



Violence and Aggression at Work Procedure

February 2024

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Add reference to Lone Working Policy and Procedure	K Drum	20th Nov 2017
2.1	Review and update. College students added, as not previously identified. BIS updated to DEBI	K Fitzgerald	9th January 2023
2.2	Cleaning Outlying Buildings – updated with additional safety points	K Fitzgerald	9th January 2023
2.3	HSE and GOV.UK information links updated	K Fitzgerald	7th June 2023
3.1	Interim review	K Fitzgerald	January 2024
3.2	HS10 to be found on the Intranet updated to Staff Portal	K Fitzgerald	January 2024
3.3	Use of Weapons: Students added	K Fitzgerald	February 2024
3.4	Preventative strategies: Common Sense Reminders added. Addendum 1.	K Fitzgerald	February 2024
3.5	Dealing with Aggression: “Simple but effective” added	K Fitzgerald	February 2024
3.6	Dealing with Aggression: bullet points 5-7 added	K Fitzgerald	February 2024
3.7	Home Visiting: Visiting in pairs in some situations changed to visiting in pairs where possible. Add visiting staff to the list	K Fitzgerald	April 2024

This Procedure sets out Borders College's occupational health, safety and welfare provision which applies to all College employees, learners, visitors, contractors and other persons who may be affected by or involved in Borders College activities, acts or services.

Introduction

Employees who deal directly with College students and/or members of the public, may face aggressive or violent behaviour. They may be sworn at, threatened or even attacked.

This procedure is aimed at providing practical advice on how to tackle the situation within the College.

The Health and Safety Executives working definition of violence is:

“Any incidence in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of his or her employment.” Verbal abuse and threats are the most common types of incident. Physical attacks are comparatively rare.

Most people accept that physical force against an individual is an example of violence, but violence can take many forms, including:

- Verbal abuse and threats (with or without a weapon)
- Rude gestures and innuendoes
- Sexual or racial harassment

Where there is no physical injury, there can still be considerable emotional stress; threats may indicate a risk of actual injury. Malicious damage to an employee's property can also cause distress and fear of future physical attack.

Statement

The College is committed to taking all reasonable precautions necessary to secure the health and safety of all employees carrying out work activities and in particular in helping to combat violence and aggression.

The College will endeavour to support those members of staff who have been assaulted or suffered verbal abuse in their working role.

Where staff may be reluctant to report such matters, the College wishes to stress that reporting incidents of violence and aggression will not be seen as an adverse reflection on the individual's ability to perform their duties satisfactorily.

This commitment extends to the protection of those employees who work away from College premises and where possible the need for employees to work alone will be avoided wherever reasonably practicable.

Responsibilities

The Health and Safety Committee have the responsibility for approving This procedure.

The Health and Safety Manager has responsibility for updating the Procedure.

All staff have the responsibility for implementing the procedure and ensuring all incidents are reported.

Reporting of Incidents

To help identify and control any potential or underlying problems associated with violence at work within the college, it is necessary we have some formal system for reporting and recording incidents of this nature. A Threatening Behaviour Incident Reporting Form HS10 is available from the Health and Safety area of the Staff Portal for completion should an incident arise.

Should any of the following incidents occur then an incident Report form should be completed by your Line Manager and passed onto the Health and Safety Manager as soon as possible; physical violence, aggression, verbal abuse, sexual or racial abuse, intentional damage to personal property.

It is a legal requirement to report any acts of violence to employees that result in death, major injury or absence from work seven or more days, under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulation's 1995 (RIDDOR) Incidents that result in physical injury to members of the public, who are then taken directly to hospital for treatment, must also be reported.

Incident Report Form

This form should be completed as soon as possible after the event, preferably by the Line Manager of the member of staff involved. The report form covers the following:

- Details of person assaulted
- Details of assailant/s if known
- Details of incident (including any injury suffered, treatment received)
- Outcome (whether the Police were called)
- Possible contributory factors/improvements

It should also be noted on the HS10 when the assailant has been involved in any previous incidents.

Use of Weapons

Where a member of staff or student has been threatened/assaulted with a weapon of any kind, then the Police must be notified as soon as possible. Members of staff are advised to take extreme caution when confronted with a weapon and not attempt any action which may result in themselves, or other members of staff or students being injured.

Preventative Strategies

- People with responsibility for staff management need to be committed to the objective of reducing risk of violence to employees. The way jobs are designed can reduce the risk of violence and aggression. Here are some examples of measures that may prove effective:
- Using cheques, credit cards or tokens instead of cash to make robbery less attractive
- Checking the credentials of clients and if possible, the place and arrangements for meetings away from the College
- Making sure that staff get home safely. The threat of violence does not stop when work has ended. For example, if you need staff to work late, try and arrange for them to be able to drive to work and park their cars in a safe area
- Training your staff to enable them to deal with aggression by spotting the early signs and avoiding or coping with it.
- Changing the layout of waiting areas. Better seating, decor, lighting and more regular information about delays have helped stop tension building up in some waiting areas.
- Common Sense reminders followed when interviewing or dealing with one-to-one situations. Addendum 1.

Dealing with Aggression

When angry parents or other visitors arrive at the College premises, some simple but effective procedures can help to diffuse a difficult situation and avoid violent confrontation. Examples are:

- Avoiding confrontation in front of an audience, particularly groups of students. The fewer people that are involved in an incident, the easier it is for the aggressor to back down without losing face.
- Asking another preferably senior member of staff to help talk things through with the visitor.
- Staying calm and speaking slowly so as not to be drawn into heated argument.
- Avoiding aggressive body language such as hands on hips, wagging fingers, looking down on the aggressor.
- Always share your calendar with colleagues/line manager to ensure they know your whereabouts.
- Never engage in a conversation with someone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or where the interviewee or any other person present is in a disturbed, charged or emotional state.
- If feeling unsure or vulnerable, make an excuse to leave i.e. urgent phone call you need to make or a comfort break.

Home Visiting

Some staff will need to visit clients/students/parents/staff in their homes. This must only be in very rare circumstances and with line managers knowledge/permission.

Suggested precautions include:

- An itinerary of the employee's movements to be left with a responsible person
- Periodic reporting to base or to a responsible person
- Avoiding evening visits wherever possible
- Checking client's records beforehand to see whether the person or someone in the household is known to be potentially violent
- Carrying a personal alarm
- Visiting in pairs in where possible

Cleaning Outlying Buildings

Cleaning staff who work in buildings remote from the main occupied areas and/or who work at night may often be alone and vulnerable to attack by intruders. Such staff could work in pairs, wherever possible. If this is not feasible precautionary measures should be taken to ensure contact can be made.

Always ensure that you a mobile phone is carried (fully charged).

Always make sure that someone knows where you are going and an expectation of a return time i.e. Line Manage/ Family member

Support for Staff Who Have Been Subject to Violence at Work

The College acknowledges that some victims of violence may need help in the form of counselling, time off work, and help with compensation or legal advice. The College will therefore endeavour to provide understanding and sympathetic treatment to those members of staff who may be affected by violent or aggressive acts during the course of their work. Members of staff should in the first instance contact the HR Department.

If any member of staff feels threatened or unsafe whilst carrying out any part of their normal work activities, then they should inform their Line Manager as soon as possible.

Related Documents

Health and Safety Procedures Manual
Lone Working Policy and Procedure

Further Information

Additional information regarding personal safety can be found in the College Health and Safety Procedures Manual, sections 26 (Personal Safety), 35 (Women – Safety), and 36 (Working alone).

A DVD is available from the Scottish Borders Campus library; it is titled *Personal Safety at Work: Planning for safety and conflict management*, and it is produced by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

Leaflets and books are also available through the HSE and the TUC, and some individual trade unions have also produced useful advice.

Preventing Workplace Harassment and Violence is a joint guidance document that has been agreed between the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Partnership of Public Employers (PPE), representing employers and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) representing employees. It is supported by the Government, including the HSE, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (DEBI).

Please find some useful links below:

[Violence and aggression at work - HSE](#)

[Workplace bullying and harassment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Common Sense Reminders When Interviewing

This is not meant to cause any panic or raise concerns – Just guidance to consider when carrying out an interview

- Use a room with two exits where possible or sit near to the door, facing the other person.
- Be aware of your surroundings and exit route in case of an emergency. i.e. a fire alarm and evacuation situation.
- Never attend an interview out of your normal working hours.
- Check in with colleagues/line manager after each interview (this can be a simply coded text message) and agree action to take, if the check-in is missed.
- Always be friendly and polite and do not appear aggressive or annoyed if an interviewee is late or says they have to leave early; respect their wishes.
- If interviewing a person who is known to have a sensitive/volatile nature, it would be advisable for an additional member of staff to be in the vicinity.
- Never start an interview with someone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or where the interviewee or any other person present is in a disturbed, charged or emotional state.
- If the interviewee becomes upset during the course of the interview, offer them the opportunity to take some time to compose themselves before continuing.
- If feeling unsure or vulnerable, make an excuse to leave, i.e. urgent phone call you need to make or a comfort break.

Consider the risk associated with the person you are interviewing, the location of the interview and topic area.

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