DERBYSHIRE County Council

Personal Safety at Work

Guidance

Contents

Document Control

Version	Date	Detail	Author
1.0	May 2025	New Template and full update	H Williamson

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to provide information, advice and guidance regarding personal safety whilst at work.

This guidance details who could be at risk, the measures to be taken to protect them and the procedures to be followed should a violent or aggressive incident occur whilst at work.

Scope

This guidance applies to all employees and all departments of Derbyshire County Council.

This guidance has been produced as part of the Council's health and safety arrangements. Whilst recognising that some departments/services will have specialist requirements over and above this guidance which necessitate additional specialist arrangements, it sets out the minimum health and safety requirements required across all departments to ensure the Council can implement the stated aims of its Safety Policy and comply with its Statutory Requirements. All managers and employees should therefore make themselves familiar with the requirements of this guidance and ensure they are followed

Introduction

The work of Derbyshire County Council employees can expose them to a variety of situations that may present a risk to their personal safety, this is usually in the form of violence, aggression, physical or verbal assault.

Employees may face such behaviour from colleagues, but it is much more likely to be from members of the public or service users. A threat to personal safety is wholly unacceptable and employees should not have to put up with or accept any risk to their personal safety whilst at work.

Roles and Responsibilities

Corporate Management Team (CMT)

- Will endorse and support this guidance and ensure that sufficient resources are provided to ensure compliance with this guidance.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this guidance

Departmental Senior Management Team (SMT)

- Will ensure that sufficient resources are provided to ensure compliance with this guidance, tailored to the specific requirements of their department.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this guidance.

Head of Service (HoS)

- Will ensure suitable and sufficient resources are provided to comply with the requirements of this guidance.
- Upon request, will provide local Union Safety Representatives with all information, including risk assessments relevant to this guidance.

Line Manager

- Is responsible for ensuring their employees read, understand, and adhere to this guidance and related documents, including risk assessments.
- Identify any potential hazards within their areas of responsibility or control.
- Undertake risk assessments where employee's personal safety is threatened with violence, aggression or assault in the workplace or relating to the work the employees undertake and implement measures to control any identified risks. The attack triangle refers to the person, the setting and the work being undertaken.
- Cease any activities where personal safety is threatened and cannot be effectively controlled, escalating any such risks for which the controls cannot be immediately implemented or controlled locally to the appropriate risk register until those controls become effective.

- Ensure procedures are in place to manage visits for employees undertaking visits to service users to ensure only scheduled appointments are undertaken.
- Where personal safety is threatened, implement procedures for keeping in touch with and monitoring the wellbeing of employees working away from offices.
- Monitor employees for signs and symptoms of violence, physical or verbal assault.
- Offer support to employees who suffer a violent / traumatic incident whilst at work.
- Implement any actions identified from incidents, accidents and near misses.
- Raise awareness in relation to personal safety at work.
- Identify training requirements across the area of work and ensure that employees complete any required training.
- For those employees unable to access this document electronically, print off a hard copy of this guidance and any relevant hyperlinks.

Employee

- Must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their activities.
- Must co-operate with the Council to enable the Council to comply with their health and safety duties.
- Must ensure that they follow procedures introduced for their health and safety and do not interfere or misuse anything provided for their safety.
- Must report any incidents of threats to personal safety at work to their Line Manager.

Non-employee / Volunteer

- Non-employees have no specific duties, but the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act apply, and they have a duty to others to report any defects or situations that may affect safety.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Function (HSW)

- Offer support, advice and guidance to managers carrying out risk assessments.
- Seek assistance from specialist organisations when necessary.
- Will provide relevant advice and guidance.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this guidance.

Arrangements

Definitions

Personal Safety at Work is an individual's ability to go about their working life free from the threat or fear or psychological, emotional or physical harm from others.

- **Violence -** any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted.
- **Aggression -** the action of attacking without provocation.
- **Threat –** a statement of intention to inflict pain, injury, damage to persons or property or other hostile action to someone in retribution for something done or not done, (these can be face to face, online or by telephone).
- **Abuse -** treat with cruelty or violence.
- **Verbal Assault -** The use of threatening, abusive or insulting language with the intention of causing someone else harm or distress or harass them.
- **Physical Assault -** when an individual or a group attacks a person physically, with or without the use of a weapon. (This includes pushing, kicking, punching, throwing things, using weapons or physically restraining another person).
- **Racial Assault** – threats likely to intimidate offend or harm an individual or group because of their ethnic origin, colour, race, religion or nationality.
- **Sexual Assault** – the act of physical, psychological and emotional violation in the form of a sexual act inflicted on someone without their consent.

- **Harassment** – if someone is abusing, insulting or otherwise harming you on a regular basis.
- **Intimidatory actions** - such as staring or making indirect threats.

The two following situations would not be included as work related:-

- Personal disputes between employees and family members
- Violence between people not at work such as customers or service users

Violence at Work

Violence against any employee in the course of their employment is both legally and morally unacceptable and the Council will treat seriously, any incident that is reported.

The Council encourages all employees to report any incident where personal safety is at risk Incident Reporting.

Impact of Violence

The difficulty with violence is that whilst a physical attack is a very clear act of violence, the effects of non-physical acts of violence can still generate considerable emotional stress. Threats may indicate a risk of actual injury, while malicious damage to an employee's property can cause distress and fear of future physical attack. People have different perceptions about the behaviour which they find threatening or offensive. Something which causes distress to one person may simply annoy another; and what one finds threatening may be shrugged off by others. It is important that each reported incident is taken seriously.

All incidents which threaten an employee's safety should be reported Incident Reporting. Targeted attacks against Council property e.g., offensive graffiti, or damage to an employee's property is a form of violence and should be reported. Employees whose personal property is damaged a result of their employment and through no fault of their own should not be disadvantaged and should contact the department's finance section

for information on whether any costs incurred can be reclaimed.
riskandinsurance@derbyshire.gov.uk

All instances of damage to Council property should be reported to the Council's insurance section and to the Police. Where emergency repairs are required, you should contact 01629 538440. Schools will have their own emergency procedures.

Who is at Risk?

Most personal safety incidents which occur at work are those inflicted by service users and members of the public on Council employees. There are a number of areas in particular in which employees may potentially be exposed:-

- Whilst working alone or away from a workplace.
- Whilst handling money or valuables.
- Whilst providing care to service users in their own home.
- Whilst carrying out inspections or enforcement duties.
- Whilst working with individuals who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Whilst working with individuals with mental health problems.

Managing the Risk of Violence

Risk assessment

The Council has produced a General Risk Assessment Form which managers can use as a starting point. This can be used to assess the risk of violence to employees (including hazards, risks, control measures and the individuals involved).

Identify the hazards

- Ask employees about their experiences and what they think – this can be done through supervisors, managers and safety representatives, or through a survey

- Look around the workplace, including how employees work and their working environment
- Look back at incident records on threats to personal safety / work related violence
- There may be a known pattern of violence linked to certain work situations (professional organisations and trade unions may have useful information)

Assess the Risks

- Once you have identified the hazards, decide how likely it is that an employee could be harmed and how serious it could be. Think about whether there are any employees at different or additional risk. For example, lone workers may be at a greater risk due to the lack of nearby support to help prevent an incident or help if things go wrong.

You should consider any employees who may be at more risk because they:-

- work alone or late on site, e.g. caretakers and cleaners
- are new starters, trainees or other vulnerable employees
- work specifically with difficult service users / clients
- are peripatetic workers who work at a place which is remote from the normal base.

Decide How to Control the Risks

- Look at what you are doing already, and the controls you have in place. Ask yourself:-
    - Can I get rid of the hazard altogether?
    - If not, how can I control the risks so that harm in unlikely?
- Make sure you ask your employees for their ideas and feedback
- Once you decide on your controls, you must record your findings and periodically review your risk assessment

Control Measures to Prevent Violence and Aggression

- Once you have assessed the threat to your employees' personal safety, and where you cannot remove it, put the right controls in place to protect your employees.
- Often no single control measure will be completely effective on its own and it is best to use a variety of approaches.
- You should reduce the risks so far as 'reasonably practicable'. This means balancing the level of risk against the measures needed to control the real risk in terms of money, time or trouble.
- The following are examples of controls, but this is not an exhaustive list and it is important to ensure the measures identified adequately control the risks.

Your Workplace

The design of the workplace can increase the risk of violence happening to your employees. Think about:

- space and layout, for example ensuring good visibility throughout the workplace and providing good lighting to remove blind spots and ensure employees and others can be seen
- places where tension could grow, e.g., implementing a suitable queuing system
- security measures, like CCTV, trained security personnel, body-worn cameras, alarm systems, building security – they can act as a deterrent but also provide evidence for the Police to convict offenders
- carefully worded signage and visual displays can remind people to respect each other and not abuse workers

The Work You Do

How jobs are designed or carried out may increase the risk of violence to employees. Here are some examples of control measures:

- have good communication between you and the employees

- consider how workers engage with members of the public and what might trigger people to act aggressively – you could manage expectations with clear information about delays or problems
- manage lone working by making arrangements to keep in touch with employees who work away from their base, for example using mobile phones and personal alarms
- ensure you have adequate staffing levels to manage violence and respond to incidents

Training

Training can be used to prevent and manage violence. It can provide employees with appropriate skills to reduce or diffuse potential incidents. You must ensure the level of training provided to workers reflects the specific needs of the work activities identified in your risk assessment.

Personal safety training level 1 is available through Derbyshire Learning Online (DLO). On completion of the E-learning you will:-

- Know and understand the purpose of key legislation related to personal safety.
- Understand your own legal duty to safeguard yourself and others, and the legal duty of your manager.
- Know how to comply with your legal duty to report any form of work-related violence.
- Have an awareness of different forms of violence and aggression.
- Recognise and understand the impact of three situational factors that can impact your personal safety.
- Understand the value of having a personal safety plan.
- Gain an awareness of life skills and strategies for keeping safe at work and at home.

You might need to include additional training, such as physical intervention techniques, if there is a serious risk of physical aggression towards employees. Please ensure that any training courses chosen are Bild Association of Certified Training (BildACT) accredited.

Training needs should be monitored and reviewed regularly and training courses evaluated for their effectiveness. Employees should carry out refresher training periodically to ensure skills are kept up to date.

De-escalation techniques

Here are some of the basic techniques you can use to calm situations down and prevent violence and aggression:

- be polite and use a clear, calm voice
- relax your posture and keep your hands by your side
- keep a safe distance and allow personal space
- face the person and maintain eye contact
- show empathy and that you are listening and acknowledging their feelings
- avoid raising your voice and arguing
- offer alternative solutions to their problem so the person has a way out other than aggression

Trust your instincts. If the situation does not feel safe, and de-escalation is not working, then you could use a diversion tactic, such as advising that you need to check with your manager. If none of these actions help, you could follow your emergency procedures.

Check what you have done

- Check on a regular basis how well your arrangements are working, consulting employees and their representatives as you do so.
- Examine incidents regularly to understand if your control measures are working and if the problem is changing.

Visits or meetings away from the office

- Leave a specific record of all places to be visited and how long the visits will take including an estimated return time. Leave a telephone number if possible so that contact may be made.
- Any changes to the itinerary should be logged on the original record.

- Initial contact meetings should be held at the office. In situations where this is not possible, the authenticity of the person(s) must be verified before a visit is arranged.
- Do not enter areas which feel threatening.
- Provision of personal alarms or communication devices should be considered, dependent upon the degree of potential risk.
- When undertaking external visits, proof of identity must be carried and displayed.
- Ensure that someone in the office knows the visit details and times of arrival and departure, within that visit.
- Ensure that you reverse park into spaces and park in well-lit areas
- Arrange to telephone the office at pre-set times.
- ASCH and Children's Services should ensure that MOSAIC is checked before any visit to ascertain the most up to date information on the service users and any risks they present.

Lone working in an establishment

It is fairly common for employees to be in an office on their own or be in contact with members of the public and / or service users away from other employees. It should not be forgotten that they too should be covered by suitable procedures to ensure their health and safety.

Procedures could take into account the following points based on the outcome of the risk assessment:-

- Regular checks should be made by other employees to ensure their wellbeing.
- There should be a way of raising an internal alarm system or telephone code message to summon help in an emergency for employees who are exposed to risks.
- If in an office or meeting third parties on their own, the room layout should be set out to ensure that employees can exit it safely (e.g. they have a door adjacent to them that they can exit and lock it behind them).
- There should be a clear and accessible escape route from the office.
- A personal attack alarm should be issued if required.

If the employee is alone within the building, they should lock all the entry doors (ensuring that they still have a means of escape in the event of a fire).

A good example of a lone worker procedure is the Lone Worker Whereabouts Form.

All lone workers can provide **Lone Worker Whereabouts** details for days when they are lone working. It provides contact details that managers and / or colleagues can use to begin to trace the lone worker's whereabouts should they fail to return to an agreed location. The procedure should include manager / colleague arrangements to ensure someone is available for the lone worker to report to. If you have a procedure within your department that is as good or better than the Lone Worker Whereabouts form you can use that.

Handling Money or Valuables

- Special arrangements should be made for handling and carrying money. Refer to the departmental arrangements and risk assessment.
- In situations where cash is taken to a bank, the routes and times should be varied wherever possible.
- Cash must not be left on view. Surplus throughout the day should be stored away in a safe place.
- Arrange the work area so that there are easy escape routes if required.
- In situations where safety feels threatened, help should be sought immediately.
- There should be a suitable means to summon help in the event of an emergency.

Procedures to be followed when a violent incident has occurred within DCC premises

- The complainant and the alleged perpetrator must be separated and calmed until the Police arrive.

- If medical attention or first aid is required it should be sought immediately.
- The manager in charge of the establishment where the violent incident occurred should be informed of the incident.
- The manager or person involved in the incident should take the details of any witnesses present, including names and addresses where possible. The witnesses should be asked to provide a full account of the incident.
- Once documented, the account should be signed by the witness and the person taking the details.
- In cases where legal proceedings may be involved the person assaulted should be referred to Legal Services. They should also be made aware of the support and assistance available through the Occupational Health counselling services and the Employee Assistance programme as part of Our Derbyshire Rewards. (The person assaulted has the right to refuse counselling or legal services if they so wish).
- The manager must investigate the incident, obtaining specialist advice as required to ensure that suitable control measures are introduced as part of the risk assessment process to prevent reoccurrence wherever possible.
- The manager or nominated person must ensure that the Council's electronic Incident Reporting form is completed.

Sharing of Information

It is important for establishments to pass on relevant information regarding potentially violent persons and any techniques they have used to reduce the potential risk from these people to other authority establishments that these people may also interact with. This will allow the other establishments to be able to effectively assess any risk. (Settings will need to be careful when passing on such information to ensure legislation such as the Data Protection Act 1998, Education (School Records) Regulations 1989, and Human Rights Act 1998 is not infringed. Nevertheless, relevant factual information can and should be recorded and shared).

General Advice

- **Think** of your safety – assess potential risk situations. Although the chances of a physical attack are statistically low there is the tendency to believe that it will 'never happen to you'.
- **Act** on warning signs immediately (for example, feeling threatened, unnerved or upset).
- **Walk away** from situations which you feel may become out of hand.
- **Do not** resort to aggression.
- **Discuss** any fears with colleagues or your Line Manager. Do not try to hide them in fear of being seen as 'weak'.
- **Attend** a personal safety training course which deals with aggression, communication and de-escalation techniques and assertiveness. These techniques will help to diffuse potentially violent and abusive situations.
- **Avoid** aggressive actions likely to challenge and confront anyone. Lack of aggression may help to identify and avoid potentially violent confrontations.

Employee Information

You or your colleagues may be exposed to violence / abuse at work. It is important that you are able to recognise factors in the workplace which may expose you to violence and abuse. It is also important that you can recognise the signs and symptoms brought on by both physical and verbal violence in yourself or others around you in order to be able to take appropriate action.

Your manager or a designated competent person is required to undertake a risk assessment of all activities to identify significant risks within the working environment, this includes risk of violence. If you think you are exposed to potentially violent situations then discuss these with your line manager or your trade union safety representative if one is available.

It is important that all incidents of violence are reported to your Line Manager. In many cases, incidents of assault may occur away from the Council's premises and it is

important that these are reported to your Line Manager however trivial the incident may seem.

It must be understood that an incident of verbal abuse may seem trivial to one employee but to another employee it may feel threatening, therefore by reporting the incident you are protecting others as well as yourself from a possible reoccurrence.
When a **serious threat** has been received or situations have arisen where a viable risk has the potential to escalate the person(s) involved must, in the first instance raise it with the line manager who will gather information and seek clarification as to whether or not to refer the threat to the Serious Threat Protocol

Where relevant, please print out **Appendix A** and place it in prominent areas around your building / department.

Sources of Help

Your first point of contact for further advice and assistance would be your line manager, trade union representative or departmental Health, Safety and Wellbeing Function.

Other sources of help include:

Occupational Health which includes counselling
Employee Assistance programme as part of Our Derbyshire Rewards
Legal Services
HR Advisory and Support Team
Trade Union Representative
DCC's Incident Reporting Guidance
HSW Function – HealthandSafety.Enquiries@derbyshire.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

Acceptable behaviour towards our employees

We will treat you with respect and courtesy when you use our services – please treat our employees in the same way.

We will not tolerate abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour and will take action to support any employee who experiences it – including prosecution where appropriate.

Thank you

DERBYSHIRE County Council