

29 August 2019

Equalities in the workforce – Aggressive incidents

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Bal Chattha - Portfolio holder, Personnel and Business Support

Executive Summary:

At the April 23, 2019 meeting, Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report regarding equality in the Workforce.

The report covered the data required to be collated and reported in order to comply with Councils Public Sector Equality Duty, namely Equalities and Monitoring report, the Gender Pay Gap report, the Corporate Workforce Strategy (2018-20) and the Employee Survey.

Some members were concerned that there might be issues relating to aggression in the workplace along with near-miss accidents that should also be reported within the sphere of equality in terms of gender, and a subsequent report was requested.

This report aims to respond to that request by providing members with additional insight into the data we hold and the policies/procedures we have in place to support staff subject to violence and aggression at work.

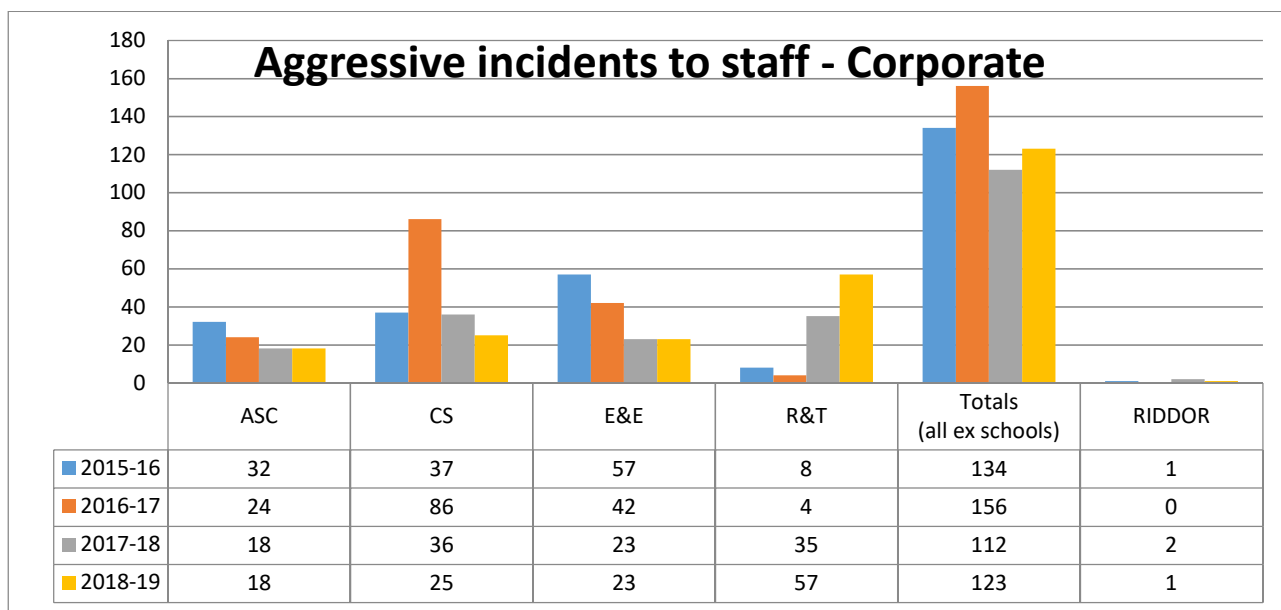
Violence and aggression (to staff)

We collect data on physical assaults, threatening behaviour and verbal abuse aimed at our staff. Physical assault tends to be reported more than the other categories; but “physical assault” encompasses a wide range of incidents from simple scratches through to more serious issues; however, the vast majority are minor incidents, many with no intent behind them.

We do not collect data on “harassment”; however, our “other” category is accompanied by a free text description field – “harassment” does not appear to be prevalent.

No employees have died because of accidents/aggressive incidents.

This data is collated below. The first set of data relates to corporate staff, the second to schools.



Breakdown by male/female per directorate

	ASC		CS		E&E		R&T		Total* (All ex schools)		Accidents (staff), of which Near Miss
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
2016-17	4	20	27	59	15	23	1	3	47	105	122, 6 near miss
2017-18	3	14	15	21	9	13	17	16	48	60	105, 17 near miss
2018-19	3	15	13	12	7	14	22	28	45	69	121, 23 near miss

*in 2016/17, four incidents were general aggressive behaviour; no sex noted

*in 2017/18, four incidents were general aggressive behaviour; no sex noted

*in 2018/19, nine incidents were general aggressive behaviour; no sex noted

Breakdown by type of aggressive behaviour

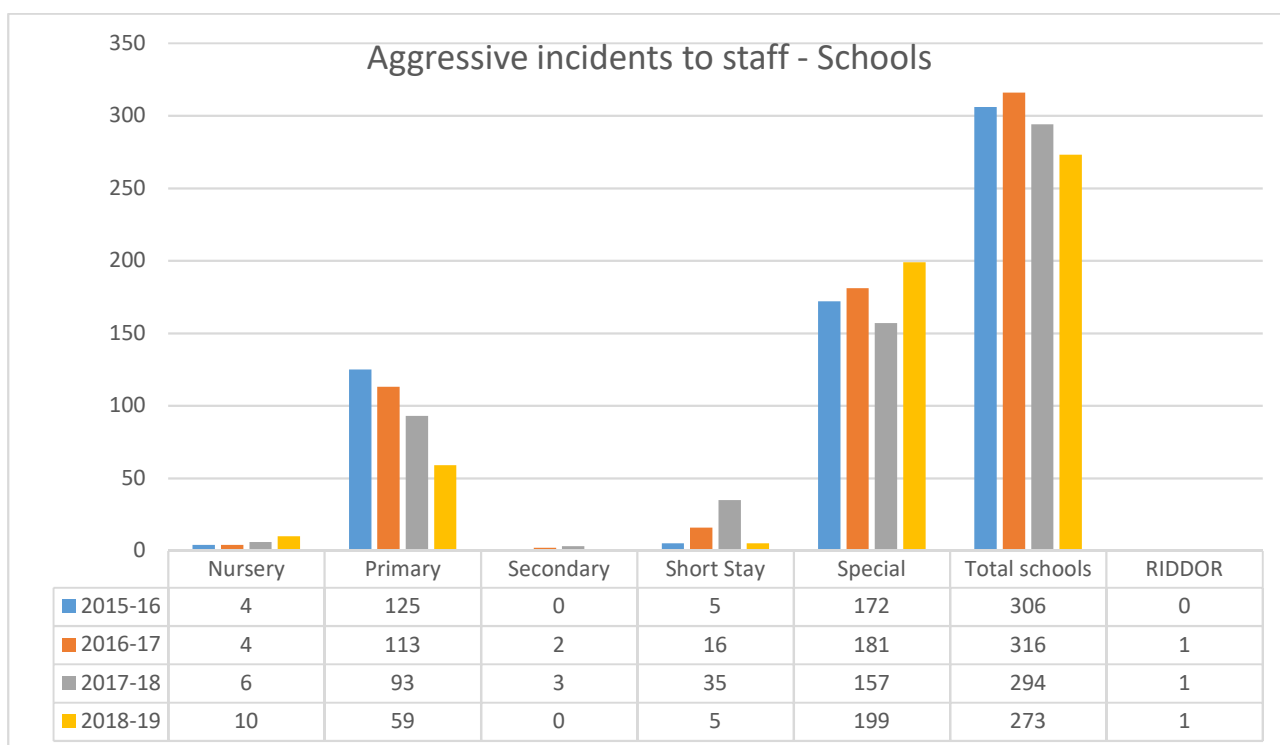
	Verbal abuse	Threatening behaviour	Physical assault	Assault resulting in injury	Other	Assault – no intent to harm
2016-17	27	16	100	48	3	10
2017-18	18	38	44	28	6	6
2018-19	37	45	27	18	9	5

NB the column “Assault resulting in injury” above is a subset of the “Physical assault” column, showing how many “assaults” led to injury (even if, as in most cases, that injury was minor).

Additionally, 4 cases of staff:staff aggression have been reported to the HR Operations team:

Type	Date	Absence as a result	Outcome
Verbal Abuse	Case Opened 14 September 2017. Completed 30 April 2018	40 days sickness with work related stress	Written warning issued for 12 months and relocation of the perpetrator
Verbal Abuse and threat of physical violence	Incident 19 March 2017 20 March 2017	Perpetrator suspended	Perpetrator resigned prior to the hearing
Verbal abuse	Case Opened 2 March 2016. Hearing 30 December 2016	None	Hearing was conducted but no sanction was issued
Verbal abuse	Case Opened 24 January 2019 22 May 2019 Hearing Scheduled	None	Hearing to be heard W/C 20.05.19

The HR Operations team has not received any staff:staff aggression complaints from schools.



Note: a small number of children displaying disruptive behaviour, for instance in special or short stay schools, can seriously affect incident numbers; consequently, figures can be volatile year on year.

Breakdown by male/female per type of school#

	Nursery		Primary		Secondary		Short Stay		Special		Total* (All ex schools)		Accidents (staff), of which Near Miss
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
2016-17	0	4	4	109	1	1	8	8	13	168	26	290	147, 2
2017-18	0	6	8	85	0	3	10	25	15	142	33	261	133, 6
2018-19	0	10	3	56	0	0	2	3	15	181	20	250	136, 4

#Academies, voluntary aided and foundation schools do not have to report incidents to us (we are not the employer); but we do get and record occasional reports from them and these are included above (e.g. in the secondary schools columns)

*in 2018/19, three incidents were general aggressive behaviour; no sex noted

Breakdown by type of aggressive behaviour

	Verbal abuse	Threatening behaviour	Physical assault	Assault resulting in injury	Other	Assault – no intent to harm
2016-17	4	3	288	216	0	21
2017-18	1	4	276	207	3	10
2018-19	1	6	239	155	11	16

NB the column “Assault resulting in injury” above is a subset of the “Physical assault” column, showing how many “assaults” led to injury (even if, as in most cases, that injury was minor).

What policies and processes do we have in place to manage these scenarios?

We have Safety Management Standards on Aggression and Violence, and Accident and Incident Reporting. Both are mirrored, in simplified form, in the school centric “School Safety Guides”

Employees have the Grievance and Dignity at Work procedure and the Whistleblowing procedure in the event that employees wish to raise matters formally. In terms of support mechanisms available managers, are encouraged to undertake one to one sessions with colleagues, the annual performance conversation has been revised to encourage managers to ask the question “How are you?” In addition to this, support can be sought from Occupational Health and/or the employee assistance programme.

How do we become alert to issues?

All accidents and aggressive incidents to staff should be reported to the health & safety team.

This message is reinforced in guidance documents, on our intranet sites, and at appropriate training opportunities and meetings.

The HR Operations Team can be made aware of such issues through the submission of a complaint from a colleague, a trade union member, a line manager and/or another colleague who may have witnessed an incident

How do we alert others to potential issues e.g. difficult/abusive people in the community?

Whilst in theory we can share data about difficult/abusive customers; in practice, this is fraught with difficulties – GDPR; data sharing, review and retention protocols; access control. In addition, we do not have one customer management system, so communication flows and data ownership could cause additional difficulties and would not guarantee that an isolated incident might still occur.

How do we monitor and report what is happening?

Regular reports are made to our health & safety committees and Corporate Health & Safety Board (which in turn reports to CMT).

All cases are recorded, monitored and updated by the HR Operations Team. These are then shared with the Directorates for information.

What have been our key actions to address/reduce such incidents?

De-escalation and Team Teach training is available to schools, and corporate staff are able to attend Personal Safety and Lone Working training. Managers/teams are expected to have appropriate risk assessments in place, as well as lone working protocols to help reduce the instances of aggression and protect staff. We have recently refreshed our "Violence" notices and new versions will shortly be placed in all our reception areas.

Many key actions are taken at a local level, and these are discussed during audits or at appropriate health & safety forums.

The HR Operations Team may provide interventions such as mediation and coaching to support individuals and/or teams as appropriate.

Corporately, the Behavioural Framework has been implemented and shared within the organisation, which support the corporate PLATE values. Workshops on resilience have been delivered previously by Business Partners and now by our Learning & Development team. Individuals are encouraged to take part in 360-degree appraisal to help them reflect and understand the need to be self-aware.

What have been some key successes/recognition from managers/employees for acting?

This information is not held centrally; however, directorate health & safety committees are encouraged to share good practice and keep the Corporate Health & Safety Board updated about any key initiatives within their areas.

Reason for scrutiny:

Requested by committee.

Recommendations:

That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the report be noted.

Background papers:

N/A

Resource and legal considerations:

As a public body, the Council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act, 2010.

Specifically, the Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to provide,

- Information showing that it has complied with the general duty
- Evidence of equality analysis undertaken
- Equality objectives

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

Internal focus – I2 A Resilient Council

Citizen impact:

There is no direct citizen impact.

Environmental impact:

There is no direct environmental impact.

Performance management:


The incidence and impact of aggression and near-miss accidents are monitored via health & safety committees as detailed above.

Consultation:

N/A

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