



Model Policy Statement on Prevention of Violence to Retail Staff

1. Joint Statement

(Company) and Usdaw recognise that violence and abuse pose a significant risk to the health and safety of retail workers. Industry figures show that 20,000 shopworkers are physically attacked each year and an even greater number are exposed to threats of violence and verbal abuse. Violence is a serious health hazard both for immediate victims of attacks and for their colleagues. It is also damaging to the business because of high levels of sickness absence and the loss of experienced staff. (Company) acknowledges that it has a duty under health and safety law to protect its staff. (Company) and Usdaw are committed to working in partnership to make sure that employees can work in an environment that is free from violence and the fear of violence. This policy outlines how this commitment will be fulfilled. All members of staff throughout the organisation are urged to make themselves familiar with the policy and to co-operate fully in its implementation.

1.1 Definition of violence

For the purposes of this policy, the Health and Safety Executive's definition of violence is adopted. Violence is defined as:

'Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.'

This definition includes physical violence, verbal abuse, and harassment on the grounds of sex, race, disability or sexual orientation.

2. Responsibilities for Implementing Policy

All staff are required to co-operate with the implementation of this policy.

(A section then needs to be inserted identifying the responsibilities at the various levels of the organisation – the structure should make it clear that the Main Board/Chief Executive have overall responsibility for the successful implementation of the policy.)

A named senior manager (eg HR Director) should have operational responsibility for:

- *Putting the policy into practice.*
- *Reporting regularly to the Main Board/Chief Executive on the progress of the policy.*
- *Setting up reporting system for incidents and collating data.*

- *Ensuring that risk assessments are carried out on all stores and that competent advice and support is available when needed.*
- *Ensuring that the resources are available to provide training for all staff.*
- *Setting up procedures to make sure that staff who are involved in incidents are given support and assistance (eg access to counselling, help with police/court procedures, financial support, etc).*

Regional managers duties should include:

- *Responsibility for making sure that reports of incidents are being submitted.*
- *Responsibility for making sure that risk assessments are being done in stores in the region.*
- *Responsibility for making sure that preventive measures are being put in place.*

Store managers duties should include:

- *Encouraging reporting of incidents.*
- *Carrying out risk assessments in consultation with Usdaw safety rep.*
- *Providing training for all staff on the policy.*
- *Providing immediate support and assistance to staff when they need it.*
- *Making sure that Usdaw safety reps are given sufficient time to carry out their functions and to attend relevant union training.*

Duties for all staff should include:

- *Co-operation with the policy.*
- *Acting responsibly to avoid putting themselves or others in danger.*
- *Reporting incidents.*
- *Raising any concerns with their store manager and Usdaw rep.*

Usdaw safety reps should:

- *Use their investigation and inspection powers to monitor the policy in their workplace.*
- *Co-operate with the store manager on the risk assessment.*
- *Encourage members to report incidents.*
- *Make sure that members who are injured are given access to Usdaw legal service support).*

3. Training

(Company) and Usdaw recognise the importance of effective training of staff in ensuring the success of this policy. Training will:

- **Ensure that staff are able to play their role in the implementation of the policy.**
- **Prepare staff beforehand so that they are better able to cope if they are involved in an incident.**
- **Inform staff about the support provided by (Company) and by Usdaw if they are involved in an incident.**

Basic training will be provided to all staff including part-time and temporary workers at induction.

Basic training will:

- Emphasise the importance of not putting themselves or others at risk to protect property.
- Explain the importance of reporting incidents.
- Ensure that the worker is familiar with any security measures in the store.
- Ensure that the worker knows what to do if they are involved in an incident or if they observe a suspected shoplifter.

Basic induction training will be reinforced following an incident or at regular intervals (specify frequency) using the staff newsletter/in-store training sessions/etc.

Staff who have key roles to play in the implementation of this policy such as security staff and store managers will be given more detailed training to enable them to carry out their role.

4. Risk Assessment

(Employer) and Usdaw recognise the value of a joint union/management approach to the management of the risk of violence and abuse. The starting point for such an approach is the development of detailed risk assessments.

It is recognised that the risks will vary from store to store, depending on location, the layout of the store, the customer base and many other factors.

This means that risk assessments must be developed on a store by store basis taking account of local conditions.

The store manager will work with the staff/Usdaw rep(s) in each store to develop the store-based risk assessment.

At each store a written record of the risk assessment will be kept which includes:

- Brief description of the risks involved, including any risk factors specific to that store.
- Details of the groups of workers exposed to the risks.
- Brief details of the preventive measures in place to prevent or reduce the risks.
- Date when the risk assessment was last reviewed.

To make sure that the local risk assessment is tailored to the needs at the particular store, the store manager and staff/Usdaw rep(s) will pay particular attention to the following points.

4.1 Reporting system

Reporting procedures are in place to allow staff to report incidents. (*Description of system or reference to where details of system can be found – eg in staff handbook.*)

Staff are encouraged to report all incidents including incidents of verbal abuse, intimidation or harassment. The record of staff reports is an essential piece of information for the development of the local risk assessment.

The support of the store manager and the Usdaw rep(s) is essential to get this message across. Staff must be trained in the use of the reporting system, particularly at induction. Staff must have confidence that reports will be treated with sensitivity and will be taken seriously. Where reports reveal a serious or persistent problem, prompt action must be taken to provide the staff involved with suitable support.

4.2 Consultation with staff

The staff who work in the store will know better than anyone if there are particular risks of violence or abuse. Consultation with the staff will provide a 'reality check' to make sure that the risk assessment is effective.

Opportunities should be taken to consult with staff on the issue at staff briefings/through the store forum, etc.

Usdaw safety reps will be given the time and facilities to talk privately with the staff they represent to make sure that consultation is effective.

4.3 Local store profile

In addition to the incident reports and the knowledge and experience of staff, other vital information for the local risk assessment will be available from the police, local authority and neighbouring businesses.

Information from such sources will be shared when the store manager and staff/Usdaw rep(s) develop and review the risk assessment.

4.4 Specific issues

As with any risk assessment it is important that consideration is given to particular risks that may only affect particular workers or groups of workers.

Examples may include:

- Lone workers such as home delivery drivers.
- Night shift workers.
- Keyholders.
- In-house security staff.

Where there are particular groups of workers or specific risks, the store manager and Usdaw rep(s) will make sure that details are included in the written record of the risk assessment.

5. Taking Action to Prevent Violence

(Company) and Usdaw are committed to working in partnership to agree on the measures that may be required at the store following the risk assessment and to make sure that these agreed measures are put into practice.

The store manager will consult with staff/Usdaw safety reps on the preventive and protective measures that will be adopted. If store managers are unable to put measures in place – eg where approval from a more senior manager is required – they will refer the matter to the appropriate level of management and will keep the staff/Usdaw reps informed of the result.

Because of the complicated nature of the risk and the variation between stores, there is no single, simple solution to the problem. Any procedures will need to be tailored to local conditions and circumstances.

Examples of actions that may be appropriate include:

Environment

Access to store, car park, physical layout of store, lighting, visibility, etc.

Physical security

Panic alarms, design of tills, checkouts or counters, safe areas for staff location of cash office, cctv., security guards, etc.

Procedures

Dealing with shoplifters, till snatches, armed robberies. Cash handling, banking. Staffing levels. Complaint/refund procedures.

Reinforcement of staff responsibilities for implementing policy

Identifying who is responsible for implementation of policy at store level and above. Importance of commitment and support from line managers. Clear statement of the limited duties of general assistants.

Training

Identifying who provides training at local store level. Especially induction of new staff on basics of policy – awareness of risks, knowledge of procedures, importance of reporting, not putting themselves at risk.

As far as possible measures should be agreed at local level between the store manager and the staff/Usdaw reps. If it is not possible to agree on the appropriate action at that level or if any person is concerned that the policy is not being implemented properly at store level, they will refer the problem to the *regional manager/HR Director/other appropriate senior manager*. Usdaw reps/members will also refer the problem issues to the Usdaw Area Organiser.

(Company) and Usdaw recognise the value of sharing good practice. Where measures implemented in one store prove to be effective and may be suitable for use in other stores, the internal communication system (eg staff newsletter, intranet) will be used to pass on the good practice.

6. Support for Staff Involved in Incidents

The main purpose of this policy is to prevent violent incidents from occurring in the first place and to ensure maximum safety for staff. However we recognise that it will not be possible to completely eliminate all incidents. (Company) and Usdaw are fully committed to providing all necessary support to workers who are involved in incidents or are witnesses to incidents.

Store managers and supervisors will be trained to provide support for their staff. While recognising the importance of good customer service, we also recognise that there will be occasions when customer behaviour is unacceptable. On such occasions managers must give prompt support to the staff involved.

Procedures will be agreed at store level for dealing with identifiable triggers of abusive or violent behaviour – for example:

- Procedures for apprehending suspected shoplifters.
- Procedures for dealing with customers who insist on refunds for goods (especially where there is suspicion of fraud).
- Procedures for dealing with customers who claim that they have been short changed.
- Procedures for customers who appear to be drunk or under the influence of drugs.

Customers who are violent or seriously or frequently abusive will be excluded from the store. Although shops are open to the public they are still private property. Managers have the right to refuse access for serious or persistent offenders or for known troublemakers. A store manager who acts reasonably to exclude such people will be given full support by more senior management.

We recognise in particular that (*Company*) has a duty of care to protect staff from abuse from members of the public which is racist, sexist or based on any disability.

6.1 Taking legal action

Where appropriate, (*Company*) will take legal action to protect staff from persistent harassment or threats of violence. Store managers who believe this is necessary should contact the appropriate senior manager. When taking legal action on behalf of individual workers, the company will bear any legal costs. Legal action may include:

- Taking out an injunction against individuals who refuse to obey an exclusion order or cause other civil nuisance.
- Making a request to the police or local authority for an Anti Social Behaviour Order against named individuals.
- Supporting an application to court for an injunction under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

6.2 Immediately after the incident

Following a serious incident such as an armed robbery or physical assault, the store manager or supervisor will ensure immediate support for the staff involved.

Prompt medical attention will be arranged for anyone who is injured.

Staff involved in the incident or witnessing the incident will be given the opportunity to talk about the incident in a supportive environment. Staff will be discouraged from driving themselves home if they are still in shock. They will be given the opportunity to call relatives or friends to arrange alternative transport or transport will be arranged for them.

The manager will inform any staff who are injured about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority and explain the importance of the injured person reporting the incident personally to the police within 48 hours (even if the police have already been involved). The manager will also explain to Usdaw members the support that Usdaw's legal service can provide in pursuing a CICA claim and will give the member an opportunity to talk to their Usdaw rep or contact their local Usdaw office.

Staff and public should be kept out of the area where a serious incident has occurred and nothing should be disturbed until the police say it can be done, unless it is necessary to take action to secure people's safety.

When clearing up after an incident, special care will be needed, particularly where there is blood and sharp material such as broken glass. Staff who are expected to clean up sharp material and body fluids will be trained in the techniques to follow. These include:

- Wearing puncture resistant gloves.
- Brushing up any sharp material that poses a cut risk and disposing of it in an approved solid container.

- Cleaning up any spilled body fluids with an approved disinfectant.
- Safe removal and disposal of used gloves and other materials.

6.3 Longer term support

Once it is safe and any injured persons have received the necessary treatment there will be a joint investigation by the manager and Usdaw rep. They will investigate what happened and review the protective procedures in place. Any changes required to improve the procedures will be jointly agreed and communicated to the staff.

The store manager will make sure that all staff are advised about access to counselling services. *(The route to the counsellor should be as confidential and quick as possible – eg through a store HR manager, by contacting a central employee support telephone line, or by giving employees access to an independent telephone counselling service.)*

If legal action arises from the incident and staff are called as witnesses, *(Company)* will provide them with support.

Staff who are asked to give witness statements by the police will give the business address rather than their home address. At a later date such statements may be read out in courts and may leave staff anxious about reprisals.

Staff will be given paid time-off to attend the local Victim Support Witness Service to prepare them for the hearing and advise them on any concerns. The manager will give sympathetic support to staff involved. If anyone suffers symptoms of stress or other health difficulties they will be encouraged to visit their GP and reminded of the access to counselling. If there are any other issues such as concern for personal safety the manager will help to raise these concerns with the police or appropriate authorities.

Any member of staff who has to take time-off work following an incident either to attend court or as a result of injury or health problems will have their earnings protected. *(There may be a need to define average earnings over what period for part-time workers who work varying hours).* Any time taken off will be regarded as special leave. It will not affect entitlements under any sick pay scheme and will not result in any action under any attendance management policy. Where someone is on long-term leave as a result of post-traumatic stress disorder or other injuries, the HR manager/Occupational Health manager/other appropriate manager will keep in contact with them to see what other support may be provided.

Uzdaw will assist members in any claims with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. Members can access this support by completing a Legal Plus BL1 form available from their Usdaw rep/local Usdaw office.

The appropriate manager will work with the Usdaw rep to make sure that staff who want to return to work following a serious incident are provided with support to make sure they are rehabilitated back into appropriate work.

7. Networking with other Retailers/Police/Local Authority

(Company) and Usdaw recognise that the success of partnership on this issue relies on the effective sharing of information with each other and with other organisations.

Where there is a 'Safer Shopping Partnership' or other suitable business crime reduction partnership in operation locally, they will work together to make sure that their store is involved.

They will in any case work together to develop links with Crime Prevention Officers in the local police and with officers of the local authority involved in crime and disorder reduction and in health and safety enforcement to make sure that protection standards in their store are sufficient for local conditions.

8. Consultation, Monitoring and Reviewing

(Company) and Usdaw recognise the importance of consultation at all levels to demonstrate commitment and ensure effective involvement in the implementation of this policy. *(Company)* and Usdaw are committed to the sharing of any data, research or other information that will assist in the successful operation of this policy.

8.1 Consultation with staff and safety reps

At the local store level Usdaw safety reps will be given time to carry out their functions under the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations. They will use their powers to consult with members, inspect the workplace and investigate potential hazards to make sure that this policy is working as effectively as possible. If they identify any problems which may give rise to serious or imminent danger, they will raise the problem with the store manager straight away. If it is not possible to agree on the steps needed to protect against the danger, the matter will be referred as a matter of urgency to the appropriate level of senior management and the appropriate Usdaw official.

At the local store level the store manager and Usdaw reps will jointly monitor reports of incidents and the effectiveness of procedures. Every 3/6 months, or following a major incident, the policy will be reviewed at the store safety committee/staff briefing meeting/other appropriate local consultative structure. If the review identifies any problems or issues that cannot be dealt with at store level they will be referred to the appropriate level of senior management and the appropriate Usdaw official. The store manager will make sure that Usdaw reps/staff are kept informed of the senior management decision.

8.2 Regular joint employer/Usdaw review of policy

There will be a regular review of the overall operation of the policy by the appropriate senior management (eg HR Director, Chief Executive) and the appropriate Usdaw official (eg National Officer or Area Organiser for local agreements) at specified time intervals (eg 6 months/year). At these reviews information and data from the reports prepared by the appropriate senior manager for the main board/Chief Executive will be considered along with any other relevant information provided by either the company or Usdaw. Any changes to policies or procedures arising from the review will be communicated to all staff and Usdaw reps. *(If there is a suitable national consultative body involving lay reps such as a national forum or committee involving lay reps as well as Usdaw officials this may provide the most effective mechanism for this review).*

In addition to the regular routine reviews, either *(Company)* or senior Usdaw officials may request a review following a serious incident or any evidence of major failure in the policy.

Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*

www.usdaw.org.uk