HS 006 Violence and Aggression Policy
Version 5.1

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Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment: The EQIA did not identify any negative or positive impacts on those with a protected characteristic as it applies equally to all staff.

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1. Policy Statement

1.1. This document sets out the Scottish Ambulance Service's Policy, relating to violent incidents that occur during the course of work and how the service will respond to incidents and support staff who may be subjected to violence at work.

1.2. The Scottish Ambulance Service (The Service) considers all forms of violence or aggression against its staff to be unacceptable.

1.3. The Service will support any legal action taken against perpetrators of violence against its staff by offering employee counseling, occupational health to assist with rehabilitation and give time off for attendance at solicitors appointments. The Service is not in a position to offer legal advice.

1.4. Where reasonably practicable the Service aims to avoid exposing its staff to violence and aggression at work. Where this is not possible the Service will implement a range of actions to minimise and control the risk of violence and aggression. These actions will be regularly reviewed to ensure best practice.

1.5. The Scottish Ambulance Service takes seriously any violent incident against its staff and will provide support to all employees who are subjected to violence in the course of their duties.

1.6. Employees should be aware that their personal safety and that of their colleagues, takes precedence over anything else which may seem important at the time of a potentially violent incident.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Ambulance Service defines violence as:

> *"Any incident where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health"*

For the purpose of this document the term "violence" will encompass physical aggression, verbal abuse or threats, or other forms of harassment to persons or property, which may cause distress, fear, and/or physical injury to individuals.

2.1 Employees are expected to avoid placing themselves or their colleagues, deliberately at risk from violence. All reasonable steps must be taken by employees and managers to minimise the likelihood of violence.

2.2 The extent to which an employee may be affected will depend on the severity of the incident, their personal circumstances or experience. However in all circumstances all acts of violence in terms of this policy must be reported.

2.3 The Head of Health and Safety will take the lead role in monitoring and proposing amendments to the management systems surrounding the control of violence and aggression

2.4 This document should be read in conjunction with the lone worker policy.

3 PREVENTION AND CONTROL

3.1 Many factors are involved in an incident of violence. Whilst some staff may believe they have a comprehensive understanding of how, why and when a violent situation will occur, incidents will arise without warning or indication. It is therefore essential that each member of staff assess the risk of violence to themselves and others on a dynamic basis as they undertake their normal duties.

3.2 The Service acknowledges that staff rightly fear acts of violence whilst conducting their normal duties. It is essential therefore the problem is monitored and recorded and specific incidents fully investigated to reduce the likelihood of repetition. It is the responsibility of the line manager to investigate incidents involving their team members.

3.3 The Service will provide training to its staff as appropriate and identified by risk assessment to deal with the risks present in their workplace. Eg - Management of Aggression Training including de-escalation and breakaway techniques

3.4 The Service will, where possible use the systems it has in place to identify locations where violence has been an issue. This information will be provided to vehicle crew staff attending said location

3.5 The service's Health and Safety and Wellbeing Group monitors violence issues and the violence risk assessment(s) and conducts an annual review of violent incidents.

3.6 Accident report forms (DATIX) will be analysed to identify any trends relating to violence and these will be considered as part of the annual reviews

3.7 Occupational Health services are available to staff to help them with the physical or mental effects of violence. Staff can be referred by their manager or they can self refer. In addition to Occupational Health, staff can access the Service's Employee Assistance Programme either by self or management referral for post incident support.

3.8 The Service has arrangements in place to ensure staff receive appropriate training and information to assist them assess the risks to their safety from potentially violent situations and where appropriate to de-escalate a situation.

3.9 Staff can request police back up as required based on their local risk assessment, if such a request needs to be made covertly then the phrase "CODE ZERO" should be used

3.10 New A&E vehicles are fitted with internal and external CCTV systems. In the event of an incident occurring or if one is likely to occur staff can activate the CCTV by pressing the activation strip.

3.11 Lone workers must not be despatched to any incident coded as: AMPDS code 27****, or to an incident coded as AMPDS code 04**** at a domestic premise. In such cases lone workers can be tasked to a Rendezvous Point

4 PROCESS AND PROCEDURES.

4.1 INCIDENT REPORTING

4.1.1 Where necessary following a violent incident, obtain first aid or professional medical treatment. The person giving the treatment should be asked to make a careful written record of the nature and extent of injuries.

4.1.2 The incident must be reported at the earliest opportunity using the e-incident reporting tool DATIX on @SAS and in line with the Adverse Event Review Framework

http://sas/risk_resilience/Documents/Policies/Adverse%20Event%20Review%20Framework.pdf

4.1.3 **Note:** where treatment is given by Service staff an ePRF or Patient Report Form must be completed.

5 INCIDENT DETECTION AND PROCEDURE

5.1 Frontline staff, particularly Accident and Emergency and PTS crews are most at risk of assault. Approximately 85% of reported incidents occur in A&E, 12% in PTS, the balance being spread across the rest of the Service.

5.2 Incidents of violence to staff can broadly be categorised as follows

> ➤ When through the telephone call it is recognised that a potential violent incidents exists.
> ➤ On arrival of the crew they identify the incident as potentially violent
> ➤ When a violent incident occurs in the ambulance or other environment without prior warning.

5.3 **Procedure for ACC Staff**

When it is recognised by ACC staff that a violent incident exists or is likely to exist the ACC Manager or Team Leader must be informed and take the following action:

> ➤ Assume overall management of the incident through direct contact with the crew.
> ➤ Ensure the crew are fully informed and given the correct information and advice.
> ➤ Where appropriate instruct crew to "stand off from the incident, ensure other appropriate agencies, i.e. the Police are called and monitor their arrival.
> ➤ Ensure contact with the crew throughout the incident by his/her duty team. If no radio contact from the crew after a reasonable period of time (15 minutes) then the Police should be alerted.
> ➤ Ensure requests for Police assistance from crews is actioned without delay.
> ➤ Alert an on duty Operational Officer or the on call manager to attend incident, if it is serious in nature. In the event of injury ensure the crew receive

appropriate medical attention at the earliest opportunity.

5.4 Procedure for Staff

The personal safety of the crew is the first priority. Staff should carry out a dynamic risk assessment and where necessary request police attendance and await their arrival at a safe location. It is vital the incident is not allowed to escalate by poor management. The following guidance is issued for use of crew staff:

➢ Be perceptive and read situations
➢ Avoid argumentative situations
➢ Exercise care in what you say - try to be polite and objective - speak calmly, slowly, quietly and firmly.
➢ Offer alternatives; agree to talk at a later date. If appropriate leave the scene.
➢ Make sure the person has suitable space, as people can feel threatened if you stand too close to them.
➢ Do not be provocative
➢ Try to ignore all provocation, since responding to it may lead to the situation escalating
➢ If the person becomes aggressive, skilful handling can allow them to back down without losing face.
➢ Consider leaving the person alone, although do not ignore them completely. Let them know that you are going to leave them in peace.

5.5 Procedure for Staff Should Violence Occur

Irrespective of training, information or advice provided for the protection of staff the possibility of violence, assault or threatening behaviour cannot be totally eliminated. If staff find themselves facing violence they should:

➢ Raise the alarm
➢ Withdraw from the scene.
➢ If a person is armed or carrying some sort of weapon, do not attempt to disarm the person.
➢ Avoid grappling with the person.
➢ If you are attacked, try to break away and get some form of shelter between you and the attacker. If escape is not possible, try to calm the person down by talking, but if you can get away, do so.
➢ If a person is actually damaging property, do not intervene, you should try to move away from the situation. Personal Safety is always more important than property.
➢ If after a warning the person continues to exhibit violent behaviour, the Police should be called, this should be done without drawing it to the attention of the person.

Operational staff equipped with personal radios must carry these with them and use them to call for assistance if required.

5.6 Non Operational Staff / Operational Managers/ Officers

Occasions arise where Operational Managers and Non Operational Staff are exposed to the possibility of violent assault or behaviour

Where practicable ensure you inform your colleagues or Managers of where you are going, who is to be visited and your expected return time.

- Where possible you should make yourself aware of any relevant information concerning the person before making your visit.
- All visits should be by a minimum of 2 persons, especially where there is a risk of violence
- If a person to be visited is known to be violent or potentially violent, you should discuss the visit with your line Manager and decide if special arrangements are necessary
- If visiting an isolated location or a person's home you should telephone your base at the latest opportunity before the visit and the earliest opportunity after the visit giving an expected time of return to base.
- A Mobile telephone should be carried during visits, which if required, will provide personal access to the 999 system. Staff not normally supplied with a mobile telephone should obtain a loan of one from their local Operations Room for the duration of the visit.

If a member of staff is to conduct an interview or meeting on Service premises with a person who is known to be or suspected of being violent, this should be discussed with their line Manager who may make special arrangements. Consideration should also be given to the taking preventive action, which may include :

- Leaving the interview/meeting room door open.
- Having another person present.
- Arranging room furniture in such a manner to allow easy access to the door or other escape route, ensure you have an escape route (ie closest to exit point)
- Removing any heavy objects from the room.
- Arrange for a personal interruption by a colleague.

Employees who do not normally work outside normal office hours in Service premises who are intending to do so should inform their line Manager.

All staff should familiarise themselves with the security arrangements of the building to ensure the building is secure especially if working alone. This instruction also applies to cleaning and other contract staff that are often alone on Service premises

Where possible work should be organised so that employees are not alone in a building. See HS 028 Lone Working Policy

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CONTENTS

GUIDANCE

Guidance for Managers and Team Leaders

Introduction

Managers and team leaders will know that the way individuals react to a given circumstance will vary, this is even more so with incidents of a violent nature. As managers you are responsible for ensuring the safety and welfare of your team, this includes ensuring that there are no ill effects following an incident of violence or that any ill effects are well managed and that your staff are appropriately supported at all times.

The immediate reactions of a manager or team leader in responding to an incident of violence to one of their staff will be long remembered by the staff affected. Your response to such an incident will need to reflect the needs of those staff affected not any preconceived ideas or experiences.

The Service is committed to providing appropriate support to all members of staff and this guidance is aimed at helping you to ensure that your staff are adequately supported.

Guidance:

In the Event of an Incident:

Ensure that the immediate needs of your staff are met:

i.   They are safe and secure
ii. Medically treated if necessary
iii. Allow staff member to stand down from duty to recover
iv. Taken home if necessary

Allow staff to freely discuss the incident if they wish to, do not force staff to relive the event if they do not wish to. They may wish to discuss the incident later

If staff wish to make a formal complaint to the police facilitate this (The service is unable to make the complaint on behalf of staff)

Complete and incident report using the incident reporting tool DATIX this can be found on the front page of @SAS

Inform staff of the support mechanisms the Service has in place:

- Employee Assistance Programme
- Fast Track Physical Rehabilitation
- Occupational Health

> ➢ Ensure that staff affected are aware that it is usual to feel very emotional following an incident of violence and that the following emotions are usual: Shock, Anger, Fear, Disbelief, Guilt and Embarrassement.

On Going Support

It is common for staff to report that the immediate support offered following an incident of violence is good; however they then feel that there was no further support. In order to ensure ongoing support of staff affected by incidents of violence you should ensure that a follow up discussion occurs with the member of staff a week or so later to ensure that their wellbeing is being appropriately managed. The reasons for this are many fold but include:

- Good management and support
- Staff will have had time to reflect on the incident
- Staff may enter a denial phase in which they believe that no one will understand

Leadership and support at this stage is absolutely vital to ensure that staff recover as rapidly as possible.

In the event that staff members are still suffering these unusual emotional reactions 3 to 4 weeks after the event then they would almost certainly benefit from attending the confidential counselling services mentioned above. You will only be able to identify this by discussing the incident with your team member.

If you identify significant changes in behaviour following an incident (for example – irritability, aggressiveness, exhaustion, depression, excessive drinking, eating or smoking) then you should ensure that your team member is provided with the support outlined above.

Additional guidance on Post Incident Stress can be found in the Service's Stress Management and Wellbeing Policy (HS 023)

Guidance for Staff

Following an incidence of Violence

The first thing you should do following an incident of violence is ensure that you are safe, if this means withdrawing then withdraw to a place of safety and inform ACC.

Inform your team leader or manager of the incident as soon as possible e.g. on return to the station and complete an incident report.

Discuss the incident with your team leader, manager and your colleagues if you wish to.

Use the support mechanisms that are in place to help you such as:

- ➢ Employee Counseling Service
  http://sas/occupationalhealth/Pages/EmployeeCounsellingService.aspx
- ➢ Fast Track Physical Rehabilitation
  http://sas/occupationalhealth/Pages/HRConnectInformation.aspx
- ➢ Occupational Health
  http://sas/occupationalhealth/Pages/OccupationalHealth.aspx

Remember it is usual to feel emotional after such an event, the likely emotions that you feel may include: Shock, Anger, Fear, Disbelief, Guilt, Embarrassment.

If after a couple of weeks you are still feeling these emotions about the event or if your behaviour has changed in any way it is possible that you are not coping and you should seek support through the employee counselling service which is entirely confidential and to which you can self refer. See contact details above.

You should expect your team leader and or manager to approach you occasionally following the incident to check that you are doing okay, if you are not then tell them.