



A Safer Place

Self-audit Tool

Combating
Violence Against
Social Care Staff

Self-audit Tool

National Task Force On Violence Against Social Care Staff

Description

This Self-audit Tool aims to help employers to make a quick judgement about whether their organisation's framework for management and practice minimises the potential for workers to be subject to violence and abuse, and enables a supportive response if incidents occur.

The tool can be used at any management level in your organisation: all managers should ideally be able to answer 'yes' to all of the questions.

The questions require a yes/no answer for simplicity, but a box is provided for a qualifying comment.

Principles

Each question in the Self-audit Tool is linked to a set of principles.

Where the answer to the Self-audit Tool question is 'yes', these principles should enable employers to check that they fully understand their responsibilities. Where the answer is 'no', the principles will help employers to begin to develop safe management and practice.

1	LEGAL Are you aware of your legal responsibilities in relation to violence and abuse to your workers?	→	Yes	No
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Comments	
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2	POLICY Does your organisation have a written policy statement in relation to violence and abuse to your workers?	→	Yes	No
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Comments	
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Examples

The Task Force has selected some examples of documentation in relation to each of the Audit Tool questions. This material is available on the Task Force website (www.doh.gov.uk/violencetaskforce) in the form of:

- reviews of research
- guideline documents
- policy and procedural documents currently in use or being developed by employers.

Links are provided to either the text of the example, or to related websites where the document can be found.

There are also some key documents on the website which provide a general overview of the issues.

The Task Force has not found a single set of documents for the social care sector which outlines policy, practice and procedure and which encapsulates all the principles. Typically the examples of documentation we have seen deal with one or more aspects well, but may omit or skate over other aspects, therefore our examples are drawn from a wide range of papers.

The Task Force has made a beginning, but this is a development task that will continue once the Task Force has finished its work. Other examples of good work by employers will be put onto the website as they become available.

There is very little formal research about the positive outcomes to be achieved by employing the various approaches set out in the documentation, but the principles follow good health and safety management practice and are based on what research there is and a gathering of the broadest experience of employers, employees and service users. It is for employers to integrate use of the material into their existing health and safety management. This is best achieved by engaging the expertise and experience of workers and service users.

PRINCIPLES

This Self-audit Tool has been set in the context of the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This legislation defines the legal principles that employers should follow.

The main pieces of health and safety law which are relevant to violence against workers are:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Employers have a legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992
Employers must assess the risks to employees and make arrangements for their health and safety.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)

Employers must notify their enforcing authority in the event of an accident at work to any employee resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for three or more days.

- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996
Employers must inform, and consult with, employees in good time on matters relating to their health and safety.

Other legislation which employers should be mindful of includes the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Under this legislation, an employee has the right not to be penalised by their employer for taking actions to protect themselves or other persons.

Examples of legal documentation can be found on the Task Force website.

PRINCIPLES

Violence, threats and abuse to workers are unacceptable.

Good policy will be developed in full consultation with all stakeholders, including service users and workers. However you need to make a clear statement from the top of your organisation which:

- recognises the risk
- gives a commitment to do something about it
- says who is responsible for doing what
- explains what is expected of every care worker
- supports workers who have been assaulted and abused
- encourages workers to report incidents.

Your policy will need to define what is meant by violence and abuse. The National Task Force has adopted the following definition: *'Incidents where persons are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health'*.

The policy statement is likely to state your expectations in relation to the following elements:

- risk assessment
- environment
- service users
- social care workers
- training
- response to incidents
- post incident responses
- review and audit.

More on policy principles can be found on the Task Force website.

Examples of policy statements can be found on the Task Force website.

PRINCIPLES

The risk assessment is the starting point for dealing with violence and it should include considering the following:

- Step 1: look for hazards
- Step 2: who might be harmed and how?
- Step 3: evaluate the risks – check out your precautions
- Step 4: record your findings
- Step 5: review and revise

Examples of approaches to risk assessment can be found on the Task Force Web Site.

Carrying out a risk assessment should be underpinned by an understanding of the issues and the best knowledge available. There has been a limited amount of recent academic research into the management of violence and abuse of social care workers, but the Task Force has undertaken a review of the research available, conducted focus groups of frontline workers, met with service users, and consulted widely with other stakeholders.

An overview of this work is enclosed and all our findings are also available on the Task Force website.

PRINCIPLES

The findings from your risk assessment should be translated into a detailed action plan. You should consider management action in relation to four main areas.

Environment

The physical environment may affect the likelihood of violent incidents and the ease with which people can respond to them. If you are responsible for the design, alteration or upgrading of work areas, you might find it useful to consult security personnel, the local police crime prevention officer and architectural liaison officers.

You will need to consider the following environmental areas:

- public access
- waiting rooms and reception areas
- security systems
- day care and residential services
- community visiting.

Examples of approaches to environmental design can be found on the Task Force website.

Service users

Risks can be reduced if organisations and workers adopt a non-confrontational and supportive approach to service users, are open, friendly and take a caring approach in tune with their needs and difficulties. At the same time organisations should be prepared to state what is unacceptable behaviour and the circumstances when service will be withdrawn.

Workers should be given the opportunity to receive equal opportunities training to enhance their awareness of issues of importance to service users, and service users should be informed about issues of racism and sexism so that they understand why certain behaviour is offensive.

There is a range of issues which need to be considered in relation to:

- risk assessment of service users
- good care planning
- sharing information with other service users
- information exchange with other agencies.

Examples of approaches to service user issues can be found on the Task Force website.

Social care workers

Your planning should consider:

Recruitment of workers

When recruiting workers, it is important to consider any risks around the job.

Staffing levels

Managers who set staffing levels need to ensure there are always enough suitably trained workers to cope with any foreseeable violence.

Good practice

Much good practice applies to all social care workers, whatever task they do and wherever they are based, but there can be some issues that affect some groups of workers more than others. You should consider the particular needs of the following groups of workers:

- Reception and administrative
- Community based
- Domiciliary care
- Residential care
- Day care
- Managerial
- Agency
- Student and volunteer

Examples of approaches to social care worker issues can be found on the Task Force website.

Training

Training in assessing risk and managing violence is very important for all support and care workers and their managers. People who work with particularly violent or aggressive people need specialist training to help them work as safely as possible.

You should consider the training needs of all workers, and undertake a training needs assessment. This is a requirement on SSDs under the Training Support Programme.

Employers need to identify appropriate levels of training in relation to violence for all their workers. A suggested framework is:

Level 1: induction – all workers

Level 2: foundation – care workers

Level 3: intermediate – workers who work in high risk settings.

Level 4: frontline management

Level 5: strategic management

Examples of approaches to training issues can be found on the Task Force website.

5 **RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS**
Does your policy and procedure make it clear to workers how they should respond to violent and abusive incidents?

In respect of their practice skills	
Yes	No
In respect of administrative procedures to follow	
Yes	No

Comments

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6 **POST -INCIDENT RESPONSES**
Does your policy and procedure inform workers, victims, colleagues and managers about what they should do after a violent or abusive incident?

About immediate response	
Yes	No
About response soon after	
Yes	No

Comments

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7 **REVIEW AND AUDIT**
Does your procedure expect and enable managers to regularly check that your arrangements are effective and working?

Yes	No
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Comments

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PRINCIPLES

Violence is not inevitable

All workers have the right to:

- day-to-day support from their managers in dealing with violence and abuse
- working environments that maximise worker safety
- training that fits their job.

Foreseeable violent incidents may range from verbal abuse to life-threatening assaults. Managers need to ensure that procedures are in place for responding to incidents, and that they match the level of risk. Workers who are exposed to the risk of violence and abuse need training on the procedures to follow in the event of an incident. It is important that they are aware of the criteria for initiating procedures, and are free to do so when they feel under threat.

While no substitute for training, some brief principles in relation to worker response to incidents can be found on the enclosed Employee checklist.

Examples of approaches to responses to incidents can be found on the Task Force website.

Practice

You should expect workers to know how to:

- identify potential risks
- avoid potentially dangerous situations
- de-escalate
- disengage
- call for help
- use appropriate physical intervention.

Procedure

Procedures for responding to incidents need to:

- describe the circumstances in which they should be followed
- describe the role of individual workers
- nominate an individual to co-ordinate response action
- set out any circumstances in which physical intervention is necessary
- include arrangements in some settings for ensuring that a control and restraint team is identified and available at all times if required by the risk assessment
- include criteria for calling the police
- give clear guidance on recording and reporting procedures for the full range of incident types.

PRINCIPLES

People react to incidents in many different ways. Managers need to be sensitive to this. All these procedures will be more effective if they operate so that the support is offered automatically without the worker having to request it.

Immediate response

The first action should be to make any persons involved safe. Provide or obtain medical attention where necessary. Report to the police if appropriate.

- As soon as possible:
 - the details of any assailant and any witnesses should be noted
 - report the event to managers and where applicable to union representative, health and safety officer, emergency duty team and/or staff welfare officer
 - record the event according to your procedures.

- Employers should:
 - provide debriefing sessions (both for workers and for the perpetrator)
 - determine actions to be taken in relation to the perpetrator
 - ensure colleagues and other agencies are aware if necessary
 - provide emotional support for victims
 - investigate the incident.

Soon after

Your procedures should be clear about what support is available to workers in relation to:

- counselling
- insurance and compensation
- prosecution.

Examples of approaches to post-incident responses can be found on the Task Force website.

PRINCIPLES

Review and audit is an essential part of running a safe organisation. This is one of the most neglected areas of the management task, even though it is an essential stage in good health and safety management.

It is not enough just to tell people about working safely, it is essential to check they are actually doing it.

The aim of review is to consider the operation of your policy and procedure, and any changes which should be made to them to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. Managers, workers and service users should be consulted, and regular reports should be made to those at the most senior level of the organisation, including councillors in the case of local authority employers. Reports should also be made to employee organisations.

Reviews should take place after incidents or when there have been significant changes in the work environment or function.

This might lead to:

- changes to the workplace
- changes to working procedures
- new working procedures
- additional training requirements.

Always feed back to workers the reports that are produced, and any actions decided upon.

Examples of effective monitoring and auditing arrangements can be found on the Task Force website.

Action Plan

Action	To be completed by	
	Who	Date
