



# **Managing Work-Related Violence, Threats or Abuse to Staff**

**Approved by Governors: Summer 2025**

## CONTENTS

		Page No's
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Scope	3
3.	Definition of violence and aggression at work	3
4.	Legal framework	3
5.	Roles and responsibilities	4/5
6.	Risk assessment	5
7.	Prevention and management measures	5/6
8.	Staff training	6
9.	Information sharing	6/7
10.	Reactive measures (following an incident) including accident reporting	7
11.	Occupational Health support	8
12.	Emergency arrangements	8
13	Advice and guidance	8
A	Example risk assessment	9

## Document Control

**Responsible Service** Health and Safety Team, Bolton Council  
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## Version History

Version No.	Summary of change	Author	Date
		Frank Warren	November 2016

## 1. Introduction

Clarendon Primary School will not tolerate rude or aggressive behaviour, threats of violence or violence towards staff. We expect service users, their families and members of the public to treat our staff with consideration, dignity and respect.

## 2. Scope

This policy outlines procedures that managers and staff should follow to mitigate the risk of work-related violence, threats or abuse by service users, their families, or members of the public. It also outlines the Council's response to possible or actual violent behaviour carried out against any staff member. (Incidents of violence or aggression by or between employees are covered under Human Resources disciplinary procedures.)

## 3. Definition of Violence and Aggression at work

For the purposes of this policy the Local Authority endorses the definition of violence and aggression at work used by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), this is;

*“Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened, or assaulted in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment”*

Violence and aggression can take many forms for example;

- Verbal abuse – in person, via the telephone, or in writing – letter/email/social media
- Verbal and Non-Verbal Intimidation
- Racial, gender, sexual, disability or other harassment
- Physical or sexual assault
- Threatening behaviour; implied threat of harm to person, property or family
- The use of weapons to assault or intimidate this could include use of animals, broken bottles, syringes etc.
- Inappropriate use of Social Media
- vexatious complaining
- stalking and sense of stalking

These definitions include any violence in, or outside, the workplace which arises as a result of the employee's work activity.

## 4. Legal Framework

*The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974* imposes general duties on employers to ensure:

- The health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.
- That non-employees are not exposed to risks associated with the Council's work activities.

These general duties include allocating sufficient resources to control risks from work related violence, threats or abuse so far as is reasonably practicable.

*The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999* require every employer to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks to both employees and non-employees. Significant risks identified, including violence, must be controlled.

*The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)* require violent incidents to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive if they cause:

- Death
- Major injury
- Absence from work (or being unable to fulfil work duties) for more than seven consecutive days

Legal Services are available to give advice and assistance to officers in connection with incidents of violence in the course of their employment.

## **5. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Directors, Heads of Service will:**

- Ensure that there are procedures in place to reduce the risk to staff from work-related violence, threats or abuse.
- Confirm that there are procedures in place to support staff and take action against the perpetrators of work-related violence, threats or abuse.
- Access legal advice where appropriate
- Treat any reports of work-related violence, threats or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.
- Ensure that managers thoroughly investigate incidents and relevant action is taken to prevent further incident and ensure that this work remains up to date.
- Make decisions on the restriction of services where the personal safety of staff cannot be guaranteed.
- Sign warning/restriction letters where appropriate.
- Where personal clothing or property is damaged as a result of an assault on an employee the Directors, Heads of Service will consider granting ex-gratia payments for damage to or loss of personal property of employees occurring whilst on duty.
- Raise any serious or potentially serious incidents at JCC including actions taken to prevent further incident and ensure that this work is progressed and remains up to date.
- Ensure that potential criminal offences are identified and reported to the police.

### **Managers will:**

- Identify if (within their areas of responsibility) staff are at risk of work-related violence, threats or abuse and ensure the risk is assessed.
- Identify measures to reduce risk and ensure they are implemented and followed and that this work remains up to date.
- Set a positive example, ensuring all incidents are reported and by not tolerating violent, abusive or threatening behaviour from customers and members of the public.
- Treat any reports of work-related violence, threats or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.
- Ensure staff are supported during conflicting conversations / have the facility to record phone conversations.
- Monitor incidences of violence to identify reoccurrence or trends.
- Review and amend risk assessments as necessary.
- Report serious or potentially serious incidents on to their senior manager.
- Encourage members of staff to support colleagues following an incident.
- Where appropriate, direct staff to appropriate support and advice after an incident has occurred. E.g. by referring them onto HR/OHU for targeted support.
- Brief staff on incidents of unacceptable behaviour, action taken and learning points.
- Escalate cases (where services may need to be restricted) if the personal safety of staff cannot be guaranteed.
- Ensure staff complete relevant training e.g. lone work, conflict management, risk assessment.
- Use the generic risk assessment guide and amend to suit the work area in question.

### **Staff will:**

- Take all reasonable steps, to ensure their own and their colleagues' health and safety.
- Follow the risk assessments and guidance provided by their managers or external agencies.
- Report any concerns about potentially violent situations or the environment in which they work.
- Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or who have witnessed work-related violence or aggression.
- Suggest additional measures to managers which might help to prevent and manage work-related violence
- Participate in training.

### **Human Resources will:**

Provide managers and staff with advice and guidance relating to;

- Sickness absence arising from acts of violence and aggression
- Occupational Health support
- Support meetings between management and the employee/teams if necessary
- Legal assistance and advice
- Industrial injury scheme
- Information where clothes or personal property have been damaged

### **The Health and Safety Team will:**

- Provide managers and staff with advice on matters relating to work-related violence, threats or abuse including the risk assessment process and risk reduction
- Provide training (lone work, risk assessment, violence and aggression etc.)
- Receive and record incident forms

### **The Shared Services Training Centre will:**

- Provide conflict management training

### **The Recognised Trade Union Health and Safety Representative will:**

- Undertake such functions that are set out in the [Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977](#)

## **6. Risk Assessment**

There is a statutory requirement to assess work related risk to staff. This includes work-related violence, threats or abuse by service users or members of the public towards Council staff. The objective of risk management is to prevent, reduce and manage these incidents by taking practical steps.

Like any other risk assessment the risk of violence, threats or abuse should be assessed by talking to staff, reviewing accident forms, considering the work environment and job design. When completing the risk assessments managers should also refer to the Council's guidance document *Risk Assessment Guidance and procedures to be followed*

<http://teamsites.bolton.gov.uk/sites/ce/CorporateOD/INTRANET%20Human%20Resource/s/120503%20Risk%20assessment%20guidance%20final.pdf>

A generic risk assessment is attached to this guidance document. This is intended to help Managers develop their own risk assessments by suggesting a number of generic hazards/control measures relevant to a number of work areas. This assessment must be amended to suit the needs of the work area prior to its use.

## **7. Prevention and management measures. (work practices, work environment, staff training information sharing)**

### **Work practices**

The key to reducing the risk of violence and aggression to staff is for Managers to have a clear understanding of the risks in their work area and for them to develop risk reduction strategies using simple practical measures, this could include:

- Having a zero tolerance policy in place
- Ensuring employees are aware of service users or others known or suspected to be violent (if they could have contact with them)
- In certain service areas, ensuring individual risk assessments (care plans) are in place and regularly updated (especially where more than one agency maintains the assessment)
- Considering carefully how to provide services to individuals who may pose a risk whilst protecting staff
- Displaying suitable signage in appropriate areas
- Developing and maintaining a warning or flag system

- Encouraging the sharing of information between the Local Authority Departments and outside agencies
- Avoiding staff being alone in a restricted area with a client who is not known to a service area
- Staff to be educated about the signs in service users that risk is escalating

Not meeting service users alone (where a risk is identified). Please see the Council's Lone Work Guidance:

<http://teamsites.bolton.gov.uk/sites/ce/CorporateOD/INTRANET%20Human%20Resource/s/Lone%20Worker%20Guidance.pdf>

- Varying times of visits, meetings or activities to avoid establishing a pattern if possible
- Confirming staff have a means of communication when they are lone working or risk is identified. Managers may also wish to provide (where assessed as necessary) other assistive technology/tracking devices
- Communicating directly with the service user (to inform them of what action they need to take to control their behaviour)
- Issuing a letter which restricts the services the service user can access
- Liaising with the Police or other external agencies to discuss risk reduction

This list is not exhaustive and other measures may be identified/used by Managers to suit their own service areas.

### **Work environment.**

Managers may want to consider if/how they can make changes to the work environment to reduce the chance of inappropriate behaviours. These measures can vary widely and depend on the work environment and activity carried out for example;

- Installing CCTV
- Installing or providing personal alarms
- Installing a physical barrier across a desk or using a wider desk in areas where staff are dealing with the public
- Reducing items from the work area that could be used as weapons
- Securing the assistance of Security and Response/security officers
- Ensuring that internal/external lighting is suitable for the work area/working
- Ensuring the environment meets the needs of our customers (clear signage, clean areas, layout, ease of access etc.)

### **8. Staff Training**

Staff who (as a result of their work activities) may be at risk of work-related violence, threats or abuse must be provided with suitable information, instruction and training so that they understand the potential risks associated with their work, how these risks are managed and what practical steps they can take to reduce the chances of an occurrence. Staff should also be aware of the action they should take should an incident occur. This will include;

- Providing an induction with new staff so they are clear on the risks arising from their new role and how they will be kept safe
- Regularly providing staff with details on the *information and instruction* contained in risk assessments, work activities and emergency procedures
- Ensuring staff attend relevant training for example Conflict Management, Lone Work, Risk Assessment
- Any deliberate omission of information between our staff will be taken very seriously and acted upon by managers

### **9. Information Sharing**

There must be sharing of information between departments and outside agencies to ensure that staff are not put at risk by not having the information they need to make reasoned judgments on safety.

It is the responsibility of Managers to identify who they need to get information from and how they will gather and communicate the information they receive. These processes may be established by Departments or individual work areas.

Employer's duty under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to provide information to appointed health and safety representatives on risks to their employees' health and safety.

Information held should be accurate, relevant, kept securely, and not held longer than is necessary. Managers must ensure that the Data Protection Act is followed at all times.

### **Reactive measures (following an incident)**

Any action following an incident of work-related violence, threat or abuse must concentrate on supporting the employee involved. This may include first aid treatment, contacting the ambulance service or simply asking the member of staff to sit down, away from the immediate work area and making them comfortable.

Managers must ensure that they put procedures in place to support staff should an act of work-related violence, threat or abuse occur. Procedures must be clear for the whole 24 hours a day and 7 days a week shift system, so that staff and managers are aware what they need to do at all times.

The procedures should be relevant to the action taken by the perpetrator and may include;

- Speaking to the individual(s) about why their behaviour is inappropriate and discussing sanctions
- Transferring the casework to another member of staff or manager
- Restricting or removing services where the personal safety of staff cannot be guaranteed

Where a criminal offence may have occurred against a member of staff then this must be reported to the police.

Debrief- It is recognised that employees may require further help following the immediate aftermath of the incident. Debriefing is an attempt to recognise that a stressful incident has occurred and those involved need support and help to aid recovery after the incident. As per Occupational Health (OH) support.

### **Incident reporting and investigation**

Early reporting of incidents will help managers and senior managers to identify patterns or repeat offenders. This will help them to develop procedures to reduce incidences of workplace violence and aggression.

All employees should, in the first instance, report to their supervisor or manager any threats or acts of violence, aggression and abuse, which they experience, witness or become aware of. Their manager must complete (assisted by the member of staff) an accident incident report form.

The Manger must follow Local Authority guidance and complete an investigation, this will detail how/why the act of violence and aggression happened, who was responsible, what action was taken to prevent reoccurrence and what changes have been made to the risk assessment or work procedure to reduce the chances of further incidents. *Please also see Accident/Incident reporting guidance and procedures to be followed*

<http://teamsites.bolton.gov.uk/sites/ce/CorporateOD/INTRANET%20Human%20Resources/Accident%20Reporting%20Guidance%20V1a%20issued%20April%202012.pdf>

Once the form has been completed a copy must be sent to the Health and Safety Team.

Managers must review accident forms regularly to identify trends, ensure risk assessments are fit for purpose, recognise training needs, and to consider how to deal with service users or other persons whose behaviour to staff is inappropriate.

## **10. Occupational Health (OH) support**

Occupational Health support is available to employees who have been faced with violence or aggression in the course of their employment.

Managers should, following a discussion with the employee contact their HR Advisor for advice and submit via HR the appropriate OHU referral form and supporting documentation.

If appropriate an appointment with an Occupational Health Practitioner/Nurse will be made to establish what further support can be provided to the employee.

## **11. Emergency Arrangements**

Where managers identify that staff are at risk of work related violence, threats or abuse they must put procedures in place to deal with any emergency situations which might arise.

The procedure must be communicated to relevant employees and practiced periodically.

Procedures for emergency situations must be clear for staff and managers for the whole 24 hours a day and 7 days a week shift system or hours the service function.

When a situation arises which requires Police attendance, the employee at risk, or other relevant person, should contact the Police immediately

## **13. Advice**

Further advice on anything raised in this guidance document can be provided by;

The Health and Safety team- telephone 01204 336968- [chst@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:chst@bolton.gov.uk)

## **14. Further guidance**

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/>

Preventing Workplace Harassment and Violence: Joint Guidance implementing a European social partner agreement (BIS, CBI, HSE, PPE and TUC)

The Education Service Advisory Committee's 1997 document Violence in the education sector.

<http://teamsites.bolton.gov.uk/sites/ce/CorporateOD/INTRANET%20Human%20Resources/120503%20Risk%20assessment%20guidance%20final.pdf>

<http://teamsites.bolton.gov.uk/sites/ce/CorporateOD/INTRANET%20Human%20Resources/Accident%20Reporting%20Guidance%20V1a%20issued%20April%202012.pdf>

<http://teamsites.bolton.gov.uk/sites/ce/CorporateOD/INTRANET%20Human%20Resources/Lone%20Worker%20Guidance.pdf>

# Risk Assessment

<b>Task/Activity:</b> Public Meeting	<b>Date assessment completed:</b>	<b>Review Date:</b>
<b>Brief Details of Task/Activity</b> Provide date and detail of meeting here	<b>ASSESSMENT COMPLETED BY:</b>	<b>Signature:</b>

<b>What are the hazards?</b>  e.g. slip/trip hazards, electricity, manual handling, work equipment	<b>Who might be harmed and how?</b>  <i>e.g. staff, service users, visitors etc... and likely injury e.g. bruises, muscle strain, fracture, poisoning etc...</i>	<b>What are you already doing to control the hazard?</b>	<b>What further action or additional controls are required</b>  (if necessary)	<b>Risk rating</b>  (after control measures)	<b>Action by who</b>	<b>Action by when</b>	<b>Date completed</b>
<b>Venue</b> S,T,F's, access, capacity, emergency arrangements	Members, officers, public  Minor injuries, fractures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency exits clearly marked and free from obstruction</li> <li>Capacity of venue calculated and an adequate number of chairs to ensure comfort of participants</li> <li>Adequate lighting of outside area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person in charge of meeting to check that all emergency exits and to be familiar with emergency escape procedures</li> </ul>				

<b>What are the hazards?</b>  e.g. slip/trip hazards, electricity, manual handling, work equipment	<b>Who might be harmed and how?</b>  <i>e.g. staff, service users, visitors etc... and likely injury e.g. bruises, muscle strain, fracture, poisoning etc...</i>	<b>What are you already doing to control the hazard?</b>	<b>What further action or additional controls are required</b>  (if necessary)	<b>Risk rating</b>  (after control measures)	<b>Action by who</b>	<b>Action by when</b>	<b>Date completed</b>
<b>Violence and Aggression</b> Business being discussed could have an adverse impact on individuals or communities or other disappointment	Members, officers, public  Emotional and/or physical harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers/Members have received appropriate training in handling difficult people/situations</li> <li>Means of communication available (mobile phone/landline)</li> </ul>	<b>Please delete those not applicable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange for additional security</li> <li>Implement contingency arrangements*</li> <li>Arrange for Police attendance</li> <li>Other (please specify)</li> </ul> <i>* These may include briefing the Chair and senior officers, alerting security to the trigger arrangements for calling the police, checking the evacuation arrangements and having a back-up venue.</i>				
<b>Identifiable Group/Person</b> History of incidents in this or another forum from a group of people or persons likely to be confrontational	Members, officers  Emotional and/or physical harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on known identifiable group/person shared with other agencies (i.e. police, NHS)</li> <li>Officers/Members have received appropriate training in handling difficult people/situations</li> </ul>	<b>Please delete those not applicable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reschedule meeting to more secure location</li> <li>Arrange for additional security</li> <li>Implement contingency arrangements*</li> <li>Arrange for Police attendance</li> <li>Other (please specify)</li> </ul> <i>* These may include briefing the Chair and senior officers, alerting security to the trigger arrangements</i>				

<b>What are the hazards?</b> e.g. slip/trip hazards, electricity, manual handling, work equipment	<b>Who might be harmed and how?</b>  <i>e.g. staff, service users, visitors etc... and likely injury e.g. bruises, muscle strain, fracture, poisoning etc...</i>	<b>What are you already doing to control the hazard?</b>	<b>What further action or additional controls are required</b>  (if necessary)	<b>Risk rating</b>  (after control measures)	<b>Action by who</b>	<b>Action by when</b>	<b>Date completed</b>
			<i>for calling the police, checking the evacuation arrangements and having a back-up venue.</i>				

CATEGORIES OF LIKELIHOOD		CATEGORIES OF CONSEQUENCE SEVERITY	
<b>Highly Likely</b>	Expected to happen/reoccur, possibly frequently.	<b>Catastrophic</b>	Incident could result in <u>one or more fatalities</u> .
<b>Possible</b>	Might happen/reoccur at some time depends on circumstances.	<b>Major</b>	Major injury resulting in incapacity, hospitalisation >24 hours.
<b>Unlikely</b>	Not expected to happen/reoccur but possible in certain circumstances.	<b>Significant</b>	Injury requires attention of a Doctor or Hospital treatment or hospitalisation <24 hours.
<b>Very Unlikely</b>	Would only occur in very exceptional circumstances.	<b>Minor</b>	Small cut, bruise, abrasion, basic first aid treatment provided.
		<b>Negligible</b>	Some discomfort, self help. No treatment required.

RISK RATING				
	Highly Likely	Possible	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
<b>Catastrophic</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Major</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Significant</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Minor</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Negligible</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>

RISK CLASSIFICATIONS	
<b>A</b>	<b>Unacceptable risk</b> , requires immediate attention. Work <u>should not be started or continued</u> until the level of risk has been reduced.
<b>B</b>	<b>High risk</b> , requires immediate attention. Control measures must be identified and put into place as soon as possible.
<b>C</b>	<b>Medium risk</b> , requires attention as soon as possible. The risk should be only be tolerated in the short term and only when further control measures are being planned and introduced, Timescales must be short.
<b>D</b>	<b>Low risks</b> , confirm that there are no low/no cost solutions which may eliminate/ reduce the risk further.
<b>E</b>	<b>Trivial risk</b> , no further action required but review at regular intervals to ensure controls remain effective.