

Violence at Work Policy P630

Contents

(If you are viewing this document online, click on the headings below to jump to the relevant section)

1. Policy	2
2. Definition	2
3. Minimising the risk of violence at work	2
3.1 Risk assessment and work related violence	3
3.1.1 Control measures	3
3.1.2 Training.....	4
3.1.3 Risk Assessment Review.....	4
4. Reporting violent incidents and taking relevant action	4
5. Support for employees	5
5.1 The role of the Police	5
5.2 Compensation to staff	6

Violence at Work Policy P630

1. Policy

Norfolk County Council (NCC) readily recognises its statutory obligations to provide a safe working environment and safe working practices for all staff, and particularly in this context, those whose work may have an identifiable level of risk of threatening or violent behaviour by others.

NCC also recognises its responsibilities to provide work places which minimise the risk of violence occurring, and to ensure that methods of work are safe.

The Authority takes a serious view of any incident of violence against its employees. NCC public buildings will display a copy of the NCC Expect Respect requirements in their premises which details behaviours that are not tolerated towards members of staff. It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that these requirements are implemented.

As an employer NCC will support any employee who is assaulted or threatened in the course of their duties and it is the responsibility of managers to ensure that their staff are adequately trained and competent to fulfil their duties in a manner which will not escalate or promote the likelihood of violence occurring.

Furthermore NCC acknowledges that no person should have to work in fear of assault and that an incidence of violence should not be seen as a reflection of an employee's ability.

2. Definition

Violence at work is any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public/client in circumstances arising out of the course of his or her employment. This would include racist or sexist abuse. NCC employees, especially those who have regular contact with the public, may be at risk of violence whilst at work.

3. Minimising the risk of violence at work

Managers are responsible for identifying those areas of work and working space where staff may be at risk of violence. Consequently, they should be aware of the need to review working practices and the physical environment to identify areas of potential risk and to minimise the probability of violence occurring.

The frequency of such reviews will clearly be influenced by the nature of the work undertaken and the particular circumstances which apply, for example, enforcement activities, handling valuables, working with people who are known to be aggressive and certain lone working activities can carry a higher risk.

Specific work activities and premises identified as more likely to experience violence related incidents should issue working guidelines in the relevant teams. For the majority

Violence at Work Policy P630

of staff, however, simple measures can significantly reduce the risk of violence which can include: improved lighting; issuing personal alarms; controlling access to premises and clearly signing information for visitors.

Consultation with the members of staff directly concerned, and their representatives if appropriate, should take place to raise awareness of the risk of violence and to jointly identify potential risks and possible steps which could be taken to reduce those risks. It is then a management responsibility to ensure that action is taken on those steps.

3.1 Risk assessment and work related violence

Managers are responsible for ensuring that a risk assessment is carried out and safe working practices are created and followed. This includes ensuring that employees are not exposed to undue risk of violence.

Managers and the teams involved should consider the environment in which they work to identify areas where violence may occur, for example, reception areas in buildings without authorised access.

Further guidance on conducting risk assessments and a template form are available on PeopleNet

3.1.1 Control measures

This section provides some examples of measures which may be suitable for areas where there is the potential for violent situations:

- Consideration should be given to fitting alarm systems and/or protective screens in reception areas. There are some indications, however, that obvious alarm systems/protective screens can encourage violence. An alternative to screens may be to fit wider counters providing a safe distance to thwart an attack without giving security a high profile. Concealed panic buttons may also be a suitable alternative to more obvious alarm systems. Portable items such as heavy vases should be avoided in waiting areas as they make convenient weapons.
- Interview rooms are another area where violence may occur. Simple steps to minimise risk include altering the layout to maintain an escape path if required. Interview rooms should not be totally isolated and vision panels in the doors fitted unless good reasons exist for not fitting these.
- In addition to specific areas, regard should be given to general security arrangements such as lighting and providing authorised access for visitors and staff in certain buildings.
- An area of higher risk would be where visits are undertaken away from the workplace. Lone working practices should be assessed using the policy and

Violence at Work Policy P630

guidance provided on PeopleNet. For off site visits which are not carried out alone, it may still be identified that a “buddy” system is needed to monitor staff movements. An outline buddy system is available on PeopleNet for this purpose.

- A key factor in controlling lone worker risk is to ensure that lone workers are competent in adapting to a foreseeable range of changing and developing situations with little or no contact with their supervisor. The extent of supervision must be proportionate to the risk and the competency of the lone worker. The manager is responsible for ensuring that safe working arrangements are in place for all stages of the activity, from task planning, to implementation and completion. These arrangements include ensuring that lone workers are competent in adapting to a foreseeable range of changing and developing situations with little or no contact with their supervisor.

3.1.2 Training

The importance of training is recognised in the sense of raising awareness of the risk of violence and to help individuals to recognise situations where violence may occur and how to diffuse such situations. In addition managers and risk assessors may need to attend risk assessment training.

The lone working policy on PeopleNet also identifies where mandatory personal safety training is a requirement for specific lone worker groups.

Personal safety training is available through Corporate Training and Development or through your departmental learning and development leads.

3.1.3 Risk Assessment Review

Risk assessments must be regularly reviewed in line with changes which have been identified, for example, a violent incident has occurred. Managers must ensure that there are adequate reporting and feedback mechanisms are in place which allow for new information to be gathered about any changes which impact on the risk assessment. Changes to working practice must be assessed and communicated to all relevant staff.

If no changes have occurred within a twelve month period then the risk assessment should be reviewed at that point.

4. Reporting violent incidents and taking relevant action

Staff must report all incidents of violence including threatening/abusive behaviour, even if they are only of a minor nature. Incidents should be reported to the line manager and an Incident Report Form completed (available on PeopleNet).

Part of the actions which must be taken include following the actions which are detailed in the Expect Respect Guidelines which can be obtained through HR Direct.

Violence at Work Policy P630

If a known person is responsible for intimidating behaviour etc. it may be appropriate for the department to send a formal warning letter to the individual and inform the Police. If a client/customer is persistently displaying violent or aggressive behaviour towards one or more members of staff, staff should consult with their Supervisor to review the service provided. An example of action which can be taken is to withdraw provision of a face to face service and provide support by telephone.

5. Support for employees

If an employee is injured in or otherwise suffers as a result of a violent incident in the course of their work, NCC will provide support and help in accordance with the following arrangements.

If the employee is injured or in shock, assistance should be given with arranging medical treatment. Support must be given to the employee, however, over and above medical attention. Initially there should be no presumption of failure by the employee because violence has occurred. Supervisors should talk through the incident as soon as possible.

A counselling service, Norfolk Support Line is provided through NCC, the individual concerned may wish to make their own counselling arrangements either through their trade union or independently. If this is the case the employee should be supported and compassionate leave allowed accordingly. If private counselling is arranged, either through NCC or directly by the individual, reasonable costs will be met for up to five counselling sessions. This may be extended when necessary.

Norfolk Support Line can be contacted at any time and offer confidential and independent advice on any aspect of working arrangements that may cause an individual undue concern.

Staff should be advised of the legal options open to them (see 5.1 below) and in some circumstances it may be appropriate to refer the individual to their trade union for legal advice.

5.1 The role of the Police

If there is a severe disturbance, assault or threatened violence the Police should normally be called. If the Police are involved it may be decided by the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute an assailant. If however the Crown Prosecution Service decides not to prosecute for whatever reason, the employee has the option of pursuing the matter by taking private legal action against the assailant.

NCC Solicitors may be able to advise or act on behalf of a member of staff taking private legal action depending on the circumstances. Trade Union members may also be able to obtain advice/help from their Trade Union in this respect.

Violence at Work Policy P630

If it is decided by the individual to take private legal action, it should be remembered that they have already suffered from the assault itself and it is important that they are reassured and guided in seeking legal redress.

5.2 Compensation to staff

It is recognised that individuals who are injured or suffer damage to their property through no fault of their own and as a consequence of their work should not be financially disadvantaged.

In this context where injuries are sustained which result in absence from work, the absence will be treated as being attributable to industrial injury and will not, therefore, count against the normal sick pay entitlement. If full and half pay allowances becomes exhausted sympathetic consideration will be given to extending these depending on the circumstances of each case.

Compensation for any injuries sustained may come from a number of sources depending on the nature and severity of the injury. National Conditions of Service prescribe various payments to compensate for permanent disablement or death. Additionally, for less serious injuries compensation may be available through applying to the Personnel Sub-Committee. If the injuries are the result of an assault it may also be able to claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Agency. Enquiries and application forms are available from:-

Criminal Injuries Compensation Agency
Tay House
300 Bath Street
Glasgow
G2 4LN

Tel: 0800 358 3601

If personal property is damaged as a result of an assault, whether it be damaged clothing or more major items, compensation may be available either through various insurances held by the Authority or through contacting an HR Direct.