



PERSONAL SAFETY POLICY

To be reviewed

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PERSONAL SAFETY AND THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

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1.0 POLICY STATEMENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1 Policy Statement

The County Council recognises that those employees who deal directly with the public may face aggressive or violent behaviour and/or verbal abuse.

Buckinghamshire County Council is committed to reducing the risks to its employees from acts of violence and aggression by assessing the risks and introducing appropriate controls and procedures so far as is reasonably practicable including:

- Giving practical advice and guidance to managers and employees on how to avoid and manage violence whilst at work.
- Providing adequate training for employees who may be subject to violence or abuse.
- Providing appropriate equipment where applicable.
- Encouraging proper reporting of incidents and near misses and ensuring that employees do not avoid reporting and recording violent incidents in the belief that an assault may suggest failure on the part of employees concerned.
- Where appropriate, counselling of employees who have suffered violence or abuse.
- Monitoring of incidents of violence or abuse.

1.2 Definition of Workplace Violence

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

Violence and aggression comes in many forms and for the purpose of this policy, workplace violence includes physical and non-physical acts. See [appendix 1](#) for a list of examples.

1.3 Responsibilities

1.3.1. Role of managers

Where employees' personal safety may be at risk manager's will:

- Consult with employees on the risks to their health and safety from violence.
- Carry out or arrange to carry out job based, and when required, specific risk assessments for all tasks which they undertake, taking into account the added risks of lone working and real or perceived violence. See Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, section 2.1 for further details of the risk assessment process.
- Ensure adequately safe systems of work are drawn up and used.
- Provide appropriate equipment and resources (for example closed circuit TV, mobile phone, tracing systems, alarms and buddy systems).
- Ensure employees are aware of relevant policies and procedures.
- Evaluate training needs and ensure appropriate training is undertaken and review training needs at appraisal.
- Ensure employees have access to any relevant background information, for example on

clients, location, historical problems.

- Share information with other BCC Services, partners and agencies as appropriate in order to resolve an issue or prevent further issues.
- Monitor work practices to ensure that control measures are working.
- Ensure all incidents of aggression and violence, including threats, verbal abuse and near misses, are reported, investigated and appropriate action taken (see Health and Safety Policies and Procedures section 3.1 for further details on reporting).
- Display the Violence Notice in public areas where a risk assessment indicates that staff may be at risk from violence. See [appendix 5](#) - download and sign.
- Send a standard letter to clients or members of the public who are abusive or aggressive to Council employees. See [appendix 4](#) for an example that can be put on appropriate Service Area headed paper and amended to suit most situations.
- Provide support to employees who have been exposed to violent, threatening or abusive behaviour
- Treat volunteers the same as employees

1.3.2 Role of employees

All employees also have a legal duty to:

- Report any shortcomings in systems of work to their manager or the Health and Safety Team
- Take care for their own personal safety and take time to plan in advance.
- Comply with risk assessments and safe systems of work.
- Attend training and awareness sessions as appropriate.
- Report all incidents of violence, verbal abuse and threats to their Service or School's Accident/Incident/Near Miss reporter (see Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, section 3.1 for further details)

2.0 TOOLKIT FOR MANAGERS – PREVENTING INCIDENTS

2.1 Identifying Who is at Risk and Potential Causes of Violent Behaviour

It can be difficult to anticipate a violent or aggressive act because it is not always premeditated and does not always have an obvious cause. It is important to recognise signs and triggers as this can often help in defusing or avoiding a potentially violent situation. [Appendix 2](#) will help to identify who may be at risk and which activities could present an added risk to the lone worker. Employees

identified as at risk of violence must receive appropriate training. See section 2.5 for details of training courses.

Managers must also receive appropriate training so they can adequately identify personal safety risks to employees and carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments. Courses available include Personal Safety Awareness, Risk Assessment and IOSH Managing Safely. See section 2.5 for details of training courses.

2.2 Sharing Information and Concerns Regarding Clients/Pupils

Sharing information with colleagues, Headteachers, parents, other service providers and agencies is essential especially if there are potentially difficult circumstances.

- Matrimonial difficulties or discussions involving custody of children can make one or other parent potentially aggressive.
- Persons with learning difficulties may exhibit unpredictable behaviour.
- Persons involved in planning disputes, school choices or enforcement may become aggressive.
- Children in care homes may have a history of violent or aggressive behaviour.
- Elderly clients and their families may have a history of aggression towards employees or other clients.
- Clients/pupils in schools and Social Care establishments may sometimes “target” a particular employee. Regular monitoring of reports should identify these trends.

Managers at all levels, in all Services and schools throughout the County Council must be aware of the importance of sharing information with colleagues in other teams, Services or agencies and should encourage employees to do so. It often happens that after an incident someone will come forward with information or a feeling that something was not quite right but they did not think it worth mentioning at the time.

- The majority of information concerning clients of the County Council is highly confidential but in some circumstances it may be legally necessary to inform colleagues in other Services Areas and to consider whether this information should be shared if the information could affect the safety of others.
- Social workers may have information which could be of use to Education Welfare Officers and Headteachers or vice-versa.
- Persons referring children to care homes or foster carers may be aware of a past history of violence or aggression by the child or parents.

2.3 Managing Risk in Reception Areas and Information/Enquiry Desks

- Visitor access to schools and establishments should be controlled by a Reception Office or via

an electronic entry system such as intercom or buzzer entry. The person authorised to give access should have a clear view of who is requesting access prior to letting them in.

- Schools and establishments must have a signing in and out procedure, issue badges and provide basic Health & Safety information to all visitors to site. Visitors must be accompanied when in the building.
- The layout of reception desks or public counters and information desks should be such that a barrier is formed between employees and service users/parents/public and there should be easy access to a safe area or method of calling for immediate help.
- Emergency procedures should be drawn up by managers and staff.
- Alarm systems should be tested regularly.
- Emergency procedures and response to alarms should be rehearsed regularly.
- Access to private office areas should be controlled either by swipe card or digilocks. If this facility is not available then doors should be secured (bearing in mind emergency exit requirements).
- Cash should be out of sight and cashing up should be carried out away from public view.
- Waiting areas should be as pleasant as possible.

2.3.1 Interviewing Safely

It is important to remember that the majority of interviews will not present any danger to the persons involved. However there have been incidents of violence towards employees either during or prior to an interview or where clients have gained unauthorised access to administrative or office areas.

It must be recognised that such incidents can occur, so being aware of the risks and taking appropriate steps to minimise the risks is important.

Types of interview and interview environments vary widely however the following are examples of good practice:

- Interviews should be planned and risk assessed in advance and an appointment system should operate.
- As much background information should be gathered prior to the appointment
- A way of calling for help should be arranged. This could be a colleague popping in to check, a panic button or simply leaving the door open so the interviewer is within hailing distance of colleagues.
- Ensure employees know what to do in the event of a call for help
- Interview rooms should be welcoming, well lit and comfortable.

- The room should be laid out so that a quick escape is possible. Under most circumstances, the chair/desk position should allow the interviewer to be nearest the door (with the door behind them).
- Remove or put away items in the room that could be used as potential weapons such as scissors, large ornaments etc.
- Ensure employees have received training in interview techniques and defusing and de-escalating techniques.

2.4 Lone Working

This guidance covers personal safety as well as violence. It will depend on the findings of a risk assessment whether lone working is appropriate. However in all cases, serious consideration must be given as to whether lone working is necessary at all or whether the work can be carried out in any other way.

Both managers and employees must be involved in any decision to work alone.

Certain types of work are not suitable for lone working if there is a risk of serious injury where the employee may be unable to summon assistance for themselves.

For example:

- working at height involving the use of ladders, mobile towers etc.
- working with hazardous chemicals
- the use of hazardous machinery or tools for example chainsaws
- handling significant amounts of money

Lone working must be included in the employees job based risk assessment. It may also be necessary to carry out an activity based assessment for one-off situations which could include working alone on site during the holidays or working away from the usual place of work.

Managers must where appropriate, risk assess and draw up safe working practices for activities involving lone working for example, home visits, site visits, mobile services etc.

Contractors, for example cleaners and service engineers who are working alone, should have their own arrangements for site lone working.

Control measures may include instruction, training, supervision, protective equipment etc. Managers should take steps to check that control measures are used and review the risk assessment from time to time to ensure it is still adequate.

When a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back-up should be put in place.

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra risk-control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, for example fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. If an employee's role includes working at a non BCC workplace, the risk assessment should be done in conjunction with that employer. Managers should identify situations where people work alone and ask questions such as:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and a way out for one person? Can any temporary access equipment which is necessary, such as portable ladders or trestles, be safely handled by one person?
- Can all the plant, substances and goods involved in the work be safely handled by one person? Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment.
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are young or inexperienced workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- What happens if the person becomes ill has an accident or there is an emergency?

2.5 Training

BCC provides training for employees and their managers who lone work or may be at risk of violence. See details on the Intranet or SchoosWeb for Personal Safety Awareness Courses. Bespoke courses that can be arranged on site for groups of people on request. IOSH Managing Safely is available for Managers and Headteachers. E-mail the Health and Safety Team mailbox for further information healthandsafety@buckscc.gov.uk .

2.6 Useful Equipment which may assist in Minimising Risks from Violence

It is the duty of employers and employees to plan and use safe systems of work to minimise the risk of violence. The objective should always be to prevent a possible violent situation occurring.

There may be situations when the use of certain types of “hardware” will assist in minimising the risk. Care should be taken however not to be lulled into a false sense of security, for example a mobile phone can be useful to let colleagues know about a change to a planned itinerary or to call assistance in cases of car has breakdown, but will be of little use if someone is actually being attacked.

The following items may be useful when incorporated into a planned system of work following a risk assessment.

Personal Equipment

- Mobile phone.
- Lone Worker Devices and Apps
- Two way Radio.
- Gas or battery operated attack alarms (note: these devices need to be regularly tested and after approximately 5 tests the gas canister will need replacing).
- “Panic alarms” (these include hand held “screech alarms”, hand held radio operated alarms which activate a light or buzzer and fixed panic buttons).

- Dog biscuits to divert attention of aggressive dogs. Dog dazer devices are available; however these devices are not always effective and can give a false sense of security.
- First Aid kit.
- Preventative injections for example Hepatitis B.
- List of premises where violence has previously occurred (often used by enforcing authorities).
- Torch.

Aids to Site Security

- Door access equipment for example swipe cards and combination type locks.
- Entry phone systems.
- Closed circuit television.
- Toughened glass screens around reception desks.
- Extra wide reception desks to prevent assailants reaching or jumping across desks. When refurbishing or designing new reception areas the above features should be considered.
- Security lighting sometimes linked to movement detectors.
- Signing in books or systems and visitor badges.
- Alarms.
- Adequate external lighting.
- Secure fencing and gates

It is vital that employees receive sufficient training in the use of such “hardware” and those procedures for using it are regularly rehearsed if necessary.

2.7 Following an Incident

2.7.1 Reporting Procedures

A great deal of crime and other incidents often go unreported, sometimes because they are considered too trivial to report, or there is a view that no action will be taken when incidents do occur. Consequently, failure to report incidents gives a false picture of the real situation.

Managers and employees must ensure that all incidents, including actual violence, verbal abuse, threats (including sexual advances/threats) and deliberate property damage are reported and acted upon so that a recurrence can be prevented. See section 3.1 of Health and Safety Policies and Procedures for full details on reporting incidents.

Managers and employees must understand that just because they work in a certain type of employment ***they must not accept violence as “part of the job.”***

It is important to record the circumstances leading to violence as this may help to identify what events may have triggered the incident and what systems or procedures may need revision. The County Council as an employer has a duty to ensure a safe and secure workplace but they cannot help if they are unaware of problems.

2.7.2 Managers Action to be taken immediately after a Violent Incident

- Provide assistance if necessary for the employee to go home/see doctor/attend hospital etc.

- Make time for the employee to talk to you.
- Explain the employee's right to involve the police if they so wish. Notify police if the incident is serious. Depending on the circumstances you may have to disregard the wishes of the employee not to involve the police.
- Maintain regular contact if the person is off work because of the assault.
- Encourage the employee to access counselling via the Employee Assistance Programme; details can be found on the Intranet and SchoolsWeb.
- Ensure that the event is reported as stated in [section 2.7.1](#) above.
- Carry out a thorough investigation into the incident.
- Obtain written statements from witnesses.
- Review risk assessments and change procedures and practices if necessary without delay.
- Ensure other relevant employees are informed of the incident and of the changes to working practices.
- Inform other BCC Services, agencies and partners about the incident to warn them and report to the police as necessary.

2.7.3 Legal Implications

In general where a deliberate assault with the intent to cause harm has resulted in actual injury, or where an employee has been seriously threatened, the police should be called.

This action may not always be considered appropriate, for example where a pupil at a Special School has assaulted a teacher or fellow pupil, or a Social Care client assaulted a Social Care employee or another service user. In these cases appropriate discretion should be exercised taking into account the views of the injured person.

In all cases of assault causing actual injury the employee sustaining the injury is advised to take legal action against the assailant unless, as above, this is considered inappropriate. This decision although personal should be discussed with the employee's line manager.

Assault on an employee by a third party

(Teacher struck by a parent; planning officer assaulted by a landowner etc.)

The employee should report the incident in the usual manner, prepare a short report outlining the details of the incident and submit this to his/her line manager. Where the police are not able or willing to prosecute, the victim may bring a private prosecution and if appropriate claim for damages. Information and advice can be obtained from a private solicitor. The Council's legal services are not able to represent employees in these circumstances because of a possible conflict of interest.

Assaults on an employee by another employee

In such cases action will be taken in accordance with the Council Conduct and Discipline Policy. In addition the victim may wish to involve the police or consider civil litigation.

Deliberate damage to property owned by an employee or the Council

Where damage is caused to property the senior manager present should consider whether the damage is serious enough to warrant calling the police. This may be necessary for insurance purposes to claim for repair or replacement

Complaints against an employee

Where a third party takes legal action against an employee, who has been properly carrying out their duties, the employee will receive support from the County Legal Service.

2.8 Further Information and Contacts

Health and Safety Team, e-mail healthandsafety@buckscc.gov.uk

Employee Assistance Programme, details on the Intranet and SchoolsWeb

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, <http://www.suzylamplugh.org>

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, 0800 358 3601 www.cica.gov.uk

The Health and Safety Executive, www.hse.gov.uk

3.0 PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES

3.1 Planning

BCC has worked closely with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust which is a leading national charity for Personal Safety. Their philosophy is to plan to avoid, always leave enough time to think of everything and put safety measures in place.

P – prepare:

If you are working away from base, consider the following:

- Have you got all the information you need before you leave?
- Have you done your own risk assessment? See [appendix 3](#) for the Personal Risk Factor Checklist.
- What do you know about the place you are going to?
- Have you told anyone where you are going and left a contact number and estimated time of return?
- Have you got all the right equipment you need?
- Are you carrying unnecessary equipment or personal belongings?
- Do you know how to summon help?
- Are you working within the safety procedures relevant for this working activity?
- Would someone raise the alarm if you did not return when you were supposed to?

If you are working at base (office, school, centre etc.):

- Have you checked the working environment for any personal safety hazards?
- Do you know how to summon help?
- Are you working within the safety procedures relevant to this working activity?
- Do people know where you are in the building and what you are doing?

L – look confident

- Take a big breath which will clear the brain and improve your posture
- Release tension in facial, upper body and upper limb muscles
- Take a moment to decide how you are going to deal with the situation

A – avoid risk

- Be aware of your responsibilities as laid down in this policy
- Follow any relevant safety procedures and safe systems of working
- Use the Personal Risk Factor Checklist – see [appendix 3](#)

N – never assume

- It won't happen to you

Training is available for all 'at risk' employees so ensure you attend, including regular refreshers. See 2.5 Training section above.

3.2 Home/Site Visits

Is a home/site visit absolutely necessary?

- Before carrying out the visit you may decide to carry out a preliminary visit, possibly with a colleague, to identify any possible hazards.
- Are there any particular circumstances of which you should be aware? (See section 2.2 guidance on sharing of information.)
- Would a meeting on neutral ground be more appropriate?
- Should you go with a colleague?
- Are you familiar with the area and location?
- Does the location pose any particular risk for example country lane, block of flats, high crime area etc?
- Can the visit be made during the working day?

Every time you carry out a visit

You Should:

- Know where you are going and how to safely get there. Be aware of safe parking areas at your destination, especially after dark.
- Know the history/background of the person(s)/business you are visiting. (Check with colleagues for any recent experience or information).
- Discuss any concerns you may have with your manager.
- Have the means to raise the alarm, such as a personal alarm or a mobile phone or safety system.
- Tell your manager/colleagues where you are and when and to where you will return.
- Know where you are going, how people can contact you, or, how you will contact them.
- Know the time you expect to arrive at your destination and when you expect to be back in the workplace.
- Let the appropriate person know if you change your schedule or have been delayed.
- Regularly review working practices

It is useful to compare work practices with that of another Service, team or local authority as they may have developed alternative approaches to problems based on past incidents and perception of the risk or have assessed the risk differently.

3.3 Visiting Clients/Parents/Children in Their Homes

- Whenever possible, avoid visits out of office hours.
- Only take with you what you need for the meeting. Do not take papers which you do not wish to be seen by the client.
- Use the Personal Risk Factor Checklist – see [appendix 3](#)
- Take care to park your car in a spot that you can drive out of easily without too much manoeuvring.
- Do not enter a house or premises if the person you are visiting is not there and you do not know the person inviting you inside.
- If there are any signs of aggression at the front door leave straight away and offer to meet another time.
- Prepare an excuse to leave before you go inside, for example 'I just need to get something from the car'.
- Remember you are entering someone else's territory, acknowledge it is their home and wait to be asked in, invited to sit etc.

- If possible get the person to lead the way so you shut the front door and can familiarise yourself with the latch.
- Avoid actions which may appear aggressive or an invasion of privacy.
- Do not stand too close to the person you are visiting.
- Familiarise yourself with the surroundings in case you need to leave quickly.
- If you sit down, try to choose a chair closest to the door, preferably a hard chair rather than a soft low sofa.
- Avoid reacting to the surroundings if they are unpleasant.
- If you feel threatened by dogs etc. ask politely if they can be moved.
- Be aware of changes in mood, expression etc. and be prepared to react if you feel threatened.
- Remember your own body language could trigger a potentially threatening reaction.
- Tell your manager if you feel that he/she or other colleagues in the Council should be aware of any points which arose during the meeting.
- Remember to share concerns.

3.4 Lone Working in Buildings or Isolated Surroundings

- Is it necessary to work alone (after hours or at weekends)? This must be discussed with your manager and be the subject of a risk assessment.
- Does there need to be a regular calling in procedure?
- Are there tell tale signs that you are alone on the premises for example single light left on?
- Is there a phone or some other means of communication (not behind a locked door) that can be used to summon assistance?
- Are the premises safely secured whilst you are alone inside (but not so secure you can't get out in an emergency)?
- Is your car parked prominently and close to the door?

- Does someone else know your estimated time of reaching home for example wife, husband, partner, buddy?
- Do you need a torch with you?
- How much luggage will you have with you when you leave, for example will you have one hand free?

3.5 Community Safety

Many of our Services and schools form part of a community which can from time to time suffer from unruly groups of youths and vandalism. It is likely that others in the community are experiencing the same problems so it is therefore important to tackle these problems as a community and not alone. For example, the library, youth centre, school, local shops, village halls, community centres, district and parish councils could elect representatives and meet together with the local Police Community Support Officer who can take the lead and co-ordinate a local strategy.

3.6 Stalking

The main piece of legislation relating to stalking is The Protection from Harassment Act 1998, which carries a maximum penalty of a restraining order and up to 5 years imprisonment. It must be proved that the accused has caused another person fear or alarm on at least two occasions.

Stalking can be an unexpected development in a relationship or from a client or complete stranger. It is important not to engage with your stalker and to deal with it as soon as possible. Remember to save any messages received and keep records of dates and times. Always report to the police how ever trivial it may seem, who will advise a course of action. If it is affecting you in your place of work or on your journey to work, you should inform your line manager who may be able to make adjustments to working patterns or arrange a buddy system. You should also tell your manager about any unwanted attention from a client or colleague. If your manager is unsure what to do or for any reason you do not wish to confide in your manager, contact the Health and Safety Team who will be able to provide advice. There is very good information and a helpline on the [Suzy Lamplugh](#) website on stalking and harassment with links to other dedicated organisations.

3.7 Safety Tips

Always remember to remove or cover your name badge when you leave the building or finish work.

Visit the [Suzy Lamplugh](#) website for personal safety tips including car journeys and parking, cycling, using public transport, cash handling, internet safety choosing an alarm, and much more.

Remember there is training available that can be tailored to your needs.