Accessing help and support

Because of their varying degrees of experience and exposure to conflict, people cope with assaults and incidents in different ways.

Incidents where you are abused, threatened or even assaulted in the workplace can have various different impacts on everyone and so you need to be aware of what is available out there to help you if you need assistance or support following a traumatic incident.

It is important, therefore, that businesses and organisations are able to help staff after an incident of workplace violence, particularly in relation to:

- providing immediate and ongoing support
- helping all members of staff to learn from the incident
- updating policies and procedures to improve safety
- sharing good practice

Typical effects

Anyone could show any or even all of the following short-term or long-term symptoms following exposure to workplace violence:

- sickness
- insomnia
- behavioural changes
- becoming withdrawn
- anxiety
- intolerance
- hypersensitivity
- fear
- depression
- loss of confidence
- stress
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Responses to incidents

Typical symptoms are how the brain and body react to abnormal situations or incidents. The severity of the symptoms will usually depend on the severity of the incident, although something that might not affect you could well affect one of your colleagues and vice versa.

Certainly, in the time directly following an incident, anyone could start to feel shock, anger, embarrassment and disbelief that this has actually happened to them at all.



Post-incident support

It is vital that if a member of staff starts to show any signs that they may be suffering from any of these symptoms, support must be given immediately to reduce the changes of long term effects. Support can be provided by:

- colleagues
- management
- counsellors
- helplines (such as the Samaritans)
- citizens advice
- trade unions
- trade publications such as victim support: **(www.victimsupport.org.uk/)**
- the internet

Professional medical help may be even required for serious problems.

Chapter 11: Good practice for post incident management

Reflecting on and learning from conflict

Dealing with people, particularly within the private security industry, is a large ongoing learning curve. You never stop learning, and there is always room for improvement in everything you do. This is especially true when it comes to how you deal with conflict, anger, aggression and violence.



There are 6 basic steps to take following an incident.

1 STEP 1 - Reflect on what happened

Consider: *What happened?* *Why did it happen?* *What went wrong?* *What could we have done better?*

2 STEP 2 - Recognise trends and any poor practice

Consider: *Does this problem occur regularly?* *At any particular place or time?* *Can we reduce or stop these types of incidents?* *Is there something we are doing wrong?*

3 STEP 3 - Share good practice

Consider: *Did we do something well?* *Does everyone know how to do it?* *Is extra training required?* *Does it need to be a policy?*

4 STEP 4 - Learn from what happened

Consider: *How do we make sure this doesn't happen again?* *Can we improve something for next time?*

5 STEP 5 - Update policies, practices and procedures

Consider: *Are our policies, practices and procedures up to date?* *Can anything be added or improved?*

6 STEP 6 - Monitor progress

Consider: *How can we record future incidents better?* *How can we monitor the effectiveness of any changes made?* *When and how do we re-evaluate our future performance?*

The proper debriefing of these types of incidents can help you to improve how you deal with similar problems in the future. Organisations can use data that has been collected for licensing hearings and they may even be able to reduce the chances of them happening in the first place, or even stop them from happening at all. And if they do occur, you should be able to provide an agreed, common positive response each time, automatically improving your own safety, as well as the

safety of customers, colleagues, other members of staff and the public. All members of the security team, particularly those involved in the original incident, should take part in this process so that they can help to make the changes required to deal with future conflict situations more effectively.



Improving practice

Like all industries, the security industry needs to continue to evolve and progress. As a security operative you have the responsibility to ensure that you continually contribute to improving practices within the industry.

Improved practices help to:

- promote a professional service
- increase safety for staff
- promote teamwork
- increase safety for customers
- identifies procedures or methods to better deal with situations effectively