

# HEALTH AND SAFETY Policy & Guidance Note



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<b>Violence and Aggression</b>			

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## REVISION TABLE

Issue Number	Date issued	Revision / Change
1	October 2025	New Policy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As an employer Cheshire East Council must ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare of all its employees and others working on its behalf such as agency workers, apprentices and volunteers. The Council accepts that there are occasions when employees are required to work with clients and members of the public who are anxious or distressed and so may be more inclined to direct aggressive or violent behaviour towards them.

The Council **does not accept** that violence and aggression should be part of any working situation, whether that happens in a physical or virtual space, and does not accept that employees should have to work in fear of physical or verbal abuse or threats and intimidation. The Council therefore takes a zero-tolerance approach to violent or aggressive behaviour directed towards its employees and will fully support anyone who is faced with such behaviour.

The Council is committed to developing strategies to deal with problems of violence towards its employees. This document is intended to support a working environment and culture in which aggressive or violent behaviour **is unacceptable**. It provides a framework for the recognition of, response to and management of aggression and violence so that employees have better knowledge of how to deal with potential or actual cases as they arise.

This Guidance Note should be read in conjunction with the Council Guidance Note on Lone Working, Risk Assessment Guidance Note and the Council's Social Media Policy, all of which can be found on the Centranet.

## 2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Council has a general duty to provide safe systems of work, a safe workplace and safe plant and equipment.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require that a suitable and sufficient assessment be undertaken of the risks to the health and safety of employees whilst at work and this would include the risks of violence and aggression that employees may be subjected to.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 3.1. Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council has robust policies and procedures in place for dealing with aggressive and violent behaviour towards employees. The requirements of this policy will be implemented through the Executive Directors, Directors, Heads of Service, Departmental Managers and Supervisory Management.

### **3.2. Executive Directors, Directors, Heads of Service**

Executive Directors, Directors and Heads of Service will ensure that, within their areas of responsibility, the necessary resources are made available to implement this policy, these including those required for security systems and equipment, training and managerial support.

### **3.3. Line Managers**

Line Managers must ensure that:

- Employees are made aware of this policy and guidance note and of the measures taken by the Council to reduce the risks of violence and aggression towards employees.
- Risk assessments are prepared for the risks that employees may encounter whilst carrying out their duties. These should include assessments of current working practices, the working environment, existing measures implemented in order to prevent and manage violent incidents and the identification of training needs. They should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they remain suitable and sufficient.
- The Council Policy and Guidance Note on Risk Assessment and the associated risk assessment template can be found in the Health and Safety Section of the Centranet by visiting the Intranet site, clicking onto 'Document Finder' then 'Documents by Topic' and then 'Health and Safety'.
- The findings of the risk assessments should be communicated to employees who may be affected by them and a register of completed risk assessment forms should be accessible to all employees and a copy kept in work areas.
- Safe systems of work are established and maintained.
- Employees receive appropriate training in the handling of aggressive and violent behaviour.
- Employees are aware of where to request assistance in the event of a potential incident involving violence and aggression or after such an event has occurred.
- Employees report all incidents involving violence and aggression to their manager and that these are recorded on the Accident Management System.
- Following an incident, undertake a full investigation, in order to determine what occurred and whether any changes in procedure or other preventative actions are required in order to reduce the risk of a reoccurrence. Any employees involved in the incident should be de-briefed and where required offered support and counselling.

- All equipment, such as personal protection alarms, which is related to dealing with violent or aggressive incidents is readily available and in good working order.

### **3.4. Employees**

Employees are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy and guidance note.
- Not undertaking any activities that may cause themselves or others harm.
- Adhering to any instruction, information and training that they have received.
- Ensuring that incidents are reported on the Accident Management System using the correct reporting procedure.
- Reporting any concerns to their line manager or Trade Union Official.

## **4. POTENTIAL HAZARDS**

Employees could encounter any of the following:

- Verbal or physical assault.
- Sexual or racial harassment.
- Robbery or attack (especially employees who are thought to be carrying money, mobile phones or other valuable items).
- Illness or psychological trauma (e.g. arising from being forcibly/physically detained).
- Problems with communication (e.g. inadequate mobile phone signal).
- Being attacked or bitten by an animal.
- Receiving abusive and intimidating communications

The risks can be greater for employees when they are:

- Visiting peoples' homes.
- Working alone 'out of hours' in vulnerable areas e.g. town centres, carparks etc. where there might be danger from people affected by alcohol or drugs.
- Travelling alone either at night, in extreme weather conditions or along seldom used roads.
- Meeting with people previously unknown to them.
- Carrying out specific roles including enforcement (civil and planning), regulatory inspections, social working, care working etc. or handling cash.
- Working in remote, rural or isolated workplaces.

## **5. DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION**

The EU definition of work-related violence and aggression is 'Any incident where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work involving an explicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health.'

## **6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

Line Managers should prepare risk assessments for all situations or activities where it is anticipated that employees may be at risk of being subjected to violence and aggression. These risk assessments should be undertaken in consultation with relevant employees and safety representatives to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls chosen. Low risk activities occurring on an infrequent basis can be included in the team activity risk assessment instead of having a specific risk assessment. High risk activities will need specific risk assessments to be undertaken, and, in some circumstances, dynamic risk assessments will need to be undertaken whilst the activity is underway.

When undertaking the risk assessment, the following should be considered:

- Have employees received adequate training to deal with the risks that they may encounter e.g. service users who may pose a high risk of causing violence or be aggressive?
- Have employees been provided with all necessary equipment (e.g. mobile phones, personal attack alarms, body cameras, radios, personal protective equipment) etc.
- Are the employees' lone workers capable of undertaking lone working duties and able to adequately control the risks of the job. See Lone Working Guidance Note.
- Is there a means of summoning help and agreeing a response procedure.

## **7. SAFE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**

Managers should ensure that in all areas where there is a risk of violence and aggression there is a means of communication with a manned back office or some other contact point (e.g. panic buttons at reception desks, and in interview rooms). These arrangements should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that they are operational. Safe-working arrangements for lone workers are discussed in the Corporate Guidance Note on Lone working.

A word or phrase should be decided on which the employee/s can use to alert the contact point that assistance is required.

Employees must be aware of signs that could indicate that they may be at risk of violence and aggression. These could include changes in the behaviour or speech (e.g. a change in tone) of the person that they are dealing with, or that person may be showing signs of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

When using areas such as interview rooms, employees should ensure that they remain between the exit door and the person in the room so that they can effect a rapid escape if necessary.

## **8. ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT OF IMMINENT OR ACTUAL VIOLENCE**

Employees should:

- Seek immediate assistance from anyone available including their Line Manager or Supervisor (Shout for help if necessary). Retreat if physical violence is used.
- Assess the situation to decide if the incident can be contained or if additional assistance is required. Where appropriate use verbal techniques to de-escalate behaviour.
- Where an individual considers that the presence of the police is required then they should dial 999. The Police should be called if employees feel threatened or have been harmed or there is an immediate risk of harm to others.
- Employees involved in an incident should take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of:
  - Themselves and people in close proximity
  - Those involved in the incident (including seeking medical assistance or first aid assistance where required)

The conservation of property should not be seen as having a high priority.

## **9. TRAINING**

Training available via the Workforce Development Team includes de-escalation techniques and personal safety (these must be included in each service area's team training plan and agreed with Workforce Development prior to submitting a request for corporate funding to be provided).

Introduction to the Accident Management System/refresher sessions and generic risk assessment training are arranged via the Corporate Health and Safety Admin Officer.

## **10. INCIDENT REPORTING**

All accidents, incidents and near misses which occur during working activities must be investigated by the line manager and reported on the Accident Management System as soon as possible.

## **11. INVESTIGATION**

An investigation will be conducted as soon as possible after receiving a report of violence or aggression at work. The relevant manager will write to the victim confirming that they are conducting an investigation along with the time scales for completion. The investigator will meet with the victim to gather as much detail as possible about the incident, including who the alleged perpetrator is; the nature of the incident; the time and date of the alleged act of violence or aggression and the details of any potential witnesses. All physical attacks that result in injury will be reported to the Police, unless the victim objects. For physical attacks that do not result in injury, the Council will involve the police only if the victim requests this.

If the Police are involved, the investigator will need to ensure that their investigation does not prejudice or disrupt the Police proceedings. In these circumstances, the investigator will pursue the investigation as far as possible in the normal way while ensuring that they cooperate with any requests made by the Police including any instructions that they give about what matters can be pursued.

## **12. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES**

Following being involved in an incident, employees may require additional support, and this can be provided via:

- The Occupational Health Service (e.g. for counselling – where the employee is referred by their manager)
- Employee Assistance Programme – which is available 365 days throughout the year and provides free and confidential access to information and advice and support to all CEC employees and their families. Access is via 0800 111 6387 and [www.my-eap.com/login](http://www.my-eap.com/login).
- Mental Health first aiders

External sources of help and support are also available for individuals who experience violence or aggression at work, these including:

- Victim Support NI – Supporting People Affected by Crime
- Information and support for victims and witnesses – The Crown Prosecution Service
- Get support as a victim of crime – GOV.UK

## **13. FURTHER ACTION FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT/INVESTIGATION**

This may include:

- A discussion with the perpetrator to attempt to find agreement on ways of preventing a recurrence.
- A letter to the aggressor explaining why their behaviour was unacceptable and setting out criteria for future conduct.
- Liaising with the Police to provide them with any necessary information
- Formal communication requiring the perpetrator not to enter any or all of the Council's premises or make use of its services.
- Wider steps to reduce the risk of work-related violence or aggression e.g. changing the workplace design, providing information and training, amending agreed communication channels, or amending working procedures.

In all cases, the relevant manager will write to the employee informing them of the outcome and of what further actions are being taken

Employees should be encouraged to use the criminal justice system to prevent occurrences of violence and aggression, whether it is physical assaults or verbal abuse.

There are numerous offences within the Public Order Act to cater for violence and aggression where no physical assault has taken place.

Where employees have actually been physically assaulted then these offences fall within the Offences Against the Persons Act and attract a higher sentence from the courts.

#### **14. POLICE POWERS**

**Breach of the Peace** – The Police can arrest and take away an offender only if they are still committing the breach or if it is likely that the breach will occur again.

**Actual Bodily Harm, Theft, Damage** – The Police can arrest if the offence has been committed, the offence is in progress, or the police believe the offence is about to be committed.

**Arrest** – If an arrest is made, the Police will expect employees who have witnessed that event to be prepared to make statements and to appear in court as witnesses, for which employees will receive support from their line manager and the Legal Services team.

#### **15. DATA PROTECTION**

The Council will ensure that individuals personal data, including information about their health, collected when preventing and dealing with violence at work (for example during risk assessments and accident investigations) is handled in accordance with the Council's policies on data protection.

#### **16. REFERENCES**

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Corporate Policy on Lone Working
- Social Media Policy

#### **17. GUIDANCE NOTE REVIEW**

This document will be reviewed on a biennial basis or earlier if required.