



Policy on dealing with aggression and violence at work

Date approved by the Assurance sub-Committee:
Latest review date:

December 2022
December 2026

Dealing with aggression and violence at work



1. Background

- 1.1 Aggression in the workplace can be defined as 'any incident in which employees and other people are abused, threatened or assaulted at work'. Within this definition, threat means any statement or behaviour that leads a person to believe they are in danger of being verbally or physically attacked. As an employer, we have a duty to manage the risks related to violence and aggression at work.
- 1.2 The Health and Safety Executive has indicated that where an employer has employees who could be exposed to the risk of assault, a systematic approach should be adopted to identify and as far as possible control the problem. The degree of risk for all employees must be assessed and the appropriate preventative measures identified.
- 1.3 This Aggression and Violence at Work Policy has been produced as part of a broad-based systematic approach to ensure that the associated procedures are adopted as standard throughout the Association.
- 1.4 There are three key areas where employers can have a substantial impact in the performance of that duty:
 - a) in the prevention of violence
 - b) dealing appropriately with violent incidents
 - c) monitoring and aftercare

2. Equality and human rights

- 2.1 The Association's equality and human rights policy, which was approved by the Committee in April 2021 following community consultation, outlines our commitment to promote a zero tolerance to unfair treatment or discrimination to any person or group of persons, particularly based on any of the protected characteristics¹.

¹ The Equality Act 2010 identifies the "protected characteristics" as age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

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- 2.2 This includes ensuring that everyone has equal access to information and services and, to this end, the Association will make available a copy of this document in a range of alternative formats including large print, translated into another language or by data transferred to voice
- 2.3 We are also aware of the potential for policies to inadvertently discriminate against an individual or group of individuals. To help tackle this and ensure that it does not occur, best practice suggests that organisations carry out Equality Impact Assessments to help identify any part of a policy that may be discriminatory so that this can be addressed (please see section 6 of the Equality and Human Rights Policy for more information).
- 2.4 In line with section 6.3 of the Equality and Human Rights Policy, the Association will apply a screening process based on that recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ascertain whether each policy requires an Impact Assessment to be carried out. The screening process was applied to this policy, and it was decided that an impact assessment is required. **Please refer to Appendix 3.**

3. Risk management

- 3.1 The Association has considered the potential risks associated in implementing this Aggression & Violence at Work Policy. All staff are made aware of their right to be safe at all times and what action to take if applicable. Staff are invited to comment on the policy, make recommendations and are encouraged to attend relevant training events. Strict adherence to Health & Safety is promoted at all times.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 The Health & Safety Executive regards violence as *“Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.”* adding that *“Verbal abuse and threats are the most common types of incident. Physical attacks are comparatively rare.”*

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5. Legislative and regulatory framework

5.1 All employers have a legal duty under Section 2(i) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure so far as it is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.

5.2 The following have been considered when reviewing this policy:

- Health & safety at Work etc., Act 1974
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
- EVH personal safety and violence at work information

5.3 Standard 4 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework states:

The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.

More specifically, and in relation to this policy, Standard 4.3 states:

The governing body identifies risks that might prevent it from achieving the RSL's purpose and has effective strategies and systems for risk management and mitigation, internal control and audit.

6. Commitment and responsibilities

6.1 Management Committee and management team

6.1.1 The Management Committee acknowledges the risk of violence and aggression towards staff at work and affirms that such violence, threat of violence and aggression or verbal abuse is wholly unacceptable. It is the responsibility of the Committee to ensure that staff are provided with as safe a working environment as is reasonably practicable and that, where staff are subjected to violence, threat of violence and/or aggression, they are provided with appropriate personal support. The Committee will ensure that all staff are aware of this policy and any related procedures.

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6.1.2 The Committee acknowledges the important role of the Director and other senior staff in raising awareness and implementing this policy. Committee also recognises that this delegation of responsibility to the Director and senior team does not diminish its own responsibility under health and safety legislation nor does it diminish the day-to-day responsibility assumed by individual staff members.

6.1.3 The Committee is not prepared to tolerate:

- a) violent behaviour or verbal abuse between staff or Committee members
- b) severe verbal abuse or threat to their employees, tenants or themselves
- c) verbal or physical harassment, including racial, sexual, homophobic or transphobic harassment, or harassment on the grounds of age or disability
- d) physical assault by tenants or other members of the public, either during or outside working hours, arising from their employment by the Association.
- e) attacks on or damage to the property belonging staff of the Association arising from or in connection with staff carrying out their duties

6.1.4 The management team will review a risk assessment (Appendix 1) at least on an annual basis, with consultation at staff meetings and this will be presented to the Assurance sub-Committee for noting. Recommendations for improvements will be included in the risk assessment. The annual risk assessment has not been conducted for several years, but will be reinstated during 2022/23 now that we have resumed in-person meetings, staff working from the office and the office being open full-time.

6.2 Staff

6.2.1 Staff members are expected to assess situations where violence or abuse may occur and determine appropriate action. A range of options could include taking another member of Staff along or not arranging a meeting in the tenant's home.

6.2.2 Staff are required to participate in the annual risk assessment review process (Appendix 1).

6.2.3 Staff should feel able to remove themselves from a potentially violent/abusive situation and will receive support from colleagues and the management team.

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6.2.4 Staff are required to declare their understanding and willingness to adhere to this policy in terms of protecting their personal safety.

7. Reducing the likelihood of violence

7.1 Risk assessments

7.1.1 Each year, staff members will be asked to review the risk assessment and to propose amendments as necessary. Whilst this will be done at least on an annual basis, should an incident occur that suggests that the risk assessment be reviewed sooner, this will be conducted and the Assurance sub-Committee will be informed.

7.1.2 The risk assessment will cover the following areas:

- a) Reception area
- b) Interview rooms
- c) Dealing with petty cash and cash payments in the office
- d) Dealing with transportation of cash to bank
- e) Lone working
- f) Site visits & external area inspections
- g) Home visits (housing list and others)
- h) Void inspections
- i) Aggression/violence from colleague/Committee member
- j) Driving while on Association business
- k) Mobile phone use

7.2 Monitoring return of staff and appropriate action

7.2.1 It is recognised that most of the off-site visiting will be undertaken by housing management team and maintenance team. With this in mind, current practice is that staff:

- a) notify a member of staff their whereabouts and likely time for return (where there are multiple tasks being carried out, for example, bank/estate management visits and void inspections, a list showing order of visits should be provided)
- b) takes a mobile phone out with them

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- c) calls the office if they know they will be returning later than planned
- d) receives a call from another member of staff if they have not returned by the original time or the re-scheduled time
- e) informs a member of the management team should the other staff member not answer calls
- f) informs the Police if the staff member is still not contactable
- g) Takes a personal alarm out with them

8. Training

8.1 Staff training, particularly for staff dealing directly with the public, will include information on:

- a) how to avoid and/or defuse potentially violent situations
- b) what support and help is available and how to summon it
- c) what to do if threatened or attacked

8.2 Senior staff/line manager training and awareness will be pursued, including the following:

- a) a review of the effectiveness of existing practice, procedures and systems where staff are, or feel, vulnerable in the workplace
- b) safety within the Association
- c) for staff working away from the Association on sites and home visits
- d) a review of existing areas where staff meet the public to determine the need for and location of exit routes, alarm buttons, availability of potential weapons etc.
- e) an understanding of the impact of fear, violence and harassment upon staff and their work performance.
- f) the necessity of a sympathetic and clear response to incidents to encourage staff to approach management with concerns about safety.

8.3 Review of practice will form part of the risk assessment process and implementing/improving revised actions will be an ongoing process.

9. Following an incident

9.1 Arrangements will be made immediately for appropriate first aid and medical

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assistance if required. Assistance will be provided in getting the victim home or to a place of treatment (such as a GP surgery or hospital), whatever action is considered appropriate.

- 9.2 Any violent or threatening incident must be reported to the Director (or, in their absence, the Depute Director or other members of the management team) immediately and followed up in writing using the 'Incident Report Form' (Appendix 2). The Director will discuss the incident with the employee to determine whether the Police should be notified. The Director will prepare a report to the Assurance sub-Committee or Management Committee who will decide whether any modification to work practices or procedures will be necessary.
- 9.3 The office may be closed to the public if necessary until the incident has been resolved.
- 9.4 In accordance with RIDDOR the Association will report all violent incidents where a reportable injury has been sustained. In these situations where the affected party wishes the incident to remain private (for example, in cases of sexual abuse), the employee's privacy rights will be protected as the Association will report the incident as a "violent incident", without going into detail.
- 9.5.1 The employee must be allowed to discuss the incident and the Director should be available to do this as soon as the employee is able to do so. Debriefing should take place as soon as possible after the incident. The Director will make available where necessary professional counselling support for the victim and any other individuals who have been affected.
- 9.6 The Committee is mindful that witnesses of the incident may also be emotionally affected by the incident. Where it is felt to be appropriate, support in the form of debriefing and counselling will be offered to them.
- 9.7 The Committee may take action against a tenant or client, where appropriate, by sending a formal letter warning of the consequences of future abusive behaviour. Where the circumstances are deemed to warrant it, the Committee will consider more severe action for persistent offenders.
- 9.8 The Committee will determine what additional or alternative steps or procedures

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may be required in the light of the incident to ensure continuing staff safety.

10. Sick leave arrangements

- 10.1 Sickness absence resulting from an assault during normal working hours will be registered as industrial injury absence. Periods of absence attributable to an assault will not, therefore, count against the employee's entitlement to sick pay.
- 10.2 Sickness absence resulting from an assault outside normal working hours will be classed as normal sickness for the purposes of the sick pay scheme. However, the Committee may decide, dependent upon the circumstances of the assault, to discount all or part of the period of absence when calculating the employee's future entitlement to sickness allowance.

11. Compensation

- 11.1 Claims for personal injury following assault can be submitted to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for payment. Guidance on eligibility under the Board's provisions, advice on taking a claim and application forms are available from the Health and Safety Administrator.
- 11.2 If a member of staff suffers a loss or damage to personal property as a result of assault, then they may also wish to consult a legal advisor and make a claim in respect of such loss.

12. Review

- 12.1 The aggression and violence at work policy will be reviewed every four years or sooner in light of legal, regulatory or best practice requirements. The next review will take place in or before December 2026.

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Risk assessment – APPENDIX 1

Duty/location	Risk	Current Measures	Additional Measures Required
Outer Reception area	Danger of assault/verbal abuse from visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise objects that can be used as weapons • Minimise amount of time spent in open area (i.e. try to stay behind reception desk or use interview rooms) • Door to staircase has security code entry pad • Door to open plan area has security code entry pad • Terminate discussion if abusive/aggressive and inform Line Manager immediately • Call on any Staff member if there is an incident • Call Police if necessary 	
Reception area within open plan office	Danger of verbal abuse and assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise objects that can be used as weapons (e.g. refrain from having items on reception desk) • Be conscious of having discussions of sensitive nature in reception – offer to use interview rooms • Terminate discussion if abusive/aggressive and inform Line Manager immediately • Call on any Staff member if there is an incident • Police to be called if necessary 	
Using the Interview Rooms	Danger of verbal abuse and/or assault	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise objects that can be used as weapons • Keep interview room doors locked (at open plan area) • If visitor known to be temperamental, interview with another Staff member • Notify Staff in open plan area when you are going into interview room • Terminate the interview if necessary and ensure internal door locked 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call on any Staff member if there is an incident• Use panic button if necessary (this has a silent link to the Police) - check	
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Working alone in the office	Danger of assault when opening or locking up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When opening up be vigilant that no-one is around the area. • If you feel concerned, wait until another staff member arrives. • Keep door locked at all times. • Do not let anyone in even if it appears to be an emergency. You can assist from within the office if necessary (i.e. phone someone for them). • Notify your Line Manager before working late and try to work with other people and leave with them. If this is not possible, phone or text the second last person who left the office when you leave and are in your car. (This applies to anyone staying after 5pm). • After an evening meeting, ensure either another member of Staff or Committee waits while you lock up. • Set alarm before opening the door. • Report any bulbs that are not working. • If you become unwell contact either emergency services (depending on severity of illness) your Line Manager or another member of the Management Team as soon as you can. • Call Police if necessary. • Follow new Covid-19 arrangements as per Covid-19 Risk Assessment 	
Dealing with petty cash and banking	Possible robbery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep all cash in locked safe. • Ensure cash is counted in front of person paying. Financial procedures state that the Staff member collecting the cash should initial the receipt AND the receipt printed from SDM • Counterfeit detector pens used • When cash builds up ensure it is banked in line with insurance schedule – making sure appropriate number of staff attend. • Staff should notify someone in the office where they are going and if they 	Tenants encouraged to pay by alternative methods to keep cash transactions to a minimum

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		<p>are due back, what time that is likely to be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff should use the H&S sign in/out sheet.• A member of Staff at the office should phone if they are not back within specified timescale – following the 'monitoring return of staff' procedure of this policy.• Avoid going to bank on set days and following same route.• Alter which branch is used.• Call the office where possible and use 'safe' word to alert Staff to a problem or call police, depending on situation.• Personal alarms available to take with you.	
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Home Visits	Danger of assault/ verbal abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the H&S sheet to sign out. • Notify at least one Staff member where you are going and when you expect to be back. • Use the H&S sheet to sign back in. • If a number of visits are being carried out a list should be given to an appropriate Staff member. • Housing List visits will be carried out with the staff member advising the office where they are going and when they are due back.(These visits can be done in two's if preferred). • When new tenant or new member of Staff, use discretion whether to visit in pairs. • Take mobile phone or office mobile and if you are going to be longer than expected, call the office. • The Corporate Services Assistant will keep an eye on the time and call if not back by agreed time, however any other staff member can check this. • If you become unwell contact either emergency services (depending on severity of illness) your Line Manager or another member of the Management Team as soon as you can. If you are not able to do so, have the person you are visiting do it. • Call office where possible and use 'safe' word to alert Staff to a problem. • Take personal alarm with you at all times. 	
External area inspections	Danger of assault/ verbal abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use H&S sign in/out sheet • Do not move onto some other task without notifying someone at the office. • Take your office mobile or personal mobile and personal alarm. • Notify Staff member(s) of your likely whereabouts and anticipated return time. 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff member(s) to be aware of time in line with 'monitoring return of staff' procedure of this policy.• Call the office where possible and use 'safe' word to alert Staff to a problem.	
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Site Visits & Void Inspections	Dangers within properties (i.e. nails sticking out of walls/flooring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear appropriate safety clothing. • Be observant and vigilant of possible dangers (e.g. missing floor boards, exposed electrics) • If dangers found, complete appropriate form and notify all other staff and contractors likely to encounter this. • Sign keys in and out using the key register. • Notify Staff where you are going and likely timescale. • Take office mobile/own mobile and personal alarm. • Other Staff members to be aware of time and to implement the 'monitoring return of staff' procedure of this policy. • Call the office where possible and use 'safe' word to alert Staff to a problem. 	
Aggression/violence from Colleague/ Committee member	Bullying, fighting, verbal abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director to be notified of incident and will take charge. Where Director not available or involved, next most Senior Officer will take charge. • If during Committee meeting, Chairperson will ask the person to leave the meeting and either Code of Conduct for Committee members or Staff and Disciplinary procedures will be implemented. 	
Driving while on Association business	Breakdown or accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H&S Administrator has responsibility to gather car and insurance information annually from relevant Staff members. • Staff are responsible for ensuring their cars are road worthy and possess an up to date MOT (where appropriate). • Do not smoke or use mobile phones while driving. • Where possible, Staff should have breakdown cover. • When possible, notify the office if you have a breakdown or an accident. If you cannot manage to call, ask someone else to do so. • If no call is received, then Staff members will implement the 'monitoring 	

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		return of staff procedure of this policy.	
Mobile Telephones	No signal, battery run down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are responsible for ensuring their own phones are charged. • All staff now have an office mobile phone and are responsible for keeping them charged. Staff should carry their own, or their office mobile, at all times when not in the office. • Note should be taken where there are poor signal areas within our area of operation. Where this occurs Staff should notify others' how long they are likely to be in that zone and contact the office once they have resumed signal. If no contact is made within the agreed timescale, the 'monitoring return of staff' procedure should be implemented. 	

Assessed by:

Date:

Next Review Date:

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Incident report form – APPENDIX 2

LOCATION:	
DATE:	TIME:
EMPLOYEE DETAILS:	
NAME:	ADDRESS:
DESIGNATION:	
Briefly describe what you were doing at the time of the incident & explain in more detail below (e.g. Estate Management visits)	
DETAILS OF PERSON(S) INVOLVED:	WITNESS(ES):
NAME(S):	NAME(S):
ADDRESS(ES):	ADDRESS(ES):
AGE:	AGE:
OTHER DETAILS:	OTHER DETAILS:
INCIDENT: (Give an account of the incident, including any relevant events leading to the incident – Continue on separate sheet if required)	

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ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION: (i.e. sketch of location)

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<h2>Cernach Housing Association – Appendix 3 Equality Impact Assessment Tool</h2>	
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Name of the policy / proposal to be assessed	Aggression & Violence at Work Policy	Is this a new policy / proposal or a revision?	Revision
Person(s) responsible for the assessment	L Crawford		
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy / proposal	This aggression and violence at work policy sets out the associations approach to tackling violence at work. Employers can have a substantial impact in the prevention of violence, dealing appropriately with violent incidents, monitoring and aftercare.		

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<p>2. Who is intended to benefit from the policy / proposal? <i>(e.g. applicants, tenants, staff, contractors)</i></p>	<p>Staff, Contractors, Management Committee and anyone who interacts with the association.</p>
<p>3. What outcomes are wanted from this policy / proposal? <i>(e.g. the benefits to customers)</i></p>	<p>To ensure that cohesive and uniformed approach is in place to promote personal safety and take a stand against violence in the workplace.</p>
<p>4. Which protected characteristics could be affected by the proposal? <i>(tick all that apply)</i></p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Age <input type="checkbox"/> Disability <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage & Civil Partnership <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy/Maternity <input type="checkbox"/> Race <input type="checkbox"/> Religion or Belief <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Reassignment <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Orientation </p>	
<p>5. If the policy / proposal is not relevant to any of the protected characteristics listed in part 4, state why and end the process here.</p> <p>After careful consideration, there are no known elements of this policy that would impact any of the 9 protected characteristics.</p>	

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	Positive impact(s)	Negative impact(s)
6. Describe the likely positive or negative impact(s) the policy / proposal could have on the groups identified in part 4		
7. What actions are required to address the impacts arising from this assessment? (<i>This might include; collecting additional data, putting monitoring in place, specific actions to mitigate negative impacts</i>).		

Signed:  Job title: Corporate Services Officer

Date the Equality Impact Assessment was completed: 18.11.22