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INTRODUCTION

Employees of Bracknell Forest Borough Council, like all those who deal directly with the public, may face aggressive or violent behaviour, sexist, racist or other forms of verbal abuse. This behaviour does not have to be tolerated and the Council will support staff in their dealings with violent, abusive, sexist or racist behaviour. Employees should take reasonable precautions to avoid putting themselves at risk, and should inform their manager of any incidents so that they can give appropriate guidance and support. Violent or abusive behaviour must be treated seriously and always reported.

Violence includes not only physical attack, but also threatening behaviour, verbal abuse and behaviour calculated to cause hurt or distress. The Council is particularly concerned to ensure violence ostensibly based on issues related to gender ethnicity, disability, nationality, religion or other equal opportunity issues are expeditiously dealt with. Employees encountering violence in the course of their duties will be fully supported by the Council in all actions which, fall short of pursuing private litigation.

It is also the case that the violent incident may involve another employee rather than a member of the public. If this is so then the Bracknell Forest Borough Council's Code of Practice can still apply, with the investigation for the Violent Incident Report form (see Appendix A) serving as part of an investigation within the Disciplinary Procedure and as evidence at any subsequent hearing. However, employees should also be aware that the Council's Fair Treatment Policy provides an alternative procedure for dealing with harassment (particularly if the violent incident is not a one-off incident and a wider set of behaviour needs to be addressed).

Employees and volunteers in the education sector may be at risk of violence from pupils and their parents, and from other visitors; many of them consider violence at work to be one of the most serious problems that they face. As well as causing injury and distress, violence may harm the education process and cost money through absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and compensation payments.

Incidents involving intruders in schools in recent years have put staff, pupils and visitors at risk. post-Dunblane and Lord Cullen's Public Enquiry, this Council wishes to re-emphasise the importance of risk managing and assessing this area by school governors, head teachers and other education employers.

There is no simple solution to violence, and it is not the role of employers or staff to solve fundamental problems of violence in society. However, there is much that could be done to avoid and reduce risk of verbal or physical assault in schools where risk assessment shows that such assaults are foreseeable.

WHO MIGHT BE AT RISK?

A variety of services and jobs are performed in education, some of which can give rise to an increased risk of violence. Some examples are given in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1
Activities (and those who perform them) associated with risk of violence

Activities	People
Caretaking, looking after premises	Site supervisors (eg: caretakers), porters, security staff
Working alone	Cleaning staff, library staff, head-teachers, principals, teachers, lecturers, site supervisors, maintenance and administrative staff
Home visiting, off-site working	Education welfare officers, education social workers, teachers, researchers, psychologists, etc
Evening working	Teaching staff, library staff, cleaning staff, education welfare officers, youth and community workers, site supervisors, bursars, students
Running licensed premises in education establishments	Bar staff
Looking after animals/research with animals	Animal house technicians, teaching staff, research workers
Working with pupils with behavioural difficulties	Teachers, educational psychologists, day-care helpers, nursery nurses
Looking after money	Bursars, clerical and finance staff, head-teachers, teachers, school secretaries
Supervising/disciplining students	Head-teachers, teachers, midday supervisors, lecturers
Dealing with angry parents or relatives of pupils	Principals, lecturers, school secretaries, bursars, receptionists, head-teachers, teachers

The list in Table 1 is by no means complete, and some staff may face risks from more than one source because they are involved in a variety of tasks. You will need to research and assess the extent of the risk, taking account of the views of staff, as the first step in deciding whether you need an action plan to combat violence.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDANCE?

Employers such as local education authorities (LEAs), governors of colleges, grant-maintained, voluntary aided or independent schools; and senior managers such as Directors of Education:

This guidance is for you. You are responsible for ensuring risks are assessed, and for devising and implementing policies and strategies for managing the risks which are identified. This includes any risks from violent incidents in the workplace. It is important that you are seen to be actively committed and to support measures to control the risk. You are also responsible for monitoring their success or failure and introducing new measures or revising strategies as a result of your findings.

School or college managers such as head teachers, principals and departmental heads:

This guidance is for you. You are responsible for implementing the health and safety policy and strategy. You therefore need to know what these expect from you, in general terms and in relation to any risks from violence. The guidance in this manual will help you to ensure that local management systems and training programmes take account of the issue of violence and its impact on staff, and that there is an upward flow of information to senior policymakers.

Others who can influence policies and practice, including anyone who might have a role in developing personnel, safety or security policies and procedures, for example governors of LEA schools, personnel staff, and health and safety or security advisers.

Your responsibilities depend on your role. For example, although employers have the legal responsibility for health and safety management, they may arrange for some or all of the work to be done at the level of an individual school or college. You may be involved in such work and find this guidance helpful.

HOW CAN THE RISK OF VIOLENCE BE MANAGED?

There are four key parts to any approach to managing violence:

- find out if you have a problem;
- decide what action to take;
- take action;
- check what you have done.

If you are going to manage risks of violence successfully, you need to show that there is commitment at the top of the organisation. The above is best expressed in a clear policy statement, this including a statement of your views and the actions you propose to take to tackle violence at work. This will show that you consider the risk of violence to be a serious matter. The statement will need, in particular, to give clear commitments to supporting staff who have been subject to violence and to taking positive action to minimise identified risks.

Statement of employer's intent

This may include, for example:

- a commitment to introduce measures for reducing the risk of violence at work;
- a declaration of full support for people who have been assaulted or who have suffered verbal abuse;
- encouragement for employees and pupils to use the reporting procedures and reassurance that employees who report incidents will not be viewed as "failures";
- confirmation that all reported incidents of violence will be investigated and all assaults will be reported, by a senior manager, to the police (except, in minor cases, where the victim objects);
- an offer of support following incidents, including situations in which the prosecuting authorities do not proceed, eg: by providing legal advice and representation.
- a commitment to send a letter, where appropriate, to people who make threats or verbally abuse employees, warning them that legal action may be taken.

Finding out if you have a problem

Employers have duties, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to assess risks of injury and ill health to which employees and others are exposed to at work. Under the law they must also take steps to combat and reduce the risks. The duties cover the reasonably foreseeable risks of violence. As a first step, you need to examine carefully those aspects of work which, might result in employees and others being exposed to violence. You will then be able to decide whether you need to do more than you currently do to prevent harm.

You will need to look at hazards in the work itself, at working practices and procedures, and at the physical aspects of your premises, including their security.

Risk Assessment

Employers need to:

- *Decide if there is a problem.* You should identify any instances or situations where people can be harmful. Talk to staff, they may have noticed things which, are not immediately obvious. You could use your accident and incident reports to find out about incidents of violence, and a premises security survey could give useful information. Published information on violence at work will also help.
- *Decide who might be harmed, and how.* Think about people who may not be in the workplace all the times, for example maintenance staff. Do you have new staff who may be at greater risk because they do not know what to do in difficult situations? Do you have staff who work alone in a vulnerable area? Are contractors or pupil vulnerable?
- *Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done.* Decide whether the risk is significant, and if so whether you have taken precautions to reduce the risk or control it so that harm is unlikely. Precautions may include changes to working practices or providing staff with adequate information, instruction and training. Whatever you do, you will need to decide whether precautions reduce the risk as far as reasonably practicable.
- *Record your findings.* You must record the significant findings of your assessment. This includes how people could come to harm and your most important conclusions about reducing the risk.
- *Review your assessment from time to time and revise it if necessary.* If you bring in new procedures which could lead to a new and significant risk you must review and revise your assessment. It is good practice to review your assessment from time to time anyway.

Table 1 gave examples of activities and jobs where there may be a risk of violence. Other activities, jobs or work settings may also offer potential for violence. Therefore you need to consult staff at all levels to find out where problems may lie (you may also need to include contractors', such as cleaners and caterers). They may have first-hand knowledge or experience which indicates where there is potential for a violent incident.

If you have trade union safety representatives, you will find it helpful to consult them. Their training and experience can make a valuable input, for example in deciding what data, should be collected and how this can, best be done. Where employees are not represented by trade union health and safety representatives you may still need to consult them or their elected 'representative of employee safety'.

As part of your assessment, you need to consider the risk from intruders to employees, pupils and visitors. This can be done by carrying out a security survey which takes into account the level of crime in the area, the design of the buildings and any existing security measures. Detailed guidance on how to carry out a security survey is given in the DfEE booklet *Improving security in schools*.

Helpful information may be available from trade unions or other employers with experience of managing risks from violence. Local police crime prevention officers can also help. The information you gather from such sources should help focus your attention on areas where potential for violence is greatest in terms of both the severity of incident and the numbers affected, so that resources are directed to areas where they are needed the most.

Decide what action to take

To be effective, measures for dealing with violence at work need to be based on proper analysis of the problems and careful thought about the alternative strategies available. There are no ready-made solutions; it is likely that it will take time, careful planning, and a combination of approaches to achieve the objectives.

Issues to consider include:

- the physical aspects of premises;
- working practices and patterns;
- staff training;
- pooling of information; and
- contact with the police.

Physical aspects

The general design and physical environment of workplace buildings can sometimes be improved to reduce the likelihood of violent incidents.

An easily identifiable and accessible reception area, which allows office staff to receive visitors, direct them to their destinations, answer queries etc, can help reduce the numbers of unauthorised visitors wandering around the school/college. Think about:

- location: preferably close to the main entrance;
- signs: to be effective, signs giving directions or instructions should be clear and unambiguous, appropriately positioned, and there need to be enough of them;
- appearance: ideally a reception area will have good lighting, subdued colouring, robust furniture and perhaps some reading material for visitors who may have to wait for attention;
- ease of contact with colleagues: it is important for reception staff working alone to be able to summon assistance;
- access control, eg: 'visitor' badges: everyone, including parents and students, needs to know about arrangements for identifying visitors.

Where there is no reception area, which is the situation in many primary schools, locating the school office near to the entrance will help office staff see anyone entering the building.

Other examples of building design that can help to reduce the risk of violence include:

- ensuring that any landscaping does not act as a screen for potential intruders;
- avoiding potential missiles on school/college grounds, eg: pathways of loose pebbles, detachable stones or paving slabs;
- ensuring prompt repair of minor damage and the removal of graffiti - the level of care for the working environment can affect the standard of pupils' behaviour;
- building design that combines durability and ease of maintenance avoids circulation bottlenecks and provides good sight lines for the supervision of pupils.

Security

In some cases your risk assessment may show that intruders create risks to people. The problems of property theft and damage, however, are not within the scope of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act.

The report of the Working Group on School Security, set up in December 1995 following the murder of a head-teacher, recommended that schools should continue to review their security arrangements. Information obtained from a security survey of the premises will help identify areas where improvements can be made. Possible security measures include:

- restricting public access to the school or college grounds;
- external lighting;
- restricting the number of entrance/exit points (while retaining emergency exits);
- erecting high-level perimeter fencing;
- installing entry control or surveillance systems.

The need for such measures will depend on the assessment of the risks at individual schools and colleges. Security systems can help to prevent or deter intruders, but before you install this type of equipment, consider whether it is appropriate to the risk. Factors to consider when selecting any equipment include its ease of use by staff, the need for emergency access or escape and the level of crime in the area.

You may need to consider also how staff could get help if an incident occurred, particularly where there are outlying buildings. Panic buttons, telephones and personal alarms may help, as could closed circuit television; but it is important to remember that schools vary greatly: what is appropriate for one school or college may be inappropriate for another. Risk assessment should take individual situations into account when identifying which measures are reasonably practicable.

You need to train staff to operate any equipment and to respond to alarms, appropriately; they may need regular practice in operating security equipment so that they remember how to use it in an emergency. Make sure your procedures do not put them at additional risk, for example by responding alone at night to a burglar alarm. Also remember that any temporary staff may need to be informed about security systems.

Local crime prevention officers will be able to provide information on the level of crime in your area. They will also be able to give advice on security arrangements. Some have specialist knowledge in 'designing-out' crime at the drawing board stage and are known as 'architectural liaison officers'.

Working practices and patterns

It has been mentioned that particular activities or jobs within an organisation can create the potential for violence (see Table 1). Sometimes activities can be altered so that they are carried out in ways, which reduce the risks. For example, staff who work in buildings remote from the main occupied areas, or who work at night may be alone and vulnerable to attack by intruders. They include cleaning staff and caretakers or site supervisors. Working in pairs, and providing a means of calling for help, might reduce the risk.

Where activities or jobs cannot be altered or adapted, specific precautions or techniques may help reduce risks. For example, there are ways of handling angry visitors, which can help to defuse a confrontational situation and avoid violence. These include:

- avoiding confrontation in front of an audience, particularly groups of pupils: the fewer the people involved in an incident, the easier it is for the aggressor to back down without losing face;
- staying calm, speaking slowly so as not to be drawn into heated argument, giving the aggressor space;
- avoiding aggressive body language such as hands on hips, wagging fingers, looking down on the aggressor;
- asking another, preferably senior, member of staff to help talk things through with the visitor.

Training in interpersonal skills and how to defuse difficult situations will give staff confidence in using these strategies.

Some staff are required to visit people in their homes outside normal working hours. This may involve travelling to areas where violent incidents have been known to occur, (see appendix 3). The visit may be to an anxious, aggressive person who could act violently or in a threatening manner. Precautions could include:

- avoiding home visits, for example by arranging a mutually convenient meeting place;
- avoiding evening visits wherever possible;
- checking records beforehand to see whether the person, or someone else in the household, is known to be potentially violent;
- visiting in pairs;
- carrying a personal alarm and mobile phone - employers could keep a pool of this type of equipment for use by visiting staff when necessary;
- leaving an itinerary of the visitor's movements with a responsible contact; and
- periodic reporting to base or to a responsible contact.

Violence directed at school staff often stems from attempts to separate pupils during playground fights. If your risk assessment shows this to be a problem you should develop clear guidelines on whether, and how, intervention should be attempted. Much will depend on the extent of the risk in the circumstances; the age of the pupils involved will be one important consideration. Staff also need to understand what they are allowed to do under education and other legislation in situations where it is essential to restrain pupils.

Staff training

Staff who may be exposed to violence need to be aware of the risks they face and be capable of recognising the potential for danger either to themselves or to others within the school. Remember, it is not only teaching staff who are involved - other groups which might be affected include administrative staff, lunchtime supervisors, cleaning and maintenance staff, technicians and caretakers. The staff-training programme could include:

- the causes of violent and aggressive behaviour;
- the policy and procedures for dealing with violence;
- safe working practices;
- what to do when feeling threatened with violence;
- managing confrontation by using positive interpersonal skills;
- attracting the attention of colleagues;
- how to use security equipment such as alarms;
- ensuring an escape route;
- how to escape from aggressive people;
- breakaway techniques may be particularly appropriate for staff in special schools for pupils with challenging behaviour. Training should include advice on when physical restraint is appropriate, acceptable methods of restraint and legal considerations.
- After-incident support and care, including awareness of the impact that violent events can have on staff and others, and of the arrangements for support.

It is important that line managers are, and are seen to be, committed to the objective of reducing the risk of violence, even though they themselves may not be exposed to it. The Education Service Advisory Committee (ESAC) strongly recommends that managers also receive appropriate training, which might include:

- understanding violence and how it can develop;
- understanding the effect that a perceived risk as well as a real risk can have on staff morale and stress levels;
- the role of managers in identifying staff training needs and implementing the preventive strategy;
- the importance of supporting victims of violence; and
- the action to take during and following a violent incident.

Pooling of information

You may have found out from others or you may already know that some of your pupils, students, or their relatives, are potentially violent or have aggressive tendencies. For example, youth workers may know that a young person attending a youth centre is aggressive or comes from a family where there is a history of violence.

There may be occasions when sharing such information could help to prevent violence. This is a sensitive area however; the question of confidentiality and the need to avoid 'labelling' should be carefully and fully discussed with the relevant professionals and trade unions. Nevertheless, relevant factual information can and should be recorded and shared.

Schools need to observe restrictions on the disclosure of information on pupils, as set out in The Education (School Records) Regulations 1989.

The role of the police

It is useful to develop and maintain good links with the local police because they are likely to be called on for help during incidents involving violence. Establishing these links will help to develop an understanding of each other's working methods, responsibilities and constraints. Internal guidance on violence prepared for employees could include information on the powers and duties of the police, and guidelines on circumstances when the police should be called. DFEE is producing guidance for schools and the police on how they can best work together to deal with troublemakers in and around schools.

Staff morale and confidence can be improved if they see that there is a genuine commitment on the part of employers and the authorities to pursue prosecution in cases of assault.

Crime prevention officers will on request provide information on local crime prevention initiatives such as "School Watch" schemes, and advise on the security of buildings. They can also put you in touch with the architectural liaison officer who will advise on building design.

Take action

Some risk reduction measures are inexpensive and require only minor changes to existing work practices; they can be put into effect immediately. Others may take longer to implement because of the need for careful planning. An action plan, including a schedule of time-scales, will help you to monitor progress and will give your staff confidence that positive action is being taken.

In drawing up an action plan you need to consider:

- priorities for the provision and maintenance of risk-control measures such as training, building alterations, alarm systems;
- the standards of training required by different groups of staff;
- responsibilities for implementing change and how those with responsibilities are to be held accountable;
- design standards for buildings, alarm systems, etc;
- objectives, and targets for their achievement within specific time periods; and
- your arrangements for liaison with contractors - they will need to know your rules for getting access to the premises, out-of-hours working etc.

You must consult your employees before making any changes that may affect their health and safety.

Check what you have done

It is important that you monitor the effects of your approach to controlling violence to find out whether it is working. You can then identify strategies that are ineffective, or which have unforeseen consequences, and modify or replace them. **Active monitoring** involves checking that systems and procedures are working without waiting until something goes wrong. It can be carried out by designated managers, by safety committees or by special joint management employee committees. **Reactive monitoring**, which involves looking at incidents, helps everyone to learn from the experience. It depends on an effective system of reporting and recording incidents of violence.

Monitoring is effective only if all those who are responsible for carrying it out understand what is expected of them. The details of what is to be monitored, by whom and how often, need to be made explicit.

Reporting and recording incidents

You will already be keeping records of serious incidents and any accidents through which staff are injured as part of your legal duties under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). The definition of 'accident' in the Regulations includes some acts of physical violence done to a person at work. These must be reported to HSE on an HSE report form (F2508) in the same way as other accidents, if the employee:

- dies; or
- suffers major injuries as defined in RIDDOR; or
- is prevented from doing his or her normal work for more than three days.

More detailed information on RIDDOR is provided in HSE's guide to the Regulations.

You will find it helpful to record and analyse information on incidents, which are not reportable to HSE, as well as those, which are. Data on all violent incidents, and information about suspicious people or unusual events, will help you to assess risks and identify any areas or activities involving greater than average risk. Simple records of minor incidents can help you detect changing patterns of behaviour that may predict and so help to prevent problems in the future.

Information about more serious incidents will need to contain sufficient detail about all the relevant factors if it is to help you devise appropriate preventive strategies and, subsequently, monitor whether and to what extent they are effective. Such detailed information includes:

- the context: where the incident occurred, time of day;
- the activity at the time of the incident;
- details of any witnesses;
- details of the victim and assailant, and their relationship;
- possible motive;
- the outcome, eg: emotional disturbance, physical injury, fatal, other long-term emotional/disabling impacts (absence from work);
- whether reporting procedures were followed, including where necessary to outside authorities, eg: the police and HSE;

- whether any preventive measures, already in place, helped;
- suggestions about what else could be done to prevent a recurrence.

GUIDANCE ON INCIDENT ANALYSIS

It is important that you encourage staff and students to report all incidents if a true picture of their nature and frequency is to be built. Some staff, including teachers, may be reluctant to report incidents such as verbal abuse for fear that it will reflect on their professional ability to manage classes. For this reason, it is important that your statement of intent makes it clear that reported incidents are not seen as 'failures'.

Investigations of reported incidents can provide useful information with which to assess how successful particular measures have been, whether they need to be reviewed, or whether new measures need to be introduced. Where a preventive strategy has been introduced in one section/department but not in another, a comparison can be made to judge its effectiveness.

Staff morale and confidence will be boosted if monitoring shows that measures are working. Staff will be encouraged if you take positive action to rethink the problem and try other measures, where monitoring shows that your initial strategy has not worked well.

WHAT ABOUT THE VICTIMS?

Providing support for victims of violence forms a vital part of a good overall policy on preventing and controlling violence at work. Staff are reassured to know that they will receive understanding, sympathetic and sensitive treatment from their supervisors or managers should a violent incident occur. Support measures help to minimise the impact on victims, and help them to recover from the incident as soon as possible.

Support might include:

- talking about the incident, either individually or as a group, with a designated member of staff who understands the likely impact. Some people may require specialist counselling by an independent person; this can be arranged through a number of agencies, including trade unions and other professional bodies;
- time off from work, although this may need to be balanced with encouraging a return to 'normality';
- legal advice and help in taking proceedings against an assailant and obtaining compensation for injuries or damage to property;
- support on return to work, especially if the aggressor is still within the working environment.

Whatever help is given, it needs to include both emotional support and practical information and help. Victims of violence need to be assured that they can express anxiety without fear of criticism. Learning from the feedback after an incident is often helpful in avoiding a recurrence.

Follow-up action after a period of time will help to ensure that victims of violence have fully recovered and do not require any additional help. Information on the progress of any police action could also be given.

All these procedures will be more effective if they operate so that the support is offered automatically, without the individual having to request it.

BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

**VIOLENCE AT WORK POLICY
FRAMEWORK CODE OF PRACTICE**

**For Community, Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided Schools
with delegated budgets**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Employees of Bracknell Forest Borough Council, like all those who deal directly with the public, or pupils may face aggressive or violent behaviour, sexist, racist or other forms of verbal abuse. This behaviour does not have to be tolerated and the Council, the Education Department and this Governing Body, does not condone abusive, sexist or racist behaviour. Employees should take reasonable precautions to avoid putting themselves at risk, and should inform their manager or any incidents so that they can give appropriate guidance and support. Violent or abusive behaviour must be treated seriously and always reported.
- 1.2 Whilst this document is based on the premise of good employment practices, the advice should be read in conjunction with the relevant section of the Health and Safety Manual, section 2(12).
- 1.3 The Governing Body acknowledges its responsibilities under the Commission for Racial Equality's "Standard for Local Government" in relation to the way in which it approaches violence towards staff which may have racial overtones. This policy takes those responsibilities into account when dealing with such incidents.

2 PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Violence includes not only physical attack, but also threatening behaviour, verbal abuse and behaviour calculated to cause hurt or distress. The Governing Body is particularly concerned to ensure violence ostensibly based on issues related to gender, ethnicity, disability, nationality, religion or other equal opportunity issues are expeditiously dealt with. Employees encountering violence in the course of their duties will be fully supported by the Governing Body and Borough Council in all actions which fall short of pursuing private litigation.
- 2.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 places a general duty on every employer to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. Given this, Headteachers and Managers have a responsibility to assess the risk of violence to their staff and to ensure reasonable preventive measures are in place.
- 2.3 Successful strategies for preventing Violence at Work require local input at each school and department which reflect the specific nature of its task, local conditions and circumstances. Schools should therefore implement specific operating procedures and guidelines within the enabling framework of this Policy and Code of Practice. Those operating procedures should be appropriate to the degree and type of risk of violence which staff may be exposed to.

2.4 It is also the case that the violent incident may involve another employee rather than a member of the public or a pupil. If this is so then this Code of Practice can still apply, with the investigation for the Violent Incident Report form (see paragraph 5.4) serving as part of an investigation within the Disciplinary Procedure and as evidence at any subsequent Hearing. However, employees should also be aware that the Schools' Fair Treatment Policy provides an alternative procedure for dealing with harassment (particularly if the violent incident is not a one-off incident and a wider set of behaviour needs to be addressed).

3 DEVELOPING LOCAL GUIDANCE WITHIN THE EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Code of Practice set out below is of a very general nature and the level of risk and the best ways to minimise it will be very different in different work areas. Specific risk factors include:

- off-site visits
- working closely with adults or children who may have behavioural problems
- working alone, or in one-to-one meetings with parents/students/children
- travelling between locations
- handling cash, where this may make them vulnerable to violence connected with the attempted theft of the cash
- dealing with issues which impact on a student or child's family or home and which prompt strong reactions.

3.2 Each member of staff who deals with members of the public or children will have different situations to face and some may have detailed guidance about what to expect and how to respond to those situations. Managers should ensure that any such local guidance is readily available to employees.

3.3 Each set of employees will have a different perception of the type and degree of risk they face. Headteachers/managers should ensure they are listening to the concerns of staff and reacting appropriately. Employees should also receive training appropriate to the level of risk of violence and the type of situation they are likely to encounter. Staff should consult their managers for advice about the availability of appropriate training courses.

3.4 Each location will have specific safety and security issues. More physical security is not always the answer as the environment can be made more tense or potentially hostile by some security measures. Any measures introduced should be appropriate to the assessed risk and periodically reviewed to see what impact they have had on violent incidents and the fear of violence.

4 ASSESSING AND REDUCING THE RISK – ACTIONS FOR MANAGERS

4.1 Assessing the risk

Headteachers/managers must assess the risk of violence against staff, and take any necessary steps to reduce that risk. Assessing the risk of violence will involve talking with members of staff about their experiences. Risk may be increased if the employee works alone or visits people in their homes, but is not confined to these situations; any face to fact contact with the public or pupils may carry a potential risk.

4.2 Evaluating the risk and considering preventive measures

Once the risk has been evaluated, managers will be required to check existing precautions and decide if they are adequate.

The Health and Safety Manual gives advice on this issue, but examples of possible areas to consider include:

- (a) The environment in which people who come into school for a meeting with a member of staff have to wait to be seen and are seen. The lighting, furniture arrangements, exits, and visibility are all significant factors – the provision of alarms, wider counters, video cameras, or service windows may be useful in areas of high risk.
- (b) What systems exist to warn colleagues in their own and other areas of the schools about parents/students who have threatened violence in the past.
- (c) In respect of visits what systems exist to let colleagues know where employees are going and when they are expected back.
- (d) Should some visits be undertaken by more than one employee? Are employees aware of how off-site visits may be conducted to minimise risk?
- (e) Should an employee making off-site visits involving a significant degree of risk have a mobile phone to summon assistance more easily, or have a regular checking-in procedure?
- (f) Have employees at particular risk attended training on the issues of violence at work on how to spot the early signs of aggression and how to avoid it or cope with it?
- (g) Where alarms are installed they should be regularly checked and an appropriate response procedure should be in place.

5 REPORTING INCIDENTS

- 5.1 If an employee encounters violence or the threat of violence then they should report and discuss the incident with their manager or headteacher. The headteacher/manager should establish what has happened as soon as reasonably possible, once the employee feels able to go into the details.
- 5.2 If the employee is injured or shocked then the manager (or any other appropriate person) should first arrange appropriate practical support, such as medical attention or first aid, arranging to contact a friend or relative, or offering to arrange counselling support through the Staff Support Service. It should be determined if the police have been called, and if not, to call them in appropriate cases.
- 5.3 As soon as practically possible, the Headteacher/manager should visit the place where the assault took place, and carry out a detailed investigation (including, wherever possible, interviews with the alleged perpetrators). Witnesses should be asked to record the incident in writing at the earliest possible time.
- 5.4 The Headteacher/manager and employee should work together completing the Violent Incident Report Form (attached as Appendix A) which they will both sign. The procedure and the Violent Incident Report (VIR) Form are shown in the Health, Safety and Welfare

Manual of Guidance. Headteachers/managers should note that any incident which results in an absence of more than three days. Any incident which results in a major injury, will also require them to complete a form F2508 reporting it to the Health and Safety Executive (see the Health, Safety and Welfare Manual of Guidance, Section 2(12)). Headteachers/managers should also note that, where an incident is reported which may relate to any Equal Opportunities issue (including sex and race), provision exists to refer the matter to the appropriate statutory body, eg the Commission for Racial Equality.

- 5.5 The VIR form also calls for the manager to note any action which can be taken to prevent recurrence of such an incident. A copy of the form will be passed to the Director of Education's representative the Education Personnel Manager, to the Public and Environmental Services Department for Health and Safety purposes and, if the incident appears to relate to racial issues and this should be indicated on the form, to the Head of Policy Development (the latter two for monitoring purposes). Headteachers, managers and directors should jointly ensure that any appropriate preventive measures are put in place. These should include warning other members of staff who may encounter similar circumstances in the course of their work, and in particular if other staff are likely to encounter the person named in the report.
- 5.6 Governing Bodies and Departments may construct their own additional procedures surrounding the use and distribution of the VIR form, and in relation to actions proposed and taken as a consequence, provided that the corporate requirements set out in this document and in the Health, Safety and Welfare Manual are met. Some departments may have other regulations or reporting requirements to meet and it is of course anticipated that any additional actions, forms or procedures specific to a given department will be incorporated into their own operating procedures.

6 DEALING WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- 6.1 Violent and aggressive behaviour is not excusable, but the risk of such behaviour being encountered may be increased if the member of the public finds their contact with the School frustrating. Even if the outcome of their contact with the School may not be what the outcome they were seeking, the way in which the individual is dealt with can influence the nature of their response. "Members of the Public" is meant as a broad category which may also include clients, pupils or their parents, suppliers, etc. Employees may find it useful to consider the following:
- How long does the individual have to wait for a response? Is the individual told how long they are likely to have to wait, and informed if there is any further delay?
 - Is the relevant manager available to deal with the situation?
 - Will the individual feel that he or she has been listened to?
 - If it is necessary to refuse a request or take an unwelcome action, has the action been explained to the individual?
 - Could the individual interpret the manager's body language or speech as threatening, and could that threat be reduced by, for example, sitting down or speaking calmly?
 - If visiting the member of the public at home, they have been told who the employee is, been shown their identification card, and are they aware of the purpose of the visit?

None of the above should be taken to imply that when violent incidents occur it is the employee's fault; these are simply examples of ways to reduce, not eliminate, the risk by modifying behaviour.

Training on dealing with difficult situations can be arranged through the Training Section of Corporate Services Personnel.

6.1 For their own safety, employees should be aware of issues like the following:

- In a potentially difficult situation, they should check that they know the way out and that their path to an exit is not blocked.
- If going off site, the employee should find out what they can about where they will be going and what to expect there.
- When going off site, the employee should ensure their colleagues know where they are and when they are expected back, and should call the office/school if they are delayed – in some cases a checking in procedure should be used.
- Employees should never put themselves in danger by trying to protect cash.
- Employees should never be embarrassed to raise an alarm or ask for help or to be accompanied.
- Employees should discuss potentially difficult situations with their headteacher/manager, to see if the risk can be reduced (eg by sending two people, or arranging for the member of the public to come into the offices).

Above all, if the employee has any reservations about their own safety in a situation, they must withdraw.

Date: August 2000
ED/p/ds

**BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL
PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL – VIOLENT INCIDENT FORM**

This form must be completed by the Supervisor/Manager/Headteacher as soon as possible following a violent incident. Please refer to the Violence at Work Policy/Framework Code of Practice for help in completing this form.

Violence includes physical force, aggression, verbal abuse or threats, threats with weapons and intentional damage to persons or property.

DEPARTMENT:

DATE/TIME OF INCIDENT:

LOCATION OF INCIDENT:

DETAILS OF PERSON ASSAULTED OR THREATENED:

Surname: Approx Height:

Forename: Approx Weight:

Post No: Date of Birth:

Post Title:

What work activity was being carried out:

Was the person doing something authorised for his/her work?

YES NO

Was the person on duty at the time of the incident?

YES NO

DETAILS OF ASSAILANT/PERPETRATOR (IF KNOWN):

Surname: Approx Height:

Approx Age:

Forename: Approx Weight:

Address: Sex: M F

.....
.....

Name of Witness(es):

Address:

.....

Was the Assailant:

A member of the public A contractor working for BFBC

Another member of staff Other (eg: pupil)

If "Other", please describe:

HOME VISITING CHECKLIST

Home visiting checklist for use by managers and others who co-ordinate outreach work

Are your staff who visit:

- fully trained in strategies for the prevention of violence?
- briefed about the area where they work?
- aware of attitudes, traits or mannerisms which can annoy clients?
- given all available information about the client from all relevant agencies?

Have they:

- understood the importance of previewing cases?
- left an itinerary?
- made plans to keep in contact with colleagues?
- the means to contact you - even when the switchboard may not be in use?
- got your home telephone number (and have you got theirs)?
- a sound grasp of your organisation's preventive strategy?
- authority to arrange an accompanied visit, security escort or use of taxis?

Do they:

- carry forms for reporting incidents?
- appreciate the need for this procedure?
- use the forms?
- know your attitude to premature termination of interviews?
- know how to control and defuse potentially violent situations?
- appreciate their responsibilities for their own safety?
- understand the provisions for their support by your organisation?

OK - so what else is needed?

Home visiting checklist for staff who make home visits

Have you:

- had all the relevant training about violence to staff?
- a sound grasp of your unit's safety policy for visitors?
- a clear idea about the area into which you are going?
- carefully previewed today's cases?
- any 'PVs'?
- asked to 'double up', take an escort or use a taxi if unsure?
- made appointment(s)?
- left your itinerary and expected departure/arrival times?
- told colleagues, manager etc about possible changes of plan?
- arranged for contact if your return is overdue?

Do you carry:

- forms to record and report incidents?
- a personal alarm or radio? Does it work? Is it handy?
- a bag/briefcase, wear an outer uniform or car stickers that suggest you have money or drugs with you? Is this wise where you are going today/tonight?

Reactive monitoring:

- out-of-hours telephone numbers etc to summon help?

Can you:

- be certain your attitudes, body language, etc will not cause trouble?
- defuse potential problems and manage aggression?

Remember the three Vs of visiting: **Vet – Verify – Vigilance**

FURTHER READING

You may be interested in looking at some of the following publications on violence at work:

- Violence and aggression to staff in the health services: Guidance on assessment and management. HSE Books 1987
- Violence and aggression at work - reducing the risks. Guidance for employers. The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 14 East Sheen Avenue, London SW14 8AS, Tel: 0181 392 1839
- Personal safety for schools, The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 1996
- Philips C M, Stockdale J E and Joeman L M - The risk in going to work - London School of Economics and-Political Science, 1989 (available from The Suzy Lamplugh Trust)
- The TUC and some individual trade unions have also produced useful advice, as have many local authorities and other employers.

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