

Cost of violence against NHS staff

A report summarising the economic cost to the NHS of violence against staff.

2007/2008

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 The NHS is the largest employer in Europe with approximately 1.3 million employees. NHS employees have the right to expect a safe and secure environment in which to work, and NHS employers have a legal and ethical responsibility to ensure their employees are protected from violence and abuse at all times in the course of their duties.

1.2 The Department of Health takes violence against NHS employees seriously and has made reducing levels of violence in the NHS a priority for all NHS employers. Furthermore, the Department of Health either alone or in conjunction with the NHS Security Management Service (NHS SMS, which was established in April 2003) have embarked on a series of initiatives designed to improve the management of health and safety issues with a view to reducing violence within the NHS. Such initiatives include:

- **1998/1999 Survey**

The NHS Executive carried out a survey to assess the levels of reported violence, accidents and sickness absence in the NHS.

- **1999/2000 NHS Zero Tolerance Zone campaign**

This campaign, launched by the Department of Health, was aimed at increasing awareness amongst NHS staff of the need to report incidents of violence or abuse, assuring staff that the issues would be tackled and informing the public that violence against NHS staff is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

- **1999/2000 Working Together targets**

In conjunction with the Zero Tolerance Zone campaign, this scheme required NHS employers to have systems in place for recording incidents of violence and abuse and set targets for reducing violence and aggression.

- **2000/2001 Improving Working Lives initiative**

This initiative ensured that all acute, mental health and ambulance trusts put into practice the targets set out as part of the Working Together scheme.

- **2003/2004 Secretary of State for Health Directions to NHS Health Bodies**

Secretary of State for Health *Directions to NHS Bodies on Measures to Deal with Violence Against NHS Staff* issued November 2003. Secretary of State for Health *Directions to NHS Bodies on Security Management Measures* issued March 2004.

- **2003/2004 Local Security Management Services**

Secretary of State for Health *Directions to NHS Bodies on Security Management Measures* issued March 2004 placed requirements on NHS health bodies to nominate an accredited person to perform the role of Local Security Management Specialist (LSMS). LSMSs are responsible for managing the security of NHS staff, estates, property and assets at a local level.

- **2004/2005 Conflict Resolution Training**

This training programme was initially rolled out to frontline NHS staff who face daily risks to their personal safety during the course of their duties. It has now been made available to all NHS employees. The training focuses on the prevention and management of violence and includes physical and non-physical intervention techniques.

- **2006/2007 Pubwatch campaign**

This campaign, operated in conjunction with local licensees, aimed to raise local awareness of the violence and aggression directed at ambulance staff and to reinforce the message that it will not be tolerated. The initiative had a clear remit, whereby if any member of the Ambulance Service is assaulted or verbally abused whilst attempting to carry out their duties then an instant banning order can be imposed which would ban offenders from city centre establishments.

- **2006/2009 Your Choice of Treatment campaign**

This award-winning campaign was first piloted in 2006 to widespread support from NHS staff, the police, local authorities and the general public. The campaign message was clear, that if you abuse NHS staff you will have to face the unpleasant consequences of prosecution and a possible prison sentence. The campaign received widespread media coverage and evaluation of the scheme showed a significant increase in the awareness of NHS anti-violence work.

- **2008/2009 Criminal Justice and Immigration Act powers**

The Criminal Justice and Immigration Act (CJIA) 2008 creates a new criminal offence of causing a nuisance or disturbance on NHS hospital premises and refusing to leave - and a new power for authorised NHS staff to forcibly remove a person suspected of committing this offence. The initiative also includes training on the Act delivered by NHS SMS, which makes clear the legal rights of an individual being forcibly removed as well as those of the staff involved.

- **2009/2010 Lone worker services**

This initiative sees the provision of lone worker services to NHS employees who work directly with patients (and their families or associates) who have a history of violence, alcohol or drug abuse, or whose clinical conditions may increase the risk to the employee's personal safety.

2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- 2.1 This summary report presents the results of an exercise aimed at measuring the costs incurred by the NHS as a result of violent physical assaults against NHS staff¹. A random sample of physical assault reports made between July and August 2008 were reviewed to determine the direct and indirect costs incurred by the health body as a result of the incident. Extrapolations were made against the total number of physical assault reports between April 2007 and March 2008 using the average costs identified for 513 physical assault incidents reviewed in this exercise.
- 2.2 The indications of this exercise suggest that physical violence against NHS employees cost the NHS **£60.5 million** during 2007/08. This figure comprises several components, which can be illustrated in the subsequent table:

	Cost
Physical assault incidents	£26,095,203
Litigation and damages	£1,807,019
Conflict Resolution Training	£2,612,443
Staff quitting the NHS ²	£29,740,036
Anti-violence policing	£299,066
TOTAL	£60,553,767

- 2.3 Analysis of the incidents in the sample suggests that physical violence against NHS employees cost the NHS £26.1 million during 2007/08 (see Annex 1 for details of the various factors included in the analysis). ‘Category A’ assaults, which are by law reportable under

¹ The full report is available from Risk@cfsms.gsi.gov.uk.

² Research into workplace safety carried out by MORI on behalf of the NHS SMS revealed that 2% of NHS staff who had been subjected to violent assaults left the NHS as a result. This report can be accessed at:

RIDDOR³, with an average cost of £6,475 per incident, came at greater cost to the NHS than 'category B' assaults, which cost the NHS £62.94 on average per incident (see Annex 2 for definition of 'category A' and 'category B' physical assaults).

- 2.4 If the costs of litigation and damages paid out by the NHS Litigation Authority relating to assault claims are included in the analysis, the overall cost increases to £27.9 million. If the total amount spent on the Conflict Resolution Training programme is included, the overall cost increases to £30.5 million. If the costs associated with staff quitting the NHS (as a direct response to assault incidents) is included, the overall cost increases further to £60.2 million. Finally, if the cost incurred by Trusts providing an anti-violence police presence in Accident and Emergency Units is added, the overall cost increases further to **£60.5 million**.
- 2.5 In 2003 the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report⁴ which estimated that work-related health and safety risk incidents, including incidents caused by exposure to physical and non-physical violence and aggression, cost the NHS £173 million per year. In a subsequent report⁵, the NAO estimated that 40% of this cost (£69 million) is attributable to physical and non-physical violence and aggression.

³ The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR), place a legal duty on employers to report work-related deaths, major injuries or over-three-day injuries, work related diseases, and dangerous occurrences (near miss accidents).

⁴ *A Safer Place to Work: Improving the Management of Health and Safety Risks to Staff in NHS Trusts*, published by NAO, April 2003 (fieldwork carried out June – October 2002).

⁵ *A Safer Place to Work: Protecting NHS Hospital and Ambulance Staff from Violence and Aggression*, published by NAO, March 2003.