

UNISON

Violence at Work Charter

Introduction

For some years now, it has been recognised that violence towards people working in the community and voluntary sector, including housing associations, is a significant problem which is getting worse.

The 2015 UNISON survey of members across the service group found that 48% had experienced an incident of violence or aggression at work in the previous two years, whilst 27% felt threatened by violence or aggression at work.

In October 2016, the BBC broadcast information gathered by 'Inside Housing' showing that seven out of ten workers from housing associations had been either physically or verbally abused in the preceding twelve months.

These appalling incidents include staff being punched, pushed and kicked. Staff have also been threatened with weapons and held against their will. UNISON reps in the sector tell us they are seeing more and more examples of violence against members who are simply doing their jobs.

UNISON wants to work with employers to put in place a basic level of monitoring, support, safeguards and training. These are measures which every employer should be able to deliver. We are asking only that charities and housing associations take their duty of care to staff seriously.

In common with the Health and Safety Executive, UNISON defines violence at work as “any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”.

Meeting these standards will show the workforce and the employers stakeholders that organisations founded on the principles of care and social responsibility are prepared to put in place measures which prevent people they are responsible for from being assaulted as they carry out their work.

The standards

To qualify for the UNISON Violence At Work Charter mark, employers must meet the following standards:

1. The employer has a written violence and aggression at work policy which is available to all staff. The policy should also cover lone working.
2. Responsibility for implementing these policies lies with a senior manager.
3. Measures are taken to prevent staff working in isolated buildings, offices or other work areas on or off site.
4. Staff are encouraged to report all violent incidents and they are told how to do this.
5. The employer collects and monitors data on violent incidents on a regular and ongoing basis.
6. Where they are in place, union safety reps are able to access this data and are consulted on solutions to issues relating to violence in the workplace.
7. Thorough risk assessments are conducted for staff placed in vulnerable situations
8. The employer has in place support pathways for staff who are victims of violence at work, so that they know where to turn for advice and support.
9. Training to ensure staff are aware of the appropriate way to deal with threatening situations.
10. Where appropriate, independent counselling services are available to staff who are the victims of violence at work.

Implementation

UNISON will approach all major employers in the Community and Voluntary Sector and ask them to sign up to this charter.

All employers seeking to sign up will be asked for evidence of their compliance with the ten points prior to signing.

Organisations which need to make changes to their practices will be given one year to make those changes and state, at the time of signing, what their plan is to deliver on all 10 points.