

Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service

POLICY DOCUMENT

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Document Title: VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE

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This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

CROSS REFERENCES

This Policy refers to the following documents:

Doc Type	Doc. No.	Title
POL	PP:014	NIBTS Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
POL	QP:003	NIBTS Policy for Incident Management
POL	PP:007	Conflict Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace
FMW	QD:001	NIBTS Board Assurance Framework
SOP	HS:012	Procedure for Reporting and Managing Health and Safety Incidents
POL	PP:023	Absence Management Policy and Procedure
SOP	GL017	Procedure for Reporting and Management of Serious Adverse Incidents
FORM	DD:2497	Personal Impact Assessment
FORM	DD:2496	General Management of Violence and Aggression Risk Assessment Form

Key Change from Previous Revision:

New Regional policy

1 STATEMENT

All Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion (NIBTS) staff have the right to feel safe from the threat of violence and aggression. NIBTS do not condone any acts of violence or aggression towards staff. Whilst it is acknowledged that in the provision of healthcare services, there is an increased risk of violence and aggression this does not mean that it is acceptable. NIBTS is committed to staff safety and in working to achieve a reduction in incidents of violence and aggression towards staff, through the provision of safe ways of working and effective training. The risks associated with such incidents can be effectively managed through the use of effective communication, risk assessment, the provision of training, prevention planning, service user involvement and learning from incidents.

For employers it is recognised that the impact of violence and aggression towards staff, is far reaching for the organisation, in that it can lead to reduced performance, both individually and at team level, low morale, poor employee relationships, high levels of absence, difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, and negative publicity. When incidents do occur, it is vital that all incidents of violence and aggression are dealt with appropriately and that staff are supported in line with NIBTS policy.

Any donors, visitor, parent, guardian or carer behaving unlawfully may be reported to the PSNI and NIBTS will seek the application of relevant penalties available in law and will consider as necessary, the prosecution of perpetrators of crime on or against Staff, NIBTS property and assets.

The regional HSC Violence and Aggression Framework has been used to adapt this policy in line with NIBTS practices.

2 OVERVIEW

2.1 DEFINGING ‘Violence and Aggression’

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as*:

“Any incident, in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment”. This includes, threatening behaviour including bullying, intimidation, psychological abuse, harassment, inappropriate use of social media and/or telecommunication and threats with weapons.”

Verbal abuse: the use of inappropriate words or behaviour causing distress including shouting, swearing or insults with racial or sexual intent and intimidation.

Physical violence: the intentional application of force to another person without lawful justification, resulting in physical injury or personal emotional discomfort.

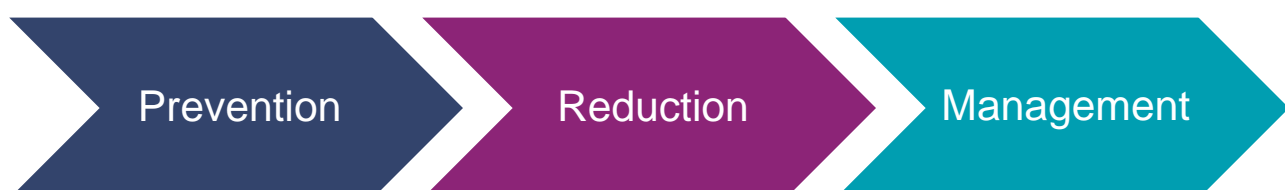
It also includes slapping, punching, nipping, biting, kicking, spitting, butting, head butting, stamping or sexualised abuse. It may also include more extreme forms of violence using weapons that are not just restricted to sharp implements, chemicals and firearms.

It is important to note that in addition to the deliberate acts of violence and aggression that are sometimes displayed by service users (or their family and friends), illnesses and mental capacity may also lead to unintended or unintentional incidents of violence and aggression. A service user may be responsible for incidents of violence and aggression which are outside of their control, but which lead to the harming of staff. Whilst these incidents may be unintentional, it is vital that staff are supported in line with this policy. * <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf>

2.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline NIBTS commitment in partnership with staff representatives, to ensure the **prevention, reduction and management** of violence and aggression towards staff in the workplace, and to ensure associated structures, policies and support is in place to enable staff to work safely.

This Policy is underpinned by health and safety legislation, which places a duty on the employer to provide a safe and secure environment and support for staff and others and to undertake risk assessments as applicable in line with the creation of safe working environments.



2.4 Objectives

In Health and Social Care, we are committed to creating a culture of mutual respect, where staff can undertake their duties safely. In accordance with this policy NIBTS will:

Respect donors/patient/ service users /staff's rights under the Human Rights act 1998;

Promote an organisational culture and develop associated structures and strategies that help prevent incidents of violence and aggression towards staff in the workplace and minimize the adverse effects of abuse on staff should it occur;

Provide an environment where staff feel protected from violence and aggression, with appropriate support for staff, donors / patients / service users, students on placement and other persons carrying out authorised work on behalf of the organisation;

Take all reasonable practical steps to reduce the likelihood of the occurrence of abuse toward staff, ensuring staff have the appropriate skills to manage these situations and to minimising the effects of abuse should it occur;

Ensure all staff are aware that they have a vital role to play in these processes, and support staff to take all reasonable steps to ensure their own and others safety.

Ensure that the need to protect staff is properly balanced against the need to provide health and social care to individuals.

Learn from incidents of violence and aggression, by gathering and reviewing relevant information, sharing this with staff appropriately and making improvements where possible.

Consider and ensure the implementation of all other relevant policies.

As part of NIBTS commitment to keeping staff safe, and in line with the **Plan, Do, Check, Act** approach outlined in '*Violence prevention and reduction standard*' NHS Guide¹, it is important that a governance policy exists in all HSC organisations and that appropriate steps are put into place to mitigate the risk of incidents of violence and aggression to staff and that reduction and prevention strategies are reviewed and implemented. NIBTS Policy for Incident Management (QP:003), outlines the actions required to report and respond to any Health & Safety incident involving staff.

¹ NHS guide; 'Violence prevention and reduction standard' - December 2020

For additional information see appendix 10

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/B0319-Violence-Prevention-Reduction-Standards.pdf>

2.5 Scope

This policy applies to all NIBTS staff, students and volunteers. Excluded from this policy is harassment and bullying of NIBTS staff by other staff and abuse of service users by staff. Such situations will be managed in accordance with other policies such as Conflict Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace (POL PP:007) or NIBTS Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (POL PP:014)

3 RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 Board

The NIBTS Board are responsible and accountable for the strategic direction and management of the organisation's activities. The NIBTS Board Assurance Framework (FMW:QD:001) provides the policy framework and structure by which the Agency's responsibilities will be fulfilled, including governance and risk management. In this respect, the Board, and the Board chair in particular, are responsible and accountable for ensuring organisational compliance with this policy, as well as assessing and reporting both on progress with implementation and the impact this is having upon the health and well-being of staff and service users.

3.2 Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility and accountability for the health, safety and welfare of all donors/service users and clients, staff and others affected by the activities of NIBTS. The Chief Executive will ensure that all actions are taken within NIBTS in relation to the prevention, reduction and management of violence and aggression in the workplace.

3.3 Senior Management Team

The senior management team are directly accountable for ensuring that this policy for the prevention, reduction and management of violence and aggression in the workplace has the appropriate governance structures in place to implement and monitor this policy. This includes responsibility for creating and driving a culture focused on preventing and managing incidents of violence and aggression (see Section 4).

3.4 Head of Departments

- Compliance with this policy regarding the prevention, reduction and management of violence and aggression towards staff in the workplace.
- Ensuring that any development or review of procedures on managing violence and aggression towards staff reflects the ethos of this policy.
- Ensuring required health & safety risk assessments are completed in each of their areas of responsibility and that the training needs of staff are properly identified, delivered and reviewed.
- Ensuring that all incidents of violence and aggression are appropriately reported, investigated and monitored in line with NIBTS Incident Reporting Procedures (QP:003) and that learning outcomes are implemented and shared.

- Monitoring incidents regularly to identify high-risk areas and to action plan and develop prevention strategies as necessary.
- Maintaining records in relation to incidents of violence and aggression in line with NIBTS Incident Reporting Procedures (QP:003).
- Ensure that the line managers of individual members of staff or a staff group involved in an incident are provided with an appropriate level of emotional and other support as is necessary.

3.5 Line Managers

All line managers need to support and protect their staff, and should through risk assessment be aware of the potential for violence and aggression against their staff and the impact that this may have. Line managers are responsible for the following:

- Communicating this policy to their staff.
- Completion and implementation of management of violence and aggression risk assessments (section 4) as appropriate.
- Ensuring that effective plans are in place to release staff for training as necessary.
- Investigating all incidents of violence and aggression promptly and communicating and sharing learning where appropriate.
- Monitoring and reviewing staff working practices with regards to the management of violent or aggressive incidents.
- To facilitate and implement safe working practices, e.g. buddy systems.
- Ensuring where available, that resources including alarms and CCTV are in good working order and that staff responsible for using them are appropriately trained to do so.
- Recognising the rights of individual members of staff to pursue legal action against an aggressor in the context of their work and where appropriate offer support to staff (see section 4.3.7 reporting a crime).
- Keeping their Senior Manager / Head of Department informed of any significant risks or implementation difficulties.
- Ensuring appropriate communication of relevant information and risks between services/other agencies. This should be considered and documented on a case-by-case basis. If in doubt about what information is appropriate to share Managers should seek advice from Senior Management or the Information Governance Manager.
- Providing emotional and other appropriate support to individual members of staff or a staff group involved in an incident (Section 5).

3.6 MOVA (Management of Violence and Aggression) Liaison Function

The NIBTS HR Department will act as a Liaison Function to assist specifically in the prevention, reduction and management of violence and aggression by:

- Providing a central coordination point for the gathering and monitoring of information relating to all incidents of violence and aggression
- Providing a regular review to Senior Management of all incidents of violence and aggression towards staff and an overview of staff personal impact assessments to

capture themes and to inform decision making in the prevention and management of violence and aggression.

- Undertaking regular reviews of staff personal impact assessment documentation to ensure learning.
- Where appropriate, linking with line managers regarding the support of staff that have been involved in serious incidents of violence and aggression, which may include accompaniment if appropriate at civil court cases.
- Liaising between staff and managers where issues arising from incidents of violence and aggression require immediate action or where further support for staff is required.
- Building strong relationships with the PSNI.

3.7 All Staff

Staff are required to adhere to this policy, and any other associated policies at all times whilst carrying out their role. Staff must:

- Attend relevant training.
- Adhere to safe working practices and report to their line manager if they are experiencing difficulties.
- Record and communicate appropriate information about known relevant risks to themselves, colleagues and any others who may be affected.
- Report violent or aggressive incidents in compliance with the Procedure for Reporting and Managing Health and Safety Incidents (SOP HS:012)
- Reflect with colleagues on practice and learning following an incident.
- Ensure that their behaviour towards clients/donor/service users reflects an understanding of individual need.
- Be aware of the potential impact of their behaviour and how this could precipitate or increase the severity of an incident of aggression.

4 POLICY

4.1 Preventing and Reducing the Likelihood of Violence and Aggression

4.1.1 Risk Assessments

Effective, up to date, suitable and sufficient risk assessments are key to helping the organisation prevent and reduce the impact of incidents of violence and aggression; both workplace / environmental risk assessments. These assessments should reflect requirements under health and safety legislation and must outline the measures in place to support staff as far as reasonably practicable to minimise the risk to their personal safety at all times and should be shared with staff as appropriate.

FORM:DD:2496 General Management of Violence and Aggression Risk Assessment Form should be completed by the line manager and the employee affected if an incident of violence or aggression has occurred.

4.1.2 Staff Training

All staff should receive induction and other appropriate training relevant to their roles. For front facing staff this will include the knowledge and behaviour in the form of

communication necessary in preventing, de-escalating and managing incidents of violence and aggression.

4.1.3 Incident Reporting

It is important to report all incidents of violence and aggression in order to identify incident trends and other related issues, with the aim of preventing future incidents. An incident of violence is defined by the HSE as:

“Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to work”.

This includes the serious or persistent use of verbal abuse – which the HSE says can add stress or anxiety, thereby damaging staff health and wellbeing. It also covers staff who are assaulted or abused outside their place of work, for example, while travelling home, as long as the incident relates to their work. This also includes staff who have experienced violence or aggression through social media platforms, linked to their role / job(s).

All incidents of violence and aggression, including incidents which are motivated by a protected equality characteristic for example racial, sectarian or homophobic abuse must be reported and recorded in accordance with the NIBTS Policy for Incident Management (QP:003) and Procedure for Reporting and Managing Health and Safety Incidents (SOP HS012).

It should also be noted that incidents involving threats of violence or actual violence and other crimes against individuals and property should also be referred to the PSNI by individuals (see section 4.3.8, 4.3.9).

Incidents reported via the Procedure for Reporting and Managing Health and Safety Incidents (SOP HS:012) should be reviewed at regular intervals to provide information and trend analysis to managers. Managers should investigate clusters and identify the root cause of incidents and ensure this is fed back into care plans and local procedures. Managers should be suitably trained and aware of understanding behaviour as a form of communication.

Reporting is important in order to:

- Assess the risks to individuals concerned, the environment and to the service
- Identify the true scale of the problem
- Highlight patterns of increasingly threatening behaviour
- Measure the effectiveness of how incidents of violence and aggression are handled
- Identify issues that could be considered a hate crime (on the basis of equality grounds)

The **collection of evidence** is important and may be required (where appropriate) to assist in the prosecution process. This may involve:

- Weapons (which should be securely and safely retained with minimum handling to prevent contamination)

- CCTV footage
- Photographs of the scene and injuries sustained should be taken
- Obtain details of possible witnesses, including written statements of evidence; if no PSNI involvement e.g. in cases of potential hate crimes etc.
- Where a written statement has been provided to the PSNI, a copy of this statement should be requested from the PSNI by the person who made the statement and this should be forwarded to their line manager for review as part of any incident investigation.

If staff are unclear in relation to the gathering of evidence they should link with their Line Manager in the first instance.

4.1.4 Prevention and Reduction - The application of a 'Trauma' lens

Staff and service user engagement is a key factor at all levels (**primary, secondary and tertiary**) in the prevention and reduction of violence and aggression. The following guidance sets out considerations at each level, with a particular focus on applying a trauma lens to the understanding of donors / patient / service user needs.



4.5 Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Intervention



This includes engagement and collaboration with donors/ patients / service users, accurate and up to date risk assessments, clear communication and understanding of donors / patients / service user needs, and focusing on a culture of respect. The

application of a 'trauma lens' to situations and to service users' behaviours can reduce the likelihood of violence and aggression through consideration and planning of the following:

Physical environment

Consider the impact that the setting has and how that might impact on donors / patients / service users (noise, lighting, crowds, signage).

Assessment, treatment and screening

Use a calm voice; provide clear instructions, clear explanations. Be responsive to and acknowledge pain (physical and/or emotional), fear and/or frustration.

Behaviour is communication

Aggression is often the mask of fear therefore it is essential to create safety as far as possible i.e. consider privacy; clear exits so donors / patients / service users do not feel trapped; provision for physical needs-water, toilets, resources.

Workplace Culture

Staff need to feel confident and supported by colleagues and managers/leaders (e.g. through clear communication, modelling of respect, support, compassion, supervision in a range of forms formal and informal, individual and group/team focussed) in order to do demanding work. Line managers should work to ensure that a workplace culture exists where staff feel able to not only report incidents that have occurred but where they feel safe to raise concerns and reflect upon practice.



Secondary intervention is early intervention to prevent escalation and involves the use of de-escalation skills and techniques in real time as behaviour is escalating.

Successful secondary intervention is heavily reliant upon departmental practices and procedures, communication skills and staff having up to date training and awareness.

There may be occasions where even best practice fails to de-escalate aggressive or violent behaviours. In such circumstances, staff have a range of options up to and including the immediate removal of the individual(s) by the PSNI. Clear communication with PSNI officers attending, may be effective in order not to further escalate the situation.



Seeks to lessen the impact of episodes of violence and aggression as well as learn lessons to reduce the chances of future episodes. Staff/team debriefing, service user learning, accountability/supervision, system evaluation and root cause analysis are all key components of tertiary prevention and form part of the learning for staff and donors / patients / services users. It is also essential to learn lessons where a heightened situation has been avoided through de-escalation, support, explanation etc. De-briefs and learning when difficult situations have been avoided are of equal importance as techniques used could be repeated or replicated to other situations.

4.2 Managing Incidents of Violence and Aggression

4.2.1 General guidance for managing an incident

Where there is an identified or foreseeable risk of staff being faced with violence and aggression, an appropriate risk assessment should be completed by managers in conjunction with staff and appropriate training provided where necessary. In many roles and in many circumstances within HSC there are inherent risks and the potential for violence and aggression against staff. Whilst organisations have a responsibility for staff safety, there is also an individual responsibility on each member of staff, to make professional judgements, in order to control risk. This is known as '**dynamic risk assessment**'.

Dynamic risk assessment is the continuous process of identifying hazards, assessing risk, taking action to eliminate or reduce risk and monitoring / reviewing in the rapidly changing circumstances of an incident.

With regards to the management of an incident of violence and aggression, this may include the ability to recognise own limitations, being vigilant for the safety others, adapting to changing circumstances, working with accepted systems of work, introducing additional controls, reassessing etc. This could be as simple as withdrawing and calling for help depending on the situation. It is important to note that risk management at this level includes post incident review to ensure shared learning. The review allows relevant information to be recorded and fed back into the strategic decision making process, so that safety can be further improved.

In areas where a risk has not previously been identified (e.g. in an administrative or office type setting), the following is guidance on dealing with an incident of violence or aggression, which could be on NIBTS premises.

Early warning signs

- Every effort should be made by staff to recognise early warning in changes of behaviour and to take control of the situation as soon as possible. Communication skills are vital to engage with the individual to understand the cause, find solutions and ultimately to de-escalate the situation

Assuming control

- If possible, one staff member should lead in a potentially violent situation.

'De-escalation'

- This refers to the use of verbal and non- verbal responses which, if used selectively and appropriately, may reduce the level of a person's anger and hostility. Consider which de-escalation techniques are appropriate for the individual and the situation.

Know your exit

- For personal safety be aware of your environment and know your exits. If the situation is unsafe disengage and leave immediately.

Maintain Calm

- Be aware of your own emotional state and maintain a calm, confident manner to convey respect of the individual and maintain control of the situation. Take a deeper than normal breath and exhale slowly to help calm your emotions.

Weapons

- Where there are potential weapons in the environment, this is very high risk and the individual should, where possible be encouraged to relocate to a safer area. Staff are not expected to disarm an individual who is displaying violence and aggression. If a weapon is involved ask for it to be placed in a neutral location. It may be necessary for staff to move away and call security where applicable or the PSNI for assistance.

Restrictive practices

- Where restrictive practices are required to manage risk, they should be used as a last resort, be the least restrictive option available and used for the minimum amount of time in line with local policies and best practice guidelines.

Ensure assistance

- Ensure assistance is available by raising a suitable alarm where applicable. This may be calling for help, activating an alarm where available.

Manage the environment

- For example, get colleagues to move other individuals towards a safe place and help create space.

Adopt a non-threatening position

- At least one leg length away at an angle to the angry/hostile individual; legs positioned slightly wider than hips for optimal balance and in readiness to move away if necessary. Keep open fluid hand movements at waist level and maintain intermittent eye contact.

Actively Listen

- Demonstrate that you are really listening and interested in the individual by encouraging them to express their concerns.

Keep it simple

- Give simple and brief directives to the individual. Negotiate and offer realistic options and choices, speak calmly assertively and respectfully, empathise and seek resolution. Listen carefully, continue to establish and build therapeutic rapport with the individual.

Behaviours

- Manage your verbal and non-verbal behaviour ensuring that you remain non-threatening and communicate respect.

Quiet Area

- Consider offering the individual the use of a quiet area or designated area to help them calm.

4.3 SUPPORTING OUR STAFF

Supporting staff who have experienced violence and aggression or the threat of violence and aggression is an important issue for NIBTS and is integral to our duty of care and shared HSC values.

When an incident of this type has taken place, it is important that staff know what to do, who to talk to, are aware of the support available to them and what they can expect from their Manager. For an open culture where incidents and learning are shared and addressed it is important that staff feel supported and encouraged to report all incidents of violence and aggression and vital that they see appropriate action and follow up.

NIBTS will support any individual who exercises their right to take legal action in the case of an act of violence at work.

4.3.1 Recording and reporting of violent or aggressive incidents

Information is essential to assist with the prevention, reduction and effective management of incidents. It will also shape the support available for staff and aid with the evaluation of training or any other intervention in place to address violence and aggression. The process for dealing with incidents of violence or aggression is as follows:

- **All incidents of violence and aggression must be reported** as soon as possible to the person in charge of the relevant area/department by the person(s) directly involved.
- **All staff must use an IR1 form, following the Procedure for Reporting and Managing Health and Safety Incidents (SOP HS012), to report all incidents of violence and aggression recording where appropriate incidents related to an equality characteristic** (as defined in this policy).
- **Managers must investigate and follow up** with the member of staff in relation to any incident that occurs within their area. Serious or highly significant incidents must be investigated in accordance with the Procedure for Reporting and Management of Serious Adverse Incidents (SOP GL017) and appropriate support given to the member(s) of staff involved.
- **All incidents must be reported** in line with Health and Safety Legislation and Regional Framework for Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence's Regulations (NI) 1999 as appropriate. For further guidance on RIDDOR reporting refer to: <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/report-incident>
- **Managers should monitor** the frequency and severity of incidents in their area to look for trends, patterns or particular cluster areas.

4.3.2 Actions following an incident

Managers are responsible for ensuring that each individual receives an appropriate level of support responsive to individual need:

Initial support, some examples of this may include:

- Emotional first aid – common human support, e.g. comforting the individual and offering refreshments
- Recognise the impact of discriminatory behaviours for example racism or homophobia and provide signposting and support.
- Support immediately after the incident within the department/unit (Group or individual) and support to get prompt and appropriate medical care.
- Opportunity to go off duty.
- Contact relative, friend or Trade Union representative.
- Taxi Home/Transport arrangements.
- Assistance and accompaniment to hospital (where appropriate)
- On-going managerial (most appropriate Manager) contact with individual in a considerate/ supportive manner.
- Seek Occupational Health or Inspire support

4.3.3 Personal Impact Assessment

Staff that have been involved in an incident relating to violence and aggression in work should be offered the opportunity to complete FORM:DD:2497 Personal Impact Assessment. This is not compulsory for staff to complete. It is important that the manager makes the member of staff aware of the opportunity to reflect on their experience by completing FORM:DD:2497 Personal Impact Assessment soon after the incident or at an appropriate time after the event.

The purpose of the assessment is to enable the individual to reflect on their experience, the support they have had, and what other support if any may still be helpful. It will be up to the manager and member of staff to determine when the timing is right to undertake the assessment.

Purpose of the Personal Impact Assessment:

Experiencing incidents of violence or aggression in the work place can leave staff feeling lots of different emotions. One way of helping the organisation to understand what staff have experienced is to provide a personal impact assessment. Your statement details how the experience has affected you in your own words. It enables you to describe the impact on you emotionally and practically, and is intended to help NIBTS to continually learn from incidents, put appropriate preventative and support measures in place and to ensure that you personally have been / continue to be supported appropriately post incident.

The personal impact assessment is confidential, and redacted information from the documentation will only be used (with staff consent) in appropriate ways e.g. for sharing information with relevant working groups / Health and safety groups linked to management of violence and aggression.

4.3.4 Return to Work

Staff should be kept informed of any actions taken following the incident, especially if they are absent from work and what steps have been taken to ensure that the individual feels that they are supported and returning to a safe working environment. Further guidance on staff returning to work following absence is contained within the NIBTS Absence Management Policy and Procedure (POL PP:023) and where appropriate a management referral to Occupational Health may identify some additional measures that may be taken to support the member of staff's return.

4.3.5 Learning from Incidents of violence and aggression

Post incident review(s) should be regarded as an opportunity:

- To promote a learning culture where there is learning from experience and where there is appropriate support for our staff in the best way possible in the future
- To obtain information to prevent/reduce risk of further violent and aggressive incidents.
- To improve services and better utilise resources.

It is important that lessons are learned and conclusions drawn from all incidents that staff are involved in and that changes identified as being necessary are made. Managers should actively promote learning from experience and share knowledge across teams in relevant services. Opportunities to share learning right across NIBTS should be maximised to prevent the reoccurrence of similar incidents in other departments.

4.3.6 Evaluation (of Incidents/ incident management and impact on staff)

The Head of HR & Corporate Services will provide a summary report of all incidents to the Governance & Risk Management Committee in accordance with NIBTS governance arrangements. This is for the purpose of preventing, reducing and managing all incidents of violence and aggression effectively, to ensure that staff are receiving an appropriate level of support, and that there is awareness and understanding at a senior level within the organisation, of the impact that incidents have on NIBTS staff.

The following sections outline some of the support mechanisms available to staff and outline the responsibility of Managers in terms of providing direct support and guidance for staff when an incident occurs:

- **Appendix 1 – Dealing with dangerous or offensive weapons**
- **Appendix 2 - Managing abusive telephone calls**
- **Appendix 3 – Working with the PSNI**

4.3.7 Reporting an incident as a Crime (Criminal Prosecutions)

Where a member of staff has reported an incident as a crime, the individual may wish to liaise with the HR team who has responsibility for MOVA to seek support / information as necessary (see Section 3.6 regarding the liaison function).

Where an incident could be / is being considered as a hate crime, due to an equality nature of the incident, individuals may wish to speak to the HR Department for further advice.

A member of the HR team will liaise with individual affected and their Line Manager, in terms of follow up actions / information required and to support learning post incident. This may also include providing support / guidance as appropriate and accompanying the individual if required.

In addition to the support outlined above, a member of the HR team will link with the relevant Health and Safety Groups / Committees to provide further details and analysis re incidents across NIBTS that will inform relevant actions plans and training etc. They will also be responsible for developing relevant action plans in support of the relevant Committees to ensure actions in relation to incidents of violence and aggression are delivered and that post incident learning is applied and shared appropriately. They will also have responsibility for establishing a baseline for incidents of violence and aggression, working closely with other staff from the relevant Health and Safety Team(s) / Officer(s) and monitoring levels of incidents on an annual basis, to look for and report on trends and recurring issues that should be developed through an action plan for improvement.

4.3.8 Advice Regarding Criminal Prosecution

Due to the legal requirements set out in law, the employer is unable to take forward a case on behalf of a member of staff. Line managers do however have a responsibility to support any member of staff involved in criminal/legal proceedings because of a work related incident.

Where a serious incident (including hate crimes and or threats of violence) has occurred, staff should report the complaint to the PSNI as soon as possible and liaise with their Manager to advise of any issues that arise from this. It is acknowledged that this can cause distress to staff and managers should ensure the individual is given appropriate assistance and support. A work colleague or line manager can be present to provide support so long as they are not involved

in the incident or likely to be a witness. In pursuing a criminal prosecution, a Senior Member of NIBTS Management may be able to submit a **victim impact statement** to support a member of staff's case. Staff should speak to the PSNI about this during the course of reporting an incident and they will advise on the appropriateness of this. The Liaison Officer can also assist in the co-ordination of this process and the provision of advice.

Reporting a criminal incident (of violence and/or aggression);

Staff should report an incident as soon as possible, in one of these ways:

- **Emergency:** Phone 999 where there is serious injury, threat or danger; a crime is in progress; or suspects are on the scene.
- **Non-urgent matters:** Phone 101 or you can report online at, <https://reporting.psni.police.uk/>
- **Hate crime:** You can also report hate crime online at <https://reporting.psni.police.uk/>
- **Call at your local PSNI station:** You can report non-urgent incidents at your local PSNI station, during opening hours.
- **SPOC,** Northern Area (extension 63968), Western Area (extension 40722), Eastern Area (extension 36602), Southern Area (extension 34030), South Eastern Area (extension 34030).
- **Web:** <https://www.psni.police.uk/>

Where reported to the PSNI, a crime (incident) number will be issued, which is important should staff wish to pursue individual personal damage or prosecution against the perpetrator. Following the incident, staff member(s) may be asked by the PSNI to make an immediate statement, in order to assist them in dealing with or arresting an individual. If necessary, the PSNI will take a written, or video recorded, statement from staff setting out what happened.

For more detailed and up to date information in relation to how to report an incident to PSNI and the support available, or other general information in relation to incidents please see either of the links below:

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/crime-justice-and-law/victims-and-witnesses>
- <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/information-for-victims-of-crime.PDF>

The Victim Charter sets out how victims of crime should be treated and what advice, support and practical information they can receive. Details of the Victim Charter can be found at [Victim Charter | nidirect](#).

4.3.9 Logging an incident with PSNI by way of a record of the incident

In the event that a member of staff does not wish to make a formal complaint to the PSNI, but NIBTS feels that they have a duty to flag the incident to the PSNI by way of a record, the Line Manager in conjunction with the Head of HR & Corporate Services can report this to the PSNI, but request no further action to be taken. The staff member involved may be asked by the PSNI if they wish to do anything further regarding the incident.

Contact regarding an incident should be raised through the PSNI via; **Telephone Number: 101 OR via the PSNI website (link below)**

<https://selfservice.nidirect.gov.uk/firearms/PSNI/PSNIForms/OnlineIncident#/IntroAdult>

This will generate an incident number which can be recorded by NIBTS and referred to if any further incidents occur

5 EQUALITY SCREENING AND ACCESSIBILITY

This policy has been drawn up and reviewed in light of the statutory obligations contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). In line with this statutory duty of equality this policy has been screened against particular criteria. If at any stage of the life of the policy there are any issues within the policy which are perceived by any party as creating adverse impacts on any of the groups under Section 75 that party should bring these to the attention of the Head of HR & Corporate Services.

The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for staff, donors and service users. We strive to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and that their rights are respected at all times. We believe that it is important that our policy is understood by all those whose literacy is limited, those who do not speak English as a first language or those who face communication barriers because of a disability. On request it may be possible to make this policy available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, disk, audio file, audio cassette, Easy Read or in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.

6 TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

All employees are required to make themselves familiar with this policy.

APPENDIX 1 - DEALING WITH DANGEROUS OR OFFENSIVE WEAPONS

Definition:

A weapon means any object which can be used to cause injury and not just items such as knives, etc. Any implement lying around could be seized and used to harm or threaten others.

Staff should:

- NEVER approach an armed aggressor.
- Keep at a safe distance, weapons can be thrown.
- Build a way out – position yourself to the nearest escape route.
- If unsafe, leave/disengage immediately and if possible, evacuate everyone and secure the area.
- GET HELP.
- Ring PSNI if required.

If safe, use an item of furniture as a barrier and ask the individual to lay down the weapon, rather than hand it over.

Negotiate a compromise e.g. “if you put the weapon down, I will telephone your GP/partner/manager” depending on the situation.

If a dangerous or offensive weapon has been brandished or used, it should be:

- Securely retained if possible.
- Handling should be kept to a minimum
- Item placed in a plastic bag and then placed in box to prevent accidental injury.
- PSNI should be advised and the item handed over to them.
- Under no circumstances return to the assailant.

APPENDIX 2 - MANAGING ABUSIVE TELEPHONE CALLS

Staff should:

- Try to answer the phone promptly
- Be assertive but friendly, courteous and respectful.
- If appropriate let the caller vent (in a respective way) their concerns, this will allow the caller to calm especially if they know their message is being heard.
- Reflect back empathetically to the caller the essence of the information gathered “*Yes I can see you are extremely frustrated/angry/annoyed that nothing has been done*” and seek clarification of the issues.
- Show empathy “*I am sorry this has happened to you*”.
- It is important to recognise the boundaries of your role, you may have to refer the caller to a manager or colleague if this will help. Inform the caller you are putting them on hold, for say 5 minutes, to find possible solutions, while you check on records; or speak to a colleague.
- If transferring the call please ensure details of the caller’s issues are conveyed so as not to exacerbate the situation.
- It may not be possible to fully meet needs or demands but offer realistic alternatives and time to choose, where possible explain why you can’t meet their needs.

At any stage if de-escalation has been successful and the situation has calmed follow normal procedures to further resolve the caller’s concern, query or complaint. Offer extended help, “*Is there anything else I can help you with?*”

If unsuccessful move to:

- **Stage One:** Explain there is a problem and ask them to stop e.g. “*Please stop shouting/using bad language, I want to help.... pause.... When you speak more quietly/calmly/stop swearing then I will be able to listen and help you*”. Remain silent to allow caller to consider their behaviour and a positive outcome if they follow your request.
- **Stage Two:** Remind the caller and state more assertively e.g. “*I have already asked you to please stop shouting/using bad language. If you choose to continue to do so then you leave me with no option but to end this call*” Remain silent to allow caller to consider their behaviour and a positive outcome if they follow your request.
- **Stage Three:** Terminate the call e.g. “*I’m sorry but I have already asked you twice not to shout/use bad language. I am authorised to terminate this call. Please call again when you can do so in a calm/normal way. Thank you*”.

Dealing with Threats

Staff are authorised to immediately terminate any call where threats are made against them personally or to their property or any perceived threat to them outside of the work environment should be reported to the PSNI. NIBTS find abusive calls unacceptable and operate a Zero Tolerance Policy, however where staff believe appropriate techniques have not resulted in the required respect then this should be reported to their line manager.

APPENDIX 3 - WORKING WITH THE PSNI

If any member of staff perceives that there is a risk to the safety of a donor, service users, the public or staff they should contact the PSNI. Each situation will demand an assessment of risk to be made by staff and PSNI on duty.

1. PSNI called to deal with violent/disorderly persons.

- Staff will fully brief the PSNI in attendance.
- Any offence committed will be dealt with by the PSNI.
- If action is required by the PSNI, staff should not intervene.
- Witness statements will be taken by the PSNI Officers attending.
- Any Medical attention required should be administered.

All incidents where PSNI are called to attend NIBTS premises must be fully documented within the incident report.

2. Organisations working with PSNI

Organisations are encouraged to work on an on-going basis with local PSNI, to provide clarity on these matters and build relationships