Violence at Work

Guidance Note 32

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Introduction

This Guidance Note gives practical information about managing violence at work.
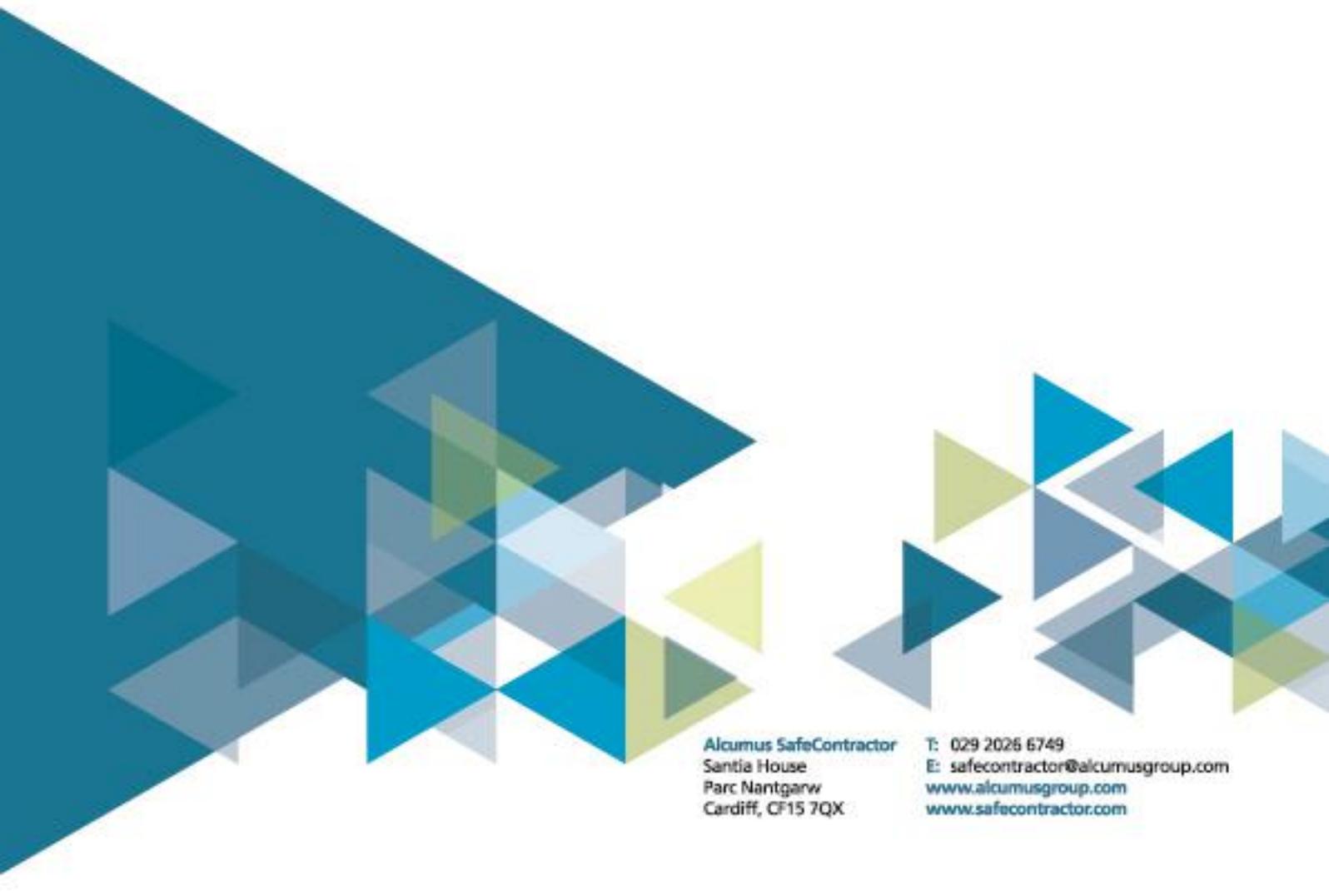
A sample risk assessment template has been included in Appendix 1 and a sample policy template in Appendix 2. If you wish to use these templates to construct your own documents, you must ensure that all references to **Alcumus SafeContractor Accreditation** have been removed and the final documents are clearly incorporated into your existing safety management system. The policy should explain your company's specific intent and arrangements.

Legal Requirements

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as:

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

This can include verbal abuse or threats as well as physical attacks.

Those most at risk of harm include anyone involved in the following:
- Providing a service to the public or other employees
- Telephone sales or support
- Caring for individuals
- Training and education
- Cash transactions
- Delivery/collection of goods
- Controlling and supervising others
- Representing authority in any form, but especially regulatory personnel.

Employers have a legal duty to protect their staff from foreseeable violence at work and should establish an effective strategy to protect both employees and customers from violence in the workplace.

Why should you be concerned?

Impact on your staff

- Physical injury
- Work-related stress – which can have long-term effects on health
- Fear and anxiety
- Job dissatisfaction and poor performance

Impact on your business

- Lost staff time from injuries and stress
- Higher staff turnover, leading to increased recruitment and training costs
- Damage to the reputation of your business
- Potential compensation claims by staff

Employers need to adopt a risk management strategy, which enables them to check to see if there is a problem in the workplace, if there is a problem, to decide which action to take, take the action and then check the control measures have been successful.

Find out if there is a Problem of Violence

All potential hazards need to be examined. Employers may not be aware where there is a problem, so it is important to talk to employees as well as looking at incident records. A checklist is available at the end of this document in order to assist the employer in identifying if there is potential for violence at work.

The British Crime Survey shows these occupations most at risk of assault (NB, average risk = 1.2%):
- Security and protective services (11.4%)
- Nurses (5.0%)
- Care workers (2.8%)
- Public transport (2.8%)
- Catering / hotels / restaurants (2.6%)
- Other education and welfare (2.6%)
- Teachers (1.8%)
- Retail sales (1.8%)
- Management and personnel (1.7%)
- Leisure / service providers (1.7%)
- Other health professionals (1.4%)

Risk Assessment of Violence

This follows the familiar procedure however it focuses on a single hazard. Don't forget that exposure to verbal abuse is included in the definition of violence. A generic form can be utilised, please refer to the risk assessment section in the document library. However, a separate checklist and specific risk assessment form can be found at the end of this document should you wish to utilise them.

Decide What Action to Take

If violence is a problem, employers must decide what action to take by:
- Identifying who may be harmed and how

- Evaluating the risk
- Assessing the level of training and information needed
- Providing an adequate work environment
- Looking at the design of the job to see how exposure to violence can be eliminated or the threat minimised
- Recording the findings and reviewing the assessment.

What can you do to control the risk of violence?

There are many different ways of reducing the risk of violence, which can be separated in to the following areas:
- Work environment
- Working practices
- Training
- Legal options
- Partnership working and special schemes.

Implement a Policy on Violence at Work – and Take Action

Where the threat of violence is real, introduce a policy that can be written into the overall health and safety policy statement. Ensure employees are aware of it and the procedures to follow in the event of a violent incident. For example, the NHS has adopted a policy of non-tolerance of violence against its staff.

Cases where the NHS has taken legal or other action include the following:
- In June 2004, following violent or abusive behaviour the NHS successfully applied for the first ever national Anti-Social Behavioural Order (ASBO) covering the entire NHS against a specific named patient. The ASBO prevents him from entering medical premises in England and Wales without lawful excuse or prior permission from the NHS organisation involved. He was jailed in January 2005 for three years.
- A violent arsonist was sentenced to life imprisonment on 13 June 2005 for stabbing a staff nurse at York Hospital in September 2004.
- In March 2005 successful trials were completed of a device to help protect those who work in the community. Using mobile phone technology, the device helps workers raise the alarm if they feel threatened or are attacked. It allows them to covertly record threats of violence or abuse, which may later be used in evidence.

Violence at Work Policy

Employers should appoint an individual with appropriate authority to have overall responsibility for developing an integrated policy, ensuring it is implemented, and then overseeing it. The policy should outline the arrangements in place for dealing with violent incidents, both verbal and physical and should be made available to all employees. From time to time the policy will need to be reviewed to ensure that it remains valid and useful.

An example policy is contained in the document library – Violence at work Policy. It is only an example and should be used with caution and amended to your particular circumstances.

Overview

- Do you know if your business or your type of business has a problem (including potential problem) of violence at work?
- Do you keep records of violence at work incidents?
- Have you carried out a risk assessment on those activities where there is a potential for violence at work?
- Have you established a policy and procedures to deal with violence at work and are they reviewed/monitored as necessary?
- Do you have a system in place to deal with the victims of violence at work incidents?
- Do you know where to go for further advice and information

Further Guidance

- Violence at Work: A guide for employers. Free to download at: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf

- Preventing Workplace Harassment & Violence. Free to download at: www.hse.gov.uk/violence/preventing-workplace-harassment.pdf

- The HSE website also has a section on Violence including further guidance and case studies. This can be accessed at: http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/index.htm

Appendix 1

Identifying Violence Checklist

Tables 1 and 2 form part of the initial risk assessment process for identifying potential of violence and aggression for staff. Before the ' Assessor' completes the Form they should satisfy themselves that they are able to answer the questions raised in Table 1 and should check with staff that they are able to answer the questions in Table 2.

TABLE 1	Yes	No	N/A
Are your staff:			
In your department/business in contact with the public where violence may or is likely to occur? If No- no further action necessary – review at least every 12 months			
Aware of whether violence has been identified as a problem in the department?			
Briefed about the area where they work?			
Aware of attitudes, traits or mannerisms, which can annoy clients/customers etc.?			
That verbal aggression by telephone could be perceived as a problem?			
Provided with a sound grasp of the departments preventative strategy?			
Provided with training appropriate to the risks for managing potential violence and/or aggression?			

Do they?			
Have access to forms for reporting incidents?			
Appreciate the need for this procedure?			
Use the forms?			
Appreciate their responsibilities for their own safety?			
Understand the provisions for their support by the department e.g. Police liaison, counselling, etc.?			

TABLE 2	Yes	No	N/A
Have you:			
Had appropriate training regarding violence and aggression to staff?			
A sound grasp of your department's safety policy?			
A clear idea about the area into which you are going to work?			
Out-of hours telephone numbers etc. to summon help?			
Access to forms to record and report incidents?			
A personal alarm, mobile phone(where appropriate)? Does it work?			

Are you:			
Aware that your approach, body language or mannerisms may influence the clients/customers behavior?			

Date of assessment:	
Name and signature of assessor:	
Position:	

Description of activity where violence and/or aggression could occur:						

Frequency of Exposure

Infrequently		Annually		Monthly		Weekly		Daily		Hourly		Constantly	

Control measures already taken to reduce risk of violence and/or aggression (if any):

New/Additional Control Measures Required to reduce further the risk of violence and/or aggression:

If the above action is implemented the perceived residual risk is:

Residual Risk Remaining		Low Risk		Medium Risk		High Risk	

Violence Risk Assessment Form

Assessment Completed by:		Date of Assessment:	
Name		Review Date:	
Signature			
Position			

Appendix 2

Violence at Work Policy (Example)

Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out **[Business name]** policy and procedures to prevent, manage and respond to work-related violence. Management supports this policy and we will not tolerate any instances of work-related violence, including verbal abuse, to our staff. No member of staff will be blamed for an instance of work-related violence caused by a customer or member of the public. All employees have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect.

This policy applies to all staff working on our premises, including door supervisors, contractors and delivery personnel.

Definition of Work-Related Violence

[Business name] define work-related violence as: any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of his/her employment. This is based on the Health and Safety Executive's definition.

Responsibilities of Staff and Managers

These relate to all members of staff, including door supervisors and other personnel who work on these premises, or have responsibilities relating to them.

Managers

All managers have a responsibility to implement this policy and to make sure their staff are aware of it and understand it. Managers should also:

- Treat any reports of work-related violence, threats or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.
- Record details of the incident where appropriate and give all employees involved in the incident full support during the whole process
- Respond and consider seriously any suggestions made by staff about how to improve violence prevention and management, and give feedback to staff about their suggestions, including whether it will be taken forward and if not, why not.
- Set a positive example by reporting all incidents of violence and abuse and not tolerating abusive behaviour from customers and members of the public. Make sure you also offer good customer service and follow specific policies.
- Respond to and, where possible, resolve incidents, ideally before they escalate.

- Monitor incidences of violence and abuse and initiate appropriate action if more measures are needed.
- Review and amend this policy and the risk assessment as necessary.
- Where possible, direct staff to appropriate support and advice after an incident has occurred.
- Encourage other staff members to support their colleagues, including those that might have witnessed the incident.
- If victims are particularly traumatised by the event, provide support where possible, such as time off work or changes to their tasks.
- If an investigation is needed, work with the police and offer any assistance needed to help in their enquiries.
- Managers have a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence.
- Any manager found to be encouraging or inciting violence or not resolving potentially violent or abusive situations may be subject to disciplinary action.

Staff

All staff have personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that they comply with this policy.

There are a number of things that staff can do to help prevent work-related violence:

- Be aware of the company's policy and comply with it, including specific policies on aspects such as the sale of alcohol or excluding customers.
- Offer good customer service and be aware of customer needs.
- Recognise the potential for work-related violence and take action to resolve it early on.
- Staff should take positive action and, for example, contact a manager if they think a customer or member of the public might cause problems.
- Don't accept instances of work-related violence directed towards you or others. Staff should report any instances of violence, threats or abuse, including any details about when it happened, who was involved and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident.
- Serious incidents should be reported in the incident book kept in the manager's office but minor incidents and incidents of verbal abuse should be reported to managers as they occur.
- Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or witnessed work-related violence. Suggest additional measures to managers which might help to prevent and manage work-related violence.
- Staff have a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence.
- Any staff member found to be encouraging or inciting violence may be subject to disciplinary action.

- Staff and managers should also work with trade unions, where relevant, in preventing, addressing, reporting and responding to incidents or work-related violence.

Risk Assessments

The risk assessments for work-related violence are kept ( ).

The risk assessments were conducted by the senior manager and are reviewed every year, unless an increase in the number of incidents suggests the assessment should be reviewed more frequently.

The risks were assessed by talking to staff, reviewing the incident book and considering the work environment and job design. If staff believe a risk factor has not been covered by the assessment or have ideas on further prevention measures, they should discuss these with their manager. The contents of the risk assessment will be communicated to all staff and appropriate training will be given.

Prevention and Management Measures

There are a number of measures in place following the risk assessment that staff should be aware of. These fall under the areas of work environment, working practices and training.

Work Environment

We have CCTV to monitor and survey the premises. This is visible in the manager's office. The system can be used to focus on a potentially violent individual. It can also be used by the police to identify perpetrators. There are sufficient discs for one month's worth of surveillance but, after that time, discs are recorded over. New discs should be purchased every quarter and the system is serviced every year.

We hire three door supervisors for Friday and Saturday. They are to be positioned at the front entrance. They have radio links to the manager so that they can call for assistance or look at CCTV if needed.

Popular but relaxing music is played on the premises to create a pleasant environment for customers.

Working Practices

Deposit boxes have been provided next to each till and staff are to keep cash in their tills to a minimum. For example, staff should deposit all £50 notes, deposit all but a couple of £20 notes, keep less than ten £10 and £5 notes in their till.

At the end of a shift, staff must follow the cashing-up procedures.

Sufficient staff should be provided at all times. At particularly busy times, more staff should be provided. Managers must monitor busy periods and ensure that this is followed. We will ensure that adequate numbers of staff are available at all times.

Training

The following training should be provided:

- All staff, including new staff, should receive awareness training on work-related violence, our policy and procedures, how to prevent work-related violence, reporting procedures and what to do following an incident. This may be through formal training or a briefing from managers, depending on the risk potential for the staff members.
- Managers will be trained as above, as well as on how to handle complaints and trouble among customers effectively.
- Door staff have been trained by their own company on how to exclude or remove individuals from the premises and will be Security Industry Authority (SIA) registered and trained. They have also been inducted in relation to our own premises.

Specific and Relevant Policies

There are other company policies that are relevant to the prevention and management of work-related violence. These include:

- training
- cashing-up
- credit/debit cards
- counterfeit notes
- dress code.

Actions Following an Incident

If a staff member is being abused, threatened or attacked, they should approach their manager or a colleague for help. Managers should respond to the situation by talking to the perpetrator, explaining that their behaviour is not acceptable. They should try to resolve the problem and, if that is not possible, call security for assistance. Security will remove the person where required.
Medical assistance should be provided immediately where required. The police should be informed of a serious incident involving physical attack or serious cases of threatening or verbal abuse. Police should also be informed of persistent cases of violence, threats and abuse.

CCTV discs of incidents should be kept in case the police need them. All incidents should be recorded in the incident book and less serious incidents reported to managers.

Staff members will be encouraged to provide support to any victims or witnesses of violence, threats or abuse through appropriate training, and managers should provide support, including, where needed, allowing time off work for individuals to recover.

Review Dates

This policy should be reviewed yearly when all other policies are reviewed, or if regular or serious incidents arise that suggest it needs to be revisited.

Reporting and Recording Systems

Staff have a responsibility to report incidences of work-related violence, including threats and verbal abuse, to managers. All incidents, including physical attacks, serious or persistent threats and verbal abuse, must be recorded in the incident book in the manager's office. This asks for details of when the incident occurred, who was involved, descriptions of the perpetrator and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident.

Any incidents resulting in major injury to staff or that cause staff to be off work for seven consecutive days or more must be reported under the RIDDOR Regulations 2013. Any incident which results in a member of the public being taken directly to hospital from the premises must also be reported. Managers should contact the HSE Incident Contact Centre on 0845 300 9923 to report the incident.

Less serious incidents should still be reported to managers as they occur and managers should make a note of these. If managers notice an increase in reports, several reports within a short period or reports about the same perpetrator, managers should record the details, ask staff for more information and take action. The action may include contacting the police or other local businesses about a persistent offender, reviewing the risk assessment and considering further prevention measures, or increased vigilance by managers or staff to prevent a more serious incident occurring.

Sign and print managers name:

Date:
Date for review: