Aggression & Violence & Lone Working

Safety management procedure (SMP)

Document information

Document title	Aggression & Violence and Lone Working SMP		
Owner	Human Resources		
Status	Final	Version	1
Effective from	1 February 2023	Approved on	16 January 2023
Last updated	1 February 2018	Last updated by	Chris Kent
Review date	31 January 2026		
Purpose	To give managers guidance on arrangements required for dealing with work related aggression and lone working and sharing information in line with Trusts procedures. Also advice to employees on dealing with aggressive incidents and support available.		

Contents

Introduction

Due to the nature of the services offered, and the users of the Trust's services, the Trust recognises that aggression and violence towards its employees is a foreseeable occupational hazard. Therefore, it is important that each team ensures that there are arrangements in place to manage this risk.

Employees within the Trust are also likely to work alone at times and therefore managers must have effective procedures in place to keep employees safe when lone working occurs. The risks from lone working include violence and aggression, but also stress and wellbeing and the employee's suitability to work alone from a medical point of view.

1. Definitions

Aggression and Violence:
The Trust has adopted the Health and Safety Executives (HSE) definition of work related violence which is:

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

Verbal abuse:
Verbal abuse is when an **employee feels** threatened or intimidated, and the abuse is intentionally or deliberately directed towards them.

In circumstances relating to work:
This includes any aggression and violence that occurs from an employees' work duties regardless of whether the incident occurred in normal working hours or outside of those hours. It also includes any threats of aggression received through texts, email messages or social networking sites.

Flagging on Childrens Case File
If there are individuals who use the Trust's services that have known aggressive tendencies, have made credible threats or have been intentionally physically violent to the Trust's employees, then the Trust are duty bound to share this information with other employees who may also interact with them/be at risk.

Retention period:
Any personal data that has been added to the Childrens Case file can only be held for a limited period. The Trust must ensure that this information is removed from the system at the end of this period. If personal data is to be held longer than the published retention period, then the justifiable reasons must be evidenced and documented.

Lone Working:
A Lone Worker is a worker (either employee or agency worker) who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from other workers without close or direct

supervision. Such worker may be exposed to risk because there is no-one to assist them.

2. Managers responsibilities

Risk Assessment

Where there is lone working or a foreseeable risk of aggression and violence to our workers, then managers will identify this in the team's general risk assessment including the controls to manage the risk.

Workers who have contact with service users and/or work alone may be particularly at risk.

Factors to consider as part of the risk assessment process include:

- The type of work undertaken by the worker e.g. child protection activities, youth offending work etc

- The group or individuals the service is being provided to including working with people who are emotionally or mental unstable, under the influence of drink or drugs, involved in criminal activity

- Whether work is undertaken by lone workers or vulnerable groups (e.g. new and expectant mothers)

- Time which work is carried out i.e. out of normal office hours

- Previous history of aggression and violence at the premise/towards employees.

Control measures

Managers and supervisors must introduce controls to reduce the risks from aggression and violence and lone working.

Control measures should include:

For Violence and Aggression
- Training for employees on dealing with aggression and violence and diffusion strategies.

- Workers are empowered to withdraw from any situation

- Undertaking a review of the circumstances of a visit to determine if lone working is acceptable. The checklist at (Appendix 1) can be used to inform these reviews.

- Employees checking the Childrens Case File for any alerts of previous instances of violence and aggression and using that information to determine if lone working is acceptable or if any additional controls are needed.

- Ensuring all workers are aware of the reporting and emergency procedures in case of any incidents of violence or aggression (Appendix 2 – Emergency Procedures)

- Workers (with manager and supervisor if necessary) should reflect on visits during supervision, and immediately following a visit that created a concern, to consider if any behaviour was presented during visits that increases the risks to the health and safety of workers making future visits alone.

- Any violent and aggressive incidents will be investigated to identify potential triggers and take necessary action; this will include ensuring that a flag is placed on the Children's file to inform anyone who may have contact with any known violent persons.

- Use of personal panic alarms or emergency alert on mobile phones for visits- or a lone working app

- Use of fixed panic alarms in interview/contact rooms

- Reviewing security of building and use of interview rooms.

- Displaying signage re expected behaviour in public areas.

- Good external lighting for buildings.

For Lone Working

- Managers should keep appropriate information on anyone in their team who is a lone worker, so that in an emergency an accurate description can be provided to external agencies such as the police. This information should include: contact information, gender, height, hair colour, ethnicity, first language, any medical needs, distinguishing marks, if possible make / model / registration number of car. If the manager is not available the HR team should be contacted for contact information, the HR Team will provide further guidance on who to contact if required.

- Managers are responsible for making their workers aware of the following Lone Working procedure

- Managers will ensure that they have access to their team's dairies

- All visits will be recorded in the team members diary; this will include case number, name, address, proposed length of visit and reason for visit

- Any individual who is lone working or at risk of violence or aggression will use the Lone Working app 'Hollie Guard'. This Lone Working App must be used and completed prior to the team member starting each separate visit. The individual must follow the requirements of the App for each visit. The named contacts for the Lone Working alarm should be reviewed before every lone working activity, include a line manager and make consideration for any absences. Appendix 3 explains the use of the Lone Working App

- If a Lone Working alarm is triggered the appropriate procedure will be implemented

- Emergency Procedures –Each team must have established emergency procedures in place for employees to raise the alarm if they encounter any difficulties. (Appendix 2) This could be a manual or automatic solution:
  - alert methods that can be activated manually by the lone worker, including:
    - pressing a panic button to summon assistance, for instance in areas where members of the public are admitted such as reception areas, etc.
    - using a walkie-talkie to summon assistance
    - using the panic button on lone working app.

Recording and Investigation of Incidents

It is important that managers encourage workers to report all incidents of aggression and violence so that the Trust has a true picture of the risks and triggers for work related violence and helps to ensure that relevant control measures are put in place along with support for workers. Being subjected to violence and aggression at work is not 'part of the job'.

All incidents that result in an employee being harmed must be reported and recorded on the Trust's incident report form Trusts incident report form. The Trust's incident reporting, recording and investigation SMP has additional information on how to complete this form.

All incidents should be investigated, and action taken to reduce the potential for a similar incident to occur.

3. Workers responsibilities

Prior to any visits Workers must consider the potential risk of any aggression or violence and lone working and the level of risk from the visit. This includes

- Check the child's case to ensure there is no flag for aggression or violence contained within it and any agreed control measures.
- The type of work undertaken e.g. child protection activities, youth offending work etc
- The group or individuals the service is being provided to, including working with people who are emotionally or mental unstable, under the influence of drink or drugs, involved in criminal activity
- Time which work is carried out i.e. out of normal office hours
- Previous history of aggression and violence at the premise/towards employees.

All visits will be recorded in the Workers diary; this will include case number, name, address, proposed length of visit and reason for visit

Any individual who is lone working or at risk of violence or aggression will use the Lone Working app 'Hollie Guard'. This Lone Working App must be used and

completed prior to the team member starting each separate visit. The individual must follow the requirements of the App for each visit. The named contacts for the Lone Working alarm should be reviewed before every lone working activity, include a line manager and make consideration for any absences. Appendix 3 explains the use of the Lone Working App

Where lone working is not considered appropriate, the Worker must notify their line manager who will consider whether alternative arrangements are to be put in place and the decision recorded on the relevant file.

All workers of the Trust **must take a non-confrontational approach** when dealing with individuals who use our services/members of the public.

If a situation arises where a worker feels their personal safety is in imminent danger, then they should withdraw from the situation and raise the alarm with their supervisor/manager.

If during any visit a worker feels that the any individual's behaviour presented increases the risks to the health and safety of workers making future visits, it must be brought to the attention of the line manager and the relevant children's case can be updated.

Workers have a legal duty to report any accidents and/or incidents to their immediate line manager as soon as possible after the incident. This includes any incidents of aggression or violence, regardless of whether a physical injury was sustained.

4. Personal safety tips for workers

No one can say with any certainty what they would do if faced with difficult or stressful situations.

Many factors can affect the way an individual will behave when faced with violence or aggression. There are no right or wrong answers, but it will help if you think through the options ahead of time.

Appendix 4 provides a list of personal safety tips.

5. Support for employees

The Trust recognises that individuals will react differently to incidents of violence or aggression whether they were involved directly, or they witnessed the event and, in these circumstances, they may require support. Support might include talking about the incident with a designated member of staff who understands the likely impact, or by professional counselling by an independent person. This should take place directly after a significant incident as part of the reporting of an incident. All workers will be asked about their welfare at their supervision meeting on a monthly basis.

Workers can also contact the Council's Employee Assistance & Counselling Service-
☎ 0808 168 2143.

To assist with prevention of reoccurrence and/or closure following a serious incident, managers will support the worker in any individual proceedings against the perpetrator. This may involve prosecutions, injunctions, anti-social behaviour (ASB) notices etc.

6. Updating of Children's File

It is important that where the Trust is aware that there is a potential risk of violence and aggressive behaviour from any of its service users, it must ensure that this information is shared with any workers who may have contact with the person. This is so any interaction with any potential aggressors can be risk assessed and appropriate controls put in place to manage the risk to safety of workers and provide them with vital information.

When a violent or aggressive incident has taken place, an incident report form will need to be completed which will be investigated by the individuals line manager to decide whether a 'flag' should be placed on the child's file. Regardless of whether a 'flag' is placed on a child's file, the incident should be noted and recorded on the child's file including any decision making on the significance of the event.

The flag is placed on the child's file by the Social Worker, it is the responsibility of the Social Workers Team Manager to confirm that this has taken place. Note the same investigatory and decision-making process should take place if the Trust is made aware of potential concerns and incidents by any of its partners.

Prior to arranging any visits at a property or lone working, the children's case file should be used to check if there are any 'flags' in place and the information used to assess the risk of the visit and put appropriate controls in place to manage the risk of violence and aggression.

7. Training

Workers who are in roles where there is a foreseeable risk of aggression and violence will be given personal safety/conflict resolution/customer service training during induction. Training will provide workers with the appropriate skills to reduce or diffuse potential incidents. Basic training should include:

- causes of violence;
- recognition of warning signs;
- relevant interpersonal skills, i.e. verbal and non-verbal communication skills;
- de-escalation techniques;
- details of local working practices and control measures; and,
- the Trusts incident reporting procedure

Managers of Lone Workers will receive appropriate training to identify any risks and associated control measures, to understand what levels of supervision are required, and to know what action to take, should a Lone Worker require emergency

assistance. All workers who may work alone will also receive information and instruction of the Lone Working procedures for their team.

8. Further information

The HSE website has numerous resources on violence and aggression and Lone Working

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust are a leading organisation related personal safety. Their website has many resources for managers and employees to access.

Appendix 1 - Risk of violence and aggression checklist

Information on family members, including extended family and neighbours
- Is there a history or knowledge of aggression and violence, criminal activity, use of drugs and alcohol, dangerous animals present in the property?
- Is there any information on the children's file from other agencies such as Police, Probation Service, Health and Education? Are any further discussions needed?
- Is this a referral for people of whom there is no knowledge at all?
- Are any service users known to be violent or aggressive likely to attend any of our buildings?

Nature of and reason for the visit
- Type of visit – is it an intervention that will raise anxiety such as child protection or safeguarding or a general family support visit.

Time of visit
- Is the visit during normal office working hours or is it after hours, late night/early morning working, and/or weekend working.

Environment
- Where is the visit to take place or adjacent to, consider, blocks of flats, areas of known concern due to criminal activity and/or anti-social behaviour.
- The security and the physical layout of the building
- Items that can be used as weapons

For Lone Working
- Possible violence and aggression towards workers
- Accidental injury on land and in premises
- Vehicle accident/break-down
- Ill-health of the worker
- Security of ICT and mobile equipment and data.

Appendix 2 - Emergency Procedure "Red Alert"

The emergency procedure is to be used on occasions where you feel your health and safety is at risk and you don't have the opportunity to leave the premise / area or obtain immediate / local support.

Advise the people you are visiting that you need to contact the office to get / check some information.

Call your line manager and state:
- Who you are
- Who you are visiting and
- Alert them to the fact that you would like them to check the **'RA'** (Red Alert) file

If you are unable to make a call, utilise the panic facility on the app, which will send an alert to your agreed contacts.

This will result in the Emergency Procedure being implemented.
1. The person who picks up the call / alert will know that you are at risk and cannot leave the premises
2. They will contact your line manager, to check your diary to confirm the details of your visit
3. The police will be contacted on 999 to attend, they will then coordinate responsibility for any subsequent action.
4. As soon as is reasonably practicable, you must contact your line manager / Head of Service with an update or to confirm the outcome and complete an incident form with your line manager and any appropriate action (which may include a flag being placed on the case file).

Every time the emergency procedure is used, immediately after the incident or on that working day in consultation between the Manager and the Team Member, an assessment will be made as to whether the employee(s) can return to their visiting duties on that working day, or for a specific period as deemed appropriate.

All employees will have access to the Council's counselling service.

PLEASE USE THIS PROCEDURE IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS ONLY, AS THE POLICE WILL BE CALLED.

Appendix 3 – Using the Lone Working App

The Trust uses Hollie Guard (Lone Working App) to support employees when Lone Working or when they are in any situation with a risk of violence and aggression.

Hollie Guard provides an ability to locate an individual, through GPS, when an alarm is triggered. The alarms are triggered when a timer is not switched off within the pre-set timescale or if the panic alarm is triggered.

All employees who will find themselves in a potential position of Aggression, Violence or Lone Working must use the Hollie Guard App.

All individuals must allow their line manager and the Heads of Service for their Directorate access to their outlook diaries in case of emergency. Where the Directorate is small, a decision may be made to extend the emergency contact list to other Directorates.

The Hollie Guard App must be down loaded onto your work phone, so it is readily accessible. It is important to note that the App is only functional when you have logged in/is in use.

The only information that should be shared on the App is

- Your contact details
- The contact information for the Head of Services for your Directorate

No child, young person or family information should be recorded when the App is being used.

If an alarm is triggered, the identified contact numbers above will try to contact you to check on your personal safety.

Failure to contact you in a reasonable amount of time will lead to the emergency procedure being implemented (Appendix 2).

Further information on the App and how to use it can be found on the Hollie Guard App Training Module.

Appendix 4 – Personal safety tips for employees

If you are a lone worker, it is important that you pay particular attention to your safety and follow any lone working arrangements put in place. Below are some hints and tips for managing violence and aggression.

Be aware of changes in the behaviour in the person you are with, especially if you are discussing something that could result in a stressful situation.

Try to use your own training and communication skills to defuse a difficult situation early on, thinking how about how tone, volume and body language can help to create a calming atmosphere.

If the person you are with is getting angry, try to remain calm. It is best not to meet aggression with aggression.

Avoid entering the aggressor's personal space or touching them, as could make the aggressor feel threatened and can escalate the situation.

Beware of your own body language, adopting a neutral and non-threatening position to help create a calming atmosphere.

Remember:
- Trust your instincts
- Never underestimate a threat
- If you feel uneasy or alarm bells start ringing — act right away

If you cannot de-escalate the situation:
- Get away from the aggressor.
- Be assertive but avoid meeting aggression with aggression
- Use exit strategies — have a pre-planned way to excuse yourself from a difficult situation. *(e.g. you are just going to check something with the office)*
- Apply diversion techniques to distract them whilst you make your exit
- Use your voice — shout a specific instruction such as "Call the police!"
- Use a Personal Safety alarm
- Use the app that has been provided to you for lone working and emergency situations
- If it is necessary, use the Emergency Procedure – 'Red Alert'

Remember, the earlier you spot a potential problem arising, the more choices you will have to avoid it.