

Violence and Aggression: The employees' perspective

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UNISON

- UNISON is the UK's largest union, serving more than 1.3 million members.
- Members working in local government, police services, charities, care sector, education
- More than 70% of our members are women



- Set the Scene
- UNISON Activity
- Explore some of the challenges
- Actions and working in partnership with trade union safety representatives

The Scale of the Problem

- UNISON Scotland (2018) 40,000 attacks on public sector workers (55% local government)
- 9 out of 10 social workers in Northern Ireland experienced intimidation, three quarters have received threats and half have been subject to physical violence. (BASW NI 2018)
- UNISON survey library workers (2018) 85% suffered violence and abuse
- UNISON and Nursing Times 2021 Survey: Three fifths (60%) had been sexually harassed either by patients or colleagues
- UNISON Safety Reps Survey (2021) – 34% rise in violence and aggression from the public during the pandemic

The Covid Effect

Weaponising Covid

Home working and
domestic abuse

Enforcement of
restrictions

Impact of Covid on staff
absence/service delivery

Abuse and
harassment from
Covid deniers and
anti Covid vaccination
demonstrations

Verbal abuse
'disease spreaders'

UNISON Activity



Liverpool signs up to UNISON's End Violence at Work charter

City council becomes first to make union's charter a key part of its c...



UNISON's Violence at Work Charter

Campaigning for an end to violence at work in the community sector

To qualify for the UNISON Violence At Work Charter mark, employers must meet the following standards:

1. The employer has a written violence and aggression at work policy, which is available to all staff. The policy should also cover lone working.
2. Responsibility for implementing these policies lies with a senior manager.
3. Measures are taken to reduce staff working in isolated buildings, offices or other work areas to a minimum.
4. Staff are encouraged to report all violent incidents and they are told how to do this.
5. The employer collects and monitors data on violent incidents on a regular and ongoing basis.
6. Where they are in place, union safety reps are able to access this data and are consulted on solutions to issues relating to violence in the workplace.
7. Thorough risk assessments are conducted for staff placed in vulnerable situations.
8. The employer has support pathways in place for staff who are victims of violence at work, so that they know where to turn for advice and support.
9. Training to ensure staff are aware of the appropriate way to deal with threatening situations.
10. Where appropriate, independent counselling services are available to staff who are the victims of violence at work.

Working with union health and safety reps

Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations 1977

- Union training
- Joint Inspections
- Consultation on H&S matters/Risk Assessments



Consultation

Health and Safety (Consultation of Employees) Regulations 1996

- consult the workforce on health and safety matters either directly or via an elected representative of employee safety



Challenges



- Reactive approaches rather than prevention
- Lack of focus on work related factors: what can be done to make work safer
- Over reliance on body worn cameras and training to deal with violence – **hierarchy of controls?**
- Out of sight and out of mind – lone workers/hybrid workers
- Online abuse, harassment and violence against women
- Empowering employees to say it is not part of the job/report
- Lack of inspections and enforcement

Care provider fined for failing to manage risk of service user

22nd September 2021



The Action Group, who provides support to children and adults, has been fined £20,000 after HSE investigated how risks to staff were assessed, in the wake of an attack on an employee by one of its service users.

Edinburgh Sheriff Court heard that a female employee of the Action Group was abducted, assaulted, sexually assaulted and raped in 2018 while visiting the home of a male service user to provide support and care.

Action



- UNISON further promotion of the charter
- UNISON recruiting and training union health and safety reps
- UNISON working to get recognition of gender based violence /sexual harassment as a workplace issue. (ILO C190 and Domestic Abuse work)
- Employers – look to sign up to the charter
- Employers - work with your employees and trade unions to change the culture.

Thank You

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For violence charter

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