

Workplace Violence



Many organisations should already have policies and procedures in place to deal with work place violence. However, under the current climate with Covid-19, staff may face additional abusive and threatening behaviour. These guidelines may provide managers and staff with information and strategies to help them prevent, identify and manage violent behaviour.

Reducing the risk:

Procedures should be put in place to enforce social distancing, such as:

- Consider an allocation system or queuing to provide items that are provided on a limited basis – or possible keeping these off shop floor for collection.
- Meet and Greets on main entrances to provide reassurance, customer care and a subliminal message to any prospective thieves.
- All prominent household item areas should have a member of staff regulating them and depending on risk assessment consider deploying security into these areas.
- Establish queueing contingency plans, including any car parking areas, and ensure there is commensurate security, and staff in this area and the main entrances.

Any social distancing measures should be reinforced by signage and floor markers. This clearly sets out the rules and encourages shoppers to follow them. This should help to reduce the risk of violence and aggression experienced by staff.

Managing the situation:

Try to use your own communication skills to defuse a difficult situation early on, thinking how about how tone, volume and body language can help to create a calming atmosphere.

Try and remain calm and respectful if a person is getting angry. If the perpetrator has left the premises, consider recording a description and reporting this to police as soon as possible.

Listen to what the aggressor has to say and don't intervene too quickly.

Use active listening skills to show the aggressor you are listening (eye contact, nodding of head).

Don't try and have the last word this can aggravate the situation further. If a person is leaving the premises and still being verbally abusive let them leave talking to themselves. When it's safe, lock the door.

Beware of your own body language, adopting a neutral and non-threatening position to help create a calming atmosphere.

Avoid entering the aggressor's personal space or touching them, as could make the aggressor feel threatened and can escalate the situation.

Consider the use of body worn video technology to capture evidence and positive impact the behaviour of those involved in violence on your premises.

You may need to issue the person with a warning. Clearly inform the person of the organisation's protocols for responding to threats – communicating clearly and consistently the repercussions that will flow if the behaviour continues.

Trying to de-escalate the situation:

If it becomes clear that you cannot de-escalate the situation, explain that you are going to go and get another member of staff who may be able to help with the problem. Using this type of exit strategy will help you get away from the aggressor.

Use a Personal Safety alarm, if necessary but only when it's safe to do so.

The earlier you can spot a potential problem arising the more choices you have to avoid it.

Reporting and recording:

It is not possible to completely avoid violence and aggression in your working life. So it is important to know where you can go for help should you experience an incident.

By law each business should have a robust reporting system, where all near misses, violence and harassment are recorded. If something happens to you, you should report it.

Reporting incidents is an important element in managing and preventing the risk of violence to staff. By reporting incidents it is enabling your employer to provide you with the necessary support and re-assess the risks to put in extra security control measures if required.

Staff training

All staff should receive training on workplace violence. Consider refreshing your training to help you prevent, identify and manage violent behaviour. Your health and safety is paramount.

For further information please refer to:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/>

www.suzylamplugh.org/