

Violence in the Workplace: Employee Factsheet

What is workplace violence?

The HSE define workplace violence as:

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

Examples of this include:

- name calling and other verbal abuse
- staring at a person in a menacing manner
- shouting at a person in an intimidating fashion
- verbally threatening to injure/kill a person (or their friends and family)
- physically jostling, pinching, scratching, punching or kicking a person
- an attack with a weapon, eg a knife or other instrument that could be used as a weapon
- threatening a person with demotion or dismissal if they do not achieve a certain target, when they have no realistic chance to do so.

Identify the risk:

- do you have face-to-face contact with customers?
- do you deal with customer complaints or disputes?
- do you handle large amounts of cash?
- is the organisation open in the evening, or late at night?
- are you a lone worker or with small numbers of staff?
- do you sell high-value goods, including medicines, expensive merchandise or alcohol/tobacco?
- do you sell age-restricted goods, and may have to refuse to serve customers who are under age or without ID?
- is the organisation located in a high-crime area with previous experience of robbery, assaults or threats?

Did you know?

Fact 1

The British Crime Survey 2011/12 reported approximately 324,000 physical assaults and 319,000 cases of threatened violence on British workers.

Fact 2

In over 30% of the incidents of physical violence to a British worker, the victim believed the offender to be under the influence of alcohol.

Fact 3

Workers in protective service occupations (such as police officers) faced the highest risk of assaults while working, at 7.3 per cent – 10 times the average risk.

Controlling risk:

- recognise the early signs of aggression, and either avoid, or cope with it
- be clear about which steps to take and, if not, raise your concerns with your management
- identify clients with a history of violence or anticipate factors which might aggravate them and create the risk of violence
- give regular information about delays to customers
- keep the public out of staff areas
- reduce the amount of cash handled in front of customers
- bank money frequently and vary the route taken to reduce the risk of Robbery
- check the credentials of clients and the place and arrangements for any Meetings
- be accompanied if having to meet a suspected aggressor at their home, or at a remote location
- avoid lone working situations or ensure you adopt appropriate procedures to give the necessary protection for yourself and colleagues.

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