



Violence against staff - A Cluster Approach

Introduction

All staff in the Dereham Cluster are committed to working with you in a professional and courteous manner and have the right to work in a safe and supportive working environment. School staff should be able to come to work without fear of violence, abuse or harassment from students, their parents or carers or other members of the community. In most cases, students and their parents or carers will be appreciative towards those who work with and support the students in their school but a minority of people are abusive or violent towards staff.

The Dereham Cluster is committed to dealing with this problem.

The Dereham Cluster has a 'zero tolerance' attitude towards violence.

It is clear that some staff groups may be more at risk than others. This may depend on their role in their school and whether they are frontline staff or leadership staff or not.

Violence and abuse is not acceptable under any circumstances and will be dealt with accordingly.

The legal position

The Dereham Cluster can't ignore or dismiss the chances of violence towards their staff and expect to get the support of the courts. Employers have a duty 'so far as it is reasonably practical' to protect the health, safety and welfare of staff members under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work etc Act.

In practical terms, that includes assessing the risk of violence and taking steps to reduce it as required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Employers also need to establish procedures to be followed in the event of serious or imminent danger, and provide information and training on health and safety risks and control measures.

What is violence at work?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines violence at work as "any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work." This covers the serious or persistent use of verbal abuse- which the HSE says can add to stress or anxiety, thereby damaging an employee's health. It also covers staff who are assaulted or abused outside their place of work - for example, while going home, while working in the community or while travelling as long as the incident relates to their work.



The Cluster Approach to Violence and Assault

The cluster expects all staff to:

- Report physical assaults to their Headteacher
- Report verbal assaults, threats or intimidating behaviour to the Headteacher

The Headteacher will then do the following:

- Log all issues in accordance with their school procedures
 - Share the information with the cluster so we can assess the scale of the difficulties across the cluster
 - Ensure police involvement with physical assaults and consider if this appropriate for other cases of violence or assault
 - Send a warning letter, in conjunction with legal services if necessary, to the perpetrator.
- Consider taking legal action to prevent the perpetrator from entering the school premises without invitation, as appropriate, or imposing conditions to safeguard staff whilst ensuring a parents/carer can still be engaged in their children's education
 - Share information on transition for the safeguarding of staff and potentially students in the receiving school

Reducing the risk of violence

A key part of the cluster's approach has to be risk assessment and devising solutions to eliminate the risk of violence or reduce that risk to an acceptable level.

Research highlights some risk factors for violent behaviour:

- impatience
- frustration
- anxiety
- resentment
- drink, drugs and inherent aggression/mental health problems.

There are many ways to reduce the risk of violence.

- providing suitable training and information to staff
- ensuring the design of the working environment promotes safety
- recording incidents of physical assault or verbal abuse so that patterns can be discerned.

The cluster schools will ensure regular check ins with frontline staff to discuss the above. The Headteachers in the cluster will discuss violence against staff at their meetings to ensure we all have the same expectations and take the same level of action, and that we also support each other.

