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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy and Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b> 18 September 2012
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Head of Organisational Development Human Resources and Communications</b>	<b>Report No:</b> HR/13/12/PR
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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression in the Workplace</b>	

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to approve a Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy for the Council (Appendix 1).

## **2.0 SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act places a duty on employers to prepare a written statement of their general policy and as part of that policy to have in place arrangements for the implementation of Health and Safety. The Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy will form part of the Council's arrangements for Health and Safety.
- 2.2 The policy sets out how the Council will implement and control the risks of Violence and Aggression towards employees in line with the relevant HSE and other guidance documentation.
- 2.3 This policy updates and replaces the Violence and Lone Working in the Workplace policy.
- 2.4 The Workforce Development Strategy was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on the 26 May 2009 and has three main themes. This particular proposal is contained within Employees – our most valuable resource in that it focuses on health, safety and welfare of our workforce.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee is recommended to approve the Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy.
- 3.2 The Committee is asked to support this policy by active promotion of Health and Safety.

Head of Organisational Development  
Human Resources and Communications

## **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council are required to ensure that the risks to employees, from Violence in the workplace is assessed in line with its legal duties as defined by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- 4.2 By law (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 section 2(3)) if you employ five or more people you must have a written health and safety policy. This contains a statement of general policy on health and safety at work and the organisation and arrangements in place for putting that policy into practice. The Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy details the arrangements the Council has in place for assessing and controlling the risk from Violence.
- 4.3 The Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy sets a clear direction for the Council to follow; it will contribute to all aspects of business performance as part of a demonstrable commitment to continuous improvement. It will demonstrate a shared common understanding of the Council's vision, values and beliefs. A positive Health and Safety culture is fostered by the visible and active leadership of senior managers. This is reflected within the policy.
- 4.4 The policy consists of the following main sections:
- Statement of Policy
  - Roles and Responsibilities
  - How the Policy should be implemented
  - Management Requirements
  - Information and Training Requirements

## **5.0 PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 The Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy is to be adopted by Inverclyde Council and used as a framework to further enhance the safety of employees and those affected by the work of the Council.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Finance: None
- 6.2 Human Resources: None
- 6.3 Legal: None
- 6.4 Equality: None

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy has been coordinated through the Corporate Health and Safety Committee with Health and Safety seeking the views of both union and management colleagues. The Trades Unions have agreed the Policy.

## **8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy

# ***Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression in the Workplace***

Version 2.0

Produced by:  
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August 2012



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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Change History		
Version	Date	Comments
1.0	March 2004	Original Version
2.0	August 2012	Reviewed and updated to reflect new guidance from the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives, COSLA and the STUC.

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Policy Review		
Review Date	Person Responsible	Service
August 2014	H&S Team Leader	OD&HR

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is a regrettable fact of working life that threats, harassment and acts of physical violence on employees, by others, does sometimes occur and there is a disturbing increase in aggressive incidents in the workplace. Given the existence of potentially hostile workplaces, where employees may be at risk, either physically or emotionally from job-related factors, Inverclyde Council recognises the importance of including appropriate arrangements for dealing with “occupational violence and aggression in the workplace” as an integral part of its Health and Safety Policy.
- 1.2 Of particular relevance to the Council is that research figures confirm that the greater the contact with the general public, the greater the risk. The “at risk” factor may increase with employees in occupations requiring them to exercise authority, enforce standards, work with emotionally unstable client groups, or operate alone in a potentially hostile environment well away from their office base.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this policy arrangement, violence at work is defined as the application of force, severe threat or serious abuse by members of the public, clients, pupils or any other person towards employees of the council arising out of the course of their employment. Such violence includes:

- attempted assault
- actual assault
- verbal abuse and threats
- rude gestures
- harassment

Inverclyde Council has adopted the definition of violence given by the Health and Safety Executive, this is as follows:-

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

- 1.4 In seeking to apply this definition, it is recognised that while some forms of violence such as physical assault or explicit threats are easily identified, others such as verbal abuse are more difficult to assess. It is further recognised that words or gestures which may be acceptable to some people may be deeply offensive or threatening to others.
- 1.5 The impact of being on the receiving end of repeated insults and verbal abuse can be as significant as being physically assaulted, and can contribute to long-term health problems such as stress and depression. Being proactive in planning to help our employees to manage such violence when it occurs can dramatically improve not only their working lives, but their overall health and wellbeing. The associated benefits for the organization are immeasurable.

## **2 POLICY STATEMENT**

- 2.1 It is the policy of Inverclyde Council to take all reasonably practicable steps to safeguard the health, safety and welfare at work of all of its employees. The council will comply with all aspects and provisions of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974; the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations; and all other relevant statutory obligations. This includes the organisation and arrangements required to prevent or to minimise the potential for injuries and/or ill-health as a result of occupational violence and aggression in the workplace.
- 2.2 A high standard of health and safety performance is recognised as an integral part of the council's service delivery. Therefore, sufficient resources will be allocated to meet the requirements of the Council's Occupational Violence and Aggression in the Workplace Policy.
- 2.3 Risk assessments will be carried out identify potential hazards, evaluate the risks from them and implement control measures to minimise the risks. Trained personnel will be involved in the risk assessment process which will be supported by the Council's Health and Safety Advisors.
- 2.4 The method used to achieve compliance with the requirements of Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 will be the method set out in the appendices of this document, or another method as agreed by the Health and Safety Team Leader.

## **3 AIMS**

This policy aims to provide guidance and information to Services to help them to manage the risk of occupational violence and aggression in the workplace based on the HSE's 10 principles of sensible risk management:

Sensible risk management IS about:

- Ensuring that workers and the public are properly protected.
- Providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks, both those which arise more often and those with serious consequences
- Enabling innovation and learning not stifling them.
- Ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead to robust action.
- Enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right protection, they also have to exercise responsibility.

Sensible risk management IS NOT about:

- Creating a totally risk free society
- Generating useless paperwork mountains



- Scaring people by exaggerating or publicising trivial risks
- Stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals where the risks are managed
- Reducing protection of people from risks that cause real harm and suffering.

## **4 SCOPE**

- 4.1 This policy applies equally to all employees regardless of grade, experience or role within the organisation. The policy also applies to contracted staff as far as is reasonably practicable.

## **5 CONSULTATION & IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 Inverclyde Council recognises the importance of employee consultation and is committed to involving all employees in the development of policies and procedures. The following groups are formally consulted:

- Trade Union Representatives through the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.
- All Chief Officers.
- Employees via the Council Intranet.

- 5.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out using the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment Template.

## 6 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the responsibilities laid out in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy the following responsibilities are specific to this Policy.

### 6.1 Corporate Directors/Heads of Service

Corporate Directors and Heads of Service have a collective and individual responsibility to employees in providing Health and Safety Leadership within Inverclyde Council, they should ensure that their Directorate has:-

- adequate procedures for identifying operations, tasks and processes which may foreseeably cause harm to employees as a result of occupational violence and/or aggression in the workplace;
- sufficient systems for identifying the likelihood of the hazards associated with lone working and violence and aggression being realised, and the possible consequences, which might occur;
- suitable procedures for enabling a risk assessment to be developed which will assist in eliminating or reducing the exposure of employees to the risk;
- suitable arrangements to provide information, instruction and training on hazards, risks, control measures and safe systems of work associated with lone working and violence and aggression to all relevant employees and other relevant persons. This will include refresher training at suitable intervals;
- suitable procedures for routine checks to ensure control measures are being applied, particularly those relying on direct action by individual employees;
- sufficient numbers of competent persons trained to conduct risk assessments relating to lone working and violence and aggression in the workplace;
- adequate procedures to ensure that risk assessments are recorded, monitored and reviewed.
- adequate procedures and resources to ensure that section 7.4 of this Policy – “Effective Management of Occupational Violence and Aggression at Work” is complied with.

### 6.2 Managers/Team Leaders/Supervisors

Any person who has a managerial/supervisory responsibility for other employees, whatever title they are given has the responsibility to ensure:

- risk assessments relating to lone working and violence and aggression are carried out in their area of responsibility by competent risk assessors;
- risk assessments are recorded and retained for inspection by the internal Health & Safety Advisors, Health & Safety Executive and any other relevant person;
- risk assessments are reviewed regularly in accordance with the approved guidance;
- control measures and corrective actions identified are implemented as far as reasonably practicable

- that safe systems of work (SSW) are developed, implemented, monitored, and reviewed in accordance with the approved guidance;
- that all relevant persons are informed of the SSW and a record of this kept in accordance with the approved guidance;
- that the employees for whom they are responsible comply with health and safety requirements for their job;
- risk assessments relating to lone working and violence and aggression are available as a working document for relevant employees and other relevant persons
- that section 7.4 of this Policy – “Effective Management of Occupational Violence and Aggression at Work” is complied with

### **6.3 Employee Responsibilities**

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they are complying with the health and safety procedures and requirements appropriate to their job. To achieve this, in relation to occupational violence and aggression in the workplace and lone working, employees should:

- attend any health and safety training arranged for them;
- where given the responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of risk assessments carry these out at regular intervals;
- consult their Line Manager/Supervisor with any queries they may have about their work task and any relevant risk assessment;
- follow any safe systems of work, instructions and information given following risk assessments

### **6.4 Health and Safety Team Leader**

The Council Health and Safety Team Leader shall ensure that the Occupational Violence and Aggression in the Workplace Policy is monitored for effectiveness, is subject to regular review, and is revised when necessary. She shall do so in conjunction with Heads of Service and Trades Union safety representatives.

### **6.5 Corporate Health and Safety Committee**

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented.

The safety committee will oversee monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy and other measures to reduce risks and promote workplace health and safety.

## 7 ARRANGEMENTS

### 7.1 Procedures

- 7.1.1 Inverclyde Council will undertake to meet the duties placed on the Authority under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, ensuring that a system is in place to identify and assess the risks from occupational violence and aggression in the workplace.
- 7.1.2 Where significant risks are identified appropriate control measures will be implemented to reduce the risks to the lowest reasonably practicable level.
- 7.1.3 Each service will be required to ensure that:
- Risks of violence to employees are identified, assessed, managed and recorded.
  - Where appropriate, employees are involved in the assessment process and kept fully informed of the outcome of assessments and the steps identified to reduce or eliminate risk, including any suitable training available.
  - Employees are provided with such training as is felt necessary to enable them to avoid and /or deal with actual and potential violence.
  - Where the risk of violence is assessed as “significant” control measures are implemented to reduce the risk.
  - Support is provided to employees who are the victims of violence.
  - All acts of “non-consensual physical violence done to a person at work” which can be defined as an “accident” under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995), are reported to the Health and Safety Executive - refer to Health and Safety Policy Arrangements – Section 7.2 “Incident Reporting”.
  - Details of reportable incidents are passed to the Council Health and Safety Section to allow the effectiveness of managing violence at the workplace to be monitored, periodically reviewed and relevant information shared across the Authority.
- 7.1.4 These Policy arrangements are designed to assist Directors and Heads of Service to pursue a strategy of managing violence risks in their workplaces. The arrangements made are important elements which link with other responsibilities within the Council’s Health and Safety Policy and Risk Management Policy.
- 7.1.5 The Health and Safety Policy arrangements for “Occupational violence and aggression in the workplace” shall be reviewed periodically to reflect any changes considered necessary, based upon experience, work alterations, current legislation and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive. This will be carried out at service level, for example, Director/Head of Service, and also corporately by the Council Health and Safety Team Leader.
- 7.1.6 These procedures form part of the Arrangements section of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy of Inverclyde Council. They outline the Council’s intentions regarding general areas where the principles of management of violence may be put into practice. It is intended to provide guidelines for management actions in relation

to the specific risks in the workplace environment.

- 7.1.7 Each Service must assess their own “risks of occupational violence and aggression in the workplace” and, where it is necessary, produce their own written procedures, and train their employees in the furtherance of the health and safety policy objectives.
- 7.1.8 The following general areas are guidelines for management actions when considering specific service requirements in managing “occupational violence and aggression in the workplace”

## 7.2 Incident Reporting (R.I.D.D.O.R)

- 7.2.1 A number of important changes were made in the revised Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (R.I.D.D.O.R). A key change redefined an accident for the purpose of the Regulations to include an act of non-consensual physical violence done to a person at work.
- 7.2.2 This has the effect of making injuries arising from such acts reportable, if (as is likely), they fall into one of the injury categories in regulations 3 and 4 of R.I.D.D.O.R. In order to clarify the situation and assist managers, some guidance follows:
- 7.2.3 The term “**Non-consensual Physical Violence**” is used to exclude injuries arising from situations where the injured person “agreed” to the violent act taking place. A major injury suffered by a professional sports person e.g. leg fracture during the normal course of a football/rugby/tennis match for example, would not be regarded as an “accident”, for the purposes of the R.I.D.D.O.R Regulations 1995 and would not need to be reported. In the context of Inverclyde council activities then a parallel may be drawn with a pupil suffering injury in a school’s football match and, therefore, such injuries would not be reportable.
- 7.2.4 A “major injury” suffered by, for example, a Librarian, Refuse Collector, or Home Help assaulted by another person in the course of their work, is reportable under R.I.D.D.O.R. It should also prompt a review of the risk of violence assessment and/or re-assessment of the job activities. An injury in which the physical injury results in the employee being absent for over three days is also reportable under R.I.D.D.O.R, however if the employee is absent from work due to stress resulting from the violence this is not reportable.
- 7.2.5 Only physical injuries resulting from the acts of violence suffered by people who are at work are included in the definition of “accident”. An act of violence done to a member of the public by, for example, a Council employee or another member of the public on the Authority’s premises, would not be regarded as “an accident” under R.I.D.D.O.R. Therefore, a resulting injury would not need to be reported to the H.S.E, but may require to be reported elsewhere, e.g. Police, Council Insurers, etc

## 7.3 Arising out of or in Connection with Work

- 7.3.1 In the context of violence in the workplace, and the requirement to report it as an accident, then the effect of the term “arising out of or in connection with work” may require further explanation. The following examples selected are based on those

used in the R.I.D.D.O.R guidance published by the Health and Safety Executive.

7.3.2 If one of the persons in the examples should die or suffers a major or over three days physical injury caused by a non-consensual act of violence while they are at work, then Regulation 3 of R.I.D.D.O.R. would apply, meaning the death or injury must be reported:-

- An employee is hit by a Supervisor while being given feedback on work performance
- A Supervisor is hit by an employee whilst giving an instruction to carry out a work related task
- A Social Worker is struck by an irate service user on a visit to their house
- A new employee is injured while being forced to take part in an "initiation ceremony" at work

7.3.3 Injuries suffered by the people in the following examples would not be regarded as arising out of or in connection with their work and so, would not have to be reported:

- An employee at work at a public enquiry desk is hit by one of his or her relatives who comes in to discuss a domestic matter.
- One employee hits another during an argument over a personal matter.
- A pupil in a school hits another pupil during a personal dispute between them.

## **7.4 Risk Assessment**

7.4.1 Risk assessment requires to be carried out by law under Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and applies to all work activities. This includes an assessment of the threat of violence from members of the general public during those work activities. Any lone working, violence at work and / or personal safety issues must be taken into consideration when conducting such risk assessments and, where any significant hazards are identified, specific risk assessments and controls should be initiated.

7.4.2 Each Service must assess the risks to their employees and make arrangements for their health and safety by effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review. Services must record the significant findings of their risk assessments, which should include:

- Those hazards (including violence or threats of violence), which might pose serious risks to workers, or others directly affected;
- The existing control measures in place;
- The population which may be affected by those significant risks or hazards, including any groups of employees especially at risk from violence, for example,

disabled persons, persons handling cash, lone workers and employees working with physically or emotionally disturbed client groups;

- Any additional control measures to be implemented as a result of the risk assessment to aid personal health and safety or security.
- Risk assessments should be monitored for effectiveness and be reviewed on a regular basis.

7.4.3 These records can be kept on paper or by electronic means, provided that they are retrievable. They should represent an effective statement of the hazards and risks (including violence or threats of violence, where identified) which should lead management to take the relevant actions to protect health and safety.

7.4.4 A more detailed account of how to carry out risk assessments is given in “Health and Safety Policy Arrangements – Risk Assessment. Details of legal requirements can be found in appendix 1.

7.4.5 More specific guidance on the types of control measures available can be obtained from the Health and Safety Section and further information can be found on the council intranet. ICON (Inverclyde Council on-line) has a section on health and safety and in particular Risk Assessment and Violence and Lone Working.

## 7.5 Dynamic Risk Assessment

7.5.1 While risk assessment is a vital part of the process, employees can still be faced with situations which may not have been addressed or that they are unaware of. Dynamic Risk Assessments are not a substitute for a comprehensive risk assessment but in some cases it is not always possible to identify all hazards relating to a role where the working environment is outside normal conditions.

7.5.2 Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) means the things individuals can do to protect themselves at work when they face potentially difficult circumstances. The focus here is on the questions individuals may need to ask themselves when they enter any potentially violent situation, and the way that they might need to act in this situation because of the risks.

7.5.3 The term ‘Dynamic Risk Assessment’ is the process where workers themselves have to make operational decisions based on risks which cannot necessarily be foreseen. It would cover risks which may arise such as if there is a hostile dog or a person in a clients home who is under the influence of drink or drugs and abusive.

7.5.4 The term “dynamic” is used because it relates to the need for an individual to remain assertive, proactive and vigilant in recognising the potential risks of violence in any situation, and then in responding to these risks in a way that reflects the particular situation.

7.5.5 By preparing to dynamically risk-assess, employees can begin to be prepared to recognise the potential for aggression and remove themselves from the danger before it occurs.

7.5.6 Further guidance on Dynamic Risk Assessment is contained in Appendix 2: Dynamic Risk Assessment.

## 7.6 Effective Management of Occupational Violence and Aggression at Work

7.6.1 A simple four stage management process can assist by providing a structure by which the risk of violence to employees can be managed, this is set out below. Services should complete the four stage process according to their structure and the type of work activities carried out by their employees. Further information and tools to assist with this process are contained in the Appendices of this Policy.

Stage 1: Find out if you have a problem  
 Stage 2: Decide what action to take  
 Stage 3: Take action  
 Stage 4: Review what you have done

**Note:** It is important to remember that these four stages are not a one-off set of actions. If stage 4 shows that you still have a problem then the process should be repeated again. Stages 1 and 2 are completed by carrying out a risk assessment (as outlined in 7.4 above).

7.6.2 Stage 1: Finding out if you have a problem

As part of the overall risk assessment for work activities or the working environment it is important that managers identify if there is any significant risk to employees arising out of or in connection with their work. To achieve this, Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors should:

- List the jobs / tasks where employee's interaction with others could place them at some significant risk
- Identify any jobs / tasks or places of work where employees may feel threatened or vulnerable
- Ask your employees - Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors should speak to their employees to find out whether they feel threatened or at risk while carrying out their work. Individual services could use short questionnaires to find out if there is a problem in their service. If questionnaires are used for this purpose staff should be informed of the results and if there is a problem, what action managers plan to take.
- Keep detailed records. All incidents including verbal abuse, phone rage and threats should be recorded.
- Analyse records of violent incidents to determine whether they are isolated incidents or whether there is a recurring problem



### 7.6.3 Stage 2: Decide what action to take

Having found out that violence could be a problem for your employees, each service will have to decide what needs to be done. Continue the risk assessment process by taking the following steps to help each individual service what action needs to be taken.

#### *Decide who might be harmed, and how*

Identify which employees are at risk – those who have face-to-face contact with the public are normally the most vulnerable. Where appropriate, identify potentially violent people in advance so that the risk from them can be minimised. Examples of those employees who may be at risk include:

- employees in front line jobs and deal with members of the public;
- employees that work alone;
- employees working off-site or visit Service Users or members of the public in their home;
- employees who are charged with the custody of or the keeping of money;
- young / inexperienced employees

#### *Evaluate the risk*

Check existing arrangements; are the precautions already in place adequate or should more be done? It is usually a combination of factors that give rise to violence. Factors which you can influence include:

- The level of training and information provided;
- The environment;
- The design of the job.

Managers, Supervisors and Team Leaders must consider the way these factors work together to influence the risk of violence. Some examples of preventative measures are as follows:

#### *Training and Information*

Corporate and Service specific training is available, details can be found on ICoN and the Corporate Health and Safety Training Course Planner which is issued to all Services at the beginning of each year. Managers must ensure that all at risk employees attend the relevant safety courses. This will equip them to be able to spot the early signs of aggression and either avoid it or cope with it. Make sure that they understand any system that you have set up for their protection.

#### *The Environment*

Rooms should be comfortable and well maintained; studies have found that this can serve to relax the client and aids in diffusing aggression. Good visibility into the rooms while maintaining client privacy ensures that colleagues outside the area can see if a problem is

developing. Employees should be instructed to keep their desks clear any extraneous items that could be used as a weapon.

Careful positioning of furniture can be helpful in ensuring the safety of employees in interview rooms, reception areas and public waiting areas. An assessment of the environment should be carried out; consideration should be given to the seating arrangements, the décor, lighting, noise levels, interruptions and information regarding any delays.

Consider physical security measures such as:

- alarm systems and panic buttons;
- CCTV;
- coded security locks on doors to keep the public out of employee areas;
- wider counters and raised floors on the employee side of the counter to give employees more protection
- signage – Inverclyde Council's Violence in the Workplace poster

### *The design of the job*

Depending on the work task being carried out there are many things that could be implemented, improved or changed to improve the overall design of the job. Some suggestions for this are as follows:

- Implement procedures for employees who work away from their base to keep in touch, this can be as straightforward as signing out and a time for return. The use of mobile phones should also be considered
- arrange for staff to be accompanied by a colleague if they have to meet a suspected aggressor
- maintain numbers of staff at the workplace to avoid a lone worker situation developing
- identify all money handling activities within the area under your control. The risk and hazards from such activities can be reduced by implementing various strategies and controls.
- check the credentials of clients and the place and arrangements for any meetings away from the workplace

### *Record your findings*

Keep a record of the significant findings of your assessment. The record should provide a working document for both managers and employees

### *Review and revise your assessment*

Regularly check that your assessment is a true reflection of your current work situation. Be prepared to add further measures or change existing measures where these are not

working. This is particularly important where the job changes. If a violent incident should occur look back at your assessment, evaluate it and make any necessary changes.

#### 7.6.4 Stage 3: Take action

All employees should be made aware of this Policy and associated documentation. This will help your employees to co-operate with you, follow procedures properly and report any further incidents.

Inverclyde Council operates an Early Alert System. Where appropriate all personnel on the Early Alert List should be notified of incidents relating to violence / aggression. Anyone who is aware of a violence related incident should, in the first instance, notify the Health and Safety Section Team Leader, who will ensure that the information is submitted to the Early Alert System.

#### 7.6.5 Stage 4: Check what you have done

Check on a regular basis how well your arrangements are working, consulting with your staff as you do so. Occupational violence and aggression at work could become an issue to discuss at staff meetings, safety action team meetings etc

Keep records of incidents and examine them regularly; they will show what progress you are making and if the problem is changing. If your measures are working well, keep them up. If violence is still a problem, try something else. Go back to Stages 1 and 2 and identify other preventative measures that could work.

### 7.7 Control Measures

There may be some simple measures available to each Service e.g., reviewing reception procedures for your clients, tightening up signing in/out procedures for staff/visitors. The following notes are intended to promote consideration and cover some of the more common situations likely to be encountered in Inverclyde Council premises etc. The notes are not comprehensive and managers may need to seek further advice.

Additional guidance and 'tools' are provided in the Appendices of this Policy. This guidance will help to identify appropriate risk control strategies.

#### 7.5.1 Security of Buildings

It is important that the security arrangements for each establishment housing employees are kept under constant review. Whenever possible, external doors should be self-locking rather than requiring the use of keys to lock them at night.

- Ensure that a safe access and egress for the building is maintained at all times.
- Lighting outside the Council buildings should be adequate to allow staff to exit safely at night. Car Parks (where provided) should be well lit.
- Where possible, situations should be avoided where employees are working alone in an isolated office or building which is open to the public. Where it is necessary for such a situation to occur you should ensure that adequate arrangements are made

to minimise risks. If staff work shifts or late into the evening, encourage them to leave together, where this is possible.

- Where employees choose to work late on their own, ensure they are advised of possible risks and that adequate arrangements are in place.
- Further guidance can be obtained by consulting the H.S.E. leaflet - "Working Alone in safety!" (See appendix 3)

### 7.5.2 Reception Areas

The way in which clients and members of the public are received may well have a bearing on how they act. While appreciating the constraints of limited finance and resources the following are some suggestions for creating a more conducive environment. (An audit for reception areas is available on ICON and should be utilised to determine requirements.)

- easy access
- good lighting
- easy access to toilets
- inviting atmosphere
- ensure staff on reception duties are knowledgeable & mature enough to deal with issues
- interesting & informative display boards
- reading material for adults
- where appropriate, play space with children's toys
- remove/replace heavy "missiles" e.g. glass ashtrays

Waiting time should be kept to a minimum. Having to wait a long time reduces the level of tolerance of anyone. Where there is a delay, the reason must be explained to the person waiting and apologies made. Remember that clients expect to be treated in the same way as we would expect and appreciate!

If the person on reception thinks a situation is developing where violence may occur, it should be possible for a senior member of staff to respond quickly to any call for assistance. Any alarm raised must be treated seriously. No one should be made to feel foolish or inadequate if they summon assistance only to find assistance is not required. This must be expected from time to time.

The installation of alarm systems with readily available panic buttons should be considered where they can offer real benefits and where a significant violence risk exists. If such a system is installed it must be ensured that the alarm signal can be heard by those who could render assistance and that all staff are trained to respond on hearing the alarm. There are substantial benefits to be gained from a "violence drill" being organised occasionally as a part of the staff training programme. If screens are in position at reception areas then they should be shatter proof - ideally where screens are considered essential then retractable screens are the favoured option since they do allow better communication with the clients.

Management should ensure, so far as possible, that there are no convenient missiles/weapons to hand, e.g., heavy ashtrays, heavy pictures etc., This may be difficult in some areas such as residential care homes - but management should take responsibility for

raising staff awareness around such dangers. Access from the Reception to work areas or interview rooms should be by controlled access where practical.

It should be standard practice to display a notice in all public areas that indicate staff will not tolerate verbal or physical abuse.

### **7.5.3 Interview Rooms**

In addition to the advice for reception areas the following points should also be considered for interview rooms.

Interview rooms should not be totally isolated. It is advisable to interview potentially violent clients in a room close to where colleagues are working, and to ensure that observations can be made from outside the room e.g., vision panels in the door. See also 7.5.2 above “alarm systems”. If trouble is anticipated then prearranged polite interruptions by other members of staff to check on employees is advisable.

Staff should be instructed, when interviewing clients, that they should be seated between the client and the door, to maintain a clear escape path if required.

The interview room should contain the standard Council notice and if required additional information indicating the conditions where staff will have the right to terminate interviews etc.

### **7.5.4 Visits Away From the Workplace**

It is good management practice to devise a checklist for employees to follow when they work away from Inverclyde Council establishments e.g. Service Users homes. This should help ensure that employees do not forget essential safety systems while rushing to a meeting e.g. informing supervisors where they are going, taking personal alarms or radios with them.

The following points are worth considering:

- If employees have to meet an unknown client for the first time and it is envisaged that there may be some element of risk, instruct staff to try to arrange the initial meeting in the office and ensure other people are nearby. Review current methods to ask if outside visits are essential or desirable.
- If outside visits are essential and you are concerned about employee's safety, then adequate measures must be made to ensure the safety of employees, for example, two people could be sent to the initial meeting.
- Ensure that employees inform their supervisors where they are going and the expected time of return. A system could be arranged, whereby they telephone in at prearranged times, especially if they are working alone or visiting locations considered being high risk. If the employee is detained and anticipates arriving back significantly later, they must be instructed to let their supervisor know. If an employee does not return to the office or fails to call in as arranged, the supervisor must ensure that contact is made with the last listed address to determine if the visit has been made or concluded. If not, they should work back from there in

accordance with the visiting list. Use of a mobile phone tracking systems could also be considered

In appropriate circumstances, the Police should be contacted. Details of the employee's vehicle i.e. make, model, colour and registration number should be readily available to pass to the police.

- If an employee has to visit a client where there is a known history of violence, or where the employee has to visit isolated/vulnerable locations or deal with unpleasant aspects which could cause distress to clients, they should not go alone. It is management's responsibility to ensure that back-up help is available. If it is not feasible to send a second person on every occasion, then alternative provisions should be made to ensure the employee's safety, e.g. Requesting Police accompaniment or the provision of a two-way radio or mobile phone so they can summon assistance if necessary.
- It is important to consider times of the day when there is an increase risk of violence. When meeting a client for the first time, the appointment could take place before public houses open to minimise drink-related attacks. Similarly attacks have occurred to employees working in proximity to public houses after closing time. Being aware of this, management should ensure that no employee is left alone in such vulnerable situations.
- Even if employees do not feel vulnerable, managers may forbid visits, if in their view, the employee is underestimating the risk. It may be useful for managers to develop their own criteria on which to base risk assessment for employees involved in visits away from the workplace.
- It is particularly important that employees check out at the end of the day, and if they are not returning to the office they telephone in to their Supervisor to confirm that all is well. The object being to ensure that Management is satisfied the employee has completed the scheduled calls safely.

### **7.5.5 Night Staff**

Employees who work at night, e.g. Night watchmen, should be advised to exercise extreme care and discretion before investigating disturbances. Notwithstanding this, where employees are operating a security patrol service appropriate working arrangements should be developed whereby they **MUST** call for assistance **BEFORE** attempting to apprehend or give chase. Property must not be regarded as more important than employees.

### **7.5.6 Handling Cash**

Handling cash in even small amounts should involve consideration of the possible risks to staff and appropriate measures should be taken to reduce these risks so far as is reasonably practicable by adopting safe, secure working procedures and appropriate security measures. Procedures should cover security and safety when cash is in transit and at its collection points. The advice of the Health and Safety Section, Finance Services and the local Crime Prevention Officer should be sought as necessary.

Council Departments are required to devise their own written procedures in relation to the handling of cash, and security measures proportional to the risks identified. Information and guidance on this is available on Icon. <http://icon/health-and-safety/hs-topics/security/>

## **7.6 Alerting Other Services**

It is important that where there is a potential for a violent situation either within council establishments or to employees working out with council buildings that other council services are informed about the situation as soon as possible in order that appropriate action can be taken to safeguard employees. For example:

- An abusive member of the public leaves one council office and threatens to go to another to make trouble there.
- Council employees are shot at by air guns when carrying out their work.
- A council employee is attacked in the street while carrying out their work.
- A council vehicle has been attacked.
- Youths are witnessed behaving aggressively in an area.

Following incidents of violence, the responsible manager for each service shall ensure that the violent individual (if known) is subject to a risk assessment. It must be stressed that this runs in tandem with everything stated thus far regarding risk assessments and alerting other Services to potential violent situations. Inverclyde Council are under an obligation to ensure the safety of all employees regardless of which Service they may work for. Colleagues from all Directorates must ensure that the safety of other employees is not compromised.

## **7.7 Post Incident Procedures**

It is important to support a colleague first and foremost following a violent incident.

Later but as soon as possible, the employee should be encouraged to begin the post incident procedures.

Within each service procedures should include:

- Deciding whether or not to involve the Police.
- In most cases of assault and injury the involvement of the Police is a prerequisite of any later eligibility for Criminal Injuries Compensation.
- Completion of the Internal Incident Report Form (Per/SAF/1/A or most current version) or if a service specific form for violence is available completion of that.
- Completion of the RIDDOR Report Form (F2508) where a reportable injury has resulted or where the employee is then absent for more than three days.
- A debriefing - which is essentially different from, and following upon, meetings or conversations aimed primarily at giving support.
- Counselling Service if requested by the employee or occupational health professionals.



## 8 TRAINING

### 8.1 Training

A suitable training programme needs to be based on risk assessment and provided for staff that could be exposed to violent situations. A priority list should be drawn up to ensure those most vulnerable are trained first. Each service will be required to identify a number of violence to staff trainers proportional to the risk of violence identified through risk assessment and the number of employees exposed to this risk. Full training will be given to those employees identified; each service will then implement a training programme to ensure that employees receive violence to staff training as determined via the risk assessment.

The Council recognises that training of managers/team leaders and employees is important to ensure that all employees have the necessary skills to carry out the requirements of this policy. The following training will be made available through the Corporate Training planner or, if identified through the risk assessment process, other specialist training can be made available. All training provided will include information about this Council policy.

- Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression at Work

### 8.2 Information

Inverclyde Council recognises the need to provide staff with relevant information on the risk of violence to employees. Employee awareness will help with the implementation of this policy. Information on Occupational Violence and Aggression at Work will be made available on the Council's Intranet System ICON, via Line Managers and Trade Union Safety Representatives or via Organisational Development, Human Resources and Performance. The information will be updated on a regular basis.

### 8.3 Communication of the Policy

The Council recognises the importance of communicating the policy to all employees. This policy will be communicated to staff via the Corporate Health and Safety Committee, the Council's team briefing system and a copy will be placed on the Council's Intranet system ICON.

## 9 MONITORING, EVALUATION & REVIEW

This reviewed policy was ratified by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September and implemented immediately thereafter.

Regular monitoring and review are necessary to measure the effectiveness of the policy and to ensure it remains relevant to the needs of the Council. This policy will be subject to monitoring and review on a regular basis by the Corporate Health and Safety Section via the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.

The policy will be reviewed 12 months from implementation and every three years thereafter unless there is significant change in legislative requirements or risk assessment



identifies a need for review. Measuring the effectiveness of the policy will include the auditing of compliance with this policy, and monitoring of violent incidents.

## **APPENDIX 1 - DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT**

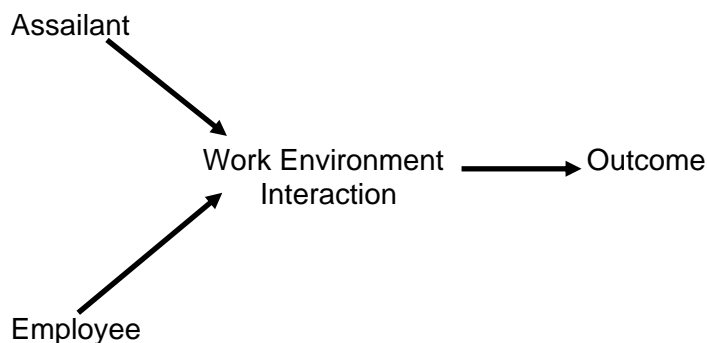
## Conducting a Dynamic Risk Assessment

A Dynamic Risk Assessment generally comprises 3 steps or phases:

1. identifying risks
2. taking action
3. learning and development (individual, team and organisation)

### Step 1. Identifying risks

The first step in any dynamic risk assessment is associated with identifying risk. The model shown below helps understand the risks involved in any potential or actual incident of violence.



Using this model as a basis, you can make more specific risk assessment questions about any incident of violence or aggression, by looking at the:

- individual characteristics of the **assailant** and / or the **employee**
- type of **interaction** that took place between assailant and the employee
- **work environment** (or workplace), this could be an interview room or visiting the person in their own residence.

## Step 2. Taking action

The second step in the Dynamic Risk Assessment process is concerned with **taking action**. A framework is provided below which for guiding actions which can prevent or reduce risk.

	Prevention (Before)	Timely reaction (During)	Rehabilitation (After)
Organisation	Policies and guidelines	Relationships with support organisations	Post – incident counselling
Team (or Service)	Fact finding and Vigilance	Back – up support	Peer support
Individual	Self - awareness	Negotiation	First - aid

This integrated organisational approach reminds us that action against violence and aggression can, and should, be implemented at various levels (individual, team and organisation) and at various times (before, during and after) to ensure continuous learning and development as well as to promote employee wellbeing and safety.

## Step 3. Learning and development (individual, team and organisation)

After considering the potential actions individuals, teams and the council as a whole can take and the control measures that can be applied to specific scenarios, employees can then move on to the third step of a dynamic risk assessment – learning and development.

The process of completing a dynamic risk assessment must facilitate reflective practice, continuous learning and development for individuals, teams, and organisations. It is important that employees are encouraged to share learning so that risks can be mitigated and safer working promoted.

Dynamic Risk Assessment			
Location/Site Details:			
Activity/task (Complete the relevant details of the activity being assessed). (for example: visiting a client in their own residence, I will be working on my own)			
Task Hazards (tick when present) ✓			
Questions about the Working Environment and the Client (The following questions are to assist you in identifying hazards involved in the activity and are intended as a guide only. Change, delete or ignore items that are not relevant to the tasks being carried out)		Control Measures, Notes or Follow-up :	
Are there any factors or issues associated with the client that you need to consider?			
Are there any factors or issues that you or another employee has been involved in with the client in the past?			
Is there anything in the close that could be set on fire whilst you are in the client's house?			
Is adequate, safe parking available?			
Is the area well lit?			
Are there strangers loitering in the close or nearby?			
Will there be other people in the residence during the visit? If so, is this a concern to you?			
Is the client aware of the approximate time of your visit? Are you on time?			
Other:			
Risk Rating - with these controls the risk is: (Circle)		Unacceptable	Further Controls required
Further control measures required List further action needed to adequately control risks			
Assessor(s):			
Date:			

Note:

This Dynamic Risk Assessment form can be part completed pre-visit and then revised on arriving at the client's residence.

### Post visit

In the event that something went wrong during your visit or indeed after any incident involving violence or aggression, you should complete Stage 3 of the dynamic risk assessment process: Learning and development (Individual, team, organisation)

Can you identify any areas for personal, team and/or organisational improvement? Record your suggestions for improvement under these column headings:

Personal improvement	Team improvement	Organisational improvement

You should make time to review your response to this form with:

- your line manager
- your service health and safety advisor
- your team/work colleagues

## **APPENDIX 2 - HOME VISITING RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE**

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

Service		Address being visited	
Visiting Officers name		Contact number	
Officers contact number		Date of visit	

**Part 1. To be completed in the planning stages prior to home visit and thereafter at any time, if necessary (✓the relevant risk category box)**

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



### What actions have you taken to reduce risks?

Actions to be taken	Tick ✓
Visit the service user with a colleague	
Find out more information from other agencies / documentation etc	
Seek advice from others e.g. line manager, safety officer	
Other	

### Part 2. To be completed after the home visit.

#### Were there any unforeseen risks?

**No** (sign form and file in service users notes) **Yes** (tick and comment below)

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

Are any other council services / employees at risk when visiting this service user?	
Have they been informed?	
Signature	
Date	

## **APPENDIX 3 - RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES**

## Risk Reduction

Risk reduction is the process of implementing measures to try and reduce the risk of violence and promote safer working. Risk reduction can operate in three different ways:

1. by reducing actual levels of exposure to violence or reducing levels of associated fear of violence (primary intervention /prevention)
2. by improving the means with which people seek to cope with exposure to violence or aggression (secondary intervention)
3. by reducing the negative consequences of any exposure or perceived fear (tertiary intervention)

The following table illustrates a range of primary, secondary and tertiary risk prevention strategies which are variously targeted at the level of individual, team and organisation in keeping with an integrated organisational approach.

Although 'prevention' is considered best practice for any risk reduction programme, this may not always be feasible or practicable. Inverclyde Council will endeavour to adopt a balanced approach which prioritises risks, and selects first any interventions which directly prevent / address the likely risk factors.

## Risk Reduction strategies

Target level	Type of intervention (Time point)		
	Prevention (Before)	Reaction (During)	Rehabilitation (After)
<b>Organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies, procedures and guidelines</li> <li>• Safety procedures including risk assessment</li> <li>• Job design</li> <li>• Security measures</li> <li>• Staffing and resources</li> <li>• Support from local agencies</li> <li>• Provision of information, instruction and training</li> <li>• Awareness of societal risk factors</li> <li>• Active monitoring</li> <li>• Reporting and recording systems</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship with support organisations</li> <li>• Ensure implementation of policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Follow-up</li> <li>• Counselling</li> <li>• Learning</li> <li>• Reactive monitoring</li> <li>• Investigation</li> <li>• Reviewing</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of alarms / lone worker devices</li> </ul>		
<b>Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency action plan</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Risk management and risk assessment</li> <li>• Vigilance</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Active monitoring</li> <li>• Information, instruction and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective alarms / lone worker devices</li> <li>• Systems and procedures</li> <li>• Remain calm</li> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Debriefing</li> <li>• Learning</li> <li>• Risk assessment review</li> <li>• Reactive monitoring</li> <li>• Reviewing</li> </ul>
<b>Individual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• De-escalation techniques</li> <li>• Appropriate attire</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Social skills</li> <li>• Relaxation</li> <li>• Active monitoring</li> <li>• Empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain calm</li> <li>• Negotiation</li> <li>• Effective alarm, lone worker device</li> <li>• Breakaway skills</li> <li>• Physical restraint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Comfort</li> <li>• First aid</li> <li>• Learning</li> <li>• Debriefing</li> <li>• Confidential counselling</li> <li>• Incident reporting</li> <li>• Reactive monitoring</li> <li>• Reviewing</li> <li>• Sharing</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 4 – WORKING ALONE IN SAFETY

### Controlling the risks of solitary work

INDG 73 (rev) Working Alone in Safety - Controlling the risks of solitary work  
Health and Safety Executive

## **Working Alone in Safety - Controlling the risks of solitary work**

Is it legal to work alone and is it safe? The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is frequently asked these questions. There is no single answer; it will depend on the findings of risk assessment but often the answer will be yes. This leaflet will help anyone who employs or engages lone workers.

The leaflet gives general guidance on working alone. It offers advice on how to comply with duties towards lone workers under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999. Employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and the health and safety of those affected by the work, e.g. visitors, such as contractors and self-employed people who employers may engage. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to people who work alone. It is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risk where necessary. Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

This leaflet may also help self-employed people who work alone themselves or engage lone workers.

### **Who are lone workers and what jobs do they do?**

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. They are found in a wide range of situations; some examples are given below.

#### *People in fixed establishments where:*

- only one person works on the premises, e.g. in small workshops, petrol stations, kiosks, shops and also homeworkers;
- people work separately from others, e.g. in factories, warehouses, some research and
- training establishments, leisure centres or fairgrounds ;
- people work outside normal hours, e.g. cleaners, security, special production, maintenance or repair staff etc.

#### *Mobile workers working away from their fixed base:*

- on construction, plant installation, maintenance and cleaning work, electrical repairs, lift repairs, painting and decorating, vehicle recovery etc;
- agricultural and forestry workers;
- service workers, e.g. rent collectors, postal staff, social workers, home helps, district nurses, pest control workers, drivers, engineers, architects, estate agents, sales representatives and similar professionals visiting domestic and commercial premises.

## **Can people legally work alone? Assessing and controlling the risks**

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the HSW Act and MHSW Regulations still apply. These require identifying hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks. It is important to talk to employees and their safety representatives as they are a valuable source of information and advice. This will help to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls chosen; consultation with employees and their representatives on health and safety matters is a legal duty anyway. Control measures may include instruction, training, supervision, protective equipment etc.

Employers 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 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. Where a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace, that employer should inform the lone worker's employer of any risks and the control measures that should be taken. This helps the lone worker's employer to assess the risks. Risk assessment should help decide the right level of supervision. There are some high-risk activities where at least one other person may need to be present. Examples include some high-risk confined space working where a supervisor may need to be present, as well as someone dedicated to the rescue role, and electrical work at or near exposed live conductors where at least two people are sometimes required.

Employers need to be aware of any specific law on lone working applying in their industry (examples include supervision in diving operations, vehicles carrying explosives, fumigation work). Sources of further information are listed at the end of the leaflet.

If you have five or more employees you must record the significant findings of your risk assessment. Further detail is now given on issues to consider when assessing risks from lone working.

## **Safe working arrangements for lone workers**

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees. Employers need to know the law and standards which apply to their work activities and then assess whether the requirements can be met by people working alone. Lone workers face particular problems. Some of the issues which need special attention when planning safe working arrangements are as follows:

### *Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person?*

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, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Employers 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 women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?

*Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?*

Check that lone workers have no medical conditions which make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary. Consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

*What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters?*

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations. Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and to understand the risks and precautions fully. Employers should set the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone. They should ensure employees are competent to deal with circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training, e.g. when to stop work and seek advice from a supervisor and how to handle aggression.

*How will the person be supervised?*

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, it is still an employer's duty to ensure their health and safety at work. Supervision can help to ensure that employees understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. Supervisors can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty. Supervision of health and safety can often be carried out when checking the progress and quality of the work; it may take the form of periodic site visits combined with discussions in which health and safety issues are raised. The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues. Employees new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job which presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first. The level of supervision required is a management decision which should be based on the findings of risk assessment. The higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. It should not be left to individuals to decide whether they require assistance.

Procedures will need to be put in place to monitor lone workers to see they remain safe.

These may include:

- supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone;
- regular contact between the lone worker and supervision using either a telephone or radio;
- automatic warning devices which operate if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker, e.g. systems for security staff;

- other devices designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency and which are operated manually or automatically by the absence of activity;
- checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.

*What happens if a person becomes ill has an accident, or there is an emergency?*

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. Risk assessment should identify foreseeable events. Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained in them. Information about emergency procedures and danger areas should be given to lone workers who visit your premises. Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.

### **Further information**

HSE leaflet *Violence at work* INDG69 (rev)  
(single copy free or priced packs of 10

HSE Books 1997  
ISBN 0 7176 1271 6)

*Management of health and safety at work.  
Management of Health and Safety at Work  
Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice  
and guidance* L21 (Second edition)

HSE Books 1999  
ISBN 07176 2488 9

HSE leaflet *5 steps to risk assessment*  
INDG163 (rev1)  
single copy free or priced packs of 10

HSE Books 1998  
ISBN 0 7176 1565 0

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**This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.**

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INDG73 (rev) C400 Reprinted 5/02

## **APPENDIX 5 – PHONE RAGE**

## **1. Phone Rage**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Many of our employees deal with service users and others on the telephone. Given the volume of calls received, the chances of being on the receiving end of calls involving verbal abuse can be considerable. Verbal abuse is not always seen as a serious issue but any abuse, particularly over a period of time, and occasionally single incidents, can have serious effects on the health and wellbeing of staff.

Phone rage can happen when a caller abuses or is offensive to the person taking the call; this should not be confused with a client or customer being angry which might be justified in certain circumstances. However, if the call descends into abuse, personal comments or offensive behaviour this is unacceptable and staff should be protected as much as possible.

### **1.2 Consequences of Ignoring Phone Rage at Work.**

The Psychological effect of single or repeated, unreciprocated incidents of verbal abuse can have a devastating effect on the worker.

The 'drip; drip' effect of verbal abuse can wear someone down, both mentally and physically. Also, if everyone else around them seems to be coping, they can feel isolated, stressful, fearful, and anxious, and can easily tip over into depression.

### **1.3 Consequences for the individual:**

- suffering and humiliation which can lead to a lack of motivation
- loss of confidence and reduced self-esteem
- if the situation persists, physical illness and psychological disorders

### **Stress**

Stress can damage physical health, social relationships and the way we function at work and at home. It is important to remember that the following symptoms may have nothing to do with stress but they are often danger signs which should not be ignored;

- physical signs like headaches, indigestion, insomnia, high blood pressure, loss of appetite
- emotional factors such as irritability, lack of concentration, anxiety, depression, loss of confidence, low morale
- behaviour aspects such as poor work performance, accidents, poor relationships at home and work, dependence on tobacco, alcohol and drugs

### **1.4 Consequences at the workplace:**

- sickness absence
- immediate, and often long-term disruption to interpersonal relationships, the organisation of work and the overall working environment, usually leading to deterioration in the quality of service provided
- higher staff turnover
- compensation claims

## **1.5 Training to manage phone rage effectively**

A suitable training programme needs to be based on risk assessment and provided for staff that could be exposed to phone rage situations. A priority list should be drawn up to ensure those most vulnerable are trained first. Full training will be given to those employees identified; each service will then implement a training programme to ensure that employees receive appropriate training as determined via the risk assessment.

Good practice in training staff to address phone rage should normally include three main areas:

1. The physical and mental wellbeing of the call handler
2. The understanding of the emotions and potential state of mind of the caller who may become enraged and how to manage them
3. The differences between justifiable anger and rage

A well rounded training package will address each of these points.

## **2. Top 10 Triggers of Phone Rage**

### **1. Call not being answered**

- The phone is not answered in a reasonable time. The caller is uncertain that they have dialled the right number, but dare not dial again in case they have to go back to the bottom of the queue
- The call is answered and then put into a queuing system. Some callers are annoyed that they have to pay the phone costs when being kept on hold.
- Being put on hold without being kept informed – one minute on hold feels like ten to a caller
- A line that is constantly engaged, with no apparent alternative numbers to try
- No means by which to leave a message

### **2. Dealing with machines, not people**

- The customer feels processed, or the victim of a faceless corporation
- Lengthy menu of options, the caller often ends up where they started
- Voicemails or answer phones

**3. Insincerity**

- Standard greetings and pleasantries which do not sound sincere
- Overuse of names and / or inappropriate use of first names

**4. Being treated impersonally**

- Abrupt, bored or generally unreceptive voices taking the call
- Being made to feel processed e.g. name, number, address, postcode
- Being made to feel guilty or rushed when the caller has called near the end of the working day or just before lunch.
- No use of names or acknowledgement of the caller's long-term relationship with the company

**5. Customer advisor not taking ownership of problem**

- Being passed around, with no one taking responsibility or the initiative to find the right person
- Caller has to repeat their name and reason for calling several times to different people
- Employees blaming each other as if they are not part of the same organisation
- Dealing with different people every time they call

**6. Not being kept informed**

- Being put on hold or kept on hold without being told what's happening
- No transfer phase when the caller is being put through to someone else, instead of 'I'm transferring you to ...or 'Angie's line is ringing for you now' – all the customer hears is a click then silence so they assume they have been cut off.
- Some customers find music annoying when on hold.

**7. Promises not being met**

- Calls not returned when promised

**8. Lack of authority**

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

**9. Denied access to member of staff**

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

**10. Rudeness of staff**

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

## **APPENDIX 6 – DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES**



### **De-escalation Techniques – Hints and Tips**

The effective handling of aggressive people is one of the most demanding aspects of working in an establishment. It is an area where good interaction and communication skills are required. Many situations, where there is a potential for violence, can be handled through communication.

Violent incidents can occur quickly if things are not handled correctly. Learning how to avoid these types of confrontations is an important part of some employees' day to day work. Knowing a few simple de-escalation techniques can help turn a bad situation around to your advantage.

#### **Remain Calm; think about your own words, tone and body language and the environment you are in:**

- Try not to become angry, agitated or exited. This is not always an easy thing to do when you are confronted with an angry person. Recognise that you may feel anxious – use keep calm strategies, for example controlled breathing to allow you to act and speak more confidently. This can help the situation to feel less out of control to both you and the aggressor.
- Take time to think about what you are going to say and say it slowly, clearly and calmly.
- Maintain your self control. Do not take the bait and be pulled into a conflict. If you take the bait, who has won?
- Offer a gift, for example a glass of water or use of the phone
- Show empathy and actively listen. Empathy is about seeing the other person's point of view, even if you don't agree with it.
- Adopt a non-threatening body posture, use a calm, open posture (sitting or standing)
- Remember that personal space should be maintained – keep a safe distance.
- Ensure that any requests or instructions are made in a clear manner and that the aggressor knows what is acceptable and unacceptable.
- Apologising - an excellent de-escalation skill! ...Not for an imaginary wrong, but a sincere apology for anything in the situation that was unjust; a simple acknowledgment that something occurred wasn't right or fair. It is possible to apologise without accepting blame. Apologizing can have the effect of letting angry people know that the listener is empathetic for what they are going through, and they may cease to direct their anger toward the person attempting to help.
- State your position about their unacceptable behaviour and give consequences, for example that you want the person to stop shouting. If he / she does stop shouting you will try your best to help – if they don't then you will not continue the conversation. Remember to carry out the stated consequence based on their chosen action.

- Remain aware at all times (remember Dynamic risk assessment) are there any potential weapons available to the aggressor.
- Have a plan before one is needed. Think about options of what you could do before such a circumstance occurs. Decisions made before a crisis occurs are likely to be more effective/rational than those thought of “on the fly”.
- Move toward a ‘safer place’ (i.e. avoid being trapped in a corner)
- Maintain an exit strategy (I have to retrieve something from my car, or I will have to speak to my supervisor about that). Ensure that you are nearest to the door / escape route.
- Do not stay longer than is safe – continually assess your situation and your capabilities – GET OUT and stay out if necessary

**Respect:**

- Be respectful. Listen to what the person is saying and try to understand their point of view (even though you do not agree with it) and why they feel aggrieved. Be empathetic to their situation.
- Remain quiet as the person explains their viewpoint, look them in the eye with a neutral expression and nod your head to their points and sometimes give encouragers, such as “Go on,” “Uh huh” or “Yes”. When a person is attempting to get attention with their anger, sometimes all you need to do is listen until their anger is spent.
- Encourage the person to talk – don’t trivialise their issues or feelings

**Think about the aggressor:**

- Be aware that aggression can be a sign of worry, nervousness, frustration etc
- Reassure the person. Focus your attention on them.
- Do they appear to be under the influence of drink or drugs?
- Do not allow the aggressor to ‘play to an audience’. If possible move away from unhelpful onlookers.
- Be careful to allow the aggressor plenty of space – adrenalin can make the aggressor perceive you as being closer, and therefore more threatening.
- Consider what you know about the person – are they inclined to this sort of outburst? What has helped before?
- Read the aggressor’s words, tones and body language – can you pick up indicators of triggering or escalating aggression?

De-escalation is a very difficult and humbling skill. You cannot be unsure of your own pride or self-esteem. You must be able to control your own anger. You must be able to see the bigger picture. You must be willing to practice what you've learned.

**High Risk Conflict:**

This is where despite your best efforts to resolve the situation; it is escalating to a point where you may be in danger of a physical assault.

REMOVE YOURSELF FROM THE SITUATION AS SOON AS IS POSSIBLE

## **APPENDIX 7 – SAFETY ADVICE WHEN OUT AND ABOUT**

## **Safety Advice When Out and About**

It is good management practice to devise a checklist for staff to follow when they work away from Inverclyde Council establishments e.g. client's homes. This should help ensure that staff do not forget essential safety systems while rushing to a meeting e.g. informing supervisors where they are going, taking personal alarms or radios with them. (Further information on this subject can be found in part 7.5.4 and Appendix 3 of this policy)

All journeys will be safer and more enjoyable with careful planning – remove uncertainty and you remove the stress. Be prepared and plan ahead.

Prepare for the journey, wear sensible clothing, know the route, tell someone where you are going and when you are due back. Try to look confident – radiate non-vulnerability, be aware of what is going on around you, limit the use of mobile phones and iPods', think about carrying a personal alarm. If you change your plans – let someone know.

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

### **Walking**

- Where practicable try to walk facing oncoming traffic. If a car follows you, turn around and walk the other way – you can turn much faster than a car
- Wear sensible shoes
- Try to keep to well-lit or busy streets.
- Avoid short cuts such as alleyways and deserted areas.
- If walking in an unknown area, download a map, then write main streets in big bold letters on for example something like an old greetings card, you can walk with this in your hand and look at it without appearing to be lost.

### **If you think someone is following you:**

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

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

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

**Beware** of someone who warns you of the danger of walking alone ‘in this area’ and then offering to walk with you or offers to give you a lift – especially if you are cold, wet, tired with sore feet and low defences.

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

### **Using public transport**

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

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

**Be discreet in conversation** with others – don’t give out personal details; you don’t know who might be listening

### **Car Wise**

Again – plan ahead. Make sure your car is regularly maintained and in good working order. You should also join a breakdown scheme such as the AA or RAC

- Can you change a tyre, top up oil and water?
- Ensure you have plenty fuel for the journey
- Carry a basic safety kit, a pen, paper and disposable camera (useful for recording details of an accident) Consider food and water
- Bad weather kit – de-icer, wellington boots, spade, extra warm clothes
- Plan your journey, in car route system, map.

- Allow plenty of time – rushing means you are stressed and not able to make rational decisions. If you are running late, pull over and phone to let someone know. This takes the heat off and will let you drive more safely
- Keep valuables out of site. Don't open windows wide and consider locking doors – especially in urban areas and essentially at traffic lights. Lock the car even when you are paying for petrol
- Reverse into parking bays to make it easier to drive off without delay
- If you are parking in daylight hours, consider the area – will it be safe to come back later when it's dark
- Multi-storey car parks – park as near to exit or doors as possible. Failing that, park near ticket machines – they usually have a 'Call for help button' on them
- If you break down on a motorway police advice is to get out of car and call for help on your mobile or on emergency telephone