



## VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION AT WORK POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 The Comhairle recognises the difficulties in managing violence and aggression at work and aims to put in place steps to identify and minimise risks to support employees and monitor incidents to help address any potential problems; this will involve the completion of suitable and sufficient assessments of the risk at work to employees from violence and aggression (Risk Assessments).
- 1.1 The nature of the services the Comhairle provides places particular groups of employees at potential risk of violent or aggressive incidents. The range and diversity of services raise specific concerns relevant to particular activities. This policy will therefore provide a framework of principles to be applied across the Comhairle and developed within departments to meet service needs.
- 1.2 The Comhairle recognises that employees may be reluctant, for a variety of reasons, to report incidents of violent or aggressive behaviour. The Comhairle emphasises that the reporting of incidents of violence and aggression at work will be viewed positively as a method of assessing the extent of violence and the risks to employees. The Comhairle further emphasises that the reporting of such incidents will not be taken to imply a failure by the employee concerned, other employees or any other person responsible for the management of the workplace concerned.
- 1.3 The Comhairle further recognises that it is essential to introduce proper recording procedures in order to identify high-risk areas of work and patterns of incidents to develop appropriate responses.

### SCOPE

- 2.0 This policy applies to all employees and covers incidents of violent or aggressive behaviour perpetrated by a member of the public, pupils, service users or their families. Incidents of violence and aggression by or between employees will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.

### POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.0 ***The Comhairle is opposed to violence and aggression in any form. We will establish and promote practices that seek to minimise the potential risks of violence and aggression towards employees.***

We aim to:

- put in place safe systems of work to minimise the risk to employees of instances of violence and aggression at work
- ensure that there is a safe and secure working environment for all employees
- ensure that incidents of violence or aggression are reported in order that high risk areas are identified and tackled

- achieve a level of understanding and awareness among managers employees of the effects of violence and aggression

- offer appropriate support to employees who are involved in violent or aggressive incidents and recognise that employees who are victims of a violent or aggressive act may suffer from emotional and psychological trauma in addition to physical injuries

***We are committed to reducing the number and severity of violent and aggressive incidents to employees and ensuring that employees are trained to handle difficult situations and individuals.***

## **DEFINITIONS**

- 4.0 Violence and aggression at work is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public, pupil, service user or their family in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment. This violence or aggression may include:
- physical assault
  - threatening behaviour
  - serious or persistent harassment
  - verbal abuse
- 4.1 While the employee's perception of an incident is important, account must also be taken of the service users and of the nature of the service. Employees should retain a sense of proportion in identifying words and conduct which may reasonably be perceived as causing harassment, alarm or distress as opposed to annoyance.

## **REPORTING AND RECORDING PROCEDURES**

- 5.0 The purpose of recording and reporting is to identify high-risk areas of work and patterns of incidents and to develop appropriate response to tackle unacceptable behaviour of a violent or aggressive nature.
- 5.1 As soon as possible the employee should be encouraged to initiate reporting and recording procedures by:
- completing a Comhairle Incident Report Form (IR1) where physical injury has resulted and/or where the employee is subsequently absent for more than three days; and
  - making an entry in the Accident Book whenever an injury has been sustained.

## **EMPLOYEE SUPPORT**

- 6.0 Line Managers should understand and accept their role in providing support to employees and should be sufficiently trained to do so.
- 6.1 Line Managers will provide debriefing and support for all employees who have been victims of a violent or aggressive act.
- 6.2 If required, the Occupational Health Nurse will provide further guidance and support. This may involve referral to the Comhairle's Medical Adviser and/or independent counselling, where appropriate. The employee shall be granted reasonable time off work to attend such appointments.

- 6.3 Where absence from work is believed to arise from a violent or aggressive incident, any such absence will be treated as special leave rather than sickness absence.

### **POLICE INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.0 The Line Manager will report the matter to the police at the employee's request.
- 7.1 A decision to report the incident to the Police should be in accordance with the nature and severity of the assault and, if possible, with the approval and consent of the employee but the Comhairle reserves the right to report the matter to the Police without the employee's consent.

### **RETURN TO DUTY**

- 8.0 Where an employee has been absent from work following a reported violent incident, the Line Manager concerned shall ensure appropriate support for the employee is given, where appropriate.
- 8.1 Prior to the employee returning to work, the Line Manager, in consultation with Personnel Section, shall consider:
- whether referral of the employee to the Occupational Health Nurse, either prior or immediately following his/her return to work, is appropriate
  - whether the employee should be temporarily transferred to other duties
  - whether it would be appropriate for the employee to initially return on a part-time basis
  - whether refresher training is required as part of returning to work
  - whether there should be a temporary restriction in the range of duties being undertaken by the employee
  - whether the duties/tasks could be redesigned to help to reduce the likelihood of an incident reoccurring
- 8.2 If any such measures are undertaken, they should be fully discussed and agreed, where possible with the employee. Under no circumstances should the employee incur any loss of contractual earnings during the relevant period.
- 8.3 The appropriate managers/supervisors should ensure that employees returning to work under these circumstances are provided with adequate support and assistance during a specified settling-in period.
- 8.4 Should an employee request a transfer to other duties, such a request should be considered sympathetically taking into account all the circumstances.

### **MONITORING**

- 9.0 Heads of Department shall establish monitoring arrangements that will ensure that trends in reported incidents of violence to employees at work are identified and appropriate responses considered. If a violent or aggressive incident occurs, Risk Assessments will be reviewed immediately to take into account the circumstances surrounding the incident to prevent or minimise the risk of a further occurrence.

- 9.1 Where specific action is taken to eliminate or reduce the risk of violence to staff, the success of this action shall be monitored and evaluated. The monitoring arrangements, in addition to those legally required, shall include submitting regular reports to the Health and Safety Officer.
- 9.2 The Health and Safety Officer will submit an annual report on the number and nature of reported incidents of violence or aggression at work to the Management Team and the appropriate Safety Committees as part of the general monitoring arrangements.

### **TRAINING**

- 10.0 The Health and Safety Officer in consultation with Line Managers will arrange appropriate training for all employees who are deemed to be at risk at work from violence and aggression.
- 10.1 The focus of training for relevant staff will be on the development of interpersonal skills that will assist in assessing situations and responding in ways designed to minimise the likelihood of a violent incident occurring.
- 10.2 The Comhairle's induction training for new employees will include general awareness training on the potential risks associated with violence and aggression in the workplace.
- 10.3 Training will also be provided for management who have responsibility to debrief, counsel and provide support for employees who have been subject to a violent or aggressive act or incident.

### **POLICY REVIEW**

- 11.0 The policy will be reviewed as necessary and at least every two years.

Personnel Section  
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