

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment to be carried out by a competent person in accordance with the 1992 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP). This risk assessment will be written up, and be made available to all staff.

The risk assessment will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure it covers all employees against all risks, and to ensure that any action identified as needed in the risk assessment has been carried out. The risk assessment will also be updated every time that there is a major change in working practices. The risk assessment will cover all employees of Children's Service, including Community Schools wherever they may be based, and will cover all aspects of their work.

Working away from the office

Staff who are going to be working away from the office should make it clear to other staff where they will be, how long for and how they can be contacted.

If in the course of a trip away from the office plans change significantly, this should be communicated back to the office.

Staff should make it clear who they wish to be informed (outside of work) in the event of an emergency and how they can normally be contacted.

Staff will use the Barnet code of practice for communication within their team. For example using the 'buddy system' and contacting their line manager.

Personal awareness

There are lots of things we already do that keep us safe, but becoming more aware of our surroundings puts us in control of our environment. The following steps are recommended to all staff as being helpful.

Whilst out and about

- **Trust your intuition and listen to your feelings** - If you sense something is wrong, it probably is. Acting on intuition may prevent an aggressive situation.
- **Be prepared** - Do you know whom to contact and what to do if a difficult situation arises? Find out and **ask** if you are not sure of the person's name or designation.
- **Be observant** - Notice everything around you – exit doors, telephones, windows, sources of help. This will make you more aware of your surroundings and help you escape if you need to.
- **Assess potential risks** - Avoid dangerous short cuts, walk facing the traffic on the street side of pavements, think about where you park your car and remember where you have parked it. Check the environment around your vehicle when entering after the visit.
- **Make sure you have checked all relevant information before you go** - Have you checked to see if there is a known problem with whom you are seeing or where you are going?
- **Look confident** - "Walking tall" and being aware of your surroundings deters assailants.
- **Never stay in a situation where you think you may be at risk.** Don't feel you have to stay because of your work. You can see the client, arrange the visit or do the interview again. You can ask a colleague to come in or be with you. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- **Be aware of personal space** – yours and others. Encroaching on other people's personal space can make them aggressive. If other people are too close to you and making you uncomfortable, ask for more space or move away.
- **Communication** – think about what you will do if you are unable to use your mobile phone before you need it in an emergency. You may want to consider discussing carrying a panic alarm with your manager.
- **Don't get into lifts with people who make you feel uneasy** - If you are in a lift and feel uncomfortable, get out and use the stairs, or wait for another lift. Make sure you know where the emergency button is and stand where you can reach it.
- **Don't accept lifts in vehicles from people you have no reason to trust.**
- **Think about what you are wearing** - Can you run if you need to?

Dealing with aggression

If you find yourself in an aggressive situation, what can you do?

- **Try to stay calm** if someone is starting to get angry. Your body language, voice and response can help to defuse a situation.
- **If you feel able offer the angry person a range of options** from which they can choose the one they prefer. They may find it difficult to stay angry.
- **Don't be aggressive back** – this is how anger can escalate into violence.
- **Consider your body language and the messages that you are giving.**
- **Keep your balance and your distance.**
- **Do not touch someone who is angry.**
- **Don't let your escape route be blocked.**
- **Keep yourself between an escape route and an aggressor** so you can still get away.
- **If the situation is dangerous, then get away as fast as you can.** Never remain alone with an actively violent person.

Reporting and recording

Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment. Staff should report any current or potential situation at work which is a threat to personal safety. Talking about fear and other problems related to aggression or harassment is not marks of failure but good practice. A serious incident, even if it results in no physical harm, may cause feelings of fear, panic or despair which can carry on long afterwards.

Other relevant policies and procedures

You should have due regard for all other council policies and procedures when carrying out risk assessments, (eg Data Protection) and refer to the published Health & Safety policy where relevant