

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR - HUMAN RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE****VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION POLICY REVIEW****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to seek the agreement of Personnel Committee to the revised policy on Violence and Aggression in the workplace, which is attached as Appendix A. The new guidance, which has been produced to support this policy, is also available as a background paper.

**Information and Advice**

2. The County Council's vision, now and for the future, includes the commissioning and provision of good quality, affordable services which reflect the needs of the citizens of Nottinghamshire. This includes a need to ensure we are able to effectively manage the risks that may arise with the implementation of appropriate and effective control measures; including ensuring that staff have the skills and confidence to deal with this aspect of service provision.
3. The County Council's policy on work related violence and aggression was last reviewed in 2005. To date this has provided an overarching framework, requiring managers to take specific action based on risk assessment; to ensure that significant risks are identified and action is taken to ensure they are adequately managed.
4. The policy seeks to ensure that the authority is fully compliant with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and appropriately manages risk relating to potential violence and aggression where that arises out of or as a result of work activities.
5. The general trend in terms of all reportable safety related incidents, including violence and aggression, has been a 32% reduction across all incident types. Whilst the number has reduced by 22%, violence and aggression still accounts for 46% of all reported incidents. The majority of these reports relate to relatively minor incidents and do not involve physical injury but can be psychologically challenging, depending on the circumstances. Many of these incidents arise within specific services, particularly where the service is provided to service users because they have special educational needs and/or exhibit emotional and behavioural difficulties. Delivery of such services often involves careful management of risk and requires a level of competence and implementation of procedures to enable staff to manage the risk involved.

6. Audits and investigations have identified generally very good procedures and levels of competence across the authority. However, the fact that violence and aggression accounts for 46% of reported incidents suggests a need to focus on this as a priority. The primary objective of this review has therefore been to develop clearer more concise policy and guidance which clearly identify roles, responsibilities and the action required to proactively manage risk.
7. Our review also identified a lack of clarity around the reporting of incidents in some areas, resulting in potentially wasteful and bureaucratic duplication. The main concern was not that things were not being reported, but that duplicated reporting to different levels in the organisation can result in confusion around responsibility for follow up action. Given these concerns, it was felt to be appropriate to update and refresh this aspect of the policy and guidance.
8. The new policy and guidance will be supported by a communication and implementation plan designed to raise awareness of Violence and Aggression as a risk that needs to be carefully managed. Our communication will emphasise the need for effective recording and reporting processes, thorough investigation of incidents and appropriate action to control significant risks including a need to train staff in order to maintain competence. As part of this we will ensure that consideration is given to the potential for violence and aggression to disproportionately impact on particular staff groups. The majority of reported incidents (90%) occur in specific services who will receive directed support to help them to review current procedures and fully implement the new policy requirements.
9. Further consultation will take place with staff groups such as the Corporate Black Workers Support Group, Disabled Workers Group and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Staff Group. This will ensure that sufficient focus is given, during implementation of the policy, to the position of staff from groups who may potentially be more likely to experience violence and aggression. The implementation plan for the policy will include promotional and training material that will emphasise the need to consider staff with protected characteristics in order to minimise the potential for discriminatory behaviour.
10. Trades union colleagues have been involved in developing the policy. Further amendments have been made to the manager's guidance following comments received from the trades unions in order to better reflect the role of trades union safety representatives.

### **Other Options Considered**

11. The review involved visits to Learning Centres and other areas of the authority to consider how violence and aggression was being managed. A working party, involving key partners from all departments and the trades unions, was brought together to ensure appropriate consideration of departmental approaches and service requirements. This resulted in the revised policy which is now attached for consideration.

## **Reasons for Recommendation**

12. The Health and Safety at Work Act requires the authority as an employer and provider of services to consider the risk arising from its activities. This requires risk assessment to identify significant risks and implementation of suitable and sufficient control measures.
13. Health and Safety policy is important to provide overarching direction which enables operational management of risk. Managers have a key role in ensuring effective implementation, but require simplicity and clarity in relation to the policies which define what they are accountable for and the key action that they need to take. The policy has therefore been simplified and more detailed separate guidance provided. Our policy requires effective risk management based on a systematic approach supported by appropriate checks and balances. The aim being to enable risk priorities to be identified and controlled at an operational and corporate level.
14. The policy has been revised to enable clarity around roles and responsibilities, clearer and less bureaucratic reporting requirements and to raise the profile of this issue across the authority.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **HR implications**

16. These are referred to in the contents of the report. HR input has been provided to the development of the revised policy. Trades union colleagues have been involved in the working group and the trades unions have been formally consulted on the revised policy through the Council's joint consultative and negotiating framework.

## **Implications for Service Users**

17. The aim of the policy is effective identification and management of risk from actual or potential violence and aggression. This will enable the Council to ensure that a safe environment is provided and maintained for staff and service users.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Personnel Committee agrees the revised Work Related Violence and Aggression Policy as set out in Appendix A.

**Marjorie Toward**  
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**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**  
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### **Constitutional Comments [KK 11/10/12]**

The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

### **Financial Comments [MB 10/10/12]**

There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.

### **Background Papers**

Guidance for Managing Work Related Violence and Aggression  
Equality Impact Assessment  
Trade Union Comments.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All