

# Work-Related Aggression and Violence

STCSSI 24

Across all our service sectors we are seeing an increase in the number of incidents reported which are related to aggression and violence towards our employees. This is clearly unacceptable, and we must ensure that both the physical safety and mental wellbeing of our teams is a priority. So we need to ensure that all of these type of incidents are reported on AIR.

For violence to be work-related, it must be in connection with the work activity. Personal disputes between workers are not included in this definition. Nor are sexual harassment and bullying.

Guidance or support required in relation to these types of abuse should be directed to your People Business Partner or Nominated Safeguarding Lead.

If you experience or observe inappropriate behaviours of any kind, including harassment, hostile, abusive or discriminatory behaviours, please speak to your Manager, People Business Partner or Nominated Safeguarding Lead. To raise an issue anonymously use the

**24 hour confidential helpline:**

**UK: 0800 041 8157**

**ROI: 1800 904 177**

## What is work-related violence?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) define work-related violence as:

‘Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.’

This includes verbal abuse or threats which are either face to face, via the telephone, online or physical, from members of the public, customers, clients or patients.



## What are the consequences of work-related violence?

The consequences of violence in the workplace are far-reaching. Direct effects include physical injuries and psychological trauma to the individuals involved.

Indirectly, there can be a significant impact on employee well-being, with an increased risk of absenteeism and reduced productivity. Moreover, there's a tangible business cost associated with violence, including potential legal fees, compensation claims, and a tarnished company reputation that can deter both potential employees and customers.

The most common types of work-related violence incidents which occur in our business are generally either face to face verbal abuse or physical attacks. As an individual's reaction to a situation is influenced by many factors it can be hard to predict when a situation may potentially result in aggressive or violent behaviour. On STCSSI 25 we will look at some of those factors which may increase the likelihood of a situation occurring, what we can do to help prevent an occurrence and what to do if something does happen.



# Work-Related Aggression and Violence continued

STCSSI 25

## Some common potential contributing factors

### Alcohol Consumption

Whilst most individuals will enjoy a glass or two, sometimes over-indulgence can lead to verbal and aggressive behaviour. Where drinks are served in glasses or glass bottles these can become a weapon. Managers may consider serving in plastic only and limiting the amount of drinks served. Always ensure that Challenge 25 is followed and don't serve any customer who appears to have had one too many!



### Being Under the Influence of Illegal Drugs

Individuals who are under the influence of illegal drugs can become violent and unpredictable, and it can be very difficult to reason with them. This is more likely to be a concern at events or in Healthcare settings, where Security Officers who are specially trained are present to assist and deal with any situations that arise.



### Mental Illness

Some mental disorders can affect individuals' emotional regulation or behaviours which can cause them to become violent and aggressive. Such situations occur more commonly in Healthcare settings, and it is likely that Security, Police and Ambulance Services will become involved.



### Hosting Sporting Events

Large crowds and passionate sports fans are factors that can result in a hostile situation escalating. Event organisers will consider ensuring that queues flow quickly to avoid frustration and that venue capacity is not exceeded to avoid overcrowding. Security bag checks are also often conducted to ensure individuals are not carrying weapons, drugs or alcohol.



### Carrying Valuables

Mobile phones, ear pods, laptops and some work equipment or goods can be enticing to a thief and reports of theft or mugging are on the increase. Be mindful if you are carrying valuables; keep them safe and away from eye view. Line managers may need to complete a Lone Worker Risk Assessment with you to ensure your safety.



### Customer Complaints

Dissatisfied customers may complain either face to face, via email or telephone and could be aggrieved by many factors such as food quality, poor customer service, guest room cleanliness or long service waiting times for example. It's important that when customers are making a complaint, they feel their complaint is being taken seriously and dealt with professionally and amicably. However, regardless of the cause for the complaint, aggressive behaviour is unacceptable



## What can you do in the first instance ?

- Watch out for early signs of aggressive behaviour and if you have concerns make your supervisor or manager aware immediately.
- Try to stay calm, keeping control of your tone of voice and be careful with the words you use - it is usually best to say nothing and not engage.
- If possible, defuse the situation by changing the subject or walking away.
- Keep your body language open, relaxed and un confrontational.
- Create a physical barrier between yourself and the individual to reduce the risk of physical harm; this could be a table, bar or service counter.
- Enlist the support of security officers if they are present.
- Report all incidents to your supervisor or manager regardless of how minor the situation might appear.
- Some sectors may have specific training requirements based on their risk profile, so please ensure you liaise with your People and Safety Team to ensure you have the relevant information.