

Guidance for local authorities  
and educational settings

# **Risk Assessments for Violent, Aggressive and Dangerous Behaviour**

*“[E]veryone including visitors, are to be safe and protected from dangerous or violent incidents.”*

- All quotes are taken from the Scottish Government’s *Schools – violent, aggressive and dangerous behaviour: risk assessment guidance*.<sup>1</sup>

NASUWT has longstanding policies and guidance for members around risk assessments in schools:

[Risk Assessment of Violent and Abusive Behaviour](#)

This is, however, the first time the Scottish Government has sought to provide clarity to local authorities and educational settings on appropriately using risk assessment processes to mitigate or minimise violent, aggressive and dangerous behaviours exhibited by children and young people at school. This guidance note summarises the advice set out by the Scottish Government, but is not intended to substitute the detail set out within the Scottish Government document, nor the wealth of information provided on the NASUWT website at the link above.

## WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

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

This can include physical attacks and verbal abuse, either face to face, online or via telephone.

## KEY MESSAGES

*“Risk and health and safety assessments should be carried out to determine any potential concerns arising from the child or young person’s behaviour and should identify any steps deemed necessary to support the child or young person in preventing harm to themselves or others. The risk and health and safety assessments should be informed by the information gathered using the National Practice Model (in the context of Getting it Right for Every Child) and should be shared with the child or young person, their parents, and all staff who are involved with the child or young person.”*

- Risk assessment processes concerning a particular child’s behaviour are not required, or appropriate, in all circumstances. They should only be applied in situations where there is a foreseeable risk of harm occurring or a pattern of behaviour that causes, or has the potential to cause, harm to self or others.
- Risk assessments may cover the risks resulting from the child’s behaviour to both themselves and anybody else.
- Risk assessment processes should always be considered in the context of the wider assessment of a child’s needs, support planning processes, and staged intervention.
- All local authorities are required to have arrangements in place for their educational settings to support health and safety risk assessments, as well as environmental audits.
- The local authority is required to record all work-related injuries and report certain incidences under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (2013) (RIDDOR); therefore, the local authority must ensure that all educational settings have a suitable recording and reporting procedure.
- The local authority is to make and give effect to such arrangements as are appropriate for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures. Such arrangements are required to be recorded.
- Local authorities are required to provide employees with comprehensible and relevant information, as well as adequate health and safety training.
- When undertaking risk assessments, the relevant regulatory frameworks and the educational settings policies should be considered, and all relevant stakeholders including relevant employees, parents and trade union representatives should be liaised with where appropriate.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/risk-assessment-guidance-violent-aggressive-dangerous-behaviour-local-authorities-educational-settings/>

- Individuals or groups who may be especially vulnerable to specific risks should be identified by the employer and, if appropriate, highlighted to educational settings and employees.
- When a child with a history of behaviour that could cause harm transfers between educational settings, the settings involved should liaise to ensure that relevant educational records are shared. A new risk assessment should then be completed for the new setting.
- Anyone who feels risk assessments are inadequate, or inappropriate, should raise this directly with their SLT or local authority and potentially request a review of the processes.
- There should be processes in place to support anyone affected by violence. This should include appropriate interventions such as post-incident support, victim support or embedded processes to address stress and mental health at work.

## RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

Effective risk assessment involves a step-by-step process:

- Identify risk. What could cause harm or injury? What kind of behaviour?
- Assess the level of risk. Who could be harmed? Where could the risk occur?
- Control or mitigate the risk. What are the planned actions to reduce risk?
- Record the assessment and planned actions.
- Review the assessment and plan.

After a risk assessment has been completed, a risk assessment plan should be developed to manage the risk and keep everyone safe.

The plan should be:

- developed in collaboration with employees (particularly those who know the child best);
- shared and easy to administer, evaluate, review and update;
- dynamic – reviewed often to meet changing needs; and
- proportionate – not too bureaucratic.

### **Risk is likely to increase, or escalate, if there is no plan in place.**

Factors included in risk assessment plans will vary between local authorities. However, they will generally include:

- **direct mitigations to reduce risk, including environmental modifications:** modifications to the physical/social environment such as: creating a quiet space for the child to self-regulate; reducing sensory stimuli; providing behaviour support; and implementing practical actions or approaches that support the child, such as positive reinforcement, visual timetables, or social stories;
- **intervention strategies:** detailed support plans around wellbeing or behaviour; for example, calming or de-escalation techniques known to work, modified routines, sensory breaks, or additional supervision during high-risk times.

*“There may be instances where a local authority/educational setting cannot completely avoid or sufficiently reduce the risk to an acceptable level with the mitigations/resources available at that time. In these circumstances alternatives should be considered through a continuum of staged intervention and the Child’s Plan. The child, who is at risk or whose behaviour is causing a risk to others, may need to temporarily be relocated to a setting or learning environment where the risk can be reduced or avoided whilst also maintaining their right to education.”*

## **RECORDING AND MONITORING**

Each local authority will have a range of systems in place to ensure appropriate recording and reporting is undertaken at both educational setting and local authority levels:

- pupil to pupil recording;
- pupil to employee recording; and
- incidences involving physical intervention.

The information from these recording mechanisms should be monitored at:

- individual child level – to inform risk assessments creation and review;
- educational setting level – to inform employee support and/or professional learning; and
- local authority level – to inform support needs and improvement priorities.

Risk assessments are 'living documents' and are to be updated and reviewed if there are new incidents and/or new relevant information that impact the current assessment of risk. Risk assessments are to be regularly reviewed to ensure mitigations are effective, appropriate and proportionate to the level of risk.

Reps and schools can contact their local secretary, NEM or Scotland Centre to support local engagement with the new risk assessment guidance: [scotland@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:scotland@mail.nasuwt.org.uk)