



# Personal Safety Policy

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Personal safety is recognised as essential to employees' physical and mental wellbeing and therefore affects performance at work. Personal safety is everyone's concern and requires collective responsibility and individual action. Acts of violence and aggression towards employees can and do occur. This document identifies ways of preventing incidents or reducing the impact of any that occur.

This policy document sets out in broad terms the commitment of Mighty Oaks Academy Trust to employees. The more specific detail will obviously vary with the needs of each service area.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Violence is "any incident in which an employee is verbally or physically abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of the course of his/her employment".

It therefore includes aggression not just actual or threatened violence. Bullying, racial or sexual harassment are all included.

Personal safety is the result of taking all the reasonably practicable measures to reduce the risk of violence as far as possible.

## **THE MAT'S STATEMENT OF POLICY**

Mighty Oaks Academy Trust will take all reasonable steps to ensure that employees are not exposed to the risk of violence or be placed at risk through lack of training, information or equipment. Awareness of the risk of violence will be a central factor in decisions about policy, service provision and development.

## **CONTROL MEASURES**

The following sections cover some of the points which must be considered when looking at the question of prevention. In each case, they should be supplemented by detailed analysis of the particular situation in each section, establishment or school.

## **RISK ASSESSMENTS**

Employers are required by law to carry out risk assessments of all the activities of employees. Competent persons must undertake these assessments within every business unit, establishment and school and the risk of violence and aggression must be one of the risks assessed. Risk assessments are required to identify control measures to reduce the risk of violence as far as is reasonably practicable and these measures must be implemented.

Risk assessments should be reviewed following an incident, any significant change and at least annually to ensure that control measures are suitable.

Employees undertaking any high risk work activities, are sometimes at greater risk than those working in less confrontational roles.

Sometimes this aggression has escalated to include targeting the employee and their possessions or home. Where this is identified as a significant risk the guidance contained within the Personal Safety for an Individual Employee should be followed. All High risk workers must ensure that their home address cannot be obtained from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) by means of an enquiry about their vehicle registration by blocking this information through the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN)

## **TRAINING**

Employees have the right to be properly trained so that they have the skills to avoid, defuse or escape from potentially violent or aggressive situations as far as possible. Training is seen as an essential control measure as it can be very effective in preventing violence or aggression occurring. Staff must approach a member of SLT if they feel that they require further training.

All staff who work in close proximity of children who can be violent, must attend 'Personal Safety Training' and 'de-escalation training' via the Behaviour and Support Learning Mentor. A number of training opportunities are available and all employees are required to attend the relevant programme to meet their needs. Staff must approach a member of SLT if they feel that they require further training.

Managers and Head teachers must receive sufficient training to enable them to deal effectively with personal safety issues faced by their team in accordance with this policy.

Skills Development can assist with developing further training as and when the need for it arises.

A record should be kept of all training given and kept up to date.

Refresher training should be provided where required.

## **THE PERSONAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS REGISTER AND OTHER INFORMATION**

Fore-warned is fore-armed. Employees need to know if they should be taking additional precautions with any person they deal with in the course of their work. Employees carrying out home visits or seeing people at other locations by appointment should have access to the Personal Safety Precautions register (PSP register), check whether someone at the address they are proposing to visit or the person they are proposing to see is on the register and heed the precautions given therein.

The PSP register is a register of individuals who pose a significant threat of physical or mental harm to employees who have to deal with them in the course of their work. In order to comply with our duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 advice on the additional precautions over and above those that employees are trained to take for their personal safety is given for each individual on the register.

The PSP register is made available to employees through the Head of School. Every employee needing access should request authorisation through the Head of School.

The Head of School maintains the PSP register. This includes ensuring that all entries are regularly reviewed and no information is held for longer than necessary.

It is important that anyone who feels that a family should be added to the PSP or discovers that an entry is inaccurate for whatever reason e.g. change of address informs the Head of School immediately.

## **LONE WORKING**

Many employees work alone for all or part of their working hours, usually without incident. This may be due to the nature of their job or because certain tasks can only be carried out at certain times. Examples include community centre staff opening up for early morning cleaning, out-of-hours duty

officers, employees undertaking tasks outside of core working hours, anyone working alone during the day or closing down premises after evening functions.

The first consideration must be whether it is reasonably practicable to avoid lone working by re-scheduling work programmes or by having arrangements for support.

Lone working should be avoided where possible, or cleared with the Head of School in advance to ensure that there is procedure in place to 'check in' and 'check out' with another person, and clarify who is responsible for them in the event of an employee failing to make contact or return by the agreed time needs to be clear to all concerned.

Pregnant employees should avoid lone working wherever possible.

A wide range of communication aids are available e.g. tablets, phones, walkie-talkies etc.

### **CUSTOMER RECEPTION FACILITIES**

First impressions count. Being welcomed professionally in well thought out surroundings can go a long way toward reducing the risk of aggression. Consider the reception facilities from the customer's point of view and ensure that the overall impression is of a place where they are welcome and will be helped. Consider the objects that are located in the reception area, they should not be capable of being used as a weapon.

### **Interview Facilities**

A private location i.e. Head's Office, meeting room, should be offered to allow a customer to discuss his/her affairs in private with an employee from whom she/he is seeking help or advice. The general furnishing should reflect the need for a relaxed atmosphere whilst at the same time providing a safe environment for the employee.

### **CASH**

Ensure that any cash received is locked in the safe immediately. Cash should only be accepted in extenuating circumstances as the Trust are predominately cashless wherever possible. Cash, especially large amounts on a regular basis can make an employee at increased risk of violence.

### **VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS**

Some employees, because of the nature of their job role will be regularly dealing with customers who, for one reason or another, have behavioural problems which can result in aggression or violence.

Professional strategies need to be worked out and included within individual care plans and education programmes to minimise the chance of aggression and violence occurring and managing it appropriately should it do so. Good communication is vital. Employees should speak to their SENCo's for advice.

Control measures should take into account the employees' (and other service customers') right to be protected from violence as well as the customers' needs. Personal safety should always be more important than confidentiality (in reality advice to ensure the safety of staff and customers can usually be shared without the need to breach confidentiality in any case).

Personal safety within schools must consider the needs of pupils for protection from the risk of violence as well as employees' needs. Please read the School's Behaviour Management Policy to assist with preventing the occurrence of violent incidents.

### **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY**

Every employee has a part to play in personal safety and a legal duty to take care of their own safety and that of others. Even employees who do not normally deal with potentially violent people have a role to play:

- Acting as back up or cover for employees that are dealing face to face with potentially violent people.
- Not allowing strangers access to premises unchallenged.
- Reporting bad practice to the Head of School.

Employees should ensure that they adhere to the Trust's procedures. If they find something is unworkable or can think of a way to improve personal safety they should let the Head of School know.

An employee in a situation who senses tension and anger rising should not wait for threats to be expressed or for the first signs of violence before considering whether to leave. Employees should use their walkie talkie's stating "emergency incident" and their location. i.e. "EMERGENCY INCIDENT LIBRARY".

Many employees will, from time to time, deal with angry and frustrated people. Skill and training are needed to manage such situations calmly and effectively. Some tips are given in at the end of this policy.

### **MONITORING**

It is important to regularly review the systems in place to control risks of violence and aggression and check that they are being followed. The Head of School and SENCo will review these annually, or after a serious incident. Employee's suggestions and ideas will be taken on board and acted on.

New employees will be fully trained and made aware of procedures. Managers will also need to take into consideration any disabilities or health concerns an individual employee may have and, in consultation with them, adapt the procedures to be followed as necessary.

### **IF AN INCIDENT HAPPENS**

Helping a Colleague: An employee in a violent or threatening situation will often require assistance from a colleague. Those responding to an alarm, however raised, need to be aware of an agreed procedure to be followed so there is no delay in taking effective action. Employees should use their walkie talkie's stating "emergency incident" and their location. i.e. "EMERGENCY INCIDENT LIBRARY".

### **Some points of procedural advice:-**

Walkie Talkies should be collected at the start of each working day, and returned to their charging station at the end of the day.

The responding employees must assess the scale of the incident and decide on a course of action, e.g. to further observe or intervene to calm the situation.

If real threats of personal violence are being made or an assault is in progress, one employee must leave the area and ask a colleague to call the police, return to the area and, if possible, help to calm the situation and prevent other persons entering the area.

Some instant decisions may be demanded and some may turn out, with the benefit of hindsight, to have been the wrong ones. Avoid criticism of the decision that someone else had to take on the spur of the moment.

Consideration needs to be given to means of reducing the numbers of people at risk from an incident, this may mean having systems for evacuating pupils from certain areas including playgrounds.

### **Physical Restraint**

Wherever possible employees should call for assistance either orally or by the agreed warning system. Until assistance is available, every effort should be made to avoid any physical contact.

Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort when there is an imminent danger to the employee and/or other persons. It should only be used by employees who have been given appropriate training and in line with the agreed policy.

It is impossible to cover every situation and, in the last resort, effective action will depend on the judgement of the person on the spot.

Violence can occur very suddenly and there is often no opportunity to call for assistance from the police. The use of physical force to repel violence is in law, perfectly acceptable, subject to the qualification that it must only be reasonable force. "Reasonable" means that amount of force sufficient to stop the attacker, or to prevent the user from being injured; it should not be greater. It should not continue once the threat has stopped. The DfE has offered guidance on this: [DfE advice template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61444/dfe-advise-template.pdf). The courts expect a person to retreat whenever possible and if the choice is between hitting the attacker or running away, then the latter course of action should be taken. There will be very few occasions when the only way in which one can protect oneself is by harming the attacker, but if this is necessary, it is justifiable in law.

Employees defending themselves in such circumstances will have the full support of the Trust unless it is in direct conflict with the agreed policies and procedures to be followed within a particular service. An employee in such a situation would need to seek their own legal advice if taken further.

Some staff are trained in Safety Intervention Training (previously MAPA) to ensure the safety of both the employee and customer in certain situations. All incidents that involve the use of MAPA must be recorded.

### **POST INCIDENT RESPONSE**

In the event of a violent incident the person is more important than any property or procedure and it is, therefore, the injured or abused person on whom attention should be focused. Sensitive handling is vital.

**The manager's role:-**

#### Immediate actions:

- Ensure that the aggressor is no longer a danger.
- Arrange first aid or medical treatment as needed.
- Inform the police or other agencies about the incident.
- Ensure that the injured party has a colleague or friend who can look after them. (The injured party may need some time off)

#### Follow up actions:

- Beyond the immediate actions thorough follow up is essential to establish what happened, why and what needs to be done about it and to prevent repetition.
- Make personal contact with the abused or injured employee as soon as possible. Where this contact is face to face this should take place in a safe, quiet, private space away from the immediate work area. Encourage the employee to talk about the incident but recognise that some people may not feel able to at that time. Allow the employee time in a quiet space to collect themselves and their thoughts.
- De-brief the employee's colleagues as soon as possible after the incident, to put together an accurate account of what happened. Listen carefully and sympathetically to colleagues.
- Obtain written statements from any witnesses.
- Consider the relationship between the perpetrator and the affected colleague, this may mean re-allocating workloads either on a temporary or permanent basis.
- Brief all relevant employees on the incident and the steps to be taken to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence. Disseminate any learning points for the organisation.
- Decide what action should be taken to make plain to the perpetrator that his or her behaviour was completely unacceptable.
- Consider whether it is appropriate to request that the perpetrator be included on the PSP register.
- Follow the reporting of incidents procedure.
- Consider if a Personal Safety Strategy meeting needs to take place.
- Overall, attempt to balance the necessary administration, completion of documentation and establishing a proper account of what happened as soon as possible whilst, at the same time, being understanding and supportive to the employee who has been the subject of the incident.
- For employees left traumatised by an incident further support may be needed i.e. counselling etc.

#### **Support Arrangements**

The Trust accepts its responsibility to support employees who are the victims of verbal or physical aggression in connection with their work. Counselling facilities separate from line management are available for employees who have been abused. This may involve the use of professional counsellors, details can be obtained through the Head of School.

Note that this service is offered in addition to, not as a substitute for, the support to be given by the line manager.

It is the management's responsibility to take appropriate follow up action after incidents of violence. Action may be specific to the assailant, the victim, the procedures involved, or alterations to facilities.

Risk assessments must be reviewed in the light of any incident and amendments made if necessary. Any action taken should be reviewed one month after implementation.

### **Police Involvement and Legal Action**

Following violence to an employee or the threat of violence the authority may report the incident to the police in order that they might proceed with criminal prosecution. An employee may exercise their right to make a formal complaint to the police or pursue civil action.

If the incident complained of is sufficiently serious to warrant criminal proceedings, then it is almost certain that the police would want to take action on the complaint. If the police are not prepared to take action there is a good reason but even so reporting of the incident is of value as it helps build up a picture of events.

An employee may wish to bring a civil action for damages although without a criminal conviction having first been obtained, the likelihood of success may be reduced.

If the perpetrator of the violence is an employee, then the Trust's disciplinary procedures will operate regardless of any other action that may be taken.

### **Risk Protection Arrangement**

The RPA provides cover under the personal accident section in the event that any Employee, Governor, volunteer or pupil of the Trust sustains accidental bodily injury in the course of the business of the school within the UK. This section will provide set monetary benefit to the injured person, whether the school is negligent or not. Benefits are only payable in the event of Accidental Death, Permanent Total Disablement or Loss of Limb or Eye of £100,000, subject to the Definitions, Extensions, Exclusions and Conditions of the Membership Rules.

Cover may also apply under the Employers Liability section which provides indemnity to the school to the extent that the school is legally liable to pay damages or compensation to an employee if they are injured in the course of the business of the school. The public liability section of the RPA will provide an indemnity to the school to the extent that the school is legally liable to pay damages or compensation to a third party, if the third party is injured or third party property is damaged (including personal effects). Pupils are classed as third parties.

The cover provided is subject to the Definitions, Extensions, Exclusions and Conditions of the Membership Rules.

### **REPORTING OF INCIDENTS**

If an incident is significant in the eyes of the employee, then it must be treated as such by management. Reporting the incident does a number of things:

- It assures the employee that people care.
- It provides a mechanism for taking a systematic look at what happened.
- It provides valuable information for the rest of the Trust allowing an overview of the pattern of incidents to be built up so that resources can be targeted effectively.

**Some Important points to consider:-**



- Reporting of incidents in a professional response, not an admission of failure
- Individuals come first, the procedure second
- Sensitivity is more important than keeping to deadlines

### **Reporting Procedures**

All employees must be made aware of the procedure that they need to follow in the event of a violent or aggressive incident. Initially this should be part of the induction process and thereafter discussed regularly at liaison meetings, staff meetings, team briefing etc.

### **Sequence:-**

- Employee reports incident to Head of School or relevant SLT who takes steps to prevent immediate repetition, calling the police if necessary.
- If injury has occurred first aid must be given and/or medical care arranged as a priority. Major injuries must be reported as soon as possible to the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) and to Internal Health and Safety on 01952 383627. Injuries that result in an employee being unable to do their normal work for more than 7 days must also be reported to the [HSE](#) within 15 days (as for accidents).
- When able to do so, the employee will fill in an incident form
- The COO will need enter the details on MyView using a violence incident report form as soon as possible (preferably within 48 hours).
- The Head of School will then arrange to meet the employee, who may wish to be accompanied by a colleague, or T.U. representative. The aim of the meeting is to establish:
  - what controls were already in place to prevent such an incident,
  - what further measures need to be taken
  - what further support, if any, the employee needs.
- Wherever possible this interview should take place within 48 hours of the incident. The employee may wish to make a detailed record of the incident, a copy of which can be uploaded on to MyView with the incident report.
- Statements should be obtained from any witnesses and attached to the violence incident report.
- The employee should be informed about the Counselling service and given the information leaflet so that they can use the service as and when they need it.

The Head of School must decide whether the incident is serious enough to ask for entry onto the PSP Register. If so, this is indicated on the report. Perpetrators are only included on the PSP Register if it is felt that other employees/customers are likely to be at risk from them and should therefore take additional precautions in dealing with that individual.

The Head of School must decide how to make sure that the perpetrator understands that their conduct was unacceptable and the consequences of continuing to behave in an unacceptable way. It is also important to tell the perpetrator that they can legitimately raise concerns or complain to the Executive Principal.

### **SITE VISITS / LONE WORKING**

- Employees should not visit an off site location with potentially confrontational outcomes alone. Staff cannot visit a student's home address alone under any circumstances.
- Employees should only complete Lone Working, with prior approval from the Head of School, with safeguards in place.

## **RECEPTION FACILITIES**

Reception facilities should appear as welcoming as possible. Where necessary low, wide barriers between receptionist and visitor are preferable to security screens.

Receptionists should be able to easily leave the reception area and retreat into a secure area.

Comfortable, fixed chairs should be provided together with regularly maintained, interesting displays or plasma screens.

Avoid leaving anything within the reception area that could be used as a weapon. Consider the best place to locate fire extinguishers so that they are readily accessible to staff but not the public.

Visitors should not be able to gain access to working areas unless accompanied by an employee. Visitor identity badges must be issued on arrival and retrieved on leaving.

No matter how good the facilities, people can become agitated if they are left kept waiting. If there is going to be a delay, they must be told why and for how long. In no circumstances should there be a further delay.

## **CASH**

Under no circumstances must any resistance be shown to persons attempting an armed robbery.

## **INTERVIEW/MEETING FACILITIES**

The room should be spacious enough to seat an interviewer and two customers.

Ideally two doors should be installed, both opening outwards and fitted with vision panels, one permitting the interviewer to exit to their working area, the other providing access to the waiting area. Where this is not possible and if appropriate a nominated person should monitor the interview (by walking past if necessary) to ensure the employee's safety. Staff should sit between the interviewee and the door.

The room must be free of loose objects that could be used as a weapon.

Use the Walkie Talkie alert system if necessary.

A nominated employee should be responsible for checking facilities at the end of the day and if an employee is still dealing with a customer remain until the interview is ended.

## **AGGRESSIVE DOGS**

### **ENTERING PROPERTIES**

- Where possible, advise the dog owner of your visit and ask them to tie or shut any dogs up.
- Before walking onto the property, check for signs that a dog may live there, such as bones, a dog kennel, chewed up articles or dog droppings.
- When entering a property, rattle the gate or make a noise calling or whistling the dog etc.
- If the dog comes, greet it as a long-lost friend, and if it responds to you and you are confident, enter the property.

- When a property is entered the gate should be closed, but not fastened until it is known where the dog is and whether it is friendly or not.
- If there is barking but it does not get any closer after a reasonable time, it can be assumed that the dog is tied up, indoors or behind a fence.
- Walk in confident manner, dogs do not smell fear, but they are very good at reading body language, (jerky nervous movements etc).
- If a dog approaches you try to understand its posture. If it is alert but not aggressive, greet it (perhaps turning side on to present a less imposing figure) let it sniff you but do not stop, just carry-on walking perhaps avoiding excessive eye contact. Remember to keep a wary eye behind you.
- If you come across a sleeping dog, back off and try to waken it at a safe distance to avoid startling it and begin the greeting procedure.
- If a dog appears to be chained up, do not assume that the chain is attached to anything other than the dog. It may also be longer than you think or even break. Remember that dogs are more aggressive when tied up.
- If a dog is hiding or lying on a door-step give it room to escape. Beware the fear biter!
- If the owner is present ask them to tie the dog up or shut it in another room.
- When knocking at a door stand well back, if there is a dog inside the owner may not be quick enough to prevent the dog biting you.
- Never assume that because a dog's tail is wagging it won't bite, it can just mean indecision on the dog's part!
- When leaving the property be careful, this is when most attacks occur, preferably back off and put something between you and the dog.
- Never run unless you can beat the dog to a safe haven, this is a sure way to incite an attack.

## **INTERACTIONS WITH DOG OWNERS**

If you move suddenly or pass something towards its owner, when the dog is nearby or in between, this can be seen by a dog as a threat to its owner. The dog may react by biting or lunging at you.

## **APPROACHING DOGS**

All strange dogs must be treated with caution and employees should not approach or stroke a dog unless invited to do so by its owner.

Approach the dog slowly, allowing time for it to sniff you or make friendly contact. Crouching down, speaking to the dog gently, avoiding eye contact, and patting around the chest or neck region are all non-threatening actions. If you are crouching, keep your face well clear of the dog's face. Approaching suddenly, bending over the dog or patting it on the head or back are dominant and threatening gestures and may cause a dog to react by biting.

Each dog has a different social and personal distance that a stranger is permitted to enter. This is why a dog that is tied up outside may snap or bite when someone tries to pat it. The dog cannot escape when there is a sudden invasion of its personal space.

## **IF THREATENED**

Reading the dog's body language will tell if it is threatening. Most dogs bite out of fear:

Fear biters characteristically behave in the following ways:

- Fear biters act angrily.
- They bare their teeth a lot.
- They are usually crouching down.
- They try to get around to one side of you or circle you.
- They may lunge in and out, trying to bite on the run.

Fear biters usually will not bite if you adopt the following stance:

- Stop, stand completely still.
- Face the dog with your eyes and body but do not stare at the dog
- If the dog lunges in or tries to circle, pivot with your feet to keep facing him.
- Speak gently to the dog. A quiet command of "sit" or "stay" can be given because many dogs will obey these.
- Crouching to reduce one's body size may relax some dogs, but any movements must be made slowly and deliberately.
- An article of clothing can be carefully removed and used to take the first bite if the dog suddenly lunges.
- If he tries to bite, tell him "NO" in a stern voice.
- If you are carrying something, keep it between you and the dog.
- Even if the owner arrives keep watching the dog.
- If the dog is persistent, walk backwards slowly and carefully until you are well out of its territory.
- It is most important that you do not turn your back, run, scream or shout. All of these submissive acts will encourage the dog to continue its attack.

A minority of dogs attack because they regard themselves as dominant and are known as brave biters

Brave biters characteristically behave in the following way:

- They seldom act angrily.
- They will always keep their ears up and tail held high.
- They prance proudly when they approach you and stand erect.
- They do not try to circle.
- They may wag their tail while holding it high.
- They may jump up at you.

Encounters with brave biters should be handled in the following manner:

- Stop walking and try to relax.
- Turn your body slightly so you are not facing the dog head on.
- Do not try to pat the dog.
- Fold your arms or keep them up by your chest.
- If he jumps up on you do not try to push him down.
- **STAND STILL!**
- If the dog walks away, slowly and carefully walk away also, but keep an eye on the dog without facing it or making eye contact.

- The brave biter will probably sniff your crotch area, shoes or clothes and then leave. It may do this more than once.

### **If Attacked**

- If you believe it is a full-on attack throw whatever is conveniently to hand (e.g. a handful of stones) at the dog.
- If that fails, grab your clip board, briefcase or whatever, and offer it to the dog keeping it well away from your body. If the dog is truly aggressive it will grab the object and hold on, do not let go of the object, if you do it will soon realise that it is not you and is likely to attack again.
- Normally after it realises it is having little or no effect it will stop the attack (or at least give you time to plan your next move).
- Only hit the dog as a last resort, when a dog is attacking pain can incite them more.
- Never try to kick the dog when it is facing you.
- If you are knocked to the ground remain motionless, curl up and protect your face by crossing your arms above your head.

### **If Bitten**

- Wash the wound well with water as soon as possible and seek medical treatment.
- Report the bite as a violent incident.
- Follow up action could include action under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

### **AGGRESSIVE OR ABUSIVE PHONE CALLS**

An abusive phone call can be just as much a violent incident as an incident that takes place face to face.

If at any point during a telephone conversation the caller becomes aggressive or abusive the following steps should be taken:

1. Try to calm the caller and empathise with them without compromising your or the Trust's position. The following phrases (or similar) may be appropriate;

- "Yes I see you have a point!" or "I agree that you do have a problem"

### **TIPS ON CALMING PEOPLE DOWN**

- **Build rapport:** Whatever you say should be done with sincerity. Do not sound patronising or smug, you will make the situation worse. Try to control a potentially difficult situation by using listening skills to calm people down, and build up trust and rapport.
- **Show understanding:** Let the caller know that you understand how they feel; e.g. "OK, I can understand why you are angry". Make sure your tone of voice is friendly not hostile.
- **Keep calm:** However difficult it may be, never lose your temper, you will only make matters worse. Show the person that you are calm and self-controlled. It is much harder for the caller to continue to be angry if you are not responding. Be careful not to indicate indifference.
- **Reassure the caller:** Let the person know that you want to help. Assure the person that you have time to give to the problem and that you are as keen to see it sorted out as they are.

- **Let the other person talk:** Listen intently and gather as much information from them as you can. Never argue even when you disagree.
- **Use their name:** Use the person's title (e.g. Mr or Mrs) and surname. Use your judgement before calling someone by their first name this as this can sound over familiar and lacking in respect. Let the caller know your first name so they do not feel that they are dealing with a faceless bureaucrat.
- **Listen actively, listen with empathy:** Put yourself in the caller's place. Do not assume that the organisation is right - most people find it very hard to complain and hence their grievances are usually legitimate ones. Make sure you get all the facts.
- **Avoid loss of face:** Make the person feel that they are important to you and look for a way out of their difficulties. As early as possible try to structure expectations for the solution. Even if you know that you are unlikely to meet the caller's demands make sure that you can offer an alternative which will save face on both sides. Be flexible.
- **Tackle issues one by one:** Often an angry person will let all their grievances pour out. Listen carefully to detach each issue and respond to each one as a separate entity.
- **Respond positively:** If the person says something positive, recognise it and be positive yourself towards them. Positive reinforcement will help to achieve a less threatening response.
- **Take your time:** You must allow time to deal with the situation. If you let the other person know that you are impatient to finish the encounter you will lose any trust that you have received.

If, despite trying the above, the caller persists in being aggressive or abusive and cannot be pacified, tell them that you are not prepared to continue the telephone conversation if they continue to talk in that manner.

- If they calm down, then continue with the call.
- If not, tell the caller that you are not prepared to continue the conversation and will terminate the call.
- Then hang up.
- Throughout call, try to establish caller's identity if not already known. Ask for the person's name.

## WHAT TO DO AFTER THE CALL

Once the call has been ended you should inform your line manager as soon as possible.

### FIRST CALL

If it is the first time the caller has been abusive the line manager and employee will discuss the preferred course of action. In some cases no action will be taken. If further action is required the line manager will write to the abusive caller explaining that their behaviour was unacceptable. The caller should be told that if this happens again we will no longer talk to them on the phone.

### SUBSEQUENT CALLS

If, following a warning, the caller telephones again and is abusive the line manager will write to the caller again and bring to their attention the fact that they have already been warned about their

behaviour. They must be told that the Trust are only prepared to correspond with them by letter in the future and these should be addressed to the line manager.

### **FURTHER CALLS**

If the caller then makes a further abusive call this should be should be terminated immediately by saying calmly “Unfortunately, as you are aware, I am not able to speak to you on the telephone, please forward your queries in writing to ..... I am now going to terminate the call’

### **PERSONAL THREATS**

If the caller makes personal threats to an employee, these should be reported to the Police.

### **MANAGING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

Some difficult situations can be anticipated and prepared for to minimise the risk of violence, a few may arise with little or no warning.

Where possible;

- Stay calm, avoid retaliating even if provoked.
- Speak slowly and quietly, do not try to out-smart the aggressor verbally.
- Avoid folding your arms or looking down on the aggressor, this is body language that can appear antagonistic. Do not move into the aggressor’s space and avoid crouching or cowering.
- Allow the aggressor to talk without trying to interrupt them but avoid appearing indifferent.
- Listen intently and gather as much information from them as you can. Never argue even when you disagree.
- Empathise with the aggressor and show that you understand why they are angry. Avoid being patronising.
- If the opportunity permits make positive suggestions and compromise to allow the aggressor a way out of the situation without losing face. Avoid making rash promises.
- Do not try to intervene if aggression is aimed solely at inanimate objects e.g. banging on tables or walls.
- Trust your instincts and be ready to escape if the situation gets worse.

### **GUIDANCE ON THE ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO PERSONAL SAFETY OF EMPLOYEES WHO SUSPECT THEY MAY BE TARGETED OUTSIDE WORK.**

If an employee has been threatened by individuals as a result of undertaking a work activity and/or this has led to strong suspicion that these threats have been translated into attacks on employee’s private property an individual personal safety risk assessment should be undertaken to aid identification of appropriate control measures.

To control these risks the Trust should apply the usual risk assessment procedure to aid identification of appropriate measures.

- **Hazard:** Attack on employee or the employee's private property including vehicles.
- **Risk:** When assessing the risk the following should be taken into account:
  - Previous history of threats from the individual or sector of the community the employee is working with.

- Police intelligence leads to the belief that threats are credible.
- Employee is (or has recently been) carrying out actions that will have a negative impact on the recipient.
- Employee has face to face contact with the aggrieved individual
- Employee needs to have a continuing role with the aggrieved individual
- Employee lives within easy travelling distance of the aggrieved individual

If all of the above exist then there is a significant risk that the threats may be realised.

- **Controls:** There are a number of options and in most cases most if not all will be needed:
  - Ensure that employees report promptly by means of the violent incident reporting system any threats made to themselves or other employees including those made outside the work situation.
  - Employees are advised to report threats to the Police.
  - Organise work to minimise the targeting of individuals. This could include regular rotation of responsibilities to prevent any one employee becoming a target and where possible send communications from the Trust as a body rather than an individual to avoid the personalisation of any conflict.
  - Ensure that personal safety procedures are adhered to whilst the employee is at work.
  - Employees should be advised to ensure that they have adequate home insurance.
  - Employees who are threatened should be offered additional support by their manager supplemented where appropriate by employee counselling service.
  - Additional measures may be necessary if the threats escalate. These are at the discretion of the senior manager concerned after taking Police advice.

In the event of a credible threat to a specific employee or team then employees should be advised to arrange a home visit from a police crime prevention officer (CPO) to advise on improvements needed to home security. Paid time off from work should be allowed for the employee to meet with the CPO.

**Recommendations often include:**

- Stronger doors.
- Window locks
- Arson proof letter boxes.
- External lighting.
- Gates.
- Occasionally the installation of CCTV may also be recommended.

A written quotation must be obtained from a reputable supplier approved by the Police and the Trust. Where all the risk conditions above exist, it would be appropriate for the Trust to fund the recommended security measures. Agreement will also need to be reached on who is to be responsible for ongoing repair and maintenance of the system and who is the owner of this.