulty with unmarked police cars and you are suspicious, phone the police! Don't get out of the car until a Panda car arrives.

Police never collect fines for speeding or any other offence.

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Fife Council, Social Work Services
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HASCOG
HAZARDS (Scotland)
Moray Council
North Ayrshire Council
Renfrewshire Council
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