Health and Safety

Prevention and Management of Violence and Aggression

Minimum Standard

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1   Aims and Principles

The aim of this Government of Jersey (GoJ) Minimum Standard is to provide guidance on reasonably practicable steps which should be taken to minimise the risk of employees being exposed to violence or aggression in the workplace.

The Government of Jersey will not tolerate violence or aggression in the workplace and any instances of work-related violence or aggression, including verbal abuse to employees will not be accepted.

It is recognised, however, that the risk of violence and aggression can be inherent in some workplaces due to the nature of the service being provided e.g. custodial and secure units, health and social care etc. but this does not mean that these behaviours should be accepted as a normal part of the job. The risk assessment and controls introduced should take into account the potential behaviours of the service users and the risks to employees must be reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable.

Departments must determine the level of risk posed by potential incidents of violence or aggression and put their own arrangements in place to prevent, manage and respond to incidents of this nature.

Any procedures must meet the standards set out in this document or be of an equivalent or higher standard.

2   Legislation and Guidance

a) Applicable Legislation

Health and Safety at Work (Jersey) Law, 1989

b) Guidance

Work-related Violence INDEX (UK HSE)

Violence at Work (UK HSE)

Work-related Violence – Example Policy (UK HSE)

Risk Assessment for Work-related Violence (UK HSE)

Managing Telephone Verbal Abuse (UK HSE)

Violence – Quick Guide to Control Measures (UK HSE)

Reporting and Recording Violent Incidents (UK HSE)

Providing support after an incident (UK HSE)

3   Definitions

Violence
Any incident in which a person is subjected to unnecessary or unlawful physical force intended to cause injury or abuse.

Aggression
Any incident in which a person is subjected to an attack or violent hostility, especially one made without just cause.

4   Who this Minimum Standard Applies to

- All Government of Jersey (GoJ) and States' employees
- Voluntary staff or those on honorary contracts where there is no implied contract of employment

5   Links to other GoJ Policies, Minimum Standards and Guidance

a) Policies

Government of Jersey - Health and Safety Policy
Dignity and Respect

b) GoJ Minimum Standards

Risk Assessment
Lone Working
Occupational Health – Assessment and Monitoring

6   Roles and Responsibilities

The department's arrangements must clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of those required to assess and manage the risks to employees from exposure violence or aggression.

Reference should be made to the Government of Jersey Health and Safety Policy for general responsibilities.

7   Identifying Violence and Aggression

The first step in managing violence and aggression in the workplace is determining whether the risk of violence or aggression is present and the possible forms it could take. It should be recognised that whilst external third parties often pose the greatest risk to employees, issues can also exist in-house between employees, including from other sections or departments.

In many instances, the potential sources and risks of violence and aggression will be obvious and could be due to:

- The nature of the services being provided by the department
- The customer base of the department
- Previous experience.

However, as some violence and aggression may be less obvious e.g. between co-workers, it is important that employees are provided with opportunities to report their concerns.

Information can be gathered from employees using various means such as:

- Previous incident reports
- One-to-one discussion e.g. during staff appraisals
- Worker surveys

Information may also be available for different types of working areas from sector-specific guidance and other sources.

Once the type of incidents and causes have been identified, a risk assessment will need to be carried out and arrangements put in place to manage the risks.

8   Risk Assessment

The assessment of the level of risk of violence and aggression in the workplace should be carried out by a competent employee who has sufficient knowledge of the hazards involved and the risk assessment process itself (Ref Risk Assessment – Minimum Standard).

Once completed and risk controls are identified, these should be developed into, or included in any departmental safe systems of work or local procedures. For some departments, there will be differing levels of risk in different areas and therefore a 'one size fits all' approach at department level will not be suitable. This should be reflected in the

local arrangements to ensure that all service areas are able to determine and implement the most suitable arrangements for their particular circumstances.

Typical risk controls or preventative measures may include:

- Improving the design of the working environment including security and communication measures (this may include consulting with other building occupiers in a shared building)
- Making changes to working practices
- Setting staffing levels so there is always an adequate number of trained staff available to assist should an incident occur
- Provide suitable training to staff e.g. effective customer service, techniques for managing behaviour etc.
- Implement a robust reporting system and proper handling of reports received
- Provide support services to employees affected by violence or aggression (Ref: Section 13)

Additional guidance is available from the UK HSE at Risk Assessment for Work-related Violence and Violence at Work.

9   Working Environment

The design and layout of the workplace can have a significant impact on the level of risk from violence and aggression that employees are exposed to.

Consideration should be given to:

- Use of counters or desks
- Protective screens combined with effective means of communication
- Raised floors on the staff side of the counters
- Presence of objects which can be used as weapons
- Means of escape for employees
- Alarm systems for summoning help
- CCTV with advisory signage
- Adequate internal and external lighting
- Use of calming features such as soft furnishings, private spaces, suitable decorative colours etc.
- Signage displaying the GoJ values and accepted behaviours

In very high risk areas, such as prison, police, customs etc., additional controls tailored to the specific operating environment may be required and specialist advice should be sought from the department's health and safety advisers.

10 Systems of Work

Specific working arrangements which are tailored to the operating environment, risks present and typical behaviours of service users may be required. These could include:

- No lone working where the risk is unacceptable or the use of lone worker devices
- Appointment only service
- System for identifying customers of concern to employees before contact is made
- Arrangements in place for responding to alarm systems used to summon help

Methods of working should be regularly reviewed, including following an incident, to ensure that the risks are being adequately managed. It should be recognised the method of working itself may have contributed or aggravated the situation e.g. overly-repetitive work processes, slow response times etc.).

11 Information and Training

Information and training should be provided to employees which should include:

- The likely causes of violence and aggression in their particular area, including previous issues experienced
- The early signs of behaviour escalating and how to manage this
- The risks to employees from this behaviour
- Recognition of own behaviour and body language and how this can affect the situation
- The control measures in place to the reduce the risks e.g. design and layout of the working environment, safe working arrangements etc.
- Alarms and other systems available to summon assistance where required
- The procedures for reporting incidents of violence or aggression
- Actions required in the event of an incident e.g. provision of medical assistance, secure CCTV, management of the perpetrator, contact Police etc.
- How reported incidents will be dealt with

In high-risk environments, additional training tailored to the specific operating environment may be required and specialist advice should be sought from the department's health and safety advisers.

12 Reporting and Recording Incidents

Employees may be reluctant to report incidents of violence or aggression which make them feel threatened or worried as they may feel that accepting abuse is part of the job.

It is important that employees are encouraged to report all incidents so that a complete picture of the scale of the issue can be gained. Departments must therefore have suitable arrangements in place to enable incidents to be reported, recorded and followed up. The following information should be included in the record:

- Details of the location of the incident.
- Details of the victim(s), the assailant(s) and any witnesses
- An account of what happened

The information gathered can be used to look for patterns such as common causes, areas or times and may be useful in justifying the implementation of additional controls.

Incidents should be reported through the Corporate or Department reporting system, all of which can be accessed at Reporting an incident, accident or near-miss

To both encourage reporting and to ensure good communication, employees should be kept informed of the action taken in response to any reports made, including the steps taken to address the issues identified.

13 Supporting Affected Employees

The long-term effects on employees who are exposed to violence or aggression in the workplace can be devastating and debilitating for the individual concerned.

Early intervention immediately following the incident is critical but consideration must also be given to potential long-term consequence.

Providing support after an incident (UK HSE) contains Information on the possible effects on employees who are exposed to or witness violence or aggression in the workplace.

The provision of support to affected employees must be included in the local arrangements for dealing with violence and aggression. Providing support after an incident (UK HSE) provides further details of different types of support to be considered and the support given should be proportionate to the nature of the incident. Those with responsibility to provide or source support should be detailed in the local arrangements.

Where an employee requires additional help which cannot be provided by the Department, they should be referred to the GoJ Occupational Health Service Provider or alternative support agreed by the Department.

Employees should be provided with the contact details for the AXA Be supported at work 24/7 helpline.

Other support services may also be accessible through the GoJ Wellbeing Team.

14 Monitoring

Arrangements should be in place to actively monitor the working activities to ensure that the control measures are being implemented and remain effective.

The frequency of monitoring will depend on the level of risk in the particular area and incident data etc. and the arrangements for monitoring should be documented in the local arrangements.