managing stress and conflict in libraries

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Managing Stress and Conflict in Libraries

Sheila Pantry OBE

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In particular, I thank my husband for reading the script and listening to my ideas during the writing.

My fervent hope is that all future workplaces will be safe, healthy and less stressful.

Glossary

ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
BCS	British Crime Survey
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CISDOC	International Labour Office Health and Safety Centre's database
COSHH	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
HASAWA	The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
HSC	Health and Safety Commission
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
HSELINE	Health and Safety Executive Information Services database
ILO	International Labour Office (in Geneva)
MHSW	The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992
NIOSH	National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (in USA)
NIOSHTIC	National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health databases
OPSI	Office of Public Sector Information
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
TUC	Trades Union Congress
WRV	work-related violence

Introduction

Stress and conflict in the workplace undermine performance and can make people mentally and physically ill. Research indicates that ever-increasing numbers of people are experiencing excessive pressure of this kind in our rapidly changing world of work.

This applies to libraries and information organizations as much as anywhere; indeed they can be particular targets for verbal and non-verbal violent behaviour through their accessibility to the public. In addition, as in all organizations, a certain proportion of library staff is suffering aggression, abuse, bullying or harassment from a work colleague.

This book is written in response to this situation from the viewpoint of health and safety at work practice. Although people's ideas of standards of acceptable behaviour are likely to differ, it is vital that consensus is reached in each workplace.

Tackling – and preventing – conflict and stress effectively is a responsibility for management under health and safety legislation in the UK and many other countries. This can result in significant benefits for the organization in terms of recruitment and retention, employee commitment, performance and productivity, customer satisfaction, organizational image and reputation, and avoidance of potential litigation.

The book defines clearly what should and should not be tolerated in a healthy and safe working environment, and introduces the reporting procedures and communication skills essential in conflict resolution, enabling both employees and managers to consider situations consistently based on risk assessment previously carried out.

Chapter 1 looks at current health and safety concerns worldwide in the context of the fast moving world of work. It argues that employers must

take a lead by producing guidelines and policies to bring about a conflict-free workplace. Chapter 2 looks at stress and conflict in the context of library and information organizations. It advocates that steps should be taken to ensure that everyone involved should clearly understand what is meant by the terms 'aggression', 'bullying', 'conflict', 'harassment', 'stress' and 'violence'. Importantly, this chapter helps you to decide if there is a problem and to understand how such behaviour can affect people physically and mentally.

The business case is presented in Chapter 3. As well as endorsing the benefits of stress and conflict management, it also includes advice on the management of change: keeping staff involved and informed; dealing with internal conflict, managerial pressure and external pressures (e.g. outsourcing, downsizing); and ensuring employee commitment to work and management commitment to staff.

Chapter 4 introduces the five steps of a risk assessment and emphasizes the necessity of carrying one out, with the legal responsibilities involved. Chapter 5 further demonstrates how a risk assessment should be carried out: what happens at each step, and, once an overall picture has been obtained, the reasons why management must accept responsibility for any problems that are identified.

Chapter 6 offers organizational guidance and resources from the UK, Europe and worldwide, as well as recommending sources of advice on preventative measures that are currently in use.

Chapter 7 gives practical advice on preventative measures, and also outlines the steps to take if you find you are at risk; whilst Chapter 8 advises on how to react when faced with aggression and violence. It outlines personal safety measures that can be taken – especially while working alone or on the move – and stresses the vital role of effective communication skills. It also covers self-defence, dealing with physical attacks, and what to do in the aftermath of an incident. Finally, the very important issue of health and safety training is discussed; because all workplaces change with time it is vital to be aware that refresher training should be arranged regularly. The chapter identifies essential requirements for training, networking and counselling provision in the workplace.

A victim will need help both inside and outside the organization, and

Chapter 9 covers the support to be expected, whether immediate or long-term, after an incident.

The title of Chapter 10 is 'You are not Alone', and sadly these stories sent in response to an appeal in CILIP's *Library + Information Gazette* are real-life cases of aggression and violence that have been experienced, and in some cases are still being experienced, in our own profession. What an indictment! Work should be rewarding and fun – not stressful and harmful as these studies show.

The Appendices offer sources of further information including literature, support organizations, databases, websites and relevant legislation.

This book is essential reading for LIS employees at all levels, and also for managers, team leaders, supervisors, personnel and human resources staff, complaints officers, union officers and anyone else in the information organization who may be called upon to deal with people.

Sheila Pantry OBE

1 Current concerns worldwide

In this chapter you will find information on:

■ how stress and aggression in the workplace is a worldwide problem
■ how the changing nature of the world of work is affecting levels of stress and aggression
■ some research into the nature and extent of the problem, and some legislation developed to tackle it
■ various definitions of the problem
■ measures for beginning to tackle it.

A worldwide problem

Unfortunately, aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment and violence in the workplace are not new, and neither are they decreasing. Pressure is part and parcel of all work and helps to keep us motivated. But excessive pressure and other forms of aggression, bullying and conflict can lead to violence – all of which undermines performance, is costly to employers and can make people ill.

Some governments and organizations worldwide have tried, particularly over the past 10 years, to try and contain these problems – by legislation, guidance and advice.

The information and references in this book will help you to understand the causes, and to identify and solve problems in your workplace.

The changing world of work

In 2005, the International Labour Office in Geneva commissioned a report entitled *The Cost of Violence/Stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment* (Hoel, Sparks and Cooper, 2005). The results show that stress is an increasing workplace phenomenon negatively affecting a growing number of people across the world.

As the economy becomes global and competition increases in the battle for market share and survival, pressure mounts on workers. With high levels of crime and aggression in society, violence finds its way into the workplace in the form of robbery and assaults, particularly on frontline staff and service providers such as those in our libraries and information centres. As pressures mount, aggression may also build up *within* the workplace, making worker on worker aggression more likely. Recent research in Europe, the USA and Australia indicates that it is the emotional and psychological abuse referred to as 'bullying' and 'mobbing', rather than physical violence, which represents the greatest threat to most workers. However, due to the increasing diversity of workforces, a number of studies also document the frequent presence of harassment on the basis of race or gender. Additionally, many women, particularly in the developing world, have found that the workplace represents no safe haven from abusers.

Listed below are some current factors and trends which may affect the presence and scale of stress and violence:

- Economically, we are moving towards a single, global marketplace.
- There is increased commercial competition, which results in growing pressures on everyone at work.
- Survival in this competitive environment is not assured; organizations are restructuring and downsizing with the aim of cutting costs.
- Tendering for contracts has become increasingly common in the public sector, bringing with it more economic risk-taking in order to reduce cost.
- Outsourcing of jobs creates anxiety for current jobholders.
- Downsizing and restructuring has resulted in greater pressure on remaining employees, with an increase in their workload and workpace.
- Such intensification of work has resulted in employees (e.g. in the USA and the UK) working longer hours.

- More short-term contract work, temporary and part-time work increases tensions in the workplace.
- Perceptions of job insecurity generally are increasing in the industrialized world (there is no such thing now as a cradle-to-grave job).

The following global trends will also have an increasing effect:

- In many countries it is the service sector, including libraries and information services, that is increasing most rapidly, with growing demands and pressure from clients and customers affecting the well-being of the staff.
- The revolution in computing and telecommunications is gradually transforming work processes. A greater number of workers are being employed in teleworking, with their private home being their workplace.
- With this wider definition of 'workplace' has come a need for new measures to ensure that basic health and safety regulations are applied at home.
- The organization of work is changing, with more people working in self-directed or autonomous teams, etc.
- In many countries the workforce is diversifying. This diversity may refer to gender, race, physical ability and/or sexual orientation. Where such development is not managed properly it may give rise to tension and conflict among groups of employees.

Research and legislation

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is a large, nationally representative household survey which measures the extent and nature of crimes committed against people living in England and Wales. Each sweep of the survey asks respondents about their experiences of criminal victimization in the previous year.

The BCS provides the most comprehensive and reliable findings to date on the extent and nature of violence at work in England and Wales. The large representative sample and the continuity of questions between sweeps

mean that the BCS is uniquely placed to examine violence at work at the national level. The BCS has a sufficiently large sample (by combining several sweeps of the survey) to examine the nature of violence at work, and how risks of violence at work vary among different occupational groups.

During the 1980s and 1990s, violence at work began to attract increasing media attention. High profile incidents of violence at work have been reported in the media and have raised awareness of the issue among the public, employers, trade unions and the government. The Health and Safety Executive, the UK government agency with responsibility for advising on violence at work, has been producing guidelines on its prevention since the mid-1980s.

Legislation has also been introduced which recognizes violence at work as a health and safety issue. Since 1995, the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) have required employers to report to their enforcing authority (usually the HSE or their local authority, depending on the type of premises) acts of physical violence which cause a fatality, a major injury or someone's absence from their normal work for more than three days.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 states:

(1) A person must not pursue a course of conduct – a) which amounts to harassment of another, and b) which he knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of the other. (2) For the purposes of this section, the person whose course of conduct is in question ought to know that it amounts to harassment of another if a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to harassment of the other.

There are also other pieces of legislation, which will be discussed later in this book.

There has also been an increasing amount of academic research into violence at work. The main thrust of this research has been to identify the extent and nature of the problem, and thus inform strategies for its prevention.

Definitions of violence, stress and harassment at work

Definitions of violence form a continuum ranging from physical assault to broader definitions which also include threat, intimidation, verbal abuse and emotional or psychological abuse. Those who favour the inclusion of non-physical acts in the definition of violence argue that the consequences of non-physical and physical violence may be equally serious.

Apart from the problem of defining violence generally, there are additional issues with defining violence at work. Some commentators restrict violence at work to those incidents in which the offender is a member of the public, while others also include incidents between work colleagues. There is also debate about whether to restrict the definition to 'workplace' violence (i.e. only incidents that occur at the workplace) or widen it to include all incidents related to work regardless of where they occur (the term 'work-related violence' is often used in this sense).

Although flexibility in defining the problem is useful, as the most appropriate definition may vary across different contexts, a single overarching definition that recognizes the continuum of behaviours that constitute violence is important in defining the problem at a national level.

CILIP

The definition of The Library Association (CILIP's predecessor) as far back as 1987 was:

> the term 'violence in libraries' can be seen as shorthand for describing all sorts of anti-social behaviour, ranging from spitting, damaging furniture or playing radios, to theft, verbal abuse and physical attack.
>
> (Library Association, 1987)

European Commission

The following definition has been adopted by the European Commission:

Incidents where persons are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

The definition of violence at work adopted by the HSE is as follows:

Any incident in which an individual suffers verbal abuse, physical abuse or threats in circumstances relating to their work.

Also, the HSE defines work-related stress as

The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.

The British Crime Survey (BCS)

The BCS measures both physical assaults and threats, and therefore provides a relatively broad definition of violence at work. The definition of violence at work used in BCS reports is as follows:

All assaults or threats which occurred while the victim was working and were perpetrated by members of the public. Physical assaults include the offences of common assault, wounding, robbery and snatch theft. Threats include both verbal threats, made to or against the respondent, and non-verbal intimidation. They are mainly threats to assault the victim, though some threats relate to damaging property. The term violence is used in the BCS reports to refer to both assaults and threats. Members of the public include clients or customers previously known to the victim, people the victim did not know before the incident (usually customers or clients), friends, neighbours and local children.

Swedish National Board of Occupational Safety and Health

The Swedish National Board of Occupational Safety and Health defines the problem as:

> recurrent reprehensible or distinctly negative actions which are directed against individual employees in an offensive manner and can result in those employees being placed outside the workplace community.

The European Agency for Health and Safety at Work

The Agency's Fact Sheet 23 states:

> Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee, or group of employees, that creates a risk to health and safety.

Within this definition, 'unreasonable behaviour' means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would expect to victimize, humiliate, undermine or threaten. 'Behaviour' includes the actions of individuals or of a group. A system of work may be used as a means of victimizing, humiliating, undermining or threatening. 'Risk to health and safety' includes risk to the mental or physical health of the employee. Bullying often involves a misuse or abuse of power, where the targets can experience difficulties in defending themselves.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

In general terms, ACAS defines harassment as:

> unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Harassment can also have a specific meaning under certain laws (for instance if harassment is related to sex, race or disability, it may be unlawful discrimination). From December 2003 the UK law also gives protection against harassment relating to religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Costs of workplace stress and bullying

According to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), stress now costs the UK over £12 billion a year, and employers £495 a year in direct costs for every worker employed. Indirect costs are probably considerably more (CBI, 2007).

The HSE estimates that bullying costs employers 80 million working days and up to £2 billion in lost revenue every year. Nearly half a million people in Britain experience work-related stress at a level they believe is making them ill, and the financial costs to society are estimated at £3.8 billion a year (see the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/research.htm).

The mental and emotional scars may, in some cases, last a very long time: – see, for example, some of the cases quoted in Chapter 10 'You are not Alone'.

Tackling the problem

According to a recent study entitled *Bullying at Work: beyond policies to a culture of respect*, by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2006a), bullying in the workplace is frequently swept under the carpet by employers, mainly because managers do not have the skills to tackle the problem. This CIPD study aims to tackle bullying at work, placing an emphasis on:

- defining the positive behaviours we can all expect from each other
- everyone accepting responsibility for their behaviour and actions
- everyone accepting responsibility for finding solutions
- 'top team' behaviour, which is vital in reinforcing positive behaviours and creating a culture that goes beyond paying lip service to fairness.

Being clear about people's roles, communicating consistently and effectively, understanding expectations and being given what you need to do your job – all these are also destinations on a new route forward in tackling bullying at work.

HSE's report *Bullying at Work: a review of the literature* (HSE, 2006b) states that before discussing a definition of bullying at work, people should consider behaviours that are often confused with and have been used to justify bullying at work. These include terms such as 'strong management', 'tough management', 'assertiveness', etc. It is suggested that the use of bullying as a management tool is a clear indication of poor management practice. It is clear from the figures in this report that bullied employees are unlikely to be operating at their maximum level of productivity. They are unfortunately more likely to be suffering psychological stress, and possibly to be absent from work.

There is also the negative impact upon those employees who witness bullying within the workplace to take into consideration. Those who witness bullying are unlikely to have a positive view of an organization that permits such behaviour to continue.

Employers need to demonstrate what they are doing

Employers need to be able to show evidence that they are taking steps to look after their employees – Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 gives employers a duty of care to their staff and the public, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 require employers to undertake risk assessment, which includes risk of violence. The revised Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995 specifically requires workplace violence to be reported. You should be aware that aggression and violence could take place between employees, or between employees and managers.

Ignorance of the law is no excuse, so employers in all information industry sectors – higher education, public and private sectors – need to be up-to-date with their knowledge of the latest legal requirements. If these employers think that libraries and information centres are nice quiet backwaters they should take a 'management by walking about' approach,

on a regular basis, and spend time talking to those working in the various sections and departments to see what is actually happening.

Tackling the problem worldwide

Aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment, stress and violence at work are not unique to the UK: a survey of the major occupational health and safety databases in the OSH UPDATE service (www.oshupdate.com, which includes HSELINE from the UK's Health and Safety Executive Information Services, CISDOC from the International Labour Office Health and Safety Centre, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work list of publications, and NIOSHTIC and NIOSHTIC-2 from the USA's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) reveals growing concern over workplace violence around the world. In particular, the literature shows that authorities and organizations in Australia, Canada, the wider European Union, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA have already recognized the problems and are taking action.

Results of a UK anti-bullying project

The findings from the world's largest anti-workplace bullying joint research project by Amicus and the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) – the 'Dignity at Work Partnership' – were revealed on 2 October 2006.

In a poll conducted by Amicus, as part of the project, it was found that only 2% of employers took a zero tolerance approach to bullying. A huge 97% of organizations had never quantified the impact of bullying. And 80% of organizations had an anti-bullying policy in place but, despite this, more than half of those polled still thought bullying was an issue in their organizations.

The key finding in the research project (conducted by Portsmouth University) was that organizations who took a zero tolerance approach were the organizations who dealt with the problem most effectively.

The project addressed the serious issue of bullying in the workplace, which is estimated to cost UK employers over £2 billion a year in sick pay, staff turnover and loss of production. One in 10 employees say they have

been bullied. The research project gives a contemporary view of good practice in dealing with bullying and harassment, and how the problem is dealt with in the workplace. The recommendations of the project include:

- A zero tolerance approach should be adopted.
- In partnership with unions, organizations must encourage consultation with employees on early intervention strategies.
- It should be recognized that bullying is an organizational issue rather than simply a problem between individuals.
- All anti-bullying and harassment policies should be clearly set out and communicated, along with the business case for doing so.
- Organizations should use the term 'bullying' to describe negative behaviours.
- All managers should be trained in mediation and conflict resolution skills.
- Managers at the very top should lead by good example and a senior member of management should become the 'anti-bullying champion'.

Amicus General Secretary, Derek Simpson, said:

> Bullying in the workplace can destroy people's lives. Our project aims to tackle this problem in partnership with employers by taking a zero tolerance approach to bullying from the outset.

Trade and Industry Secretary, Alistair Darling, said:

> Bullying at work is a big problem and employers need to be aware of it. It corrodes employees' self-confidence and self-esteem and leads to a hostile working environment. It's bad for staff and it's bad for business.
>
> People who feel harassed or victimised cannot do their job properly. And businesses that do not tackle bullying suffer from days lost through stress and illness, decreased productivity and damage to their reputation.
>
> The Dignity At Work report gives businesses and organizations the tools they need to make zero-tolerance of bullying a reality for all workers.

Key to the findings is that policies alone will not secure a harassment-free working environment. Employees need to be involved in creating and implementing initiatives, which leads to ownership both of the problem and the solution.

So, employers need to agree with employees an acceptable level of behaviour in their organizations, and make sure that everyone understands the definitions clearly.

You will find more on preventative measures in later chapters.

POINTS TO REFLECT ON . . .

■ **Do you think there is a problem with aggression, bullying, conflict and violence in your workplace?**

■ **Do you understand the effects of these problems on the individual?**

■ **If, after checking, there is not enough evidence, remember that you could check again at a later stage.**

■ **Do you have enough evidence and information to discuss the problem with colleagues and managers?**

2 Are you at risk?

In this chapter you will find information on:

- why information centres and libraries are targets
- the causes of aggression and other work-related problems in information centres and libraries
- what is meant by aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment, stress and violence
- whose concern the problem is
- being constantly alert
- understanding how such behaviour can affect you physically and mentally
- making sure you are safe
- deciding if there is a problem
- first steps to take
- what to record and how to classify.

Since the mid-1990s the whole scene has moved on as far as aggression, bullying (verbal and non-verbal), conflict and physical violence in the workplace is concerned – people have more legal protection and certainly many know their rights, but there is still a lack of management intervention in many workplaces.

Why information centres and libraries?

Information centres and libraries tend to be places that are easily accessible, warm, informal and welcoming – it goes with the ethos of helping people to find information. As far back as June 1987 The Library Association (CILIP's predecessor), in its pamphlet *Violence in Libraries: preventing aggressive and unacceptable behaviour in libraries* (Library Association, 1987), stated:

> The success of the service (offered to customers) very often depends on these attributes – but this same openness can mean that staff are vulnerable in the face of anti-social behaviour. It is important not to lose sight of the positive aspects of library and information services when considering the subject of violence, but nevertheless forward planning and good management practices can avoid or alleviate situations where staff find themselves in danger, or afraid or unable to cope.

What are the causes?

There are many reasons why aggression occurs in libraries or information centres. Easy access, long opening hours and friendly, helpful staff all contribute to making libraries and information centres seem welcoming and attractive places to visit. But this in itself can mean that staff are vulnerable, as acts of aggression and violence or generally anti-social behaviour can erupt without warning in today's violent society. Increased pressures on the workforce to improve productivity, de-layering of staff and financial cut-backs resulting in reduced staff numbers – all can contribute to an increase in aggression among both staff and customers. The following also cause problems:

- antagonistic behaviour by customers who oppose any authoritative regime, e.g.: restrictions on the number of books which can be borrowed at any one time, imposing a fine for late return of the books or calling closing time when the customer wants to stay longer
- lack of respect for others and their points of view
- excessive or inflexible workloads and demands on people
- targets not clearly defined, or impossible deadlines

■ poor working relationships and conflict between individuals, including possibly sexual or racial harassment
■ no clear code of policy or conduct
■ organizational change and uncertainty
■ styles of management and supervision which may encourage aggressive behaviour in the mistaken belief that it is 'strong' management
■ one section trying to get work from another section in order to survive.

It is also possible that aggressive behaviour between individuals and groups could be caused by the physical conditions of the working environment, such as excessive noise, vibration, heat or humidity, or other obvious workplace hazards which might not be adequately controlled.

What counts as aggressive and abusive behaviour?

The various forms of bullying can often be hard to recognize – they may not be obvious to others, and may be insidious. The recipient may think, 'Perhaps this is normal behaviour in this organization'. Some people may be anxious that others will consider them weak, or not up to the job, if they find the actions of others intimidating. They may be accused of 'over-reacting', and worry that they will not be believed if they do report incidents. Sometimes those being subjected to bullying or harassment appear to overreact to something that seems relatively trivial, but which may be the 'last straw' following a series of incidents. There is often fear of retribution if they do make a complaint. Colleagues may be reluctant to come forward as witnesses, as they too may fear the consequences for themselves. They may be so relieved not to be the subject of the bully themselves that they collude with the bully as a way of avoiding attention (see the case studies in Chapter 10).

The following terms may not quite describe what is going on in your workplace. If not, it may be useful to talk over and agree alternative phrases with your employer and other colleagues, so that everyone understands exactly what is meant by which actions. Bullying actions could take the following forms:

- verbal abuse or a threatening attitude from a customer, colleague or manager
- threat of assault, particularly with a weapon
- actual assault, which can result in physical injury or sexual assault.

There is clearly some debate about the various forms of workplace bullying. An examination of the literature reveals a number of different terms used to describe the various actions that could be experienced in the workplace. For example:

- aggression using terror tactics, open aggression, threats, shouted abuse and obscenities, or sexual or ethnic harassment
- bullying, sometimes referred to as mobbing and harassment, which is not necessarily face-to-face but may be by written communication, e-mail (e.g. so-called 'flame-mail'), phone or automatic supervision methods (such as computer recording of downtime from work, or recording of telephone conversations, if these are not universally applied to all workers)
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism and humiliation about minor things, often in front of others
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- employee abuse
- emotional abuse
- harassment – continual on a daily basis
- hostile behaviours – spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone verbally (particularly on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation or religion/belief)
- incivility, exclusion or victimization
- job insecurity – making threats or comments without foundation
- mistreatment/unfair treatment
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unacceptable behaviours such as copying memos/e-mails that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know, or ridiculing or demeaning someone or setting them up to fail

- unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close or displaying offensive materials
- offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour; an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient
- interpersonal conflicts between staff or between managers/supervisors and staff
- excessive supervision, monitoring everything that is done
- exclusion, victimization or unfair treatment
- withholding information so that a person cannot do their job effectively
- removing areas of responsibility from a person or constantly overruling a person's authority
- constant blocking of reasonable requests for re-scheduling a person's timetable, leave, training or promotion.

There is also the constant pressure from users, which adds to the agony. I know of one information service where one of the most senior directors caused panic among the most experienced staff whenever he appeared in the information centre because of his overbearing attitude and intolerance if some item could not be produced immediately. The head of information services had a quiet word with this user, who was horrified at what he learnt about his own behaviour. So add the following to the list of problems:

- customers – both internal and external – making unreasonable requests and then creating a scene in front of work colleagues and other customers
- intruders or customers creating a disturbance in the library or information centre.

Remember, all forms of bullying or harassment may be by an individual against another individual (perhaps the perpetrator could be someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual.

Bullying and harassment make the victim feel anxious and humiliated. Feelings of anger and frustration at being unable to cope may be triggered (see the examples in Chapter 10 'You are not Alone'). Some people may try to retaliate in some way. Others may become frightened and demotivated. Stress and the loss of self-confidence and self-esteem caused by harassment or bullying can lead to job insecurity, illness, absence from work and even resignation. Almost always, job performance is affected and relations in the workplace suffer.

Whose concern is it?

Both employer and employee should have a deep interest in reducing all forms of aggression, bullying and violence at work. For employers, violence can lead to low morale and a poor image for the organization, making it difficult to recruit staff (see also Chapter 3 'The Business Case'). It can also mean extra costs, arising from absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and compensation payments. For you as an employee, violence can cause pain, suffering and even disability or death. Physical attacks are obviously dangerous, but serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats can also damage employees' health through anxiety or stress.

There are some pieces of legislation which can be used to seek improvements in the workplace, which are described below. You should note that the terms 'he' or 'him' are often used in the legislation quoted, but the law applies to males and females alike.

All employers have a legal duty under section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure 'so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees'. This duty can extend to protecting employees from assaults, aggression, bullying and other stressful situations. Every employer also has a legal duty to make a sufficient and suitable assessment of the risks to health and safety of their employees to which they are exposed while at work, so that appropriate preventative and protective measures can be introduced.

You should also be aware that under section S2(6) of the UK Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and under Regulation 4A of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, employers have a

duty to consult trade union safety representatives about health and safety matters (readers in other countries will need to find out what their health and safety legislation prescribes). See Chapter 4 for more details on management responsibilities.

Providing evidence that incidents have occurred can cause anguish for the person on the receiving end of them, because often a more senior member of staff may be responsible for the acts of aggression, bullying or discrimination.

Guidance and advice is abundant, and employers, in collaboration with their employees, will need to carry out a risk assessment (see Chapters 4 and 5 for details) and develop, within the information centre or library, a safety policy and proposed actions to tackle any form of aggression, bullying, conflict and violence at work. Such a policy and the means to carry it out will need the support and cooperation of all staff, so consultation with management, supervisors, security, personnel/human resource staff, the safety officer and staff and union safety representatives is essential. Therefore, employers must heed the requirements of the legislation and secure a safe, healthy and stress-free working environment for all those working in information centres and libraries. And employees must cooperate.

Being constantly alert

You need to remain aware that there is a possibility that any person you meet on a daily basis in your library or information centre could become agitated and reveal tensions or negative feelings hitherto unrevealed. This may have repercussions, and the chances of verbal and perhaps physical abuse may increase.

An outburst may or may not be the direct result of interaction with yourself; it could perhaps stem from a request being made which cannot be immediately fulfilled. This may add to some in-built frustration already being experienced by the individual making the request, and as a result you may experience a violent or abusive situation (see Chapter 10 for examples).

So it is necessary to learn how to react, and you should be aware that a downright unsympathetic attitude might result in increased frustration and anger, which could degenerate into a violent situation.

You should also be aware that there may be incidents where a person's behaviour may be impossible to analyse, but you do need to be trained in how to alleviate such situations or indeed prevent them from getting worse (see some of the incidents cited in Chapter 10 'You are not Alone').

Training is essential. It will help you to identify the possible causes of such incidents, and provide you with information and skills on how to avoid them. If they do occur you will be better equipped to deal with potentially violent situations. There is more information on training in Chapter 8.

How this behaviour can affect you

Both immediate and long-term effects may result from aggression, bullying and violence. You should be aware of the following repercussions.

Psychological effects

Victims of violent behaviour lose self-confidence and self-esteem, and are at risk of suffering from stress. This, if not adequately treated, may develop into problems of anxiety or depression.

Physical effects

An injury may need treatment, including surgery. Serious injuries have led to long-term disability, and the possibility of not being able to carry on with a career.

Stress and its effects

Continuous pressures or other excessive demands place a great deal of stress on individuals. Stress is associated with a wide range of ill-health problems and can affect you in a number of ways:

■ stress-related physical effects: headaches/migraine, dizziness, raised heartbeat, sweating, blurred vision, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, skin diseases, sickness, irritable bowels, aching neck and shoulders and lowering of resistance to infection

- stress-related psychological and behavioural effects: anxiety, irritability, depression, poor concentration, tendency to consume more alcohol and tobacco, tearfulness and inability to deal with everyday tasks and situations in a calm/controlled manner.

You should be aware that the effects of stress are usually short-lived, and cause no lasting harm if the pressures are short-lived. However, you should be warned that where pressures are intense and continuous for some time, the effects of stress can be far more sustained, leading eventually to longer-term psychological problems and physical ill-health.

The UK's Health and Safety Executive warns that stress is associated with a number of serious ill-health conditions such as high blood pressure, thyroid disorders, ulcers, heart disease, anxiety and depression.

All this can have a secondary effect on the success of the library or information centre's services: it can create a bad atmosphere, which affects customers, and could, if you are in a 'business-oriented service', lead to a loss of business, with the attendant loss of sales and profit to consider. If staff loss through resignation is involved, then this in turn could add to staff costs due to the need to recruit and retrain valuable staff. Loss of staff can in itself put extra pressure on the staff that remain, and could cause some further aggression. Repeated failure to respond to staff complaints could possibly result in a constructive dismissal claim, which may result in public exposure through cases being taken to industrial tribunals and being reported in the media.

You, as an employee, should be aware that employers need to be able to provide evidence that they are taking steps to look after their staff, but first of all it will be necessary to decide whether there is a problem.

Making sure you are safe

Considering risks should be part of your everyday thinking. You should appreciate that risks at work do not exist just at your desk or counter, or just in your library or information centre. There may be risks in travelling to and from work or in connection with your work; in work that you might do on someone else's premises; or in car parks, lifts, corridors, etc. You should be

aware that time spent away from home or travelling abroad might involve work-related risks.

Legislation requires employers to secure the personal safety of their employees, but you should remember that personal safety is a shared responsibility between employer and employee, so you also have a responsibility to help yourself to be safe.

You should also think about the personal safety of others: family, colleagues, work contacts and friends. You should acquire skills and strategies that become almost instinctive, so that if a difficult – and potentially violent – situation arises, you have the confidence to know what to do (see the section on training in Chapter 8).

Deciding if there is a problem

Your employer may think that aggression, bullying, conflict and violence is not a problem at your workplace, or that incidents are rare. However, you as an employee may have a different view.

The easiest way to find out is to ask your colleagues. This can be done informally through contact with managers, supervisors, safety representatives or trade union representatives. Alternatively, your manager may agree to circulate a questionnaire. The idea is to find out whether you or any colleagues ever feel threatened or under great stress. The results of such a survey should be published so that if there is a problem, everyone will realize that the manager recognizes it, and if there is not, any fears will be allayed.

Even if no problem is found, it is wise to check the position again from time to time, because things can change. See also Chapters 4 and 5.

The first steps

The first steps which should be taken by management in making an assessment of whether there are any forms of aggression, bullying, conflict and violence in the workplace are:

■ consult with colleagues
■ build up a picture of incidents

- set up a formal procedure to report any incidents
- classify all incidents
- keep records of incidents where staff are injured (this is a legal duty under various pieces of legislation: the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (amended in 2006), the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997)
- ensure that reports are made
- search for suitable preventative measures
- decide what to do
- put the measures into practice.

Record all incidents

It is the duty of your manager to keep a detailed record of all incidents, so a picture can be built up if there is a problem. A simple report form (as suggested by the Health and Safety Executive and other organizations) can be used to record the details of what happened: where, when, who was involved and any possible causes (see Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 for more details and sample forms).

You should be aware that your colleagues may not report incidents for all sorts of reasons. Perhaps they accept aggressive behaviour as part of the job. They may think it will reflect badly on them if they admit it happens. They may be worried about their job security. Be aware that some employers are reluctant to admit that any form of aggression is taking place in their organization.

Sometimes, victims of aggression are unable to recognize the unfair treatment they are receiving.

There can be many reasons why incidents are not reported:

- Where an aggressive management style is in place, staff can be afraid to complain in case they are seen to be against management.
- There may be a misunderstanding of the difference between assertiveness and aggression.

■ Some individual incidents may appear trivial, but it is the repetitiveness of these incidents which is important.
■ Men may not want to complain because it may appear unmasculine.
■ Staff may be reluctant to complain because there are no witnesses.
■ Victims may feel that any complaint may result in further action by the aggressor (the playground effect).
■ Victims may be afraid to complain because they think management may regard it as their inability to cope.

Therefore, all staff, whatever their level/grade, should be encouraged to report all incidents. Having a report form available will help you and your colleagues to realize that this is what is expected.

Classify all incidents

You, your colleagues and manager will want to know what kinds of incidents are happening. This means classifying them under various headings: place, time, type of incident, who was involved and possible causes.

For example, Table 2.1 gives a simple classification to help you decide how serious incidents are.

Table 2.1 Classification of incidents

Type of incident	Result
Involving physical contact	Fatal injury Minor injury Injury or emotional shock requiring first aid, out-patient treatment, counselling and/or absence from work (record number of days)
Involving serious or persistent threats of verbal abuse	Emotional shock requiring counselling and/or absence from work (record number of days) Feeling of being at risk or under great stress

It should be easy to classify 'minor injuries' but the manager will have to decide how to classify 'serious or persistent verbal abuse' for your organization, so as to cover all incidents that worry staff.

The manager can use the details on the incident report forms, along with

the classifications, to check for patterns: common causes, work areas, or times of day or night. Remedies can then be targeted where they are needed most. For example, a survey by a trade union after 12 separate shop robberies found that each incident occurred between five and seven o'clock in the evening.

This type of finding may be useful for your management when deciding whether security is needed for late night opening of information centres and libraries.

POINTS TO REFLECT ON . . .

■ **Do you understand the various forms of aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment and violence that can occur in information centres and libraries?**

■ **Does your employer have a health and safety policy?**

■ **Does your employer have a harassment policy?**

■ **Are you now aware of the range of legislation that protects you at work?**

3 The business case

This chapter shows that tackling the problems of aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment and violence at work brings business benefits. It covers the following:

■ managing change positively by keeping staff involved and informed
■ dealing with organizational pressures: internal conflict, managerial pressure and external pressures (e.g. outsourcing, downsizing)
■ the case for management making a firm anti-bullying commitment to staff
■ the deleterious effect of aggression, bullying and stress on staff turnover and costs, attendance levels, recruitment and retention, customer satisfaction, and organizational image and reputation
■ potential litigation.

Management of change – keeping staff involved and informed

Change is, or should be, happening all the time in workplaces, especially in libraries and the information sector because of the nature of the work involved – there is a constant flow of new technologies, new information sources, new ways of doing jobs, new supervisors and managers, new colleagues, new demands from customers and new customers, for example if you are working in higher education or in public libraries. Whatever sector you are working in, you will experience this constant flow of changes. Some people thrive on change, others initiate change, while some just hate change

of any sort. Sometimes changes cause conflict and it is here that management at all levels must be on their mettle – to anticipate, debate and be prepared to manage any possible internal conflict.

Keeping staff involved in change of any sort is one sure way of moving changes along without conflict. Staff, especially in libraries, have been employed for their knowledge and experience. The alert manager will gain much by asking questions and discussing changes and potential changes with staff at all levels. After all, those doing the actual job will have a good idea of what will suceed and what will cause problems.

Dealing with internal conflict, managerial pressure and external pressures

Dealing with internal conflict, managerial pressure and external pressures, such as outsourcing and downsizing, can be stressful in itself for all levels of staff. For many years, workplace conflict has been viewed as dysfunctional, destructive and damaging – a generally undesirable by-product of working life. Nevertheless, given the rising diversity within the labour market, increasingly complex and ever-changing work environments, shifting attitudes to management and changing expectations of employees and employers, workplace conflict is now an inevitable and inescapable reality for every organization regardless of size, shape or structure. Many things can cause it, and all employers and employees will need to know that internal conflict arises for many reasons:

■ lack of control over work
■ excessive time pressures
■ excessive or inflexible working hours
■ too much or too little work or responsibility
■ confusion about duties and responsibilities
■ lack of job variety and interest
■ inadequate training and possibilities for learning new skills
■ poor work/life balance
■ difficult relationships at work
■ lack of support and lack of contact with colleagues

- organizational confusion, restructuring and/or job changes
- uncertainty over job prospects.

Conflict management refers to the variety of ways in which people handle grievances – clashes of right and wrong. In the information world it includes such diverse phenomena as gossip, ridicule, feuding and downright provocation by colleagues, managers and customers. Which of the diverse forms of conflict management will be used in any given case is predicted and explained by the social structure – or social geometry – of the case.

But what is absolutely clear is that the management must 'grasp the nettle' and deal immediately with any form of conflict.

Management commitment to staff

It is essential that management should give strong signals at all times that no form of aggression will be tolerated in the workplace. This commitment should be stated right from the beginning – in job adverts, at the job interview, in the induction course and when a person starts the job.

Successful businesses are built on good internal and external relationships. Yet even in the best-run organizations, conflict is inevitable. People come to work with diverse beliefs, histories, needs and aspirations, and these do not always fit neatly into the organization's context. Management will need to focus on the skills required to build good relationships, to minimize the risk of conflict and to deal with it in a constructive manner. This strong commitment should be reinforced in conflict, harassment, health and safety policy statements, and encouragement to staff to attend training courses.

Strong management or bullying?

Andrea Adams, the well-known campaigner, says:

> Bullying is a sustained form of psychological abuse and often emanates from a senior person taking what they feel is a 'strong line' with employees. There is, however, a fine line between strong management and bullying. That line is crossed when the target of bullying is persistently downgraded with the result

that they begin to show signs of being distressed, becoming either physically, mentally or psychologically hurt. It can be distinguished from other work related problems, in that it is not the intention of the perpetrator, but the deed itself and its impact on the recipient or target that constitutes workplace bullying.

(www.andreaadams.trust.org, see Appendix C)

It can be seen in the literature and also in the guidance and advice from experts that bullying in all formats thrives where it is common behaviour across the management hierarchy. This is seen especially in highly competitive environments, where many individuals consider bullying to be the accepted method of motivating staff. In organizations that pride themselves on strong management, bullying can soon become part of the business's culture, and management will be seen by their employees to have condoned such behaviour simply through inaction.

As discussed in Chapter 2, some employees may feel that they have to put up with bullying behaviour as part of the job, and may not wish to complain for fear of losing their job, further victimization or being labelled a troublemaker. However, what sort of workplace can really condone a form of behaviour which engenders fear in employees? People cannot contribute their best when in fear of harassment, bullying or abuse.

Staffing issues affected by aggression in the workplace
Employee commitment to work – staff performance and productivity

Most employees want to do a good day's work. Some may need more motivating than others, but in general where there is a culture of personal as well as organizational achievement staff want to give of their best. They want to contribute to the quality of the work being carried out, and bask in the knowledge that they are appreciated, not only by their line management but also by their customers.

If there is strong management commitment to ensuring that the workplace is free from such problems, then the library will be successful, staff will be able to get on with their work and customers will be happy.

Staff turnover, intention to leave and costs

Staff performance and productivity will always be affected if there are underlying problems of aggression etc. in the workplace. This will be manifest in staff turnover or the knowledge that staff will leave when opportunity arises.

The CIPD's *People Management* (CIPD, 2006b) notes that 25% of people who have been bullied and 20% of witnesses leave the organization. To understand the cost involved, management will first need to calculate the average employee replacement cost, including human resources/personnel time and management time before, during and after the interview, plus training costs and time before the new recruit becomes fully effective. The CIPD also suggests that management will need to consider the incidence of bullying and estimate a 'normal figure' of 10% if no data exist. Then, multiply the total number of people working in the library by the estimated incidence of bullying and by 0.25 (the typical proportion of people who have to leave) to get to the number of employees who will have to be replaced, and multiply by the average employee replacement cost. Add to this witness replacement costs, based on a conservative estimate of two witnesses per situation.

Other direct costs include early retirement and severance payments in other cases that can be tracked back to bullying. Legal and investigation costs should also be added in to reach the final cost.

Attendance levels

Research shows that where line managers have training in absence management, there is a decrease in sickness absence rates. However, many libraries provide very little or no training to line managers, and therefore fail to reap the benefits of effective absence management. In later chapters and in Appendices A and B, you will find tools that have been developed to help managers with absence management. Managers need to be able to:

■ identify an absence problem
■ develop an absence strategy

■ deal with short-term absence
■ deal with long-term absence.

Staff recruitment and retention

Good staff recruitment and retention is vital if the library wants to suceed. For example, hearing about incidents may make the job less attractive to potential recruits, and experienced staff may leave a job if they no longer feel safe or able to cope. Sick leave can result from stress-related health problems or a physical injury following a violent incident.

High levels of sick leave, staff refusal to do certain jobs, high insurance premiums and compensation claims, and a breakdown in the relationship with clients can all have a detrimental impact on a library's productivity and profitability.

Other issues affected by aggression in the workplace
Customer satisfaction

The customer is king, or so the saying goes, and this is true for libraries and information services, whichever sector they are in. Nothing is more satisfying for staff and management than to have an appreciative customer base. Without customers, what is the point? With the aid of technology, libraries can reach outside their walls and offer a wider variety of services than ever before, but will only do so if there is a movitated staff and management working together to ensure that the working environment is free from stress, conflict, bullying and aggression.

Organizational image and reputation

City employee subjected to workplace bullying: £800,000 compensation

This type of newspaper headline does nothing for the image of any organization, let alone an organization such as the Deutsche Bank. This example reports that an ex-employee of Deutsche Bank in London was

awarded £800,000 compensation in the High Court following a successful claim under the Protection from Harrassment Act 1997. The claimant was subjected to a sustained campaign of bullying and had two nervous breakdowns, but management failed to intervene to stop the bullying.

Litigation

There are many other such situations where cases have been upheld in court and substantial awards been made to victims. Employers' legal requirement to protect employees from stress was underlined in a landmark court case in 1996, when Northumberland County Council was ordered to pay £175,000 in compensation to a former employee, social worker John Walker, who had suffered two nervous breakdowns as a result of stress at work.

Since then there have been other high profile cases, but proving a stress case against an employer is still not easy. In the case of John Walker, the case against his employer was watertight. He complained to his management that he was having problems with his workload and that he was under stress. They said, 'Fine, fine'. He had a nervous breakdown. Management negotiated his return to work, promising to make the conditions better. Nothing happened. He came back to work and had a second breakdown. It was the second breakdown that won the case.

To win compensation in court, a victim of workplace stress must do more than prove that they have been injured by stress. They must also establish:

■ that the duty of care was breached by the employer
■ that the employer's negligence caused the stress (stress caused by factors outside work, such as marital problems, does not count)
■ that they had already raised the problem with their employer
■ that the stress was reasonably foreseeable.

Is it my concern?

As can be seen, from the above, both employer and employee have an interest in reducing all forms of harassment, aggression, bullying, conflict and violence at work. For employers, this kind of behaviour can lead to poor

morale and a poor image for the organization, creating difficulties in recruiting and keeping staff. It can also involve extra costs, through absenteeism, higher insurance premiums and compensation payments.

For employees, such forms of behaviour can cause pain, distress and even disability or death. Physical attacks are obviously very dangerous, but serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats can also damage employees' health through anxiety or stress.

Protecting against litigation

Some progress has been made over the last ten years or so, with new advice and guidance to protect against litigation, but you can never entirely eliminate accidents, fatalities and all other workplace incidents and problems. However, management can guard against them by implementing a robust health and safety management system that can guard against litigation, protect against copycat cases and, in the most extreme case, protect staff from a potential prison sentence.

If there is a robust health and safety system all employees will know where they can go for help and advice, unless there is a weak and wimpish management that prefers to sweep things under the carpet. We will see that this does actually happen in Chapter 10.

POINTS TO REFLECT ON . . .

■ **Do you understand that managing change means keeping staff involved and informed?**

■ **Are you aware that there are many reasons for internal conflict?**

■ **Do you appreciate that employees need to make a commitment to work – as do managerial staff?**

■ **Do you recognize why the organization's image and reputation can be damaged by internal conflict and harassment?**

4 Risk assessment

Whether you are an individual employee or part of a management team, this chapter will give you information on:

■ **the need for risk assessments**
■ **the legal responsibilities of employers as regards risk assessment**
■ **what a risk assessment actually is**
■ **the five steps involved in risk assessment.**

The need for risk assessments

Workplace problems caused by employees, managers and others are rarely discussed before events force them into the open and the organization is faced with possible disciplinary procedures, accusations of unfair dismissal and even industrial tribunals.

Listing aggression, violence and bullying as hazards alongside physical aspects of the workplace such as heat, light, ventilation, dangerous equipment and practice provides an opportunity for rational and purposeful discussion and the development of agreed procedures for dealing with what are often regarded as taboo subjects.

In larger organizations it is probable that a risk assessment has been carried out covering premises and equipment, but this can be extended within a section or department such as the library and information service to include aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment, stress and violence either in response to a known problem or to provide a basis for the development of formal arrangements to deal with possible future situations.

Legal responsibilities

You should be aware that it is the duty of every employer under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (see Appendix D) to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of:

a) the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and
b) the risks to health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking, for the purpose of identifying the measures he needs to take to comply with the requirements and prohibitions imposed upon him by or under the relevant statutory provisions.

The regulations also state:

If you are a *self-employed person* you will need to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of:

a) the risks to your own health and safety to which you are exposed whilst you are at a place of work; and
b) the risks to health and safety of persons not in your employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by you or your undertaking, for the purpose of identifying the measures you need to take to comply with the requirements and prohibitions imposed upon you by or under the relevant statutory provisions.

Any assessment such as is referred to in the paragraphs above needs to be reviewed, as stated in the same regulations above, by your employer or a self-employed person who made the assessment if:

a) there is reason to suspect that it is no longer valid; or
b) there has been a significant change in the matters to which it relates; and where as a result of any such review changes to an assessment are required, the employer or self-employed person concerned shall make them.

Where the employer employs five or more employees, he shall record:

a) the significant findings of the assessment; and
b) any group of his employees identified by it as being especially at risk.

What is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your workplace, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether enough precautions have been taken or whether more should be done to prevent harm. Workers and others have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures.

Accidents and ill health can ruin lives and affect any business, including libraries – if output is lost, insurance costs increase or you have to go to court. The owners of a library are legally required to assess the risks in the workplace and put in place a plan to control those risks, just as any other business.

The UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) believes that risk management should be about practical steps to protect people from real harm and suffering – not just bureaucratic back covering. If you believe some of the stories you hear, health and safety is all about stopping any activity that might possibly lead to harm. This is not the HSE's vision of sensible health and safety – they want to save lives, not stop them. The approach is to seek a balance between the unachievable aim of absolute safety and the kind of poor management of risk that damages lives and the economy.

The HSE has worked with a very wide range of organizations to identify some principles of sensible risk management that set out what risk management should and should not be about. The HSE is intent on ensuring sensible risk management, and has launched revised guidance on risk assessment to make clearer what is and what is not expected.
Sensible risk management *is* about:

■ ensuring that employees and the public are properly protected
■ providing overall benefit to society by balancing benefits and risks, with a focus on reducing real risks – both those which are relatively

common and those which are less common but have serious
consequences
■ enabling innovation and learning, not stifling them
■ ensuring that those who create risks manage them responsibly and
understand that failure to manage real risks responsibly is likely to lead
to legal action
■ enabling individuals to understand that as well as the right to
protection, they also have an obligation to exercise responsibility.

Sensible risk management is *not* about:

■ creating a totally risk-free society
■ generating useless paperwork mountains
■ scaring people by exaggerating or publicizing trivial risks
■ stopping important recreational and learning activities for individuals
where the risks are managed
■ reducing protection of people from risks that cause real harm and
suffering.

Ideally, every organization should have in their health and safety policy a
stress and harassment section so that all staff, at all levels, are clear about
what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. There could be a standalone
stress and harassment policy structured in the same way as the health and
safety policy.

A risk assessment is an important step towards protecting workers and
businesses, as well as complying with the law. It helps you focus on the risks
that really matter in your workplace – the ones with the potential to cause
real harm. In many instances, straightforward basic measures can readily
control risks, for example ensuring that spillages are cleaned up promptly
so people do not slip, or that cupboard drawers are kept closed to ensure
people do not trip. In most situations, this involves simple, cheap and
effective measures to ensure that the most valuable asset – the workforce –
is protected.

The law does not expect anyone to eliminate all risk, but there is a
requirement to protect people as far as is 'reasonably practicable'.

Five steps to risk assessment

Follow these five steps to assess the risks in your workplace:

1 Identify the hazards.
2 Decide who might be harmed and how.
3 Evaluate the risks and decide on the necessary precautions.
4 Record your findings and implement them.
5 Review your assessment and update if necessary.

These are explained in more detail below, and in the next chapter.

A manager should not overcomplicate the process. In many organizations, the risks are well known and the necessary control measures are easy to apply. You probably already know whether, for example, you have employees who move heavy loads and so could harm their backs, or where people are most likely to slip or trip. If so, check that you have taken reasonable precautions to avoid injury.

If you run a small organization and you are confident you understand what is involved, you can do the assessment yourself. You do not have to be a health and safety expert.

If you work in a large organization, you could ask the health and safety adviser or human resource manager to help you. In all cases, you should make sure that you involve your staff and their representatives in the process. This is particularly relevant when considering possible risks arising from aggression and violence.They will have useful information about how the work is done that will make your assessment of the risk more thorough and effective. But remember: managers are responsible for seeing that the assessment is carried out properly.

When thinking about your risk assessment, remember that a hazard is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders and steps, an open drawer, manual handling, etc. To this list you should add potential aggression and violence from colleagues and users of the service, both internal and external.

The risk is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be – for example, in extreme cases, a nervous breakdown. Risk

therefore reflects both the likelihood that harm will occur and its severity.

In some cases, this detailed approach may not be necessary; all the hazards may be known and the risks readily apparent, and can therefore be addressed directly.

This is not the only way to do a risk assessment. There are other methods that work well, particularly for more complex risks and circumstances. However, this method is the most straightforward for most organizations.

POINTS TO REFLECT ON . . .

■ **Do you understand what a risk assessment is and why it is needed?**

■ **Has your management done a risk assessment?**

■ **Does your employer have a health and safety policy?**

■ **Does your employer have a harassment policy?**

■ **Are you now aware of the legislation that exists to protect you at work?**

■ **Do you feel that enough has been done to ensure that yours is a safe and healthy workplace?**

5 Carrying out risk assessments

Whether you are an individual employee or part of a management team, this chapter will give you information on:

■ **how a risk assessment should be carried out**
■ **what happens at each step**
■ **some Frequently Asked Questions.**

How a risk assessment should be carried out

As discussed in Chapter 4, the purpose of a risk assessment is to help the employer or self-employed person determine what measures should be taken to comply with their duties under the 'relevant statutory provisions'. This phrase covers the general duties in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HASAWA) and the more specific duties in the various Acts and Regulations associated with the HASAWA.

Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations does not itself stipulate the measures to be taken as a result of risk assessment. The measures taken in each workplace will derive from compliance with other health and safety duties as described above, taking carefully into account the risk assessment. In essence, the risk assessment guides the judgement of the employer or the self-employed person as regards the measures they ought to take to fulfil their statutory obligations.

What happens at each step

Being able to make a judgement about the hazards in your daily life is useful, and the following advice may help when assessing the workplace. An initial risk assessment should always include any known information (e.g. data collected).

Step 1: Identify the hazards

If you are doing the assessment yourself, walk around your workplace and look afresh at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm. Ignore the trivial and concentrate only on significant hazards which could result in serious harm or affect several people.

Ask your fellow employees or their representatives what they think. They may have noticed things that are not immediately obvious, including irrational behaviour, a 'poor atmosphere', lack of co-operation, unwelcome visitors and occurrences of bullying.

A risk assessment for aggression etc. aims to identify the causes of stressors or potential stressors that may be harmful to the health and well-being of staff members. Remember that some stressors, once identified, can be removed.

The HR department may have reports of what is causing ill-health within the organization which could be used to identify any trends. Also, look at exit interview reports to see whether they contain any information of use in identifying hazards.

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed, and how

In addition to regular employees, think about people who may not be in the workplace all the time: cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance personnel, etc. Include members of the public, or people you share your workplace with, if there is a chance they could be hurt by being in or near your activities.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate

Even after all precautions have been taken, some risk usually remains. What you have to decide for each significant hazard is whether this remaining risk is high, medium or low. First, ask yourself whether your employers have done all the things that the law says they have got to do. Then ask yourself whether generally accepted industry standards are in place. But don't stop there – think for yourself, because the law also says that you must do what is reasonably practicable to keep your workplace safe. Your real aim is to make all risks small by adding to your precautions if necessary. More information about legal requirements and standards can be found in the HSE publications *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations: approved code of practice* (see Appendix D), the very useful *Essentials of Health and Safety at Work* (2006) and the *Management Standards for Tackling Work-related Stress* (2004) (see Appendix A). You can also check the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk.

If you find that something needs to be done, ask yourself:

■ Can you and your manager get rid of the hazard altogether?
■ If not, how can you and your manager control the risks so that harm is unlikely?

If the work you do tends to vary a lot, or if you or your colleagues move from one site to another (e.g. working in branch libraries or mobile libraries), select those hazards which you can reasonably foresee and assess the risks from them. After that, if you spot any unusual hazard when you get to a site, get information from others on-site and take what action is agreed to be necessary.

If your employer shares a workplace, your employer must tell the other employers and self-employed people there about any risks that the work could cause them, and what precautions are being taken. Also, your manager must think about the risks to you and your colleagues from those who share your workplace.

Step 4: Record the findings and implement them

If your employer has fewer than five employees, he does not need to write anything down, but if there are five or more employees the employer must record the significant findings of the assessment. This means writing down the more significant hazards and recording the most important conclusions. The employees must be informed about the findings.

There is no need for your employer to show how he did the assessment, provided he can show:

■ that a proper check was made
■ who might be affected
■ that he dealt with all the obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved
■ that the precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low
■ that the results were communicated to all staff.

Assessments need to be suitable and sufficient, and the following important questions need to be asked:

■ Are the precautions reasonable?
■ Is there something to show that a proper check was made?

Your employer should keep the written document for future reference or use; it can help if a health and safety inspector questions the precautions, or if anyone becomes involved in any action for civil liability. It can also remind you to keep an eye on particular matters. And it helps to show that the employer has done what the law requires.

Figure 5.1 shows a sample risk assessment form which you and your employers may find helpful, but you may wish to produce your own version tailormade to your specific needs.

To make things simpler, you can refer to other documents, such as manuals, the health and safety policy statement, company rules, manufacturers' instructions and health and safety procedures. These may already list hazards and precautions. Your employer does not need to repeat all of these in written documents, and it is up to your employer whether all the

Named hazard (include date of inspection)	What is the risk of injury to employees?	Steps taken (or to take) to avoid injury (include date)

Figure 5.1   Sample risk assessment form

instructions on hazards and precautions are combined together in one document, or kept separately.

Step 5: Review risk assessment from time to time and revise if necessary

Sooner or later, a new layout of the working environment, new equipment, substances and/or procedures will be introduced which could lead to new problems or hazards. The assessment should be amended to take account of the new problem/hazard.

In any case it is good practice to review assessments from time to time. Do not make trivial changes, but if there are significant new hazards, these need to be considered in their own right and action taken to keep the risks down.

Also, ensure that there are opportunities to report any unsatisfactory working conditions and steps taken to rectify them. You should also look at Chapters 6 and 7 for details of where improvements in the working environment could be made.

Make sure that your employer plans and organizes work for all employees so as to prevent as reasonably as possible any opportunities for victimization. Your employer will need to implement countermeasures without delay if signs of aggression become apparent in any part of the workplace. This should include an investigation of whether the work procedures are the cause.

No one expects a risk assessment to be perfect, but it must be suitable and sufficient. Management will need to be able to show that the following actions were carried out:

■ Premises and equipment were checked.
■ Staff were asked who might be affected.
■ All the obvious significant hazards were checked, taking into account the number of people who could be involved.
■ The precautions are reasonable, and the remaining risk is low.
■ Staff or their representatives were involved in the process.

The HSE has a risk assessment template available for organizations to use: see www.hse.gov.uk/risk/template.pdf.

If, like many organizations, you find that there are quite a lot of improvements that you could make, big and small, don't try to do everything at once. Make a plan of action to deal with the most important things first. Health and safety inspectors acknowledge the efforts of businesses that are clearly trying to make improvements.

A good plan of action often includes a mixture of different things, such as:

■ a few cheap and/or easy improvements that can be done quickly, perhaps as a temporary solution until more reliable controls are in place
■ long-term solutions, including training about those risks most likely to cause accidents or ill-health
■ long-term solutions to those risks with the worst potential consequences
■ arrangements for training employees about the main risks that remain, and how they are to be controlled
■ regular checks to make sure that the control measures stay in place
■ clear lines of responsibility, including who will lead on what action, and by when.

Remember, prioritize and tackle the most important things first. As you complete each action, tick it off your plan.

Most of all, the employer should provide rapid help and support to any victim (see Chapter 9 for further information).

Few workplaces stay the same, but when you are busy running a business such as a library it's all too easy to forget about reviewing your risk assessment – until something has gone wrong and it is too late. Why not set up a rolling programme with a review date for this risk assessment now? Note it in your diary as an annual event.

During the year, if there is a significant change, do not wait: check your risk assessment and, where necessary, amend it. If possible, it is best to think about the risk assessment when you're planning your change – that way, you leave yourself more flexibility.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

What if the work carried out tends to vary a lot, or employees move from one site to another, such as employees working in branch libraries or in a mobile library?

Identify the hazards you can reasonably expect and assess the risks from them. This general assessment should stand you in good stead for the majority of your work. Where you do take on work or a new site that is different, cover any new or different hazards with a specific assessment. You do not have to start from scratch each time.

What if the workplace is shared with others?

Tell the other employers and self-employed people there about any risks your work could cause them, and what precautions you are taking. Also, think about the risks to your own workforce from those who share your workplace.

Do employees have responsibilities?

Yes. Employees have a legal responsibility to co-operate with their employer's efforts to improve health and safety. For example, they must know who is responsible and can take action when necessary, and employees must look out for each other. Any health and safety policy, including any stress and harassment policy, must be adhered to by all employees.

What if an employee's circumstances change?

The risk assessment must be looked at again. You are required to carry out a specific risk assessment for new or expectant mothers, as some tasks (heavy lifting) may not be appropriate. If an employee develops a disability then you are required to make reasonable adjustments. People returning to work following major surgery may also have particular requirements. If you put your mind to it, you can almost always find a way forward that works for you and your employees.

What if some risks have already been assessed?

If, for example, you use hazardous chemicals and you have already assessed the risks to health and the precautions you need to take under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH), you can consider them 'checked' and move on.

What are the various formats of aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment and violence at work? How will I recognize what is what?

Look at Chapter 2 for causes and how to recognize what is what and why it happens in libraries. Also look at Chapter 3 'The Business Case'.

What should my employer be doing?

Look at Chapter 2, which gives details of what employers should be doing and how employees should be on constant alert. Also look at Chapter 3 'The Business Case' followed by Chapters 4 and 5.

What is risk assessment? Does it really apply to libraries?

Chapter 4 describes what exactly risk assessment is, who should be involved and how it can be done – and yes, it applies to all workplaces with more than five employees.

Is there any legislation that I can use if I am suffering from stress and conflict?

Chapter 4 outlines the need for risk assessment and also informs you about the legal responsibilities of employers and the pieces of legislation that must be implemented. See also Appendix D for a list of relevant legislation.

I want to read more about stress and conflict. Where can I get authoritative advice and guidance?

The major sources are quoted in Chapter 6 but there is also a Bibliography in Appendix A, and a list of organizations and websites that will be able to give advice and guidance (see Appendices C and D). In addition, you can arrange a 15-day free trial of OSH UPDATE (www.oshupdate.com) to check for yourself the vast amount of authoritative and validated information and legislation.

Management does not think there is a problem – what actions can I take?

Investigate! Ask your health and safety manager/adviser, your HR manager or your safety representative to help. Ask if there are any reports on continuous absenteeism available, and ask your colleagues if they have any problems.

If you think you are at risk from work-related aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment and violence, do not give up. There is a wealth of information available to help you.

POINTS TO REFLECT ON . . .

■ **Do you understand the details of each step in the risk assessment?**

■ **Do you know where to go for a risk assessment template?**

■ **Did the Frequently Asked Questions answer your queries?**

■ **Do you know what to do if your management team does not think there is a problem?**

6 Advice, guidance and legislation galore

In this chapter you will find information on:

■ legislation and publications that will help you
■ where to go for guidance and advice (UK, European and international)
■ preventative measures
■ steps you could take if your management team does not recognize that there is a problem.

Legislation that will help you

Health and safety law applies to risks from stress and violence, just as it does to other risks from work. The main pieces of relevant legislation that will be of interest are:

1   The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974: Employers have a legal duty under this Act to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.
2   The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 SI 1999 No. 3242: Employers must consider the risks to employees (including the risk of reasonably foreseeable stress and violence), decide how significant these risks are, decide what to do to prevent or control the risks and develop a clear management plan to achieve this.
3   The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) SI 1995 No. 3163: Employers must notify their enforcing authority in the event of an accident at work to

any employee resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for three or more days. This includes any act of physical violence done to a person at work.

4 Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (a) and The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (b) SI 1977 No. 500: Employers must inform, and consult with, employees in good time on matters relating to their health and safety. Employee representatives, either appointed by recognized trade unions under (a) or elected under (b) may make representations to their employers on matters affecting the health and safety of those they represent.

5 The Protection from Harassment Act 1997: This Act makes provision for protecting people from harassment and similar conduct. A person must not pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another, or which he/she knows or ought to know amounts to harassment of others.

6 Human Rights Act 1998: This came into force on 2 October 2000. It incorporates and brings into force the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights.

7 The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 SI No. 2006 No. 1031: This came into force on 1 October 2006 and covers age discrimination.

8 The Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) Regulations 2004 SI 2004 No. 752: As of 1 October 2004 this has set new rules which all employers have to follow in dispute resolution.

9 The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005 SI 2005 No. 2467: Under this piece of legislation, any form of harassment is unlawful.

10 Employment Rights Act 1996 – especially the parts dealing with unfair dismissal, constructive dismissal and victimization.

Regardless of their size, all employers have to have in place minimum statutory procedures for dealing with dismissal, disciplinary action and grievances in the workplace. There is a legal requirement for them to inform their employees of these procedures. The ACAS website is very informative

(see www.acas.org.uk) and tells you what you need to know about the legislation, as well as providing guidance, training materials, etc. (e.g. the Dispute Resolution Procedures that amend the Schedules to the Employment Act 2002, concerning the duty on employers and employees to follow dispute resolution procedures: failure by either party to follow these procedures will affect the way in which an employment tribunal will consider claims). The legislation is available on the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) website (see www.opsi.gov.uk).

Guidance and advice

In the last ten years, there has been prolific growth in the amount of guidance and advice issued, not only by official government bodies but also by a range of organizations that do sterling work in helping people come to grips with workplace problems. A list of organizations, with contact details, brief description and website addresses, can be found in the Appendices, as can an extensive reading list.

Preventative measures
Publications that will help you

There are now countless publications on risk management, conflict resolution, aggression, bullying, stress and violence in the workplace. Some are listed in the Bibliography (see Appendix A). A search through the collection of worldwide authoritative databases in OSH UPDATE, which includes HSELINE, CISDOC and NIOSHTICS (see www.oshupdate.com), will lead to a wider range of full text documents and references for further reading that include the UK's Health and Safety Executive publications. These give further guidance and advice on combating aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment and violence in the workplace.

Have you or your manager taken all the necessary precautions that will secure a safer working environment for you and other staff? The Health and Safety Executive has produced a number of publications that will certainly help. Real Solutions, Real People (ISBN 0-7176-2767-5) is a comprehensive pack designed to help employers identify risks associated with work-related

stress and develop locally applicable solutions in partnership with workers. The pack includes: *Tackling Work-Related Stress: a manager's guide to improving and maintaining employee health and well-being*; *Real Solutions, Real People: a manager's guide to tackling work-related stress* (a short introductory guide to the HSE's management standards for stress, to help employers measure their performance in managing stress: this is free leaflet INDG406); *Tackling Work-Related Stress: a guide for employees* (free leaflet INDG341); one A2 action planner; six prompt cards; 18 case study cards; and the Health and Safety Laboratories Research Report 440 *Violence and Aggression Management Training for Trainers and Managers.*

While it is aimed at healthcare sectors, the strategy outlined for combating work-related violence and aggression may be a useful aid to violence management training generally. A complementary practitioner report containing tools and guidance for violence management training is also provided.

The UK's Health and Safety Commission (HSC) – the strategic body for the HSE – is committed to tackling the problem of work-related violence (WRV). In March 2000, the HSC embarked on a three-year programme to help employers tackle WRV, with the aim of reducing the number of incidents of violence at work by the end of 2003.

The HSE has been working with its key stakeholders and partners – from industry, trade unions, local authorities, other government departments and small firms' organizations – to take this programme forward and to help achieve its aims. As part of this programme, the HSE has:

■ published case study guidance to help smaller businesses manage the risk of work-related violence, including in the retail sector
■ commissioned research to find examples of good practice in preventing and managing violence to lone workers, including in the retail sector
■ funded the development of new national occupational standards in the management of work-related violence: these standards were published by the Employment National Training Organization in September 2002, and provide employers with a framework on which to develop detailed policies on WRV.

The HSE hopes that, taken together, the measures in the programme will make a difference to levels of WRV.

The UK HSE has long been concerned about this issue, and has produced a number of publications which give advice and guidance. A free leaflet called *Violence to Staff* (IND (G)69 L) gives practical advice to help you find out if there is a problem, and, if there is, how to tackle it. HSE has also published a priced guidance booklet *Preventing Violence to Staff* that explains the problem-solving process in more detail and includes case studies that show how it can work in practice. The case studies do not involve libraries, but can offer you guidance and advice on how to tackle incidents and problems in any setting.

The HSE's 38-page booklet *Preventing Violence to Retail Staff* gives excellent advice that can be applied to any industry. This guidance booklet will help those developing an in-house policy, and illustrates how to take preventative measures including the training of staff. Another very important area covered is how to give post-incident support to staff, which should not be seen as a separate issue. Providing support for staff should be part of the overall policy on preventing and controlling violence at work. Bear in mind that there is a network of local Victim Support schemes. Victim Support is a national charity providing practical help and information, particularly as regards the criminal justice system (see details in Appendix C).

The number of people working alone is increasing. As organizational downsizing spreads, solitary work is becoming more frequent. The growing practices of sub-contracting, outplacement and teleworking also add to the growth of lone working. In addition, the combined push towards increased mobility and interactive communication technologies encourages the development of one-person operations, for example in a small library. Lone work does not automatically involve a higher risk of violence, but it is generally understood that working alone does increase the vulnerability of workers. This vulnerability will clearly depend on the type of situation in which the lone work is being carried out. The HSE has published more about lone worker violence, including case studies (see www.hse.gov.uk/violence/loneworkcase.htm).

Factors which reduce the effectiveness of preventative measures

The main difficulty with many of the preventative measures described in the published case studies is that they are reliant on individual action: for example, an individual is required to tell someone where they are or to activate an alarm or system, etc. This means that human error or neglect can make even the best system ineffective. Other factors can also reduce the effectiveness of measures, including:

- lack of attendance at training courses due to pressures of work
- not carrying a personal alarm within easy reach or knowing how to use it
- not always being able to avoid potentially violent situations because it goes against a person's 'natural instincts': for example, in a robbery situation, a member of staff might find it difficult to hand over expensive equipment/money without resistance.

Information from violent incidents should be recorded for future reference. Organizations can learn from the experience and knowledge of previous violent incidents and use this to help inform the development of effective strategies to manage work-related violence.

The benefits of violence prevention measures

Libraries and other organizations report many benefits from having measures in place to tackle work-related violence and aggression. These include:

- a reduction in violent incidents, and in some cases zero incidents being reported
- improved staff confidence in dealing with violent incidents
- staff feeling more safe and secure when going about their jobs
- staff feeling supported and valued by their organization
- improved working relationships and communication between staff
- improved customer service
- reduced staff turnover

■ improved productivity and profitability due to less staff sick leave, improvements in staff efficiency and output, lower recruitment costs, improved library image, etc.

Cost effectiveness of preventative measures

Over the years many organizations have agreed that it is difficult to quantify the costs of violence prevention measures and taken the view that you 'cannot put a price on safety'. While only a small number have carried out an evaluation of their violence measures, all have been able to express a view about their cost effectiveness. Interestingly, some experience an increase in the number of reported incidents following the introduction of violence measures. This can happen when new measures are introduced, because they tend to increase the level of awareness among staff. Generally, organizations report the following:

1 The benefits outweigh the costs. All believe that the benefits of the measures outweigh the costs incurred.
2 The number of reported incidents goes down. Several organizations said that they either had no reported incidents of physical violence or that the number of incidents had recently decreased. However, incidents of verbal abuse often go unreported.
3 A non-confrontational approach costs nothing. Behaving in a polite, helpful and non-aggressive manner does not cost anything.
4 Systems or equipment used in preventative measures are often also used for other business purposes. Many of the violence prevention measures in place are also essential for other aspects of the business, and are therefore cost effective for the organization.
5 Some equipment incurs minimal cost. For some organizations, the cost of equipment and other material (e.g. leaflets/guidance) is minimal compared to the overall income of the organization.
6 Customer/client service shows improvement. Staff feel more happy and confident in their work when they know they have proper support and systems in place to help them deal with potential violence and abuse,

and they are therefore more likely to provide a better service to customers and clients.

7 High technology and high cost security equipment will normally only be needed where there is a particularly high risk of violence.

As we have seen in Chapter 3 'The Business Case', work-related stress is a major cause of occupational ill health – and thus of high staffing costs through sickness absence, high staff turnover and poor staff performance. The HSE has produced management standards to help you, your employees and their representatives manage the issue sensibly and minimize the impact of work-related stress on your business. In fact, it might help you improve organizational performance.

The management standards represent a set of conditions that enable high levels of health, well-being and organizational performance. Following the advice on the HSE website will enable you to identify the gap between your current performance and these conditions. It will also help you to develop your own solutions to close this gap.

Who should use advice on stress management?

Stress management advice is aimed at anyone with responsibility for tackling work-related stress in an organization. This might be the person who has responsibility for co-ordinating your stress risk assessment, human resources managers, health and safety officers, trade union representatives or line managers.

The following HSE publications can help you meet your legal duties. They do not replace HSE's existing stress guidance pack Real Solutions, Real People (mentioned on page 53), but provide further practical information, advice and tools on how to assess the risks from work-related stress in your organization: *Management Standards for Tackling Work-related Stress*, *Short Guide to the Management Standards*, *Short Guide to the Management Standards* (Welsh language version), and *Overview of the Management Standards Approach* (see www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm for details).

What preventative measures can employees take?

As well as the above, the International Stress Management Association has produced a leaflet *Working Together to Reduce Stress at Work* (www.hse.gov.uk/ pubns/misc686.pdf) showing how employees can work with their employers to tackle work-related stress using the management standards approach. The leaflet is supported by the HSE, ACAS, the TUC and the CIPD.

Alternatively, the following measures, originally suggested by The Library Association (now CILIP) in *Violence in Libraries* (The Library Association, 1987), should be considered:

> Different people will have different ideas of what is and is not acceptable behaviour, but consistency in this area is vital. Your management should issue a definition of patterns of unacceptable behaviour, listing these in an easily understood way. It is much easier for you and your colleagues to act if you have a clear idea of what should and should not be tolerated.
>
> If you are working in public libraries, the bye-laws could be used and in schools and colleges the institution's rules could be used as a basis for these definitions. The content and status of the bye-laws and rules should be examined for relevance, currency and legality.
>
> If you work in schools, colleges and universities you should investigate whether or not you are legally protected in the same way as the teaching staff when you are in contact with or responsible for groups of children/students.
>
> Make sure that the situation over the right to prosecute is clearly understood by all staff, i.e. can an individual decide to prosecute, or can this only be done by senior management or by elected members?
>
> In cases where offenders are under the age for prosecution, the limitations on taking legal actions should be made known to all staff.

If you have a safety representative in your library or information service, do remember that trade union safety representatives have wide-ranging legal rights under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 to investigate potential problems/hazards, inspect workplaces, speak to members in confidence and take up with employers any complaints about health and safety matters. So it is up to you as an individual to share

responsibility for tackling problems or potential problems of aggression, stress and violence in your workplace.

How management can deal with these forms of aggression

Define the problem by producing a policy that clearly states what is and what is not acceptable. This should be produced in consultation with staff groups, unions and managers. These statements must be reviewed annually to ensure that all staff are still content with the information they contain.

Train managers in the appropriate skills – and ensure that these same managers do not bully others. Managers must have people skills, so do not appoint managers who lack these. There is more on training in Chapter 8.

Monitor levels of bullying, complaints and absence – sickness absences may be covering up problems. Watch staff turnover figures and intentions to leave – again, these may be covering up a range of conflict, bullying, stress and harassment situations.

Also, make sure that exit interviews are conducted in such a way that the staff members leaving feel that they can be honest. This may save on recruitment costs in the long term. However, be aware that even leavers may be reluctant to mention anyone specifically involved in bullying. The case studies in Chapter 10 illustrate that sometimes people just leave and know that bullies are, years later, still in their posts and still bullying others.

Offer as many forms of support as possible, both for victims and anyone accused of bullying. This includes using union representatives, managers and personnel/human resources staff. Perhaps all these can help deal with situations before they escalate.

What if your management thinks there is no problem?

Are you sure they understand? Heed the warning: there is no point in looking for trouble where it does not exist, but many problems go unreported for a variety of reasons. Some staff accept troublesome behaviour as part of the job, some see it as a personal failure which they do not wish to admit while some

have high rates of tolerance. There is also the very real problem of fear of incidents, rather than the active existence of them.

So do not suffer in silence, but consider making a formal complaint and requesting an investigation.

Any investigation should cover the whole range of aggressive and violent behaviour. You and your colleagues should be consulted to uncover any aggressive or violent incidents in which you have felt threatened or under stress. It is possible that 'isolated incidents' could prove to be more commonplace than was previously thought. The initial investigations can be carried out by the personnel department, occupational health nurses, managers, supervisors, trade union representatives or health and safety supervisors. Staff views could be sought via informal interviews or via questionnaires or forms, as suggested in earlier chapters. The answer might still be 'We don't have a problem', and if so then it is still worth pursuing another possibility: putting in place a health and safety management system.

How to get senior management approval for a health and safety management system

You may not be the person responsible for health and safety in your library or organization, but you may already be aware of the risks associated with poor health and safety performance and can see the benefits of implementing a health and safety management system. But implementing a health and safety management system requires time and money. How do you convince your top management that a health and safety management system is worth that investment?

See the earlier sections regarding costs and benefits. The following are a few steps to consider when developing a business case to engage your senior management and gain their commitment to change the culture and make available the resources needed to implement an effective health and safety management system (see also Chapter 3):

1 Carry out a baseline assessment to establish your health and safety performance to date. Provide some statistics on issues such as accidents

and incidents, the number of people having problems with bullying, conflict etc. and absenteeism.

2 Review your existing practices and identify the applicable legal and other health and safety requirements which apply to your library. Establish the likely health and safety hazards and risks associated with normal, abnormal and emergency situations.

3 Define the direction in which you believe your library should be going with regard to health and safety performance. Set the scope of a health and safety management system with some principles, objectives and targets for the future.

4 Point out the benefits of a health and safety management system. More and more legislation is being introduced to manage health and safety. Libraries of any size need to be able to identify, understand and keep on top of legislative requirements. There may be benefits in terms of insurance premiums – all businesses including libraries are looking for ways to reduce their insurance ratings and thus reduce their premiums. And, in extreme cases, implementing a health and safety management system can guard against litigation, protect against copy-cat cases and even protect staff from a potential prison sentence.

5 Estimate the costs of putting a system in place, the resources needed to do so and the costs of external assessment.

There are many people working in information centres and libraries who are suffering, perhaps in silence, from aggression, bullying, harassment and violence. Being aware of the problem, and taking steps to combat it – such as implementing a health and safety management system – will improve the working environment for them and for their colleagues.

POINTS TO REFLECT ON . . .

■ **Do you know what is being done to combat aggression and violence by the various authorities?**

■ **What preventative measures can be taken?**

■ **Do you know which databases to check for further information?**

■ **Do you know what to do if your management thinks there is not a problem?**

7 Now is the time for you to act!

In this chapter you will find information on:

■ what to do if you and your colleagues *do* have a problem
■ preventative measures, and how to implement and monitor them.

Previous chapters have outlined the range of legislation in place to minimize workplace stress and violence, the range of publications that can help you, the organizational costs and benefits of health and safety measures, and how to assess and manage risks and build a business case for a health and safety system. This chapter tells you what you and your colleagues and managers can do – starting right now – to address a problem and prevent it from re-occurring.

What to do if you and your colleagues *do* have a problem

Information regarding the problem needs to be collated and analysed, but there are situations where the process of data gathering and analysis will be too slow, and action will need to be taken urgently. There must be an emergency route direct to a manager who has the authority to take immediate action, which should be written into any anti-harassment policy statement.

Data collection

The HSE suggests that if a problem is identified, then a formal reporting system should be established, as a first step. For this you need a purpose-designed form similar to the widely used incident report forms (see Figure 7.1). Some authorities have also introduced monthly summary forms. Responsibility for the collection and analysis of this information could rest with health and safety supervisors or with managers. It is important that *all* staff are made aware of the proper reporting channels.

Data analysis

When the information has been collected it should be analysed to see whether particular kinds of incident are more common than others. These incidents need to be grouped together into types, each of which will have its own identifying pattern – for example, harassment from rowdy groups when on late duty. It is through this type of data gathering that particularly vulnerable jobs or tasks can be identified and a search for preventative measures can begin. If you and your colleagues can suggest some solutions then you should inform your managers.

Preventative measures
Management attitude

It is probable that your managers will employ a mixture of preventative measures to achieve control and manage the problem effectively. It is important that these are appropriate and adequate for the task, and that they are cost-effective. Staff need to be aware of them and trained where appropriate. Installing expensive security hardware, for instance, without changing inadequate systems and procedures is not likely to be sufficient. Your managers will also need to consider whether the preventative measures could increase the possibility of violence.

The attitude of managers towards a potential problem can drastically affect the reactions of staff and their ability to cope with difficult situations.

Date of incident	Day of the week	Time
EMPLOYEE		
Name		
Library workplace		
Telephone number		
E-mail		
Supervisor/Manager		
Telephone number		
E-mail		
What activity were you engaged in at the time of the incident?		
CIRCUMSTANCES OF INCIDENT		
Was assault physical or verbal?		
Location		
Number of other staff present		
Was medical assistance/ first aid required?		
Was sick leave required?		
Injury or stress suffered		
Time lost		
Legal action		
WHAT HAPPENED		
Give brief details of incident, including any relevant events leading to the incident. Injury? Verbal abuse/shouting? Anti-social behaviour? Damage to personal property/other property?		
Give brief details of assailant (approximate age, height, condition, etc.)		
Near any CCTV?		
Has assailant been involved in any previous incident?	YES	NO
Give date and brief details		

Figure 7.1 Typical reporting form

The old Library Association leaflet (see page 59) suggested:

> A written statement showing sympathy and understanding and containing positive information, e.g. on insurance protection, can boost the confidence of staff in direct contact with the public. This can be expanded into a 'Help' leaflet, or guidance notes, to be circulated to *all* staff.

Examples of these can be obtained from a search of library websites, especially libraries in universities.

Communication and consultation

The reporting procedure has been mentioned already but the importance of effective two-way communication cannot be stressed enough.

You must feel able to discuss problems with managers, and managers must consult with staff and trade union representatives at all stages. Some authorities have established working parties to investigate the problem, which have produced reporting forms and from the results have made recommendations to senior management or local authority committees. These working parties can include training officers, union representatives, crime prevention officers, community police officers and staff at various levels.

Good working relationships

There are many examples to be seen, in various communities, where good working relationships with a number of groups have been established to help alleviate problems. Contacts with teachers, headteachers and governors at schools, with police, youth leaders and probation officers, and with other types of library and other organizations within the community may be beneficial, enabling a discussion of the problems, an exchange of information and a co-ordinated approach. There could be scope for a committee to include other community workers, meeting either on a regular or an ad hoc basis. Some libraries have formed user committees, which have made a positive contribution to this and other issues.

Informal contact with local police officers can be more productive, and if officers are made aware of the contents of bye-laws etc. they will be better equipped to deal with incidents which they might otherwise regard as outside the remit of the law.

Mediation

It can often seem easier to avoid conflict and hope it will go away, but that is how problems escalate. When you are involved in conflict, a solution may seem impossible. You may not even be able to talk to the person you are in conflict with because things have become so fraught. ACAS says:

> As can be seen in many employment tribunal sessions the incident started with a small spark, e.g. conflict between staff members or an employee with a problem not taken seriously or a badly handled discipline interview or a misunderstanding between people which was then fanned into a flame and finally erupted into a volcano. Help from someone independent and even-handed like ACAS may be the only way things can be improved.

Mediation is:

■ a way of sorting out disagreements or disputes without having to go to court: a neutral third person works with those in disagreement or dispute to help them reach an agreement that will sort out their problems
■ voluntary: you only take part if you want to
■ confidential: nothing you say will be passed on to anyone else unless you agree and nothing said in mediation can be used in any later company procedures or court action.

The aim is to maintain the employment relationship if at all possible. Mediation is about the future, not the past and who was right or wrong.

Working environment considerations

The way your workplace is designed and laid out might help to prevent

incidents of aggression and violence. Crime prevention officers will advise on the security of existing buildings and – an often overlooked point – on the design of new buildings. A number of organizations have found the following measures decrease the possibility of violence:

■ providing clear visibility and lighting for staff so that they can either leave quickly or they can raise help: ensuring that lighting is adequate both inside and outside the building and in car parks might also help to identify potential assailants, as will making sure that car parks are not too isolated from the information centre/library

■ considering the effects of the locality of the library/information centre: a building shared with other community services with different opening times, near a youth club or psychiatric unit, or in an area known for disturbances, may create some problems for staff and its users

■ ensuring that inside the building all parts of the information centre/library can be seen and that the windows can be seen through

■ ensuring that staff entrances and exits are safe, particularly for those who are working late: safety equipment such as video surveillance cameras may be needed (this is particularly necessary for staff such as caretakers and cleaners, who are often in the building outside normal opening hours)

■ considering the use of alarms, panic buttons and walkie-talkies, and training staff, including security staff, how to react to an emergency

■ positioning cash tills away from customers and/or providing physical security at cash tills

■ ensuring that the minimum necessary cash and build-up of cash is kept in tills by adopting procedures to move cash quickly and safely to more secure zones

■ widening counters and/or raising counter heights on the staff side to give staff more protection (some pubs have done this); relocating the counter if it is in the wrong place; ensuring that the public cannot get behind the counter

■ ensuring adequate queue management by using clear and ample signs and, where appropriate, ensuring easy access

- arranging for staff to have access to a secure location and a secure place for personal possessions
- changing the layout of any public areas by providing better seating, lighting and decor
- providing bright lighting around the building and removing possible cover for assailants targeting staff leaving the building after late duties
- ensuring good quality control on services and systems to defuse any possibility of aggression; providing regular information about any delays
- monitoring high-risk entrances, exits and delivery points.

Before an expensive redesign of your library or information centre is undertaken, management will need to make sure that it is appropriate to the risk and is relevant to the needs of your work.

There are many ways of making improvements and it is worth examining your physical environment with a critical eye.

Job design considerations

The way jobs are designed can reduce the risk of violence. But there are no ready-made remedies; you will have to find measures that are right for your workplace. Here are some examples of measures that have worked for some organizations.

- changing the job to give less face-to-face contact with the public (care should be taken that such measures do not increase the risks of violence to members of the public because there are no visible staff)
- using cheques, credit cards or tokens instead of cash to make robbery less attractive
- checking the credentials of 'clients' and if possible the place and arrangements for meetings away from the office (this is now standard practice for some estate agents)
- monitoring staffing levels, as even in times of financial constraint it may be necessary to increase staffing levels so that one person is not left alone, especially in the evenings (alterations in hours can allow this to happen without the need to increase numbers of staff, or security

officers may be employed or hired from specialist firms)

■ ensuring that staff can get home safely, as the threat of violence does not stop when work has ended: the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act requires employers to protect employees while they are at work, but good employers will take further steps where necessary (for example, many organizations arrange transport to take their staff home if late hours are required)

■ training should be offered, both to give staff more knowledge and confidence in their particular jobs, and to enable them to deal with aggression generally by spotting the early signs of it, by avoiding it or by coping with it

■ installing video cameras: on buses, for example, cameras have protected staff and reduced vandalism and graffiti

■ putting protective screens around staff areas, as in some banks, social security offices and bus drivers' cabs

■ adding coded security locks to doors to keep the public out of staff areas.

Staff in mobile libraries may experience particular difficulties in implementing some of the above measures, and should be involved in discussions when security is being considered so that their points of view can be assimilated.

Working procedures

Revising your working procedures or introducing new methods might help to prevent incidents of violence to staff. Again, a number of organizations have found various measures which are beneficial. These include:

■ ensuring that staffing levels are appropriate to the particular task and the time of day, and, if there is a high risk, ensuring the level is adequate to the risk

■ providing adequate and appropriate information to staff on procedures and systems

■ ensuring that customer care programmes are adequately designed and managed; this will be particularly appropriate for dealing with complaints

- including specific training on violence to staff as part of the health and safety management training programme (see Chapter 6)
- establishing clear emergency procedures, for example training for staff in what to do and where to go in the event of an incident, providing emergency telephone numbers, etc.
- if cash is taken to the bank, varying the times when it is taken and changing the route: consideration could be given to using professional cash collection services
- ensuring that experienced or less vulnerable staff are used for high-risk tasks
- rotating high-risk jobs so that the same person is not always at risk, or doubling up for particularly high-risk tasks
- providing additional staff for high-risk mobile activities or providing communication links to base
- ensuring that planned staff schedules are held by the base
- providing transport for staff who work alone
- providing personal alarms for high-risk staff
- providing training in recognizing and dealing with violence, and the potential for violence.

Security systems and procedures

These will generally include security equipment specifically designed to prevent or deter violent crime. A decision will need to be made about whether such equipment is appropriate to the risk. There is no point in buying expensive and sophisticated CCTV systems if the risk is minimal. Creating an environment where security is excessive and impractical should be avoided.

The level and design of equipment will need to take into account:

- ease of use by staff
- the pattern and type of business
- the way the building is used
- whether the geographical location is urban or rural, as this may affect the local crime rate: find out what the experience of other businesses in the area is

■ the need for emergency access/control.

If you do not have in-house security expertise, you may wish to contact your local police crime prevention officer for advice.

You and your colleagues will feel that the organization is taking a caring attitude towards you if help is given in various forms as described above, and the following may also help:

■ practical training in how to operate and maintain the security equipment: after all, the equipment will only be as effective as the staff trained to use it
■ practice in the skills involved in any specific security duties held: this will help to build up confidence in the system.

Certain aspects of security procedures should be treated as highly confidential. These details should be given out on a 'need-to-know' basis only. This will help to contain the risk of violence. However, all staff, including part-time or casual workers, will need training in some aspects of security. It may also be useful to display notices so that the public are aware that certain security devices are used in the information centre or library.

Items of equipment such as alarms will need regular maintenance checks to ensure that they are reliable and effective. You and your colleagues will also wish to monitor and evaluate systems to confirm that they are still appropriate. But before your management installs new security equipment to deal with a new threat, consider how it relates to your old security systems.

Implementation

Many of the measures outlined above can be implemented with little or no financial outlay, and put into practice within a short timescale. Other measures have larger financial implications and should be incorporated into a rolling programme with appropriate allowance within the budget.

Trades union/staff consultation is crucial at the planning, implementation and monitoring stages.

Monitoring

It is essential that the effect of each measure is monitored properly. Effective measures can be identified and sustained; less effective ones can be replaced or modified. Changes in behaviour patterns can be assessed and policies changed accordingly.

Effective monitoring can also be a valuable method of staff reassurance: if it can be seen that measures are effective, staff morale will be boosted.

POINTS TO REFLECT ON . . .

■ Do you know what to do if you and your colleagues *do* have a problem?

■ Do you know how to investigate whether a problem exists?

■ What preventative measures can be taken?

■ What type of reporting procedures do you know about?

■ Do you know how to check that procedures work?

8 Dealing with aggression and violence

In this chapter you will find information on:

■ steps to improve your personal safety
■ actually dealing with all forms of aggression
■ what could be included in staff guidelines for dealing with an incident
■ training
■ networking
■ counselling arrangements.

Steps to improve your personal safety

There are various ways in which you can train yourself to deal with difficult situations and develop communication skills and assertiveness. Remember to look confident (even if you do not feel it) because a confident-looking person is less likely to be attacked. You should also keep fit; exercise can help you develop posture, stamina and strength.

Try at all times to avoid confrontation and learn how to do all you can to defuse a potentially violent situation. Should you feel scared or uneasy, act on it straight away and if at all possible move away as confidently and quickly as possible. Should you find yourself in danger, your primary aim is to get away fast, avoiding violence.

Also, be prepared to help if you see someone else in danger. If at all possible carry a personal telephone with you and make sure that it is charged up!

If necessary telephone for assistance using your organization's emergency number or 999.

Safety when on the move

Sometimes your work can take you to new or unfamiliar locations: going on training courses, working at another branch of the information service, or attending a conference or a meeting. Make sure someone knows where you are. Leave your schedule behind – train/bus times, hotel name, address, telephone number, etc. Know exactly where you are going and how to get there. If your travel plans change, tell your supervisor/colleagues. Make sure you can be contacted. Do you or your organization check out beforehand the people you meet alone?

If travelling home after dark, consider all possible risks (e.g. where you parked the car, the availability of public transport, whether anyone is meeting you, etc.). Avoid carrying cash or valuable items. Make sure that valuable items are not too visible or accessible (e.g. laptop computer, mobile phone, briefcase or handbag). Think about carrying a personal alarm or mobile telephone.

EMERGENCY NUMBER IN THE UK

DIAL 999 – THE CALL IS FREE OF CHARGE

When calling the emergency number give as much information as possible, including the following:

- ■ **Nature of the incident**
- ■ **Location of the incident**
- ■ **Type and seriousness of injuries, if any**

Remember the following:

- ■ **Keep calm, speak clearly and do not hang up until the emergency services have *all* the information needed**
- ■ **Don't wait until an emergency arises – be trained and able to react correctly**
- ■ **No policy or precautions can guarantee the safety of every individual in every situation.**

Safety when working alone at your usual workplace

If it is necessary to undertake late-night duties or weekend work, will you be working alone? Consider whether there are areas where you feel uneasy (e.g. poorly lit entrances or corridors, car parks, etc.), and whether your office/work area might be a potential trap (e.g. is a possible escape route blocked by a desk, filing cabinet, bookshelves, counter etc.?).

If you work in a large organization with security staff on 24-hour duty, inform them that you are working late and what time you expect to finish.

Learn to be an effective communicator

Formal training may be necessary to make you an effective communicator, which will help you to reduce considerably the risk of aggressive or potentially violent situations developing. Bear in mind that it is well known that communication is not just verbal – up to 90% of communication between individuals is nonverbal.

If you are experiencing some form of aggression or bullying from clients or colleagues, work to placate rather than provoke them. Learn to talk your way out of problems and, if this fails, call upon others to help. *Do not suffer in silence* or you will find yourself becoming tense and stressed, which in itself may increase the other person's aggression.

Useful safety tips

As we have already seen in various examples in this book, it is apparent that aggression, bullying, conflict, harassment and violence in the workplace is on the increase. Here are a number of useful guidelines you might incorporate on a daily basis:

- Avoid actions which may appear aggressive or may be perceived as an invasion of privacy, e.g. in the desk or work area avoid reading papers or taking any equipment without asking first.
- Avoid standing too close/touching someone you work with and avoid over-familiar talk or lewd suggestions.
- Do not give your own or colleagues' home telephone numbers or

addresses to customers, or anyone else, unless there is an agreement to do so. Also, if working in public areas, do not give your personal telephone number when on the telephone, because you do not know who else is listening to you!

■ If anyone in a lift makes you feel uneasy, avoid eye contact, look confident, be on the alert and get out at the next floor.

■ It should be possible to avoid after-hours meetings if you are on your own but, if they are unavoidable, ensure that someone knows where you are.

■ You can dress to please yourself, but bear in mind that society has unwritten rules about appropriate dress for most occupations and situations, so wear clothes which give out the signals you intend.

■ Never get into a car with somebody you do not know and trust.

Actually dealing with all forms of aggression

Aggression as defined earlier in the book by various organizations may include verbal abuse, ostracism, discrimination, racial or sexual harassment, bullying, etc. You need to be able to assess a situation and decide quickly what actions you should take to contain and curtail this aggression. Training should show you how to deal with a variety of situations, even those that could lead to physical attack. Refer to Chapter 1 for a list of the various types of behaviour that might be considered offensive, and the informal and formal procedures that might be used to deal with them.

It will be necessary to learn not to respond in kind, even if someone is trying to provoke you. Meeting aggression with aggression leads to confrontation and someone could get hurt. At all times you must stay calm and speak gently, slowly and clearly. Do not argue or try to outsmart the person verbally. Breathe slowly to control your own tension. Learn how to avoid body language which may be misinterpreted, such as looking down on the aggressor; placing hands on hips, folding or raising your arms or using any physical contact. It is advisable to keep your distance.

Also, try to talk through the problem and, however angry you may feel, try to get the person to see your manager or another colleague. If possible, allow the person's aggression to be diverted against inanimate objects, such

as kicking the library counter. Promote compromise by offering the aggressor a way out of the situation.

If you cannot deflect or defuse the situation, then get away as quickly and safely as possible. While the incident is taking place keep talking and assess possible ways of escaping if the situation worsens. Try to prevent the aggressor blocking any possible escape route. Never turn your back. If you are trying to get away, move gradually backwards.

After the incident, do learn from it and protect yourself and others from repeated aggressive behaviour. You must therefore report the incident to your immediate supervisor and ensure that your complaint is taken seriously and receives a fair hearing. Fill in the incident form (see the example on page 65).

Physical attack

If you are threatened, you must try not to freeze up but to get away as fast as you can. Aim for a place where you know there will be people, either in your information centre or library or outside. Do not look back, and report the incident immediately to the police. Someone else might be attacked and may not be able to get away.

If it is not possible to get away, protect yourself and sound your personal alarm if you have one. Shout or scream and give the command 'Phone the police!' or a similar positive instruction – people are more likely to react when given a call to action.

As a last resort, the police advice is 'bash and dash'. If you have to fight back, do it quickly. Aim for the knee, solar plexus, elbow joint or little fingers. Then get away.

It is safer to carry a personal alarm than an offensive weapon, which could be used against you.

Self-defence

During your training you will learn that physical self-defence should only be used as the last resort because it limits your options for getting away and will

invariably commit you to a fight that you could well lose. Remember also that if you respond physically you could be legally liable for assault.

Staff guidelines for dealing with an incident

Your management's health and safety policy should give you guidelines about what is acceptable behaviour at work and tell you how to report any incidents. Even after successful implementation of preventative measures, it is inevitable that incidents will still happen, and the health and safety guidelines should include information to help staff when situations do flare up. The following are suggestions for inclusion in the guidelines to be given to all staff:

- Do not over-react. However, do not wait until situations get worse. Act decisively and positively.
- Try to remain calm.
- Do not argue or threaten.
- Avoid simple mistakes like blocking the exit when asking people to leave.
- If you threaten to call the police, call them.
- Identify troublemakers and learn their names, and tell other colleagues who may have to deal with them on other occasions.
- Explain why their actions are unacceptable.
- Managers should also decide whether persistent troublemakers should be banned, the exact procedure for making the ban effective and how to inform all concerned.
- Managers should clarify under what circumstances staff have the right to close the premises.
- All staff should follow the reporting procedure.

Investigations into the problem of aggression and violence at work and its solutions should be carried out continually as part of ongoing risk assessment. You should be aware of the valuable work being done by many trade unions and bodies like the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. A number of other organizations who can provide help and support are listed in Appendix C.

Training

Training will be an important element in managing and preventing the risk of aggression and violence to staff and should be used:

- to brief you and your colleagues on your organization's policy and procedures
- to deliver advice, information and skills on prevention
- to involve you and your colleagues in sharing experiences and thoughts on the subject
- as a catalyst to bring about change within your workplace.

CILIP's Training and Development Department organizes training courses and workshops on coping with violence and aggression in libraries, as do Victim Support and other organizations (see Appendix C for further details of these organizations). Watch the professional press for details of courses and seminars.

Training topics

Changes in risks may require changes in the content of training (e.g. where new procedures have been introduced). Health and safety training should take place during working hours. If it is necessary to arrange training outside your normal hours, this should be treated as an extension of time at work.

Training on prevention might include:

- detailing policies for and systems of dealing with the problems
- recognizing and dealing with abusive and aggressive customers, who may display irrational behaviour, nervousness or hostility, avoid eye contact and take an aggressive stance
- exploring the causes of violence and aggression, such as anger and frustration
- explaining to staff what to do and what is expected of them in the event of aggression, violence and assault including, for example, how to raise the alarm, where to go for safety and not to resist or follow violent offenders

■ managing confrontation by using positive interpersonal skills such as listening, remaining calm and confident, being assertive rather than aggressive, defusing situations before they escalate by being non-confrontational and offering a compromise, attracting the attention of colleagues and, if all else fails, ensuring an escape route

■ ensuring effective handling of incidents by letting staff know what to do and who to tell; also giving advice on the degree of risk involved and using role-play to help staff feel comfortable and confident about security equipment (e.g. panic alarms)

■ providing effective customer care by being polite, calm and helpful, and recognizing the other person's point of view

■ ensuring safe working practices; if staff are mobile this involves ensuring that someone at the fixed workplace is aware of their exact movements, and for all staff this involves avoiding, where possible, working alone or in isolation

■ providing support and care after the incident, including dealing with the impact it can have on staff and making arrangements for support (this will be particularly appropriate for managers and supervisors).

The managers of each department/branch will have a key role in identifying the training needs of you and other staff. In particular, managers are tasked with controlling and preventing risk. Thus managers must be provided with sufficient training on the issue to become competent in the management role (this could be part of general management training). Managers may need to consider specific training if you or colleagues move from low-risk to high-risk tasks. All of you will need to be thoroughly briefed on areas of concern to help reduce any foreseeable risk. Where safety representatives are appointed, these should be consulted on training issues.

You should also be aware that training needs in your organization should be monitored and reviewed regularly, and training courses should be evaluated for their effectiveness. Remember, even if you are a part-time worker you will still need the same training as full-time members of staff.

You and all your colleagues will need to be aware of any risk which you could face while carrying out the job – for example during shift working, mobile work, etc. Being aware of and able to recognize the potential danger

will help you to be prepared, and enable you to react to a situation in a positive way, because you know what could happen and what would be the best way to deal with it. Training in awareness will include examples of good practice in recognizing and responding to risky situations. It will also provide you with practical knowledge and information on preventative measures (e.g. systems, procedures and equipment). Awareness can often help to avoid incidents, although it will not always guarantee prevention. Violent incidents will and do happen.

If your management has a policy on apprehending criminals, you and your colleagues will need adequate training and information to ensure that you always act within the law in doing so.

Training at all levels should be paramount in all libraries and information centres, especially in health and safety matters that encompass the well-being of staff. It is an important way of achieving competence and helps to convert information into safe working practice. It contributes to your organization's health and safety culture and is needed at all levels, including top management. Risk assessment is required under the terms of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 Statutory Instrument 1992 No. 2051, and will help to determine the level of training needed for each type of work undertaken. This may include basic skills training, specific on-the-job training and training in health and safety or emergency procedures for each type of work.

Training needs are likely to be greatest on recruitment. If you are a new employee you should receive basic induction training on health and safety, including arrangements for first aid, fire and evacuation. Your organization should also pay particular attention to the needs of young workers. The risk assessment process should indicate further specific training needs. In some cases, training may be required even though an employee already holds formal qualifications.

Changes in your work environment may cause you to be exposed to new or increased risks, and to require further training. Further training should be considered when you or your colleagues transfer or take on new responsibilities, and/or there is a change in the work or in the work environment (this could include staffing changes). Training may also be needed if there is a change in the work equipment or systems of work in use.