

Conflict Resolution Training Local Authority and Housing Workbook





*We believe that
you have the right
to feel safe and
confident at work*

Jason Keeley
Managing Director

Positively confident at work

Today's training will help you deal effectively with challenging or aggressive behaviour in your day-to-day role. By the time you leave, you should have enhanced confidence in your ability to defuse and de-escalate such situations.

- 1** Violence & aggression at work
- 2** Communication basics
- 3** Spotting warning & danger signs
- 4** Communication models
- 5** Legal rights & responsibilities
- 6** Lone working
- 7** Reporting & supporting
- 8** Further help & resources

Exercise: What challenges do you currently face within your role?



Exercise: The Iceberg Model

Discover the patterns of behaviour, supporting structures and mental models that underlie a particular event.



2

Communication basics

Understanding and interpreting different forms of communication is a key skill we develop through our lives.

It helps us to manage situations we find ourselves in, and when conflict arises, this is essential.

Information is transmitted in two main ways: verbally and non-verbally. 93% of communication relies on non-verbal messages, so understanding these signals is critical. Sometimes the most important thing in communication is 'hearing' what *isn't* said. This is especially true if you're dealing with an individual who is sending *mixed messages*. It's equally important to understand that you

will also be displaying body language for the other party to read. The combination of verbal communication and body language will contribute to how the interaction develops.

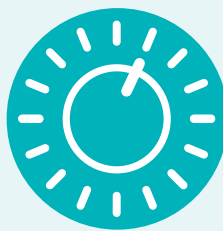
There are times when you may see stronger and more noticeable changes to an individual's body language, for instance as tension builds. However, by being aware of these clues, you give yourself a chance to predict the likely outcomes and increase your chance of diffusing the situation.

Exercise: Understanding the signals



.....%
is verbal

**Spoken words
alone with
no action**



.....%
is vocal

**The tone, volume
and pace with which
words are spoken**



.....%
is non-verbal

**Body movement,
gestures and
facial expression**

Cultural awareness

Our population is becoming more diverse. To communicate effectively it's essential to have cultural awareness and an inclusive working environment.

When resolving conflict, try to understand cultural differences and remember that culture is flexible and evolves over time. Think of your own culture and how different it is today than a decade ago.

Different cultures have their own communication styles. A key aspect is the difference in non-verbal communication and the role these differences play. Non-verbal

actions impact people's reactions. Eye contact (or lack of it), can have different connotations between cultures, as can personal space and proximity from one another. There are many examples that can instil or diminish trust. It's crucial to demonstrate good observation and active listening to make a positive impact. It's often forgotten just how powerful it is for people to stop and listen.



Managing emotions

Emotional vs rational brain

It's hard not to get emotional when you find yourself in a tense situation. Disagreement can make resolving conflict difficult. If you go into 'fight or flight' mode (adrenaline pumping), you may lose access to the part of your brain that's responsible for rational thinking, ie you lose the ability to think clearly.

It is possible to manage your emotions to calm yourself down, see the practical tips below.



Practical tips to managing your emotions...

Focus on your breathing

Notice the air coming from your lungs and feel it pass through your nostrils. This will take your attention and help you keep control.

Focus on your body

Stand up (slowly) and walk around. This helps to activate the rational part of your brain. Suggest a break or do small physical things like crossing fingers or grounding your feet.

Take a break

The more time you have to process your emotions, the less intense they will be. If things get heated, excuse yourself to give yourself time to cool down.

Try saying a mantra

Come up with a phrase you can repeat to stay calm, for example, "This isn't about me". You can let the other person vent. It's important to show you're listening. If you don't feed negative emotion, they will likely calm down.

3 Spotting warning & danger signs

Good decision making is an essential skill in conflict situations. Simply considering the significant risks and ways of reducing them can make all the difference.

Danger signs are indicators of an imminent attack and a real threat to your safety. The person is now considering how best to attack you while being able to defend themselves. These changes are difficult to hide and should be taken seriously.

Some of the signs...

Warning signs

- Direct prolonged eye contact
- Flushing of the skin
- Person stands tall to maximise height
- Exaggerated movements, especially hands
- Abrupt stopping and starting of nervous behaviour (eg tapping of fingers)

Danger signs

- Fists clenching/unclenching
- Facial colour pales
- Change of hand position
- Shoulders tensing
- Stance changing to side-on or fighting stance
- Lowering of entire body before an attack

Exercise: What else have you noticed?



Tips to help prepare yourself for interaction



Spending time assessing risks and planning your interactions will help you to manage future incidents more effectively.

Impact factors

Impact factors are the considerations we identify when we do a risk assessment. Situations can change very quickly, so you need to have an awareness of what is going on around you and be prepared to act accordingly.

The threat to you is most likely to come from the person(s) you are dealing with or from the place where the encounter occurs. These can be described as *Personal* or *Environmental* impact factors.

Personal

Sex, age, size, strength, numbers of subjects, special knowledge, position of advantage, intoxication, etc.

Environment

Location, distance from help, safe exits/layout, public or private premises, possession of weapons or potential weapons, eg hot drinks, umbrella, walking stick, etc.

Do a risk assessment

- What do you know about the person you're going to be meeting?
- Check your notes from previous meetings
- Check any other resources available to give you clues about their history and warning markers

Think about the location

- Are you familiar with it? If not, assess the environment as soon as possible
- Think about where you'll sit and how you'll be able to withdraw if you have to
- Try to get yourself in the right frame of mind
- Remember Betaris Box: Attitude drives behaviour
- Think about the best ways to build rapport
- Re-read this workbook to refresh yourself on how best to deal with situations that escalate

Exercise: What do you do to plan?

4 Communication models

Building rapport

Communication at any level is seriously impaired if rapport is not present.

Rapport gives you the ability to work towards the responses you need, to get across your message, and communicate more effectively.

Rapport exists naturally between people who 'get on well' or who 'see eye to eye'. As it is a natural state in which we all have skills, we only notice when it doesn't exist.

Practice achieving rapport when it does not exist, this will enhance all types of communication, including managing potential conflict.



The LEAPS model is a structured approach to effective communication

L Listen

E Empathise

A Ask

P Paraphrase

S Summarise

How attitude drives behaviour

You may have heard the expression 'behaviour breeds behaviour'.

This is where two parties get locked into a cycle of behaviour which, if unchecked, can escalate out of control. This is especially true in conflict situations as emotions tend to be running high. It's difficult not to react if we think the other person is acting unreasonably. Ultimately, it is attitude that drives behaviour. This is illustrated in the graphic, which is sometimes referred to as Betaris Box. It's essential when you enter a potential conflict situation that you start off in as positive a frame of mind as possible. If your attitude is 'Yes I can help', you are far more likely to be able to do so (because your attitude drives your behaviour).

It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome

William James
Philosopher



The Five Step Appeal

The Five Step Appeal is a communication model that can be used to steer a situation to the result you want to achieve.

It saves you from having to repeat the same things over and over to someone. It allows you to summarise the situation, from your perspective and from theirs. This model is useful when other options are exhausted.

1

Simple appeal: Ask them to comply with your request.

“

2

Reasoned appeal: Explain the reason for your request.

“

3

Personal appeal: Remind the person of the implications to them personally, what they can gain or lose.

“

4

Final appeal: Confirm to the person this is their last chance to comply.

“

5

Action: What action could you take in your role?

“

De-escalation skills - personal safety & space

Personal space

It's very important to recognise and respect personal space. This is the area around us that we see as psychologically ours. People set great store by their personal space and often feel uncomfortable, anxious or threatened if that space is invaded. You might have to move into someone's personal space due to your role and reactions to this can be unpredictable at times.

We can use distance to de-escalate potential conflict by understanding and respecting boundaries of personal space and not provoking someone by stepping into theirs. Distance also gives us time to think, react and move away.



Reactionary gap

The reactionary gap is the space needed between yourself and someone who's posing a threat. It allows you to react and take action to stop yourself from being harmed. At a minimum, it's the distance between yourself and the other person's reach.



5 Legal rights & responsibilities

An awareness of relevant legislation and organisational guidelines will help you choose an appropriate response with confidence.

Duty of Care: A professional duty to do the right thing

“As a professional, you are personally accountable for actions and omissions in your practice and must always be able to justify your decisions”; and, “You must always act lawfully, whether those laws relate to your professional practice or personal life.”

Accountability is integral to professional practice. You may be required to make judgements in a wide variety of circumstances. You must use your professional knowledge, judgement and skills to make a decision based on evidence for best practise and in the person’s best interests. You will need to be able to justify the decisions you make.

Health and Safety at Work

Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires the provision and maintenance of a working environment for employees that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe, without risks to health, and adequate as regards facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work, including training.

Use of force

Understanding legal rights and responsibilities could help to speed up your decision-making process and increase the likelihood of a safe, effective solution. If the situation continues to escalate then you may be required to resort to force. Any force used should be reasonable, necessary, proportionate and justifiable in the circumstances. If force is used, you must be able to account for your actions and ensure that they’re recorded as soon as possible.

Self-defence is part of private defence, the doctrine in English law that states you can act in

ways that otherwise would be illegal to prevent injury to yourself or others, or to prevent crime. You have the same right to act to protect others as to protect yourself. This defence arises both from Common Law and the Criminal Law Act.

Criminal Law Act (1967)

Section 3 of the Criminal Law Act (1967) provides: “A person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders or persons unlawfully at large”.

This applies to those events that are in progress and to those that ‘reasonably appear to be about to be committed’.

You'll only be prosecuted if you have acted unreasonably. And reasonableness isn't judged by the standards of behaviour at a vicar's tea party, it's judged by what someone in desperate circumstances would do.

Professor Gary Slapper
Former Professor of Law
Open University

Legal rights & responsibilities

Common Law

Common Law (also known as case law or precedent) is law developed by judges through decisions of courts and similar tribunals that decide individual cases.

Common Law recognises that there are many circumstances in which one person may use force upon another without committing a crime (eg sporting contests). Common Law provides a potential defence for a person's physical actions provided that:

- **The use of force was necessary**
- **The person's use of force was reasonable in the circumstances**
- **The level of force was proportionate to the amount of harm likely to occur**

What is reasonable is measured by the belief of the person using force. There may be no time for anything other than an instinctive reaction. The law does not require a fine calculation of what amount of force is needed, but it does require that the use of force should be necessary in the circumstances, as the person concerned saw them.

The action taken was that of a reasonable person doing no more than that which they honestly thought was in the best interests of the person presenting severe challenging behaviour.

In any situation, staff should be able to demonstrate that their response was not based on revenge, retaliation or punishment.

Human Rights Act 1998

The 1998 Human Rights Act aims to implement the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights in the UK

and sets out clear guidelines on the freedom of the individual. The situation must be carefully assessed, and a clear rationale put forward as to why the client is at risk, before restraint is used.

In October 2000 The Human Rights Act 1998 came into effect in UK Law. The Act secures certain rights and freedoms and sets standards to be attained for all people

Applicable articles from the Human Rights Act

Article 2 of the Human Right Act protects your right to life.

This means that nobody, including the Government, can try to end your life.

It also means the Government should take appropriate measures to safeguard life by making laws to protect you and, in some circumstances, by taking steps to protect you if your life is at risk.

The courts have decided that the right to life does not include a right to die.

Article 3 protects your freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment:

As you would expect, public authorities must not inflict this sort of treatment on you. They must also protect you if someone else is treating you in this way. If they know this right is being breached, they must intervene to stop it. The state must also investigate credible allegations of such treatment.

Article 5 protects your right to liberty and security.

It focuses on protecting individuals' freedom from unreasonable detention, as opposed to protecting personal safety.

You have a right to your personal freedom. This means you must not be imprisoned or detained without good reason.

6

Lone working

It is estimated that up to eight million people in the United Kingdom are lone workers. That's 22% of the 31.2m UK working population. Statistics from the British Crime Survey have indicated that as many as 150 lone workers are attacked every day

Tick the circles of ones that you consider already...



Preparation

- Prepare well for your visit and check warning markers, history
- Consider calling first to manage expectations, assess mood and gather helpful information
- Establish who is likely to be present
- Be prepared to change the meeting and venue and/or to involve colleagues
- Follow lone worker communication procedures so colleagues can locate and check on you
- Be able to raise alarm or contact help quickly in an emergency
- Ensure your PPE ie mobile phone is charged and with you

On arrival

- Park safely under light and position the vehicle for a quick exit
- Have a ready excuse to avoid uncomfortable scenarios eg at a lift or stairwell
- Continually assess people and environment on approach and at the door
- Do not enter if you have concerns – have a ready excuse
- Always be polite and respectful and be prepared to be firm when necessary
- Think carefully how, where and when you may deliver unwelcome news

Your premises

- If clients have to come to your premises, use the room layout to your advantage
- Give some thought before you or they arrive as to what exit strategies you could use if you felt uncomfortable or threatened
- Position yourself close to any alarm, telephone etc
- Give the client an idea of how long the meeting will take and try to adhere to this
- Have a colleague knock on your door or call a few minutes into the meeting to check you are ok and feel comfortable with them

Tick the circles of ones that you consider already...



Their premises

- Once inside, position for vision and a clear exit path
- Consider setting up a buddy system with someone so they know your plans for the day
- Think about asking your 'buddy' to call you ten minutes into any meeting with a new client to check that you are ok and feel comfortable with them. Have a predetermined code word ready in case you want to summon help
- Conduct your own risk assessment on the door step before you enter. If you feel at all uncomfortable or unsure, make an excuse and leave
- Be mindful of the fact that you are entering someone else's territory. Your presence there may be unwanted and/or pose a threat
- As you enter, make a note of how the door opens and closes so that you can leave quickly, if necessary
- Trust your instincts

Travelling to and from the venue

- Plan your journey to minimise exposure to risks
- Ensure you have adequate fuel to complete your journey
- Allow plenty of time for the journey to avoid speeding or rushing in traffic
- Keep bags, cases, equipment etc out of sight in the boot to remove from view of thieves
- Keep vehicle doors locked during travel
- When leaving your appointment, have your car keys in your hand to avoid looking for them as you approach your vehicle
- Wait for transport in well-lit areas
- Stay on footpaths in well-lit areas, avoiding waste ground or isolated pathways
- Ensure that mobile phones and keys are kept separate to handbags/bags
- If the bus is empty or it is after dark, sit on the lower deck near to the driver
- Taxi's should be pre-booked, sit in the back seat behind the front passenger seat

Working alone is not in itself against the law and it will often be safe to do so. However, the law requires employers to consider carefully, and then deal with, any health and safety risks for people working alone before people are allowed to do so.

7 Reporting & supporting

Following an incident, the report you produce, and the support you receive, is vital to ensuring you remain confident about handling situations similar in the future.

It's crucial that all incidents are reported, no matter how trivial they may seem. Reporting helps assess the frequency of violent episodes. Good reporting can also help with the development of strategies to tackle similar situations in the future. This includes reporting the facts to the appropriate person, eg your supervisor or the police. The more incidents you report, the easier it is to identify risks. Do not stop reporting, even

if it appears that no action is being taken. If fewer incidents are reported than occurred, your employer may not take the situation seriously.

You should also report 'near misses' and non-physical assaults. Often low-level aggression is a precursor to higher-level aggression. Near miss reporting can help to identify trends and triggers and enable changes to practice to avoid future escalation.

*Remember:
If there are no
reports, in effect,
there are no
incidents!*



8

Further help & resources

If you'd like to know more, on our website we are working on a resource area containing detailed information on some of the topics covered in this training.

Go to: ikontraining.co.uk

Further help

- Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
- Local Security Management Specialist
- Human Resources/Organisational Development
- Occupational Health
- Workplace Advisors

If you'd like to know more, please check out the following online resources:

- ACAS
- Age UK
- Alzheimers.org.uk
- Children's Act 1989 & 2004
- Citizensadvice.org.uk
- Dementiafriends.org.uk
- Dementiauk.org
- Deprivation of Liberty
- DOH Francis Report
- Equality Act 2010
- Equalityhumanrights.com
- GOV.UK
- HSE Violence and Aggression
- HSE Working Alone in Safety
- HSE Five Steps to Risk Assessment
- H&S at Work Act 1974
- Human Rights Act
- Institute of Conflict Management (ICM) instituteofconflictmanagement.org
- Legislation.gov.uk
- Meeting Needs and Reducing Distress
- MCA 2005
- Mentalhealth.org.uk
- Mind.org.uk
- NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)
- Positive and proactive care: Reducing the need for restrictive intervention
- Samaritans.org
- Skillsforcare.org.uk
- Unison - working home

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We'd love to know what you think
of our training and our workbook...
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