

Post-incident support framework – Managers guide



Being involved in violence, abuse or harassment at work - whether it happens to you or you witness it - can affect both your physical and mental health. People may feel shocked, anxious, angry, lose confidence, struggle to sleep or feel distressed later on.

Prevention of work-related violence is always the priority. However, even with preventative measures in place, incidents can still happen. Evidence shows that staff recover better and feel safer when organisations respond quickly, consistently and with compassion after incidents.

The NHS Staff Council has developed a [post incident support framework](#) to ensure there is a consistent and appropriate response following a violent incident at work.

This framework explains what support staff should expect after a work-related violent incident. It exists to make sure:

- staff are not left to cope on their own
- incidents are taken seriously
- support is built into normal processes
- action is taken to reduce repeat incidents.

Use this as a quick checklist to help you to support staff (both victims and witnesses) following physical violence, verbal/online abuse, sexual harassment/assault or other aggression at work.

Apply alongside local safeguarding, HR, security and incident-management procedures.

Be mindful that a 'one-size fits all' approach may not be effective and workplace support should be provided in a tailored and needs based approach for staff. Recognise that recovery may not be linear – workers may require different support at different times.

Make safe

- **Make the situation safe:** Call for security / clinical support / police. Separate the person harmed from the perpetrator and prevent further contact where possible.
- **Check for injury and urgent needs:** First aid / medical review as needed.
- **Provide basic psychological first aid:** Calm, private space. Reassure; ask what they need right now; offer someone they trust to stay with them where practical.
- **Decide about the rest of the shift:** Can they continue to work or continue with adjusted duties, or do they need to go home? Discuss safe travel and support at home if appropriate.
- **Preserve evidence where relevant:** Note key details, identify witnesses, keep any CCTV/body-worn camera process in mind (follow local governance).
- **Do a brief 1:1 'demobilisation' conversation** (or ensure a trained peer supporter does). Check safety, normalise common reactions, and agree support.

Report, reassure and plan follow-up

- **Ensure the incident is reported** using the organisational system (including near misses). If the person harmed cannot report, arrange for a manager/witness to report.
- **Explain what happens next** - who reviews reports, likely timescales, and how you will keep them updated.
- **Offer practical support** - time to complete statements, occupational health/ Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)/ counselling, union rep, access HR/people team advice (pay/injury allowance etc if appropriate).
- **Book follow-ups** (don't rely on "my door is always open"). Agree a check-in within 24–48 hours and again at 1–2 weeks this could be a team debrief led by a trained facilitator for more significant incidents of violence.
- **Consider 'defusing' for the team** (small group, 3–10 days) to reduce isolation, identify who needs extra help, and reinforce a no-blame approach.
- **Consider immediate adjustments** to reduce further risk, distress, document what you agree.

Support recovery and learn

- **Escalate for specialist input** if impact is high, persistent, or worsening (occupational health, counselling/trauma support, safeguarding/HR/security, as appropriate).
- **Agree a return-to-work plan** if the staff member has been absent. Phased return and reasonable adjustments, confirm how you will keep them safe and informed. Absence related to workplace violence or abuse should not be managed as ordinary sickness absence or counted against you in formal proceedings.
- **Support learning without retraumatising:** contribute to after action review (AAR) when appropriate; focus on prevention and system improvement, not blame.
- **Police and legal support:** Reporting to the police is the individual staff members choice. If police are involved, managers should support with statements and court attendance. Check your organisation's policy on time off, as you may be entitled to paid leave for court attendance.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check in proactively (remember some reactions are delayed).• Be factual and compassionate; thank staff for reporting and for what they did.• Keep the person updated on investigations and explain delays.• Agree and document adjustments and safety measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimise, or normalise abuse as "part of the job".• Pressure staff to "get over it" or to disclose details they don't want to share.• Promise outcomes you can't control (e.g. police action or sanctions).• Wait for the investigation to finish before offering support.

Signposting reminder: Local routes for security response, incident reporting, safeguarding, occupational health/counselling/EAP, HR/People team advice (e.g. for advice on access to injury allowance if long term sickness), union support, speaking-up options.