

Violence at work

Guidance for businesses



Ealing Council

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What is violence?

Work related violence is any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted, in circumstances related to their work. It includes:



Verbal abuse



Robbery



Intimidation



Threats



Harassment



Unruly behaviour



Physical assault



Lack of respect












Spitting

Who is most at risk?

Employees whose role involves dealing directly with members of the public can be at risk from workplace violence.

Employees in these or similar roles are most at risk:

Delivering 	Working at night 	Caring 
Working alone 	Handling cash 	Door staff and security 
Position of authority 	Young and inexperienced 	Providing a service 

Who can cause violence in a workplace?

Some people in these groups may pose a particular risk to employees:

 Unhappy customers/ members of the public	 People with mental health problems	 People under the influence of drugs and alcohol
 Young people, especially in groups	 People carrying out shoplifting or planned robberies and burglaries	

What do you need to do to protect your staff?

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, employers have a legal duty to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their employees. This includes protecting them from the threat of violence while at work.

- **risk management** – to find out whether your staff are at risk from violence at work you will need to look at the risks, how serious they are, and then decide what you need to do to reduce them. Involve your staff in this process - they do the job and understand it best. A checklist to help you identify any areas of concern has been included at the end of this guidance
- **controls** – put into practice measures that control both your working environment and working practices that reduce the likelihood of work-related violence
- **RIDDOR** – under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013, you need to report certain types of incident:
 - incidents resulting in specified injuries such as broken bones, amputation, loss of eyesight
 - incidents involving members of the public which result in them being taken straight to hospital for treatment

Both include reporting violent incidents that result in physical injury.
- **other records** – threats or verbal abuse do not need to be reported under RIDDOR but they should be noted down. You should record and regularly check work-related violent incidents that involve suspicious people or events including verbal abuse and threats.

This may help you to keep an eye on criminal trends in your area and possibly help the police at a later stage. Just to begin with, simply use a notebook with the following headings:

Date and time	Type of incident	Description of suspect / name	Did you report it? If yes - to who and when?	Signed
Example 07.05.2025 3.45pm	Verbal abuse	Known male - Joe Bloggs	Yes to PCSO and manager on same day. Crime reference	LM

Theft is when something is taken from you without your permission. Robbery is when force is used or threatened to steal items from a person.

Training

Train your staff to recognise, prevent and deal with violence. For example, wherever possible, do not touch or remove items after a robbery until police arrive and advise you further.

Advice

Speak to other local traders or business support groups to share experiences and tips for dealing with the problem.



What control measures should you consider?

Work environment

Layout

Staff should be able to see their customers and be aware of what they are doing at all times.

Customers may feel less confident about committing a crime if they feel visible.

- remove blind spots / hidden areas
- remove stock and posters that block front windows
- make sure customers can be seen entering and leaving the premises
- use mirrors and CCTV to monitor certain areas if necessary
- keep the height of larger displays as low as you can

Lighting

- while you will want to provide a pleasant ambience for customers, it is essential to allow staff good visibility
- entrances and exits should always be well lit

Protect staff

Reduce the risk of physical violence to staff by preventing customer access to them.

- use plastic screens
- install high and wide counters
- make staff only areas hard for customers to reach
- if you can, provide separate welfare facilities for employees, in a staff only area
- provide 'staff only' signage.

Outside the workplace

A well maintained, secure-looking exterior may put off shoplifters.

- remove hiding places for criminals
- lock access doors but do not lock fire exits
- prevent access to the roof – remove any climbing aids
- fit shutters / security fencing / anti climb paint
- have good lighting

CCTV and security

CCTV and security devices can act as a deterrent and CCTV may be used to provide evidence if a crime is committed.

- get real, working equipment and not just dummy gear
- a camera should point to the entrance of the premises giving a good head and shoulders view of all customers
- check regularly that the CCTV is working, recording, and pointing in the right direction
- secure recording equipment to stop it from being stolen
- alarms – do they work? Test regularly and write it down each time, to remind you
- train staff to know what to expect and do when the alarm goes off
- locks – use security rated combination locks on internal doors so no keys are necessary
- security staff must be SIA-registered to have the correct training to take the right action
- request regular visits from Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

People under the influence of alcohol/illegal drugs

- these customers can be unpredictable and can pose a risk to staff
- train staff on how to recognise difficult situations before they get out of hand

Working practices

Excellent customer service

- good service can stop customers from becoming upset
- welcome customers - be polite and helpful
- make sure they know you are aware of them, it can help stop stealing when they see staff are paying attention

Cash handling

Staff handling and transporting cash can be vulnerable targets for thieves.

- count cash out of sight of customers
- if possible, accept debit or credit card payment
- place tills out of easy reach of customers
- use a time delay safe if you process large volumes of cash
- show customers that larger notes are not put in the tills – use a drop safe
- make sure staff banking cash change their route/routines often
- if possible, arrange for cash to be collected from the workplace
- ask staff to either remove or cover their uniform when not at work, to stop them being identified as a possible target

Staffing levels

It is important to make sure staff are given the right support from colleagues at vulnerable times. They need this support either to prevent or handle a possible violent situation.

Importantly, make sure you have enough staff to:

- provide enough cover at peak times to reduce waiting
- avoid staff working alone or being out of the way for long periods, especially at night
- try to have at least two people present during opening and closing times

Unusual and late opening hours

Staff can be vulnerable both in and outside work.

- increase staff/security at those times
- staff who work away should have a way of keeping in touch
- think about staff safety when leaving work and how they travel home



Do's and don'ts for staff during and after a robbery

- stay calm and passive – never challenge a robber
- comply with instructions but do no more than asked. Do not offer concealed cash or security information
- if possible, try to preserve evidence
- secure the place where the crime was committed straight after the incident when it is safe to do so
- prevent access by members of the public but do not usher out any witnesses to the robbery
- preserve the scene to protect any evidence – do not move or touch anything
- keep anything left by the robber, for example bags or notes, but do not touch them
- get support from your employer if you feel upset or find somebody to talk to about it
- most importantly, make immediate notes about what happened and descriptions of the robbers



Further information

Hopefully the information in this booklet will help you to protect yourself and your staff and customers.

If you have more questions or need help on how to reduce workplace violence or any other health and safety concerns, please contact a member of Ealing Council's workplace and public safety team:

Ealing Council
Perceval House, 14-16 Uxbridge Road
London, W5 2HL

Tel: 020 8825 6666

Email: healthandsafety@ealing.gov.uk

Other useful organisations and contacts:

Reporting:

- **RIDDOR incidents and accidents**
www.hse.gov.uk/riddor
- **Ealing Council's safer communities team**
Tel: 020 8825 5994
Email: safercommunities@ealing.gov.uk
- **Crimestoppers – report crime anonymously**
Tel: 0800 555 111
www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Getting advice:

- **Health and Safety Executive**
www.hse.gov.uk
- **Local police force neighbourhood teams and crime prevention design officers**
www.met.police.uk/area/yourarea/met/ealing/ealing-broadway
- **Business crime prevention**
www.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/keeping-business-safe-from-crime
- **Suzy Lamplugh Trust – personal safety**
www.suzylamplugh.org
- **Victim Support**
Tel: 0808 1689 111
www.victimsupport.org.uk

Retail trade support networks to join

- **British Retail Consortium**
www.brc.org.uk
- **British Chambers of Commerce**
Tel: 020 7654 5800
www.britishchambers.org.uk
- **Federation of Small Businesses**
www.fsb.org.uk
- **Business Crime Reduction Partnerships**
www.crimestoppers-uk.org/keeping-safe/fraud/business-crime



Your checklist

Name:		Date:	
Address:			
Good lighting inside? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Do staff know regular customers by name? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Good lighting outside? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Do staff know how to deal with difficult customers? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
CCTV working and recording? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Are staff safe during opening and closing times? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
No blind spots or hidden areas? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Staff not made to work alone at night for long periods? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Customers can be seen entering/leaving? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		At least 2 staff when opening / closing? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Staff know how to download or save the recording to show police? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Premises secure and maintained? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Staff only barriers and signs in place? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Anything else?	
No cash handling in front of customers? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Tills out-of-sight and out of reach? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Staff who do banking are fully trained? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			



November 2025