

KEY EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION BRIEFING

ISSUE 18: JUNE 2018



NEW POLICY



POLICY REVIEW



REGULAR REMINDER

PERSONAL SAFETY AT WORK

POLICY OVERVIEW

The council has a statutory duty to safeguard the health, personal safety and welfare of its employees whilst at work. In line with this duty, revised Personal Safety at Work Guidance was approved at Council Executive on 17 April 2018 along with a suite of measures to assist in the management and prevention of violence and aggression in the work place.

Violence towards staff is unacceptable and will not be regarded as 'part of the job'. The risk of work related violence is often foreseeable, and the likelihood of occurrence must be assessed, minimised or prevented. There must be an assessment of the risks and only where it is not possible to eliminate them, comprehensive strategies must be introduced to control them.

The corporate Personal Safety at Work Guidance provides guidance on violence at work and lone working and will be supplemented by service specific procedures appropriate to the particular needs of the service. Employees are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the procedures specific to their service.

A communication strategy has been developed to ensure that customers of the council are in no doubt that the council will not tolerate aggressive or threatening behaviour towards staff. This message will be displayed on posters throughout council buildings as appropriate. In addition, the council's Unacceptable Actions Policy provides sanctions in relation to customers who persist in posing a threat to the safety of employees.

Where a violent incident involves employee to employee work related violence, the matter will be investigated and dealt with separately under the councils Disciplinary Policy and/or Bullying and Harassment Policy as appropriate.

KEY INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYEES

- Specific risk assessments should be carried out for any situation where an individual's safety is put at risk due to lone working, potential exposure to violence at work or where personal safety may be compromised.
- Employees must adhere to locally agreed safe systems of work and any control measures put in place to mitigate any identified risk.
- Where Lone Worker Devices are identified as required and issued, they **must** be used.
- A warning flag procedure is in place to identify and share information (as appropriate) on clients who are known to have a history of violence. Employees should adopt any precautions/controls deemed necessary to avoid potential confrontation with clients in these circumstances and must be familiar with emergency procedures to follow should things go wrong.

- Employees must maintain their own personal safety as a priority at all times. Employees must never enter premises if they do not feel it is safe to do so (eg if the person appears to be intoxicated or is aggressive/abusive) and they should withdraw themselves from any situation that they feel is escalating and compromising their personal safety.
- Consideration should be given to the location and layout of office meeting rooms so that should a client/customer become violent, the employee can leave the room quickly and safely. Where possible, furniture and other equipment should be fixed to eliminate their use by clients to injure employees.
- In situations of attempted theft, employees should not attempt to protect money/valuables, property or possessions over their own safety. Where cash is being held at any property, the value must not breach the safe capacity level at any time.
- Employees working with vulnerable client groups prone to react violently due to their particular personal circumstances should be fully involved in the risk assessment process to identify controls to be put in place to eliminate or reduce the risk of violence. Any controls put in place to minimise risk should be communicated to all those who have a direct role in the care of the client.
- Any employee or the manager of an employee who is the subject of an act of violence must complete an Incident Report via the online safety management system (Sphera) as soon as possible and in any event within three days of the incident occurring. Serious incidents must be reported to the Health and safety manager as soon as possible following the incident. Reporting arrangements can be found on the councils intranet home page
- All violent incidents will be investigated and the findings recorded via Sphera. As soon as possible after the incident the manager will meet with the employee to review the circumstances of the incident. If the employee is off work as a result of the incident it may not be prudent to wait for their return before gathering information.
- In the event that an employee is experiencing an adverse psychological or emotional reaction to a violent incident, appropriate support such as access to professional confidential counselling will be offered.
- Heads of Service or Managers may, exceptionally, decide to withdraw a council service if, having exhausted all possible solutions, a member of the public continues to pose a threat to the personal safety of employees.

ROLL OUT ARRANGEMENTS

- Services should ensure that records are kept of the date that employee briefings were conducted and the employees who attended. Those records may be subject to internal audit at any given time to ensure that council employment policies are being properly disseminated throughout services.
- Employees should be encouraged to read the Personal Safety at Work Guidance in full as available on Mytoolkit and accessible from work and home at:
<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/29248/Personal-Safety-at-Work-Guidance-issued-May-2018>