VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION AT WORK GUIDANCE

Title	Violence and Aggression at Work Guidance
Who should use this	All Staff
Author	SAC/Adapted by AVJB
Approved by Management Team	12 July 2017
Approved by Joint Board	N/A
Reviewer	**Office Manager**
Review Date	**2023**

Review History

REVIEW NO.	DETAILS	RELEASE DATE
1	NEW	JULY 2017
2	REVIEWED SEPT 2020 – ADDITION OF STALKING INSERT AND ADDITIONAL BULLETS	SEPTEMBER 2020
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1. Introduction

Violence and aggression at work is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as;

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

This will include verbal abuse or threats as well as physical attacks.

Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board's (AVJB) work activities may place particular groups of employees at risk. All practical steps will therefore be taken to minimise the risk of assault or threats to employees. AVJB will not hesitate to report incidents of Violence and Aggression to Police Scotland when this is deemed necessary. Where such acts are perpetrated by employees, disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including dismissal.

Managers should aim to ensure that work activities are risk assessed for Violence and Aggression and a range of mitigations to protect employees are implemented and monitored. A checklist to assist in identifying V&A issues is available within Appendix 1.

Reporting and recording of all violent or aggressive situations and incidents is mandatory and managers should aim to ensure that appropriate actions to prevent recurrence are identified and progressed where feasible.

Whilst AVJB welcomes comments and complaints from employees and members of the public, all violent and aggressive behaviour towards employees is considered unacceptable, whatever form it takes and whatever reasons may be given for it.

Domestic abuse and stalking are also considered as part of the overall behaviour associated with violence and aggression. Stalking can happen with or without fear of violence such as in circumstances where an employee receives persistent and unwanted contact but is never actually threatened. Stalking is therefore considered a psychological as well as a physical crime. Stalking in Scotland is a specific offence under section 39 of the Criminal Justice and Licensing Act 2010.

The Board recognises that their employees may be subject to different forms of Violent or Aggressive behaviour and under many circumstances support can be provided through Occupational Health. Referral to Occupational Health can be made via the Boards Personnel Representatives.

The Board's Health and Safety Policy seeks to remind managers and employees of their responsibility to ensure they have appropriate information, instruction and training to enable them to carry out their work activities safely.

This includes employees noting any unsafe systems or situations that they may become aware of and bringing these to the attention of their manager or supervisor. Any such potentially violent or aggressive situations should be identified and reported to pre-empt any further escalation.

The Board's Code of Conduct includes an expectation that employees conduct themselves in a courteous, professional and impartial manner during work activities, without threat or danger of violence or aggressive behaviour at any time. Consequently, the Board has a zero tolerance approach towards such behaviour and will take appropriate action against anyone conducting themselves in such a manner.

This guidance forms part of the arrangements within the overarching Board Health and Safety Policy. It aims to provide practical and legislative guidance for managers and employees in assessing and managing all forms of violence and aggression risk.

2.   Organisational Responsibilities

Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board is responsible, as far as is reasonably practicable, for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all employees and others who may be affected by Board activities.

2.1 The Assessor and ERO

The Assessor and ERO is responsible, so far as is reasonably practicable, for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all Board employees and others who may be affected by Board activities. They are committed to ensuring that appropriate measures are adopted to enable the implementation of this guidance and maintain compliance with legislation.

2.2 The Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO

The Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO is responsible for ensuring that measures are implemented to reduce the risk of violence and aggression.

Such measures will involve the following:
- Ensuring that the principles of this guidance are implemented
- Ensuring that management systems are in place for assessing, controlling, monitoring and reviewing the measures being taken to manage situations involving violence.

The Head of Valuation Services and Assistant ERO is committed to achieving a high guidance of health and safety performance across the Board. Significant health and safety issues identified should be progressed, monitored and reviewed by means of the Health and Safety Action Plans and Forum.

Line Managers/Supervisors should aim to:

- Ensure that this Violence and Aggression Guidance, their Service's Violence and Aggression risk assessments, as well as any procedures/guidelines are made known and available to all their employees;
- Source and provide appropriate training or guidelines for employees who are likely to encounter potentially violent and aggressive situations in the course of their work;
- Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment and create an environment and climate where violence is less likely. Having undertaken the risk assessment, full and proper consideration will need to be given to identifying appropriate control measures to improve the situation in order to reduce the risk. This should include discussion with union representatives and affected employees;
- Ensure that operational guidelines are available to those at risk;
- Monitor and take appropriate action following incidents to prevent recurrence and mitigate future risks;
- Ensure that all incidents of violence and aggression that occur are reported and recorded using the VA1 form;
- Ensure appropriate measures are taken to control violence and aggression towards employees.

2.3 Employees

All employees should:

- Be conversant with this guidance and operational systems to defuse or deal with violent/aggressive situations;
- Co-operate with managers to control their exposure to violence and aggression;
- Participate in any training deemed appropriate;

- Ensure that strategies provided through training are fully implemented and all measures outlined within risk assessments are strictly followed;
- Make efforts to ensure that their own actions do not initiate a violent or aggressive response in others;
- Try to de-fuse the situation if they feel safe to do so and immediately summon assistance when aware of a potential or actual violent/aggressive incident. Assistance would normally include calling on more experienced employees to the scene and may also include summoning the Police;
- Report issues where they recognise a potential for violent or aggressive behaviour;
- Report and record all incidents of violence and aggression affecting them in their work activities.

2.4 Health and Safety Forum

The Health and Safety Forum will:
- Assist and advise managers in the development and maintenance of adequate risk assessments with a view to addressing violent and aggressive behaviour in the workplace and support them in the implementation of appropriate preventative measures and action plans;
- Monitor the implementation of this document through audits, incident investigation and report their findings;
- Collate statistics and identify trends with regard to Violence and Aggression, making recommendations for corrective action;

2.5 Occupational Health

Occupational Health, along with the Board, aims to support managers and employees from being injured or made ill through their work, and to help employees who are thus affected to return to work as soon as practicable. Consequently, they can provide advice, support and counselling to employees and seek to develop health initiatives and undertake workplace surveillance programmes to identify areas of particular risk. This service is available by arrangement through management referral using Form ABS/FORM/1. This can be arranged following violence at work or other bullying or harassment situations where stress, anxiety or depression can be a consequence.

3.   Arrangements

Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board recognises the potentially damaging effects of violence and aggression on an individual's wellbeing and is committed to tackling it.

3.1 Risk Assessments

In order to support this approach, managers will aim to develop bespoke risk assessments of activities that may expose employees to violent or aggressive behaviour.

This should take into account:

- The potential for violence and aggression in each specific service area;
- The task, activity or function which may give rise to potentially challenging behaviour from a third party
- The location at which employees may become exposed to violent and aggressive behaviour
- Persons at risk, and whether this extends beyond employees to service users, contractors or members of the public;
- Existing controls, and how effective they are
- Further mitigating actions that may be required to reduce the risk, with target dates for completion
- Ongoing monitoring of the Violence and Aggression risk within each service area.

The main factors that can lead to violent and aggressive behaviour and create risk include:

- Inherent aggression or mental instability;
- Complex health needs and challenging behavioural traits
- Social and financial constraints
- Impatience, frustration and anxiety;
- Resentment (lack of rights);
- Alcohol and drugs; and,
- Poor design of premises

Additionally, there remains the possibility of violent or aggressive behaviour from colleagues within the workplace. This will be dealt with within the terms of existing Board policies and procedures, e.g. Health and Safety Policy, Disciplinary Policy, Employee Code of Conduct, Equality at Work Policy, Grievance Policy. These and other supporting guidelines and handbooks are available on SharePoint.

Mental & emotional abuse can include threats (including threats of violence); criticism and name calling.

Stalking is a term that embraces a variety of behaviours when an individual inflicts unwanted attention, intrusions and communications upon another. Examples of stalking can include following, maintaining surveillance, loitering and sending unwanted gifts or messages. Stalking may escalate to physical assault, sexual assault, or even fatal injury. If two or more occasions of unwanted attention are directed repeatedly towards a specific individual, and is experienced as unwelcome or intrusive, and triggers fear or concern, then it is considered as stalking.

A generic Violence and Aggression Risk Assessment Form is available on SharePoint. This can be adapted for work activities where employees may potentially be exposed to physical or non-physical assault.

Appendix 1 provides a basic checklist of issues to consider which may assist in the completion of the individual service violence and aggression risk assessments.

3.2 Control Measures

Managers should ensure that employees, who make regular contact with the public and/ or may be exposed to violent or aggressive situations as a result of work activity, are provided with guidance and are fully aware of what is expected of them in order to mitigate against the risk of violent behaviour.

*Examples of safety measures which could be identified as *'Existing Controls'* or *'Additional Recommended Control Measures'* within a risk assessment are:

- The provision of specially designated counters/ screens and mobile phones;
- The provision of CCTV, mirrors at blind-spots, personal alarms or panic buttons to alert others for assistance*;*
- Data/Information sharing on known perpetrators in accordance with appropriate data protection protocols;
- Lone worker protocols
- Coded door entry systems to keep the public out of staff-only areas;
- Personal communication devices *(These include; telephones, mobile phones and emergency alarms);*
- Wider counters and raised floors on the staff side of counter to give staff more protection;

- Suitable design and layout of interview rooms that allows the employee an escape route from the risk situation;
- Reception areas designed to minimise queuing, clearly identifiable, adequately ventilated and lit, with current and relevant signage, visual displays, notices and information leaflets;
- Check the credentials of clients and proposed meeting places that are arranged out with the workplace;
- Maintain staff numbers at the work location to prevent a lone worker situation developing, so far as is reasonably practicable, (e.g. maintaining adequate staffing levels during lunch times and holidays);
- Measures to minimise risks to employees when working late;
- Establishing a monitoring arrangement for employees working away from the office and/ or in an appellant's home where a potential risk situation is identified;
- Employees trained in de-escalation techniques;
- Employees trained in physical intervention techniques involving the positive application of force with the intention of controlling the individual's behaviour in order to protect them from harming themselves or others or seriously damaging property;
- Training for employees including dealing with violent and aggressive behaviour and the reporting of such incidents;
- Issuing a warning letter to an individual, in that their conduct on a given date was unacceptable and that any further unacceptable behaviour could lead to them being banned from the premises/services withdrawn;
- Violence and Aggression poster displayed;
- Continuous staffing of the reception/public facing area;
- Avoiding unnecessary risks with regard to personal safety.
- Agreed procedures in event of an imminent threat (actual or perceived) to personal safety, employees to leave the area of the threat and seek safe refuge. This applies equally to visits in the home where staff must terminate the visit and leave.
- Adopt a non-confrontational and non-judgemental approach to service users. Avoid being patronising, to service users.
- Agreed procedure that Employees must **not** physically intervene in disputes/fights between people. An Employee's primary action is protecting the safety of themselves, colleagues and others in the vicinity by clearing others from the immediate area, seeking a safe refuge for themselves and others and calling for Police assistance.

3.3 Operational Guidelines – Contact with the public

Managers should ensure that employees, who make regular contact with the public and/ or may be exposed to violent or aggressive situations as a result of work activity, are provided with operational guidelines and are fully aware of what is expected of them in order to mitigate against the risk of violent behaviour.

Where employees are expected to visit, interview or meet clients out with the office or within normal work situations, the employees should ensure that the following information is made available to appropriate colleagues:

- The whereabouts and purpose of the visit,
- The client's name and address,
- The expected time of return.

This Guidance on Violence and Aggression at Work should therefore be considered in conjunction with the Board's Guidance on Lone Working.

Suitable communication equipment may be identified through the risk assessment process, e.g. mobile phones, panic buttons, bespoke lone worker systems etc. Where an employee is out of the office, on-site, or visiting another location or client and decides to proceed directly to another

appointment in the same area and this has not been previously logged, then they should notify their work base to provide details of their revised arrangements etc.

If a visit is arranged at a location where a potentially violent or aggressive situation could arise, then the risk assessment process should be used to determine if there is a need for two employees to attend, or alternatively, it may be considered appropriate to insist on an '*office only'* interview.

Consideration should be given to the following when assessing the risk of violence and aggression.
- The employee's age and experience
- The nature of the interaction expected of them
- The extent of the supervision required.

Consideration should also be given to the sharing of information between services and/ or other agencies. For example, if a Board employee encounters a violent or aggressive situation at a property when attending to carry out an appeal inspection then this information should be communicated to canvassers within the constraints of data protection legislation, who might also be required to visit the same property.

The Board reserves the right to report to the Police any instances of assault or any threat of criminal intent to any of its employees and to withdraw Board services as appropriate.

3.4   Challenging Behaviour

A clear distinction should however be made in circumstances where, for example, an individual strikes out due to their level of challenging behaviour. The employee's line manager will, in discussion with the Head of Valuation Services, reserve the right to ensure that the Police are informed only in circumstances where it is considered appropriate. If, after reporting a valid incident of physical assault to the Police, the assaulted employee experiences pressure, either internally or externally to withdraw the complaint then they must report this to the Assessor & ERO.

3.5   Physical Interventions

Physical Interventions can be defined as:
> *'Any Board approved method of responding to the challenging behaviour of an individual which may involve some degree of direct physical force that limits or restricts the movement or mobility of the person concerned.'*

Three broad categories of interventions are identified:

1. Direct physical contact between an employee and an aggressor, e.g. holding the person's arms and / or legs to stop them attacking someone or causing injury to themselves.

2. The use of barriers, such as a locked door, to limit freedom of movement, e.g. placing locks, bolts or door catches beyond the assailants reach.

3. Materials and equipment to restrict or prevent movement.

Managers should also ensure that the employees who are expected to provide this assistance are adequately and suitably instructed.

This instruction should incorporate the following:
- recognising when physical intervention is necessary
- using minimal physical intervention techniques safely and effectively
- awareness of anger management and de-escalation techniques
- physical intervention and the law.

Any form of physical restraint must only be used as a last resort, and previously risk assessed and agreed by the Head of Valuation Services as a potential action in mitigation. It should also take into account the circumstances and act as a means of preventing the assailant from injuring either themselves or the victim.

To minimise the level of risk, managers must ensure that employees receive adequate training and support to ensure best practice is observed in their respective disciplines.

3.6   Reporting Arrangements

Managers must ensure that incidents of violence or aggression towards employees are reported and recorded in accordance with the Board's Guidance on Incident Reporting and Investigation. Incidents of a serious violent nature should be reported immediately to the Head of Valuation Services who should then notify the Police.

Reporting of all violent or aggressive incidents will help in assessing the extent of the problem and the level of risk to employees. It will also allow managers to ensure that preventative action is being taken to avoid a recurrence. Incident reporting will therefore be looked on positively and will not be regarded as a failure on anyone's part.

Board employees must complete the Guidance Violence and Aggression Reporting Form (VA1) if they have been subject to any violence or aggression.

Forms should be completed as soon as possible after the incident while the facts are still readily available and returned to the Head of Valuation Services for processing within 10 days of the incident to ensure compliance with reporting legislation. Forms submitted more than 15 days after the incident date must be approved and countersigned by the Assessor & ERO. The Head of Valuation Services will notify the HSE of incidents that require to be reported in terms of the *Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2015* (RIDDOR).

3.7   Information, Instruction and Training

Senior managers must ensure employees receive relevant training where the employee has regular contact with clients and/ or members of the public and may be exposed to the risk of violence and aggression. All relevant new employees should receive adequate and appropriate training at an early stage in their employment and existing employees should receive regular refresher training – the timescales of which can be identified by risk assessment.

The training needs of existing employees should be regularly assessed through the risk assessment and PDR process. Training should be focused towards developing interpersonal skills to enable employees to assess situations and minimise the likelihood of a violent situation developing. It should emphasize prevention/defusing/de-escalation.

3.8 Employee Support

The Board recognises that employees who have been subjected to incidents of violence or aggression at work may suffer from emotional, psychological and physical harm. It is therefore considered essential that managers respond to these situations in a supportive manner and arrange for employee support or counselling as required. This can be organised by the Boards Personnel Representatives by referral to Occupational Health.

Following a violent incident, the manager should consider the following points;

   (a)   Should the employee undertake 'refresher training'
   (b)   Is there a requirement for additional support, supervision and monitoring?
   (c)   Should the risk assessment be revisited in the light of the circumstances?

4.   Summary

It should be understood that these general guidelines cannot cover every eventuality and members of staff are expected to make their own professional judgements in the light of this guidance. Staff acting in good faith following such judgements can reasonably expect to have the full support of the Board.

5.   Further Information

For further information please contact your Risk and Safety Officer or the Risk and Safety Team at corporate.safety@south-ayrshire.gov.uk, **Newton House, 30 Green Street Lane, Ayr KA8 8BH** Telephone: **(01292) (61) 2965**

Occupational Health
South Ayrshire Council, 12 Bath Place, Ayr KA7 1DP
Tel: 01292 (61) 2139

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
Cornerstone
107 West Regent Street
Glasgow
G2 2BA
www.hse.gov.uk

Employment Medical Advisory Service (EMAS)
Cornerstone
107 West Regent Street
Glasgow
G2 2BA

www.hse.gov.uk

http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/

http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf

http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/advice/Legislation-and-policy/employee-issues/violence-aggression

http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/preventing-workplace-harassment.pdf

Working alone in safety; controlling the risks of solitary working – HSE leaflet INDG73 (rev2)

APPENDIX 1: Violence and Aggression checklist

Section	Yes	No	N/A
Is there any historical evidence of verbal or physical aggression to staff? • Verbal abuse • Physical abuse • Stalking or victimisation • Intimidation • Offensive messages or telephone abuse • Threat with use of a weapon			
How often do violent incidents occur (physical and verbal)? • Every few months • Once a month • Several times a month • Once a week • Several times a week • More than once a day			
When are violent incidents most likely to occur in your workplace? • 7 am > 5 pm • 5 pm > 10 pm • 10 pm > 7 am • At any time			
What days of the week are violent incidents most likely to occur in your workplace? Please score each day **7 = most likely & 1 = least likely** • Monday • Tuesday • Wednesday • Thursday • Friday • Saturday • Sunday • Any Day			
Are the following adequate? • Lighting • Temperature • Ventilation • Colour schemes • Housekeeping • Seating			
In your Service Area, do the complex needs of your clients or service users increase the risk of violence and aggression?			
Internal environmental issues?			

• Are there excessive noises which could cause distraction • Are there isolated areas such as treatment, interview or cash handling rooms • Are rooms laid out in such a way to allow safe exit for staff in an emergency? • Could an aggressor be situated between the employee and the door? • Are there designated waiting areas • Are these adequately supervised • Is there adequate signage displaying corporate policy or guidance • Are staff protected by additional security measures where required? • Is money or valuables kept in the working area?			

Are there any potentially dangerous fixtures and fittings?
    • Unsecured Tables
    • Waste bins
    • Unsecured seats
    • Sharp corners
    • Office equipment			

External environmental issues? • Is there adequate parking spaces • Is there adequate lighting • Is there a long travel distance between the parking and work area? • Is CCTV coverage of routes • Is the CCTV monitored at all times?			
Are there alarm systems in place by which staff can summon help? • Please state what system you have in place - • Are alarms fitted in rooms where interviews take place? • Are alarms easy to activate? • Do staff know how to use the alarms? • Are the alarms tested regularly? • Can the alarm be heard in all areas? • Are there procedures in place once the alarm has been raised?			
What training has staff received? • MAPA (Management of Actual or Potential Aggression) • Personal Safety Course (COAST) • Formal accredited training (external)			