



Diagnosing Your Workplace for Symptoms of Violence

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as: Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.



The modern world can be a stressful place.

A variety of situations and incidents (some long-standing, some new) can either cause or exacerbate that stress.

Relationship problems...mounting debt...reduced work hours...ill health...trauma caused by loss...the strain generated by the disruption to daily life due to Coronavirus.

For some, those stresses can lead to a breaking point and, unfortunately, sometimes that breaking point occurs in the workplace.

Different organisations may have different definitions, but The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as...

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Broadly speaking the scope of workplace violence tends to encompass the following actions:

- Homicide
- Use of a weapon or a threat to do so
- Assault
- Displays of violence, either physical (throwing furniture, punching a wall) or vocal (screaming, shouting, profanity, vulgarity.)
- Threats of any kind, whether in person, via phone, mail, email or social media
- Damage to property
- Intimidation and scare tactics
- Harassment



These are the ways workplace violence often manifests itself and they tend to occur within one of four scenarios:

- A customer is violent toward an employee
- An employee is violent toward a fellow employee
- A friend or partner is violent toward an employee (they confront them in the workplace)
- A stranger is violent toward an employee

Not all acts of workplace violence occur in plain sight, so how can you check for symptoms of someone being a victim?



Beyond the obvious physical signs (bruising, cuts, bumps, etc.) that are often put down to “accidents” or “falls”, there are other signs to look for:

- Drop in quality of work
- Clearly upset after personal phone calls
- Extremes of emotions and mood swings
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Depression
- Lack of focus
- Leaving early, arriving late, absenteeism

How can you check for symptoms of someone being a potential perpetrator of violence in your workplace?



Warning signs that a violent outburst may be imminent can sometimes foreshadowed by:

- Veiled or open threats
- Quick to offer criticism, overly sensitive about receiving it
- Mood swings
- Lack of focus
- Absenteeism
- Drop in work quality and productivity
- Boasting that they own various weapons
- Depression
- Drop in standards of personal hygiene and appearance



In some cases, it's actually possible to have a worksite safety analysis done by the police or fire department and even HSE. This may not prevent incidents of violence but it can identify ways to react and respond if an incident does occur.

Wherever you work and whatever your role (manager, supervisor, etc.) it is generally possible to be aware of the symptoms, assess the risk of violence in your workplace and take steps to avoid or reduce it.



If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others — or you know someone having those thoughts — seek help right away.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call **999** — or go to the closest A&E (accident and emergency).

To reach a trained crisis counsellor, call Samaritans at **116 123**.

You may also text "**Shout**" to **85258** or chat at **www.samaritans.org**. The lifeline provides 24/7 free and confidential support.*



Critical support when you need it

Visit optumeap.com/criticalsupportcenter for additional critical support resources and information.



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*The Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Welsh and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in over 250 additional languages for people who call 116 123.

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