

Peterborough City Council's

Violence at Work Policy Statement

In an organisation as large and diverse as Peterborough City Council, employees may be exposed to potentially violent and threatening situations in the normal course of their duties. Employees are not expected to accept violence as part of their normal work activities.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires Peterborough City Council to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees whilst at work and this extends to taking all reasonable action to eliminate or minimise violence to staff. Within the same legal framework, employees have a legal duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others and to cooperate with their employer to ensure legal compliance.

Peterborough City Council will therefore:

- Make it widely and explicitly known that it will not accept or tolerate violent or threatening behaviour towards its staff or anyone else acting on its behalf;
- Take appropriate preventative action to minimise potential risks, through environmental design, work procedures, risk assessments, instructions, information and training;
- Take effective and appropriate steps to deal with violent incidents by investigating all reported incidents, reviewing the service provided to the assailant and taking all further appropriate legal action that is possible;
- Be fully supportive to staff who experience violence at work;
- Work in partnership with the Police and other agencies to identify assailants and take steps to distribute information relating to those persons in order to prevent or discourage repeat violent offences.

This policy statement is supplemented by written guidance for both managers and employees, in addition to existing procedures and information, risk assessments, instruction and training.

Management will work with Trade Union health and safety representatives to develop this policy and guidance.

Chief Executive

Date:

Peterborough City Council

Violence at Work to Employees: Manager's Guide

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1 Introduction

This guidance has been produced under Peterborough City Council's (PCC) Health and Safety Policy. This document should be read in conjunction with the council's Violence at Work Policy.

This document aims to provide PCC managers with information and guidance to ensure the development of safe systems of work relevant to departmental activities surrounding lone working and incidents of violence at work.

Where policies, additional guidance or changes to systems of work have an impact on health safety and welfare, there must be full consultation with Trade Union Safety Representatives via the Directorship Safety Committee which will be an ongoing process.

If there are any queries please do not hesitate to contact healthandsafety@peterborough.gov.uk or by telephone (01733) 453526, 453529 or 453520.

2 Definition of Violence at Work

PCC has adopted the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) definition of violence at work, which is:

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

For example:

- Physical violence upon the employee, whether causing injury or not;
- Threat of violence to an employee;
- Verbal abuse to an employee;
- Threat of violence in writing addressed to or about a named employee;
- Offensive gestures and/ or foul and abusive language whether by personal confrontation, via the telephone or other communications, e.g. email, social media sites; and
- Criminal damage to personal and/ or PCC property and/ or equipment.

This list is not prescriptive nor exhaustive and other types of behaviour which are of a comparable nature may also amount to abuse or threatening behaviour.

Remember - people have different perceptions about behaviour they find threatening or offensive. It is therefore important that we all treat each reported incident seriously.

3 Health & Safety Law

Whilst there is no specific health and safety legislation dealing directly with managing violence at work, there is a legal framework which requires managers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff whilst at work i.e. taking all reasonable actions to eliminate or minimise violence at work.

Within the same legal framework, employees have a legal duty to take reasonable care not to endanger themselves or anyone who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

There are five areas of health and safety law, which are relevant to violence at work; these are:

- **The Health and Safety at Work etc Act** - PCC has a legal duty under this act to ensure, so far as it is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.
- **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations** - PCC has a legal duty to assess the risks to employees and must make arrangements for the effective management of health and safety through adequate:
 - Planning;
 - Organisation;
 - Control measures;
 - Monitoring and review of above.

Risk assessments should, where appropriate, include control of the risk of employees' exposure to reasonably foreseeable violence at work.

- **The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)** - PCC must inform the Health and Safety Executive of any accident at work to any PCC employee resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for work for over three days. This includes any violence at work incidents. The Internal Health and Safety Team will always submit such RIDDOR reports on all PCC employees' behalf (see section 10).
- **Safety Representatives and Safety Committees and Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations** - PCC must consult with its employees in reasonable time on matters that may substantially affect their health and safety, under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations. One of the roles of Union Safety Representatives is to investigate incidents reportable under RIDDOR, where the interests of employees they represent are involved.

4 Managers Responsibility

Below are some key points to assist you as managers to control, eliminate and minimise the impact of violence at work against your staff:

- Ensure that risk assessments covering violence at work and lone working are undertaken;
- Regularly review these risk assessments and safe working practices, as a minimum this should be undertaken annually;

- Provide staff with information on the findings of the risk assessments and safe working practices;
- Ensure employees receive suitable training on prevention and dealing with violence at work where a need is identified (see section 6);
- Ensure you as managers are familiar with PCC incident reporting procedures for violence at work (see section 8 and the council's Health and Safety Policy);
- Ensure your staff are aware of incident reporting procedures;
- Ensure all violence at work incidents are reported via the Prime Reporting system located on Insite;
- Ensure that all physical violence incidents are reported to the Police;
- Ensure that staff who have experienced violence at work receive ongoing support with access to appropriate counselling where required or requested;
- Ensure violence at work incidents are investigated and take appropriate action to minimise recurrence – e.g. review risk assessments; and
- Offer support to all staff and provide reasonable assistance in any actions that they may wish to take.

5 Risk Assessments

As mentioned above, managers have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees under their control. Managers must ensure risk assessments are carried out and identify potentially violent situations or persons and take any reasonable actions required to reduce or control the level of risk to their employees.

Further information on how to carry out a risk assessment can be found on Insite in the Managers Health and Safety Toolkit or in the PCC's Risk Assessment Manual. For further information or advice please contact healthandsafety@peterborough.gov.uk.

6 Health and Safety Training

If violence at work has been identified as a risk to an employee during their working activities then suitable and sufficient training should be provided to them to undertake their responsibilities safely.

You should ensure that any training supplied should cover the risks identified in the management risk assessment, such as spotting signs of aggression, helping to dissolve violent situations, how to get out of a potentially dangerous situation etc.

In addition you should ensure all employees are familiar with the Violence at Work Policy, its associated guidance and the council's Incident Reporting Procedure.

Information on all health and safety policies and associated guidance can be found on the Health and Safety pages on Insite, listed under the Information Library.

If you require help and advice on sourcing training in regard to the prevention of violence etc please contact Internal Health and Safety and/or Training and Development for advice.

7 Room Booking Procedure

When inviting members of the public who are potential assailants into the authority for meetings etc, be sure to select an appropriate meeting room. You may decide to select a room with a panic alarm, CCTV coverage, or one with a viewing panel, so you can be easily seen by other council employees. You should openly encourage all employees whom you are responsible to suitably assess the appropriateness of interview rooms before confirming any appointment with a potentially violent individual.

The room bookings procedure can be found at the following link:

<http://insite/sites/bookings/facilities/default.aspx>

8 Reporting Incidents

Managers must ensure that systems and procedures are in place, for the reporting of all violent incidents within their area of responsibility and be proactive in encouraging employees to report all violence at work incidents to their manager.

All incidents should be reported using the council's on line reporting system Prime. This is easily accessible to employees by two means:

- Via Insite - The link to Prime is listed under the Services menu on the right hand side of the homepage, entitled Accident and Incident Reporting.
- Via the internet - If employees are working away from the office, or from another location, as long as there is an internet connection an incident can be reported. Simply open the internet browser and type www.primesafety.net/pccanon.

Managers have also been provided with unique usernames and passwords to enable you to access Prime for the purposes of editing, review and investigation of any incidents reported by your employees. If you are a manager and have not got access to the manager's area of Prime please contact the Internal Health and Safety Team to create an account.

9 The Violence at Work Register

The Internal Health and Safety team receives violence at work incident reports via the Prime system. Where further investigation and/ or recommendations are considered necessary, this will be carried out by the relevant manager with support from Internal Health and Safety.

Each incident reported is reviewed on a case by case basis, and through consultation with the affected employee/s and their manager/s, a decision will be made as to whether a person should be included on the violence at work register.

What information goes on the violence at work register?

Information held includes the alleged assailants name, address and details of the incident, excluding names of affected persons. It will also detail any police advice, crime reference numbers or PCC premises exclusions in place.

How to I access the register?

The Violence at Work Register is accessible to all PCC employees. It currently has its own dedicated page on Insite, which can be viewed by following this link

<http://insite/Information%20Library2/InfoLibraryPages/CategoryDetails.aspx?CatID=472>

Why is the register useful?

The register enables employees and their managers to suitably assess whether they are at risk during their working activities. For example, if a member of public is invited into the authority for an interview, the employee and manager can review the register beforehand to see if that person has an inclusion on the register. If an inclusion exists, together they can form a decision as to whether that person is interviewed at a specific safe location, e.g. a room with a panic alarm, interviewed in pairs, or not invited into the premises at all etc.

Where do I go if I have a question about the register?

All enquiries in regard to inclusions on the Violence at Work Register should be directed to the Internal Health and Safety Team.

10 Enforcing Authorities

It is the responsibility of Internal Health and Safety to report the more serious employee incidents, known as 'RIDDOR' incidents, to the HSE. Internal Health and Safety will liaise with the relevant line manager regarding a post incident investigation.

The following types of incident must be reported to the Police:

- Any physical violence at work to PCC employees;
- Any face to face incident where an attack is threatened and there is an ability to carry out the threat at that time; and
- Any separate more serious offence of making a threat to harm a PCC employee, or their family etc, or to damage property where the potential assailant does not need to be in a position to carry out the threat immediately.

Where any or all of the above occurs, the manager must ensure that the Police are notified of the incident as a matter of urgency.

However, please be advised that the Police will not investigate the violence at work incident unless they are requested to do so by the PCC employee (i.e. victim of violence at work).

11 Post Incident Support

It is important for the line manager to support any employee involved in an incident involving violence. An employee who suffers a violent incident at work must be treated sympathetically and their immediate needs attended to.

The post incident procedures carried out by your manager should:

- Determine whether or not to involve the Police;
- Include the completion of an incident report via Prime; and
- Formulate an action plan and arrange a debriefing meeting to review the effectiveness of the action plan and procedures.

Counselling, support and compensation

Occupational Health: If requested, or deemed necessary by the manager, you should refer the employee to the Occupational Health team for post incident support, possibly including counselling.

Victim Support: Victim Support is a national Charity for people affected by crime. Their volunteers are specially trained to give information, practical help and emotional support to help people find their strength after a crime. The help they give is confidential, free and available to everyone.

You can reach Victim Support on 0845 45 65 995. Their offices are open 08.00 – 20.00 Monday to Friday and 10.00 – 14.00 Saturday and Sunday. This information has been sourced from The Victim Care Manager (East of England), Janet Lunn. You can reach Janet via email at janet.lunn@victimsupport.org.uk or visit their website www.victimsupport.org.uk.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (C.I.C.A): This is a non departmental body of the Ministry of Justice which is set up to compensate blameless victims of violent crime. As this is a public body the service they provide is free of charge and available to any person, citizen of the United Kingdom or not, who has been injured as a result of a violent crime within the United Kingdom. Below is list of criteria that needs to be met in order to apply to C.I.C.A.

- The incident has to have been reported to the police (or other authority where appropriate) as soon as possible after the incident has taken place. Generally cases that have been reported after a 24 hour time period will raise queries as to why it took so long and if the delay hindered the investigation of the police to prosecute.
- The person applying must have had medical attention for their injuries.
- The application must be made to the C.I.C.A within two years of the incident having taken place and having been reported, although in some circumstances this time limit can be waived (historical abuse, applicants under 18 at the time of the incident up until the age of 20, medically verifiable reasons for being incapable of applying)
- The incident must have taken place within the United Kingdom.
- The applicant must help the police in any way requested to help bring the perpetrator to justice.
- The applicant must have been the innocent victim of this crime

For a more detailed look at the eligibility please see the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 2008 which can be found on our website <http://www.cica.gov.uk/en-gb/Can-I-apply/>

There are three ways in which a person can apply for compensation, the first is via C.I.C.A's online application process (<http://www.cica.gov.uk/Apply-online/>), you as a manager and working in a supporting capacity would most likely find this to be the easiest way to apply. Firstly you would need to create an account; it is advisable to just use a couple of accounts to prevent the loss of log in details. Once this is done you may submit as many applications as required through this portal and with those login details.

The application itself is fairly simple, you require the:

- crime reference number
- date of incident and
- date of reporting,
- the Injured persons personal details,
- the address and postcode of the police station it was reported too
- the addresses of the medical practices the applicant has attended in relation to there injuries and dates of attendance (GP contact details are mandatory regardless of if they attended or not)

The process is the same for the telephone applications; however the paper applications are slightly different and can be viewed on their website.

C.I.C.A's investigations can take some time to complete, so before applying ensure you read all of the information concerning the investigation process on C.I.C.A's website <http://www.cica.gov.uk>.

12 Information Sharing

It is essential that managers make employees aware of potentially violent situations, and also be conscious of other people, such as colleagues, services and partners that may have contact or involvement with a potentially violent member of the public. This information will be available to employees through the Neighbourhood Window, so that preventative measures can be put into place.

The Neighbourhood Window will show on a geographical map where potential volatile members of the public are reported and discretion must be used regarding the sharing of this information. However, the Neighbourhood Window will not be available to all staff so it is also essential that records e.g. on paper or computerised records should contain information to act as an alert to staff that there is a risk of violence at work.

It is difficult to be prescriptive in this area to the extent of information that should be provided, and this will be dependant on individual circumstances. However, the important issue is that relevant

information should be passed on to employees, both within PCC and externally, where there may be a risk to their safety.

Critical information such as particular triggers, previous behavioural patterns and relevant background information should be provided to avoid other PCC employees being placed in a violent situation at work.

Due to the importance of sharing this information with other PCC employees, services and partners an Information Sharing Agreement has been created to aid the transferral of this information. This agreement has been signed by the partners and is published on Insite for referral.

(Insite Link for the Neighbourhood Window to be inserted here when available)

13 The Data Protection Act

The following information has been sourced from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The Data Protection Act – Section 29(3) re: Sharing of Information – Prevention of Crime. Data Protection Good Practice Note - The use of violent warning markers

Violent warning markers are a means of identifying and recording individuals who pose, or could possibly pose, a risk to the members of staff who come into contact with them. We understand that, in practice, a flagged piece of text is attached to an individual's file. These markers should be used very carefully and should contain the reasons for identifying individuals as being potentially violent. These markers are likely to record information relating to:

- the apparent mental stability of an individual; or
- any threatening actions, incidents or behaviour they have or are alleged to have committed.

This means personal data, and often sensitive personal data, will be included in a violent or potentially violent warning marker and so must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 (the Act).

Compliance with the Act – fairness

The first data protection principle requires that the processing must be fair and lawful. This means that a decision to put a marker on an individual's file must be based on a specific incident or expression of clearly identifiable concern by professional, rather than general opinions about that individual.

The individual should pose a genuine risk and the decision should be based on objective and clearly defined criteria and in line with a clear and established policy and review procedure. The criteria should take into account the need to accurately record any incident.

For consistency, you should make sure your Head of Service or Director is responsible for making these decisions. Decisions should be reviewed regularly. When making a decision this person should take into account:

- the nature of the threat
- the degree of violence used or threatened, and
- whether or not the incident indicates a credible risk of violence to staff

For the processing to be fair, you should normally inform individuals who have been identified as being potentially violent soon after you make the decision to add a marker to their record. It should be part of your procedure to write to the individual setting out why their behaviour was unacceptable and how this has led to the marker. You should tell them:

- the nature of the threat or incident that led to the marker
- that their records will show the marker
- who you may pass this information to, and
- when you will remove the marker or review the decision to add the marker

There may be extreme cases where you believe that informing the individual would in itself create a substantial risk of a violent reaction from them. For example, because of the nature of the incident or the risk to another individual. In these cases it may not be sensible to inform the individual as described earlier. If this is the case, you must be able to show why you believe that by informing the individual of the marker there would be a substantial risk of further threatening behaviour. You should make all decisions on a case-by-case basis and keep records.

Compliance with the Act - processing conditions

The Act states that you should not process personal data unless you can meet one of the conditions in schedule 2 of the Act, and for sensitive personal data, one of the conditions in schedule 3. As employers have a duty of care towards their staff, for example, under health and safety legislation, the appropriate schedule 2 condition to allow processing of information in markers is that processing is necessary to comply with any legal obligation imposed on the data controller (which in this case would be the employer). The appropriate schedule 3 condition is that processing is necessary to comply with any legal obligation imposed on the data controller in connection with employment.

The individual's rights

The Act gives individuals the right to make a subject access request. In most circumstances, you should reveal the fact that there is a violent warning marker on the individual's record. Although in most cases you should already have informed the individual. However, you should make this decision on a case-by-case basis and consider any other individuals (third parties) that may be included in the information. For more information about this, please see our (ICO) guidance 'Subject access requests involving other people's information'.

There may be rare cases where you will need to consider whether the following points may actually cause serious harm to the physical or mental health or condition of that individual:

- revealing the existence of the marker
- revealing the information in the marker, or
- what the individual may infer from the existence of the marker

In these cases, you must get specialist advice from Internal Health and Safety and the council's Information Officer in respect to data protection. For some of these cases there may be relevant statutory instruments that modify the provisions in the Act that relate to the individual's rights.

Requests from individuals to stop processing their personal information

Section 10 of the Act gives individuals the right to require you to stop processing their personal information if this is likely to cause them substantial and unwarranted damage or distress. If an individual gives you a section 10 notice relating to a violent warning marker then you should be aware that you may ultimately have to justify creating the marker in court.

Passing the information to other organisations

From a legal point of view, the appropriate schedule 3 condition for processing mentioned earlier will not cover disclosing the marker information to other organisations, as the condition relates to a legal obligation on the employer for their own staff, not other organisations' staff. However, where there is a good reason for providing the information to another organisation, for example, to alert them to the potential risk to their staff, this will be justified even though no Schedule 3 condition obviously applies. In these cases, our focus is on whether the processing is justified and not unfair.

The senior nominated person in the organisation should determine this on a case-by-case basis where there is a credible risk that an unlawful act, such as an assault, will occur. They should only provide the information to an individual of a similar level in the other organisation.

If you pass the information on to another organisation, you should inform the individual, unless that would be a serious risk to the person or another individual as described earlier. If you review the marker and decide to change or remove it, you should then inform the other organisations you previously sent the information to.

Retention

The fifth data protection principle states that personal information should not be kept longer than necessary. You must make sure violent warning markers are removed when there is no longer a threat. This should be part of the standard review procedure. The retention period is likely to depend in part on:

- the original level or threat of violence
- how long ago this was
- the previous and subsequent behaviour of the individual

For more information please refer to ICO's guidance, from which this text has been sourced.

14 Further Reading

- Violence at Work – Employees Guide (PCC).
- Violence at Work (A guide for employers) (IND (G) 69 L (Available on Insite-Health and Safety)
- Preventing Violence to Staff (ISBN 0 11 8854674 – (HSE Books)
- ENTO Occupational Standards for the Management of Work Related Violence - <http://insite/sites/intranet/InformationLibrary/Files/ENTO%20Management%20of%20Violence%20Standards.pdf>

Violence at Work: Employees Guide

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1. Introduction

This document is a supplementary guide, developed in conjunction with the council's Violence at Work Policy.

This guidance has been produced to assist Peterborough City Council employees whose job involves working in environments or situations where violent behaviour may be encountered. Its aim is to provide practical and useful information for the prevention and handling of violence at work.

If there are any queries please do not hesitate to contact your manager or the Internal Health and Safety Team at healthandsafety@peterborough.gov.uk or by telephone (01733) 453526, 453529 or 453520.

2. Health and Safety Law

There are a number of pieces of health and safety legislation that cover violence at work. These include the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

If you wish to know more about these in relation to violence at work please speak to your manager and/or the Internal Health and Safety Team.

3. Employee Responsibilities

Below are some key points that cover your responsibilities with regard to violence at work:

- Ensure that you have read and understood any risk assessments covering violence at work;
- Ensure you have been provided with information on the findings of the risk assessments and safe working practices;
- Ensure you undertake any identified training provided for PCC employees re preventing and dealing with violence at work
- Ensure you are familiar with the council's incident reporting procedure for violence at work (see sections 6);
- Ensure you report all violence at work incidents via the Prime Reporting software located on Insite (see section 7); and
- Ensure that all incidents of physical violence are reported to the Police

4. Definition of Violence at Work

PCC has adopted the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) definition of violence at work, which is:

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

For example:

- Physical violence upon the employee, whether causing injury or not;
- Threat of violence to an employee;
- Verbal abuse to an employee;
- Threat of violence in writing addressed to or about a named employee;
- Offensive gestures and/or foul and abusive language whether by personal confrontation, via the telephone or other communications, e.g. email; and social media sites; and
- Criminal damage to personal and/or PCC property and/or equipment.

This list is not prescriptive nor exhaustive and other types of behaviour which are of a comparable nature may also amount to abuse or threatening behaviour.

Remember - people have different perceptions about behaviour they find threatening or offensive. It is therefore important that we all treat each reported incident seriously.

5. The Forms of Violence at Work

Most people accept that physical force against an individual is an example of violence, but violence can take many other forms, including verbal abuse and threats of violence. It can also be expressed in a number of forms which include verbal communication, either in person or via the telephone and through written correspondence such as letters, emails, social media sites and faxes.

If you experience a verbal assault or threat of violence by any of these means you should report it like any other violence at work incident. Violence at work is not tolerated in any form.

6. Procedures after an Incident of Violence

If you experience violence at work you should do the following:

- Report the incident to your manager as soon as possible;
- Complete an online incident report form via the council's online reporting system Prime; and
- In the event of physical violence the Police must also be notified.

As well as reporting the incident, it is just as important for you to feel supported following an assault. Forms of support you receive could include:

- Immediate comfort from a peer or manager;
- A routine and sympathetic debriefing when appropriate by your manager or a nominated person;
- A possible referral or access to, specialist help and support e.g. Occupational Health, counselling etc; and
- Any feedback on any follow-up actions, e.g. liaison with the police.

For further information on the types of post-incident support available to you please speak to your manager and/or Internal Health and Safety for advice.

7. Incident Reporting

It is essential that all incidents of work related violence are reported to the Internal Health and Safety Team. Refer to the paragraphs below for more information on the council's reporting procedure.

How do I report an incident?

All incidents should be reported using the council's online reporting system Prime. This is easily accessible to employees by two means:

- Via Insite - The link to Prime is listed under the Services menu on the right hand side of the Insite homepage, entitled 'Accident and Incident Reporting';
- Via the internet - If employees are working away from the office, or from another location, as long as there is an internet connection an incident can be reported. Simply open the internet browser and type www.primesafety.net/pccanon.

For the purposes of editing, reviewing and investigating any incidents reported by their employees, managers have also been provided with unique usernames and passwords to enable them to access Prime. When reporting on Prime ensure you select your managers name where prompted. If your manager's name does not appear on the list provided, simply select 'not in list' and someone from Internal Health and Safety will contact you for more information.

Once you have followed the Prime link you will need to select one of the available forms.

What should be reported on what form?

Acts of physical violence towards employees should be reported using an Employee Accident Form, as a physical injury should exist.

Incidents such as verbal abuse or a threat of violence, criminal damage or damage to council property are all incidents not involving an injury. As such they should be reported using the Incident not Involving Injury Form.

What happens to my report?

Once you submit your form, all reports go direct to the Internal Health and Safety Team for review. Incidents involving damage to property will also be sent to Strategic Property. In addition if you select a manager from the drop down list when prompted, they will also be sent an email summary of your report for their information or action.

Once your form has been reviewed by Internal Health and Safety, your report will either be kept for information, initiate a further investigation performed with your manager or will be included in the council's Violence at Work Register.

Internal Health and Safety receives violence at work incident reports via the Prime system. Where further investigation and/or recommendations are considered necessary, this will be carried out by the relevant manager with support from Internal Health and Safety.

Please be advised that if an inclusion on the council's Violence at Work Register is determined as necessary, for the protection of other employees, you will always be consulted before any alleged assailant is included.

8. The Violence at Work Register

What information goes on the register?

The Internal Health and Safety Team reviews every incident report submitted via Prime. Each incident is reviewed on a case by case basis, and through consultation with the affected employee/s and their manager/s, will decide whether a person should be included on the violence at work register.

Information held includes the alleged assailants name, address and details of the incident, excluding names of affected persons. It will also detail any Police advice, crime reference numbers or PCC premises exclusions in place.

How do I access the register?

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<http://insite/Information%20Library2/InfoLibraryPages/CategoryDetails.aspx?CatID=472>

Where do I go if I have a question about the register?

All enquiries in regard to inclusions on the Violence at Work Register should be directed to the Internal Health and Safety Team.

9. Post Incident Support

It is important for your manager to support you if you become involved in any incident involving violence at work.

The post incident procedures carried out by your manager should:

- Determine whether or not to involve the Police;
- Include the completion of an incident report via Prime; and
- Formulate an action plan and arrange a debriefing meeting to review the effectiveness of the action plan and procedures.

There are a number of options available to you in regard to counselling, support and compensation:

- **Occupational Health:** Employees can be referred by their manager to the Occupational Health team for post incident support, possibly including counselling.
- **Victim Support:** Victim Support is a national Charity for people affected by crime. Their volunteers are specially trained to give information, practical help and emotional support to help people find their strength after a crime. The help they give is confidential, free and available to everyone.

You can reach Victim Support on 0845 45 65 995. Their offices are open 08.00 – 20.00 Monday to Friday and 10.00 – 14.00 Saturday and Sunday. This information has been sourced from The Victim Care Manager (East of England), Janet Lunn. You can reach Janet via email at janet.lunn@victimsupport.org.uk or visit their website www.victimsupport.org.uk.

- **The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (C.I.C.A):** This is a non departmental body of the Ministry of Justice which is set up to compensate blameless victims of violent crime. As this is a public body the service they provide is free of charge and available to any

person, citizen of the United Kingdom or not, who has been injured as a result of a violent crime within the United Kingdom. Please speak to your manager if you wish to explore C.I.C.A further.

10. Recognising the Potential for Violence

The most effective way of dealing with violence at work is prevention. You can do this by watching out for changes in a client's behaviour including:

- Increased agitation
- Tone of voice
- Unusual calmness
- Tearfulness
- Invasion of your personal body space
- Pacing and stamping
- Shouting
- Hostility
- Changes in body language

Always try to listen attentively and effectively and look for early warning signs of the potential for violence. If a threat of violence is made, terminate the meeting immediately and inform your manager.

11. Interviewing and Offsite Visits

Below are a number of practical pieces of advice when performing visits to a persons home or conducting an interview at a PCC premises.

Offsite Visits

When you go out on site, **ALWAYS** ensure that there is:

- A visible record of your location, for instance a staff destination board or diary accessible to colleagues in the office;
- An expected time of return to base and if you are unable to meet this call the office with your new estimated return time; and
- An agreed method of communication to base (this may include the use of a mobile phone).

You can also do a number of the following:

- Check to see if there is any information available on clients before you see them by accessing the council's Violence at Work Register and any other database that may be available in your department e.g. Flare, Raise;
- Do not see known 'potentially violent' people on your own, aim to work in pairs where identified risks are high;
- In potential high risk cases seek opportunities to meet the client in the office or a neutral public premises;
- Do not keep people waiting unnecessarily; if you know you're going to be late, make every effort to call the client;
- Make a mental note of exits to the premises or room;
- Plan calm verbal exit strategies in advance, such as 'I just need to get a file from the car';
- Try to sit near the door or your chosen exit, do not place the client between you and your exit;
- Keep to main living areas of a clients premises and out of bedrooms or kitchens where possible, as these areas have potential access to weapons e.g. knives;
- Try not to take too much with you into the property e.g. files and tools in case you need to leave quickly;

- Always park your car in well-lit area and where possible reverse into a parking space as this will enable you to make a quick exit if needed; and
- Know what time your public transport is to avoid waiting on streets.

Office / Interview Room

- **Always** be nearest to the exit when interviewing or in a room with any customer or client;
- Try to have chairs at a slight angle when interviewing, (face to face can be taken as confrontational);
- Do not have unwarranted interruptions;
- Do not see known 'potentially violent' people on your own;
- Do not let people know if you are alone in the office, whether by phone, email or in person;
- Ensure you know how to use technology that is available such as panic alarms; and
- If CCTV is available ensure it is working and being monitored. You may also choose to contact CCTV before an interview commences to ensure the situation is being monitored accordingly.

12. Communication and Interviewing Skills

It is important to ensure that you communicate effectively to reduce the likelihood of violence occurring.

Ensure that you:

- Speak clearly, slowly and make the purpose of your meeting clear from the start;
- Appear calm and relaxed - breath normally;
- Do not lose control - if you feel anxious suggest taking a break;
- Be assertive and take control – but ensure you demonstrate empathy saying you recognise that the person is upset and you want to help;
- Calm the individual - say you cannot help while being shouted at;
- Try to defuse the situation and look for a resolve - ask questions, give reassurance;
- Maintain normal eye contact - if you are stared at, do not stare back;
- Keep your distance - violent people need more personal space;
- Do not hurry unduly - levels of aggression tend to decrease with the passage of time;
- Take action before the situation gets out of control – for example prepare an exit strategy if there is a potential for violence, for example say you need to 'get information' or 'get assistance/advice'; and
- Sound an alarm (if available) - get away from potential danger if no other options are available.

In regard to your own body language and posture:

- Keep your distance - at least an arms length;
- Avoid standing directly in front of the individual - this may be perceived as confrontational;
- Stand at a sideways angle and weight evenly balanced over each foot - this provides a smaller target area and enables you to move more easily out of danger when in a face to face situation with no barriers; and
- Do not touch the individual, even if they are tearful, the person may strike out.

13. Room Booking Procedure

When inviting members of public who are potential assailants into the authority for meetings etc, be sure to select an appropriate meeting room. You may decide to select a room with a panic alarm, CCTV coverage, or one with a viewing panel, so you can be easily seen by other council employees.

The room bookings procedure can be found at the following link:

14. Removing yourself from a potentially violent situation

Sometimes prevention techniques are not enough to diffuse a potentially violent situation. If you need to remove yourself from a situation follow these pointers:

- Look for the various exits available, keep talking and move towards them;
- Do not turn your back; and
- Use a diversionary tactic such as 'I will need to talk to my manager before agreeing to that issue' or "let me just go and get the appropriate forms so I can help you'.

Ensure you alert your manager that you have terminated the meeting, so that further appropriate action can be taken.

15. If you are attacked

Unfortunately there are occasions where you may be subjected to a physical assault. If you are attacked:

- Try to get away safely if you can;
- Use only 'reasonable force' or only force that is absolutely necessary to disengage yourself from the attacker; and
- If you cannot disengage yourself from a grip call for help from colleagues, or if alone shout 'call the Police' rather than 'help' as this will alert passers by that you require Police assistance.

Remember: victims can become aggressors themselves, your aim is to get away from the situation not to assault the assailant.

16. Lone Working

Many people find themselves alone in the workplace. It is important that you make arrangements to ensure you are safe at all times. Carry out the following if you are working alone:

- Ensure other people know who you are meeting, when and where;
- Establish a buddy system, where someone else can be contacted everyday with an itinerary of who they are meeting and at what times;
- Consider calling someone once your visitor arrives, telling the buddy you will get back to them at a certain time after the visitor has left. This acts as both an information call for you colleague and a deterrent to the visitor; and
- Be careful to not tell anyone you are working alone in the workplace, this applies to people who call or email you.

17. Dark nights in the community

From time to time employees may find themselves working in the dark. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Always plan ahead. Make sure you know where you are going and how you are going to get there;
- If you are catching a bus or a train, find out the times to avoid waiting for long periods at bus stops or stations;
- If you are planning to take a taxi, then either book it before going out, or take the number of a licensed cab company with you;
- When walking stick to busy well lit streets. Avoid danger spots like quiet or badly lit alleyways or isolated car parks;

- If you do have to pass danger spots, think about what you will do if you feel threatened, like heading for a busy place;
- Keep a personal alarm to hand;
- Take a mobile phone. It is also a good idea to take some spare change or a phone card to enable you to make a phone call;
- Make arrangements to check in with managers or your designated buddy;
- Ensure you are wearing safe clothing and footwear so you can escape in a hurry; and
- If you suspect you are being followed trust your instincts and take action. As confidently as you can cross the road turning to look who is behind you. If you are still being followed keep moving and make your way to a busy area a tell people what is happening. If necessary call the Police.

18. Travelling by Foot

When travelling by foot in the community consider the following:

- Avoid passing stationary cars with engines running and people sitting in them;
- Try to keep both hands free and don't walk with your hands in your pockets;
- Always take a route you know best and try to use well lit, busy streets, even if it adds to your journey time;
- Walk facing oncoming traffic to avoid curb crawlers. If a car does pull up suddenly alongside you, turn and walk the other way, you can turn much faster than a car;
- Do not wear a personal stereo or chat on your mobile phone when walking as you will not be able to hear approaching danger;
- Beware of someone who warns you of the danger of walking alone and then accompanies you. This could be a ruse to get you alone;
- Never accept lifts from strangers or someone you do not know very well, even if you are wet, tired or running late; and
- Try not to keep all your valuables in one place.

19. Victims of Stalking

Sometimes a person can become fixated on one employee in the council. This may not necessarily manifest itself as violence, but could include persistent complainants, intimidation, or in worse case scenarios being stalked during and after work.

If you suspect you are being stalked at work you should inform your manager immediately so they can assess your safety at work.

In addition you should:

- Phone or visit your local Police station, no matter how trivial the harassment may seem. This will enable them to record your complaint, log, monitor and build a profile of the alleged offender. Make sure you ask for the name and number of the officer you speak to;
- Keep a record of all events, telephone calls, emails etc noting as much detail as possible, including the times and dates of the incidents;
- Try to obtain photographic evidence or video evidence of your stalkers actions. The authorities CCTV department may be able to assist;
- Do not delete emails or throw away letters or parcels received from the alleged offender. Try to handle them as little as possible and if possible place them in paper/card envelopes to preserve them. Try not to use plastic sleeves as moisture can collect inside them and remove evidence;
- The police advise that you read all mail you receive in case it contains threats, indecent or offensive language;
- Inform your colleagues so they too can keep a record of sightings and notify you of any anything they may see or notice. Colleagues will also be able to support you, and prevent calls and persons etc reaching you;

- Inform the manager of Peterborough Direct for additional advice, as they may be able to limit the alleged offender's access to you by telephone;
- Try to alter your daily routines so your movements do not become predictable;
- If possible ask friends or colleagues to accompany you;
- Always let someone know what your plans are when they change;
- Although it may be hard, try not to show emotion to your stalker, do not confront them and never agree to meet them; and
- If you do come into contact with them aim to get away and ideally move to a busy public place.

20. Witnessing Violence at Work

Remember, there are things you can do to support your fellow colleagues in potentially violent situations.

Things to look out for include:

- If you overhear an interview getting out of control, call for assistance;
- Discreetly interrupt the interview to break the tension;
- If you overhear a threat made (i.e. you are in reception and here a service user say they are going to sort out the worker) - inform the interviewer immediately;
- When an alarm sounds in an interview room, staff should follow the established agreed procedures;
- The colleague should be removed from danger;
- The Police should be called; and
- The objective is always to escape to safety.

21. Dealing with Aggressive Animals

There are occasions where people may encourage their dogs to behave aggressively towards employees. In these cases the dog is being used as a threatening weapon, exploiting the fact that it is a less culpable threat than personal violence but just as frightening.

The single most important thing you can do is arrange and organise your appointments in advance. Where achievable first invite the client to our premises, eliminating any contact with an animal altogether. If the owner is not agreeable to this, before visiting any client's premises make an appointment in advance and ask them to tie up any dogs during your visit. If your visit is absolutely necessary and the client is not agreeable to these arrangements, exercise caution. Visit with a colleague for additional support and leave immediately if an animal is used for the means of intimidation or as a weapon. Police advice should then be sought.

Before entering any property with a dog try the following:

- Check for signs that a dog may live there, such as bones, a kennel, chewed up articles or dog droppings;
- If there is evidence of a dog, rattle the gate or make a noise, calling or whistling etc. If the dog appears never enter the property unless you are 100% confident the dog is not aggressive. If the dog is barking or silent but excessively staring do not enter the property;
- If there is barking but it does not get any closer after a reasonable time, you can assume that the dog is tied up;
- Always walk in a calm and confident manner. Dogs cannot smell fear but they are experts in reading body language;
- If a dog is chained up do not assume that the chain is attached, or it may be longer than you think or even break;
- When knocking on a door stand well back. If there is a dog inside the owner may not be quick enough to prevent the dog reaching you;

- Never run unless you are confident that you can outrun the dog to a safe haven. Otherwise, your initial reaction should be to remain still, avoiding eye contact;
- All threatening gestures such as yelling at the dog, waving ones arm or rushing at it should be avoided, as erratic nervous movements may cause the dog to advance; and
- Approaching suddenly, bending over the dog or patting it on the head or back are dominant and threatening gestures and as such should be avoided. Crouching, speaking gently, avoiding eye contact and patting around the chest or neck are all non threatening gestures.

If you are attacked by an aggressive dog:

- If you believe it is a full on attack, reach down and grab a handful of stones or shingle and throw it at the dog to break its charge;
- If this fails grab your clipboard or briefcase or whatever is to hand and offer it to the dog, keeping it well away from your body. The dog may grab hold of it and give you time to escape;
- If you are knocked to the ground remain motionless in a foetal position and protect your face by crossing your arms above your head; and
- Only strike a dog as a last resort and never kick a dog whilst it is facing you as it will likely grab your leg.

22. Personal Alarms

All employees are able to obtain a personal alarm for free, supplied by Internal Health and Safety, including replacements for broken or faulty alarms.

The purpose of the alarm is to shock or disorientate an attacker, giving you vital seconds to get away.

You should aim to carry your alarm with you at all times, particularly if you are walking alone in the community. It should be within easy reach (not at the bottom of your bag), or even held in your hand. If your work requires you to have both hands free then you could attach your alarm to a lanyard or a belt, or an easily accessible pocket.

You should also test your alarm periodically to ensure the battery is still working and does not require replacing. Additionally if your alarm becomes damaged or lost you should seek a replacement. You should also ensure you know how your alarm works.

The most common misconception is that the alarm is used to alert passers by. Unfortunately you cannot rely on personal alarms to do that for you as they may not be anyone within earshot, or worse, ignored. Remember even if your alarm is sounding you should aim to escape quickly and call for help. You are much more likely to get help if you shout 'call the Police' as this makes it clear you are in danger and need help.

Never wait around to check if you alarm has had the desired effect – just go!

23. Other things to be aware of

There are a number of other things you should consider in order to prevent incidents of violence at work:

- Your appearance – first impressions are important in any job involving brief interactions with the public as they can set the tone of the interaction.
- Stress – If you are stressed from heavy work loads or working when you are not well is thought to reduce the level of tolerance of employees in difficult situations.
- Cash being handled – Staff who handle cash are potential targets for robbery. Remember if you find yourself in the rare situation of being mugged or attacked hand over the money.

- Waiting and queuing – Having to wait a long time in a queue reduces the level of tolerance in some individuals.
- Privacy – where information has to be given of a confidential nature a good deal of stress can be caused to applicants or claimants if they cannot communicate privately.

24. Further Measures

Other preventative measures could include:

- Discussing incidents that have occurred at team meetings to find ways to prevent re-occurrences
- Training courses on lone working, conflict management and violence awareness.
- Private prosecutions - these can be taken by individual employees against their assailant. The employee should deal with this matter in conjunction with a solicitor and support by management on this should be given.

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