Work-related Violence Policy
Most recent update: 02 April 2025

Scope

This policy applies to all our staff and our sub-contracted partners delivering Adult Education provision. Due to the nature of the work we do, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff, the purpose of this statement is to set out our policy and procedures to prevent, manage and respond to work-related violence. It must be noted that these incidents are thankfully rare but clear guidelines are required to give staff some confidence in how to deal with these situations should they arise and the knowledge that such incidents are not to be accepted as 'just part of the job'.

Definition Of Work-Related Violence

We will define work-related violence as any incident in which an employee is abused either verbally or physically, threatened or assaulted by a service user or member of the public in circumstances arising during the course of his/her employment. This includes both face to face and online contact. The following is based on the Health and Safety Executive's definition.

Physical assault is defined as "the intentional application of force against the person without lawful justification resulting in physical injury or personal discomfort".

Non-physical assault is defined as:

•   offensive or obscene language,
•   verbal abuse and swearing,
•   brandishing weapons, or objects which could be used as weapons,
•   attempted assaults,
•   offensive gestures,
•   threats,
•   intimidation,
•   harassment or stalking,
•   damage to buildings, equipment or vehicles which causes fear for personal safety,
•   offensive language or behaviour related to a person's, race, gender, nationality, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation,
•   inappropriate sexual language.

Overarching Principles

This policy is underpinned by the principle that we will not tolerate any instances of work-related violence - including verbal abuse - of our staff. No member of staff will be blamed for an instance of work-related violence caused by a customer or member of the public. All employees have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect.

It must be noted that we do not have any staff trained to carry out security activities eg physically removing a perpetrator from the building.

Responsibilities of staff and managers

All managers have a responsibility to implement this policy and to make sure their staff are aware of it and understand it.   Managers should also:

• Risk assess all front line work environments, implement control measures as required and regularly update.

• Treat any reports of work-related violence seriously, whether threats or abuse, including verbal abuse (eg being sworn at) and respond to them promptly.

• Record details of the incident where appropriate and give all employees involved in the incident full support during the whole process.

• Managers should also respond and consider any suggestions made by staff about how to improve violence prevention and management, and give feedback to staff about their suggestions, including whether it will be taken forward and if not, why not.

• Set a positive example by reporting all incidents of violence and abuse, and not tolerating abusive behaviour from customers and members of the public. Respond to and, where possible, resolve incidents ideally before they escalate.

• Monitor incidences of violence and abuse and initiate appropriate action if more measures are needed.

• Where possible, direct staff to appropriate support and advice after an incident has occurred. Encourage other staff members to support their colleagues, including those that might have witnessed the incident. If victims are particularly traumatised by the event, provide support where possible, such as time off work or changes to their tasks.

• If an investigation is needed, work with the police and offer any assistance needed to help in their enquiries.

• All staff have a personal responsibility for their own behaviour and to work in a way that minimises any risk for potential conflict.

Prevention And Management Measures

There are a number of measures in place following the risk assessment that staff should be aware of. These fall under the areas of work environment, working practices and training.

Work environment

• The working environment is designed to meet the needs of our customers with staff on hand to help them.   Involve staff and customers in the design of the environment where possible.
• All work environments should have a clear and agreed response to the immediate threat of workplace violence. See Critical Incident Plan.

- All council buildings have CCTV to monitor and survey the premises. Whilst not all areas of our buildings are covered by CCTV, they can act as a deterrent and also provide footage to be used by the police to identify perpetrators.
- In addition and for leased buildings, other alarm systems eg personal alarms, portable doorbells can be used for staff working in different rooms of the building.
- All personal possessions (eg handbags, purses) should be locked away.
- Sufficient staff should be available at all times to meet the needs of the working environment. Managers should ensure that adequate numbers of staff are available at all times by providing additional cover eg from back office staff when required. See Lone Working Policy.

Working Practices

There are a number of things that staff can do to help prevent work-related violence:

- Offer good customer service and be aware of customer needs.
- Overtly promote standards of behaviour expected within our settings and do not accept deviation from these standards.
- Recognise the potential for work-related violence. Take action to resolve it early on by taking steps to diffuse the situation and prevent escalation. Staff should take positive action and, for example, contact a manager if they think a service user or a member of the public might cause problems.
- Do not accept instances of work-related violence directed towards you or others. Staff should report any instances of violence, threats or abuse. Reports should include details of when it happened, who was involved and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident. Serious incidents should be reported in writing to the line manager through our Incident Report procedure but minor incidents and incidents of verbal abuse should be reported informally to managers as they occur.
- If a customer is known to the centre for red flag behaviours, this should be recorded on the Hubs (formerly Work Zone) database/partner database. All centre staff including tutors should be made aware.

Training

The following training should be provided:

- All staff, including new staff, should receive awareness training on work-related violence, our policy and procedures, how to prevent work-related violence, reporting procedures and what to do following an incident. This may be through formal training or a briefing from managers, depending on the risk potential for the staff members. There is I-Learn training available in Dealing with Conflict. Staff should request specific CPD through their appraisal/1:1 meetings with line managers.
- Managers will be trained as above, as well as on how to handle complaints and trouble among customers effectively.
- Risk assessment and lone working training and policies.
- Building familiarity and if an offsite venue, noting the presence of other staff in the building.

Procedure For Dealing With Incidents

Depending on the nature of the incident, the following steps should be taken:

• The service user should be politely informed that their behaviour/language is unacceptable and ask them to refrain from the behaviour. If the behaviour is in relation to a set of conditions/circumstances, try to find a solution or provide an explanation.
• If the behaviour continues, it may be necessary to ask the service user to leave the building.
• Call for another colleague to support you.
• Report the incident immediately to your line manager. It is important that all incidences are reported so we can monitor any escalation as well as take the necessary actions to prevent reoccurrence wherever possible.
• A letter will be sent to the perpetrator outlining our standards of acceptable behaviour and the consequences of not meeting these standards.

In the case of a serious event (for example, physical violence or serious threat of physical violence)

• Try and remove yourself from the situation immediately and call for support from a nearby colleague.
• The service user should be told to leave the building immediately.
• Report the incident to the line manager.
• The line manager will register the incident with the local police.
• Depending on the severity of the incident some cases may be taken over by the police as a criminal matter. A letter will be sent to the perpetrator inviting them to a meeting to discuss the incident. They will not be allowed to access our service until this meeting has taken place and future risk has been assessed. Options for the future course of action will take the views of the staff involved into consideration.

If a user has displayed serious anti-social behaviour towards staff, it may be necessary to include the service user's details in CW&C's Hazardous Persons Register. This will be done in conjunction with our Health and Safety team.

Actions following an incident

• Medical assistance should be provided immediately where required.
• The police should be informed of a serious incident involving physical attack or serious cases of threatening or verbal abuse. Police should also be informed of persistent cases of violence, threats and abuse.
• All incidents must be reported to the line manager. Any serious incidents will be reported to the council's Health and Safety team by the line manager.
• All incidents will be recorded in a summary register by the Skills and Employment Manager for monitoring purposes.

Linked CW&C Skills & Employment policies

- Lone Working
- Bullying and Harassment
- Safeguarding
- Online Safety
- Health and Safety
- Critical Incident Plan