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An tÚdarás Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta
Health and Safety Authority

Introduction to Bullying in the Workplace



Declan Foster
HSA Inspector- Behavioural Health and Safety Team
28 May 2026

What is Bullying in the Workplace?

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"Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work." Code of practice pg 6).

Repeated	**Inappropriate behaviour**	**At workplace or in course of employment**	**Undermines dignity at work**



One-off incidents ≠ bullying

Illustrative examples (non-exhaustive):

Excessive monitoring	**Manipulation of reputation**
Targeting	**Isolation / exclusion**

Bullying in the Workplace:
A Health and Safety Hazard

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Bullying in the Workplace is a psychosocial hazard that can harm safety and health.

Risks

Work-related stress

Sleep problems and fatigue

Reduced concentration

Personal relationship strain

Organisational Impact

Reputational damage

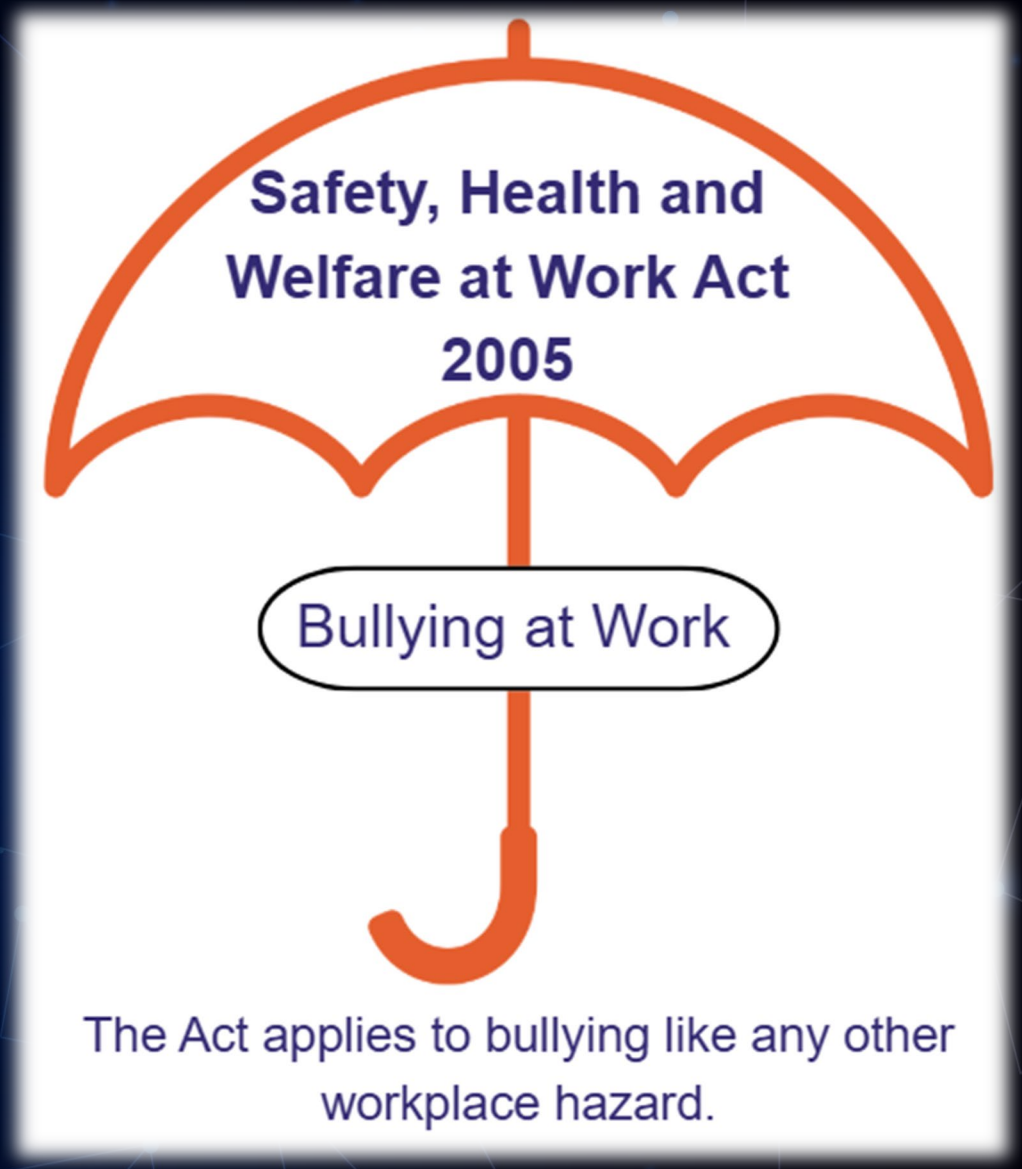
Increased sickness absence

Lower productivity and retention

Estimated annual productivity loss of €239 million to Irish Economy (Cullinan et al., 2020).

Bullying and Health and Safety Law

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- Psychosocial inspections include bullying.

Examples from legislation

Employers' duties (so far as reasonably practicable):

- Manage and organise work to prevent improper conduct or behaviour that may put safety, health or welfare at risk.
- Identify hazards, assess risks and implement necessary control measures.

Employee duties:

- Not engage in improper conduct or other behaviour that is likely to endanger his or her own safety, health and welfare at work or that of any other person.

Bullying Risk Assessment - Sample

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Step 1: Identify Hazards	**Step 2:** Assessing the Risks			**Step 3:** Additional Control Measures (Further actions needed)		
What are the Hazards and Risks?	**Who is at Risk?**	**Current Controls** (What are you already doing?)	**Level of Risk?** (Your estimate of the remaining risk level, based on the current controls. For example, High, Medium, or Low)	**Additional Controls Needed** (Further action to reduce the remaining risk level to as low as possible)	**Action by Whom and When?**	**Date Complete**
Bullying in the workplace This can lead to: • stress, • associated physical and/or mental ill health, • low morale, • reduced performance, • lower productivity, • absenteeism, and • reputational damage.	Employees	**Workplace Culture and Commitment** The employer and senior management are committed to fostering a culture that does not tolerate bullying. **Policies and Procedures** An anti-bullying/dignity at work policy is in place and aligned with the HSA Code of Practice. Our anti-bullying policy will be reviewed annually. It includes: ○ endorsement and commitment from senior management ○ bullying definition and examples of bullying behaviour, ○ roles and responsibilities for managers, supervisors and employees, and ○ informal and formal processes, investigation, outcomes and appeals processes. **Training, information and instruction** All employees are trained during induction and through refresher training on recognising and preventing workplace bullying. **Communication** Information on bullying identification, prevention and management is provided to staff via noticeboards and toolbox talks. All employees are aware of supports available, such as Occupational Health. **Supports** A Contact Person has been appointed and trained to provide advice and support. Employee's have access to Occupational Health supports.	Medium	**Training** Managers and supervisors are to receive additional training to support the management of bullying complaints. **Supports** A business case to be developed for an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).	Joe Bloggs by June 2026. Pat Sample by Sept. 2026.	

Resources and References

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Resources

- HSA Bullying at Work webpages
- Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work
- Bullying Risk Assessment Sample

References

- Cullinan, J., Hodgins, M., Hogan, V. and Pursell, L. (2020) 'The value of lost productivity from workplace bullying in Ireland', Occupational Medicine, 70(4), pp. 251–258.


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Go raibh maith agaibh
Thank you

Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council

Health and Safety Authority Webinar

Thursday, 28th May 2026

Head of Safety & Wellbeing
Eddie Ronayne

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

Introduction

Cork County Council has approx. 2,731 staff

who are spread across multiple locations in the county (this figure changes regularly due to recruitment, retirement, seasonal appointments, etc.) . This is broken down into 963 outdoor staff, 1,539 indoor staff (professional, technical, administrative) and 229 Retained Firefighters.

With this number of staff it is inevitable that there will be interpersonal difficulties.

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- Section 8 Duty of the Employer;
  - Manage and conduct work activities in such a way so as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, any improper conduct or behaviour.
- Health and Safety Authority & Workplace Relations Commission Code of Practice
  - Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

- It is a workplace hazard and so needs to be treated the same as any other hazard from a risk management point of view.

- Possible Impact;

  - Mental health of employee
  - Physical health of employee
  - General wellbeing of the employee
  - Impact on the team
  - Impact on productivity
  - Costs

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

There is a difference between a line manager being assertive in managing employees, implementing procedures, etc and what would constitute inappropriate behaviour/bullying.

Therefore there must be clear definitions, training, communication and procedures so that all employees understand the difference.

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

Our Control Measures;

- Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Public Sector Code of Conduct for Employees
- Risk Assessment for Dignity at Work
- Covered in Staff Handbook
- Covered in Employee Safety Handbook

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

Our Control Measures;

- Covered during Induction
- Dignity at Work Video, launched, on staff hub and training for employees
- Dignity at Work Designated Contacts (Trained and posted on staff hub)
- HRM Staff Briefing sessions
- Employee Assistance Programme (24/7)

Dignity at Work Video Screenshot



Dignity at Work Video Screenshot



Good Behaviour is Contagious.

Communicate Calmly and Early.

Help and advice is available.

Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

Our Control Measures;

- Policy and Procedure for the Management of Work Related Stress
- HSA Work Positive Survey Toolkit
- Return to Work meetings
- Guidance for line managers to review stress related absences

Inappropriate Behaviour in the Workplace

Ideally should be dealt with in a timely manner locally by the relevant line manager.

Early intervention is essential to avoid going formal.

Resolution;

- Informally
- Mediation
- Formally
- Appeal Process

- Essential to have on going communication with both parties through the process

- Principles of Natural Justice and Due Process apply

Thank you
for your time and attention

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Violence and Aggression – Guidance & Resources for employers



Max Parry

Inspector – Behavioural Health and Safety Team

28th May 2026

What is work-related violence & aggression?

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"Work-related violence and aggression can be defined as any incident where staff are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, wellbeing or health"

Enforcement

- Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005

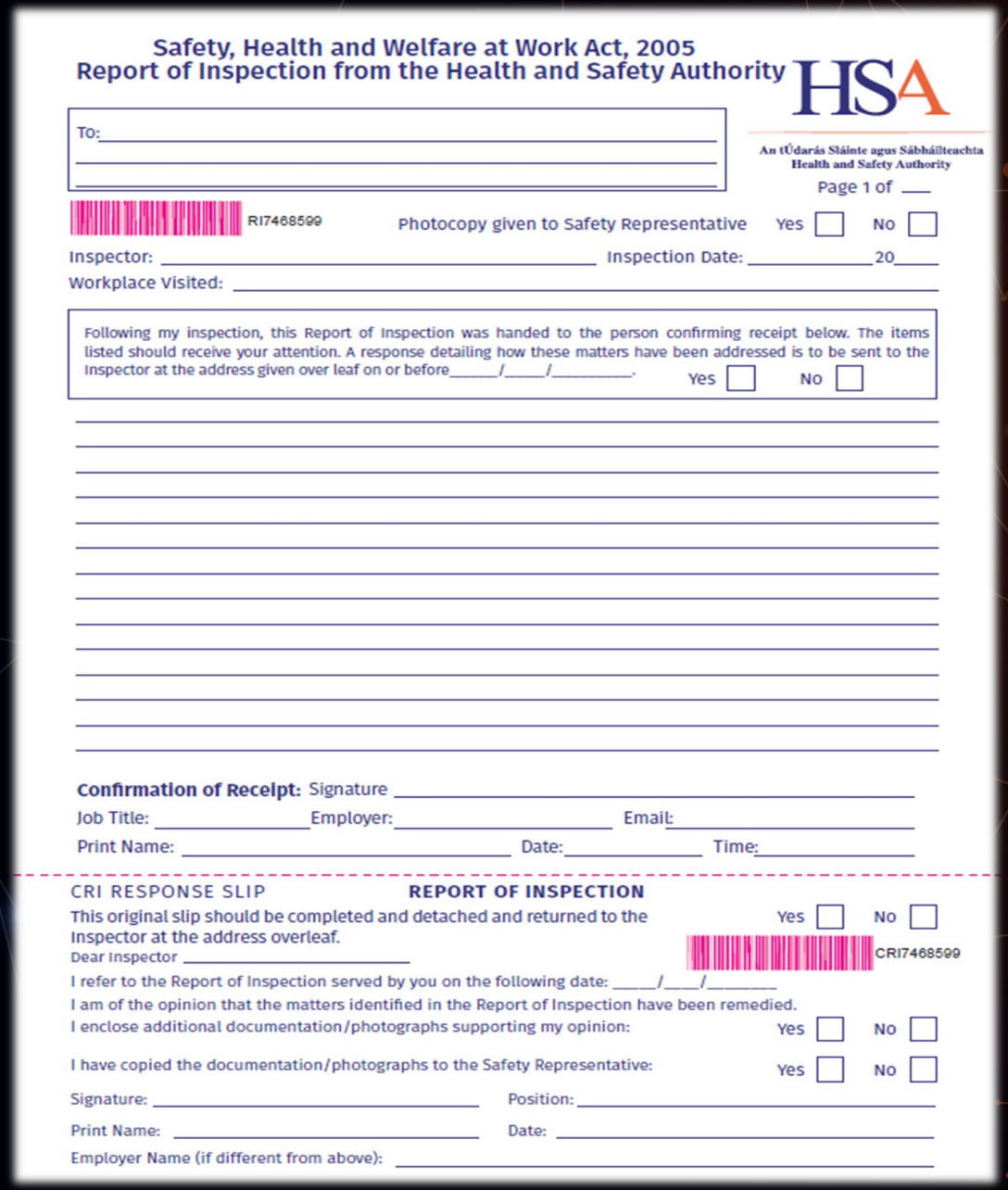
- Section 19 (Risk Assessment)

- Section 20 (Safety Statement)

- Section 10 (Training, information and instruction)

- Section 8 (2)(k) Reporting Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences

- Section 64 (Powers of inspectors)



Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005
Report of Inspection from the Health and Safety Authority

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To: _____

Page 1 of ___

RI7468599

Photocopy given to Safety Representative Yes ☐ No ☐

Inspector: _____ Inspection Date: _____ 20____

Workplace Visited: _____

Following my inspection, this Report of Inspection was handed to the person confirming receipt below. The items listed should receive your attention. A response detailing how these matters have been addressed is to be sent to the Inspector at the address given over leaf on or before____/____/_____. Yes ☐ No ☐

Confirmation of Receipt: Signature _____

Job Title: _____ Employer: _____ Email: _____

Print Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

CRI RESPONSE SLIP **REPORT OF INSPECTION**

This original slip should be completed and detached and returned to the Inspector at the address overleaf. Yes ☐ No ☐

CRI7468599

Dear Inspector _____

I refer to the Report of Inspection served by you on the following date: ____/____/_____

I am of the opinion that the matters identified in the Report of Inspection have been remedied.

I enclose additional documentation/photographs supporting my opinion: Yes ☐ No ☐

I have copied the documentation/photographs to the Safety Representative: Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature: _____ Position: _____

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Employer Name (if different from above): _____

Sample Risk Assessment

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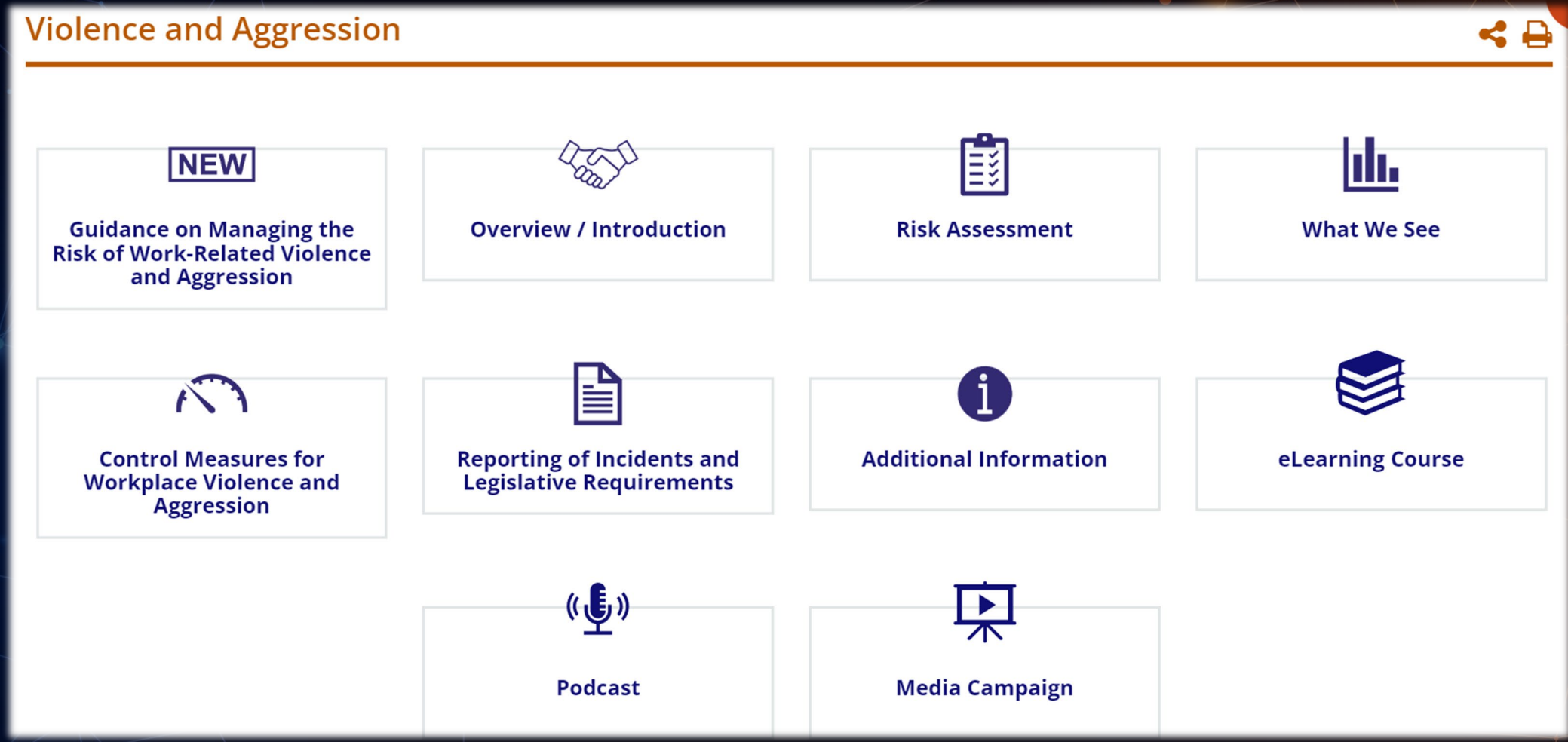
Sample risk assessment – work-related violence and aggression

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Step 1: Identify hazards	Step 2: Assessing the risks			Step 3: Additional control measures (further actions needed)		
What are the hazards?	**Who is at risk?**	**Current controls** (What are you already doing?)	**Level of risk?** (Your estimate of the remaining risk level, based on the current controls. For example, High, Medium, Low)	**Additional Controls Needed** (Further action to reduce the remaining risk level to be as low as possible)	**Action by whom and by when?**	**Date completed**
Work-related violence and aggression	All customer-facing employees (management, supervisors, employees, or security)	• CCTV is installed so that staff have visibility of all high-risk areas. Signage is also in place informing customers that CCTV is in operation. • External high-risk areas around cash points, entrances and exits are well lit to deter thieves or violent individuals. • All employees have unrestricted visibility across the store. • A communication system is in place for employees to keep in contact, and the use of code words is practised to inform colleagues of potential violent or aggressive customers or thieves. • Cash management policy is in place for the safe handling of cash. • Procedures are in place for the storage of personal belongings that could be attractive to thieves. • Procedures are in place for the storage and reduction of availability of potential missiles for aggressive customers. • Physical barriers between staff and customers are in place.	Low/Medium/High	Senior management are actively involved in the communication and promotion of a positive health and safety culture. Specific training at a managerial level is provided to managers and supervisors on how to prevent and manage aggression and violence.	Included in senior management comms by end of XX/XX/202X. Arranged by _____.	

Resources available

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Thank you

T: 0818 289 389

E: contactus@hsa.ie

W: www.hsa.ie

Circle K

Risk Assessments for Psychosocial Hazards and Human Factors: From Paper to Practice

Circle K – Who We Are

Circle K Ireland is part of the Canadian group Alimentation Couche Tard. The group employs over 130,000 employees globally and has 16,700 stores in over 20 countries worldwide.

Circle K Ireland employs over 2,300 employees in 175 Retail Service Stations, the Support Office and Terminal Operations.

Circle K Ireland also operates stand-alone retail units in Dublin City Centre.

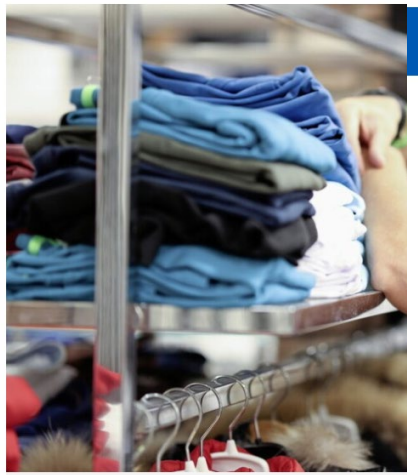






Background – Aggression Towards Employees

Violence against UK shop-workers hits peak of 850 instances a



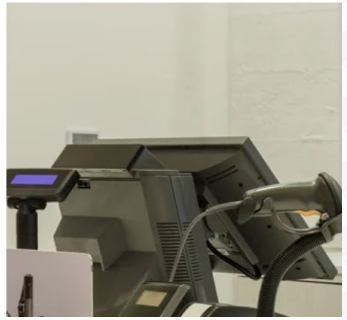
Last year 74 per cent of shop workers in the UK experienced verbal abuse cent were assaulted

RTÉ NEWS SPORT ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS LIFESTYLE CULTURE PLAYER TV RADIO

NEWS ▸ BUSINESS ▸ Agribusiness Focus on Inflation Business of Climate Work Brexit Watch and Listen Analysis

83% of retail workers experiencing harassment - survey

Updated / Wednesday, 25 Jan 2023 07:50



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'We've been spat at more than once' - R abused by customers

Jack Quann

18.18 25 JAN 2023

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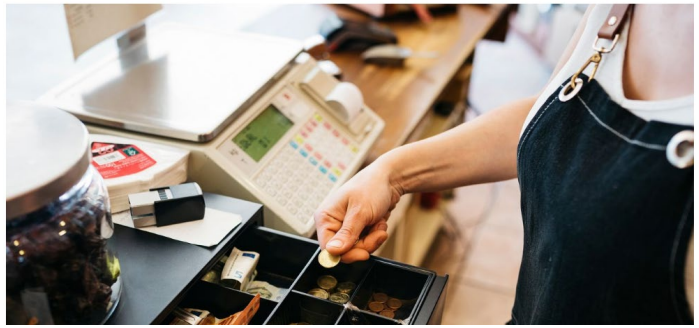
Over 80% of retail workers in Ireland have experienced harassment from customers.

That's according to research from Circle K, which found half of Irish retail

SUNDAY WORLD NEWS CRIME SPORT SHOWBIZ LIFESTYLE VIDEOS PO

SHOP OF HORROR | Over half of Irish retail workers have witnessed a colleague being assaulted

The shocking statistics show verbal and physical abuse by customers is a major issue for retail staff across the country.



Initiatives – Aggression Towards Employees

Circle K launched its first initiative in FY 2022/2023

Employee Survey (Circle K and Retail Workers)

- 83% of Irish retail workers have experienced some form of abuse from customers
- 69% of Circle K retail employees report that they have seen colleagues experience inappropriate behaviour, such as physical assault and verbal abuse while dealing with customers
- 34% of Circle K retail employees say they have experienced harassment based on race




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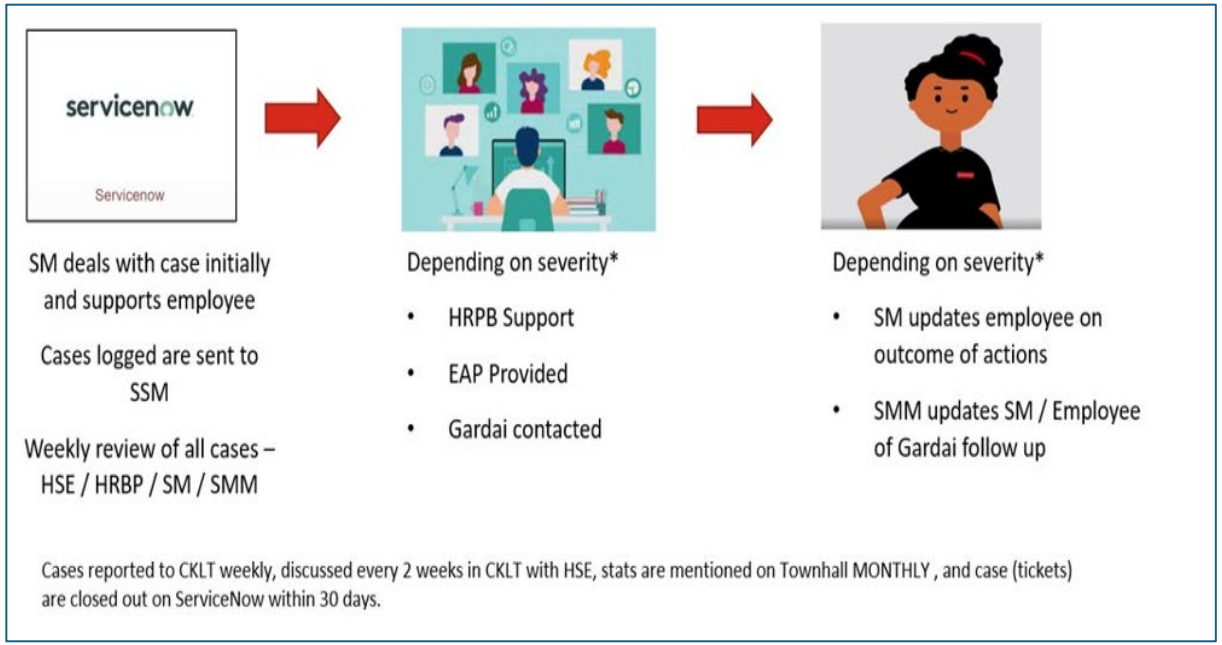
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Updated / Wednesday, 25 Jan 2023 07:50

Initiatives – Aggression Towards Employees

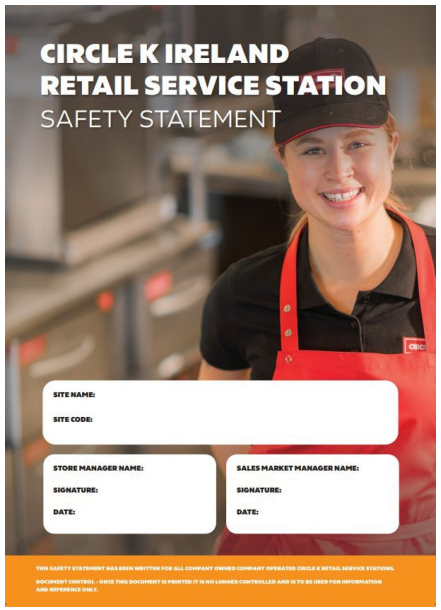
Reporting – Data based interventions



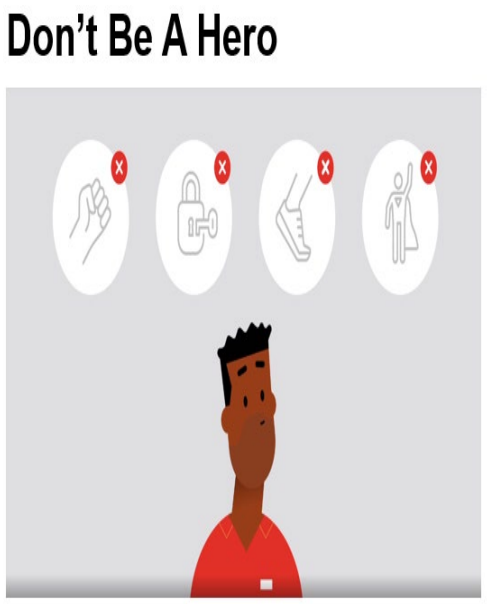


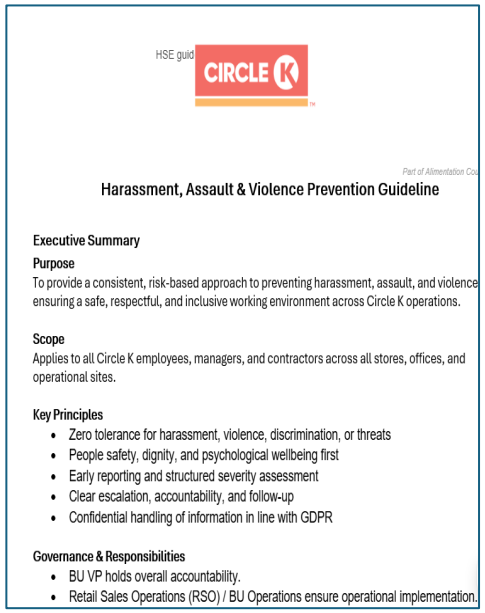
Initiatives – Aggression Towards Employees

Safety Statement, Risk Assessment, Training and SOPs/Policies








HSE guid

Harassment, Assault & Violence Prevention Guideline

Executive Summary

Purpose

To provide a consistent, risk-based approach to preventing harassment, assault, and violence ensuring a safe, respectful, and inclusive working environment across Circle K operations.

Scope

Applies to all Circle K employees, managers, and contractors across all stores, offices, and operational sites.

Key Principles

- Zero tolerance for harassment, violence, discrimination, or threats
- People safety, dignity, and psychological wellbeing first
- Early reporting and structured severity assessment
- Clear escalation, accountability, and follow-up
- Confidential handling of information in line with GDPR

Governance & Responsibilities

- BU VP holds overall accountability.
- Retail Sales Operations (RSO) / BU Operations ensure operational implementation.

Initiatives – Aggression Towards Employees

Internal Communications





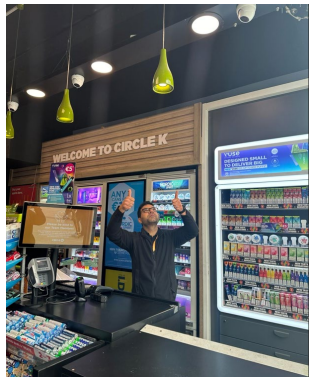




Initiatives – Aggression Towards Employees

Technological Solutions







Thank you

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Human Factors in Risk Assessment



Colleen Butler, PhD., C.ErgHF MCIEHF
Human Factors Specialist/Inspector

28 May 2026

Performance Influencing Factors

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Individual Factors

- Competence
- Illness/health
- Fatigue
- Physical strength
- Sensory capability



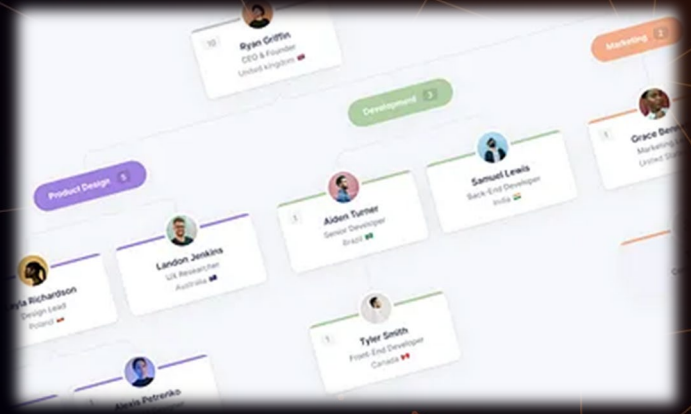
Job Factors

- Equipment design
- Workload
- Procedures
- Shift handover
- Computer interface



Organisational Factors

- Health & safety culture
- Accident investigation
- Communication
- Competence management system



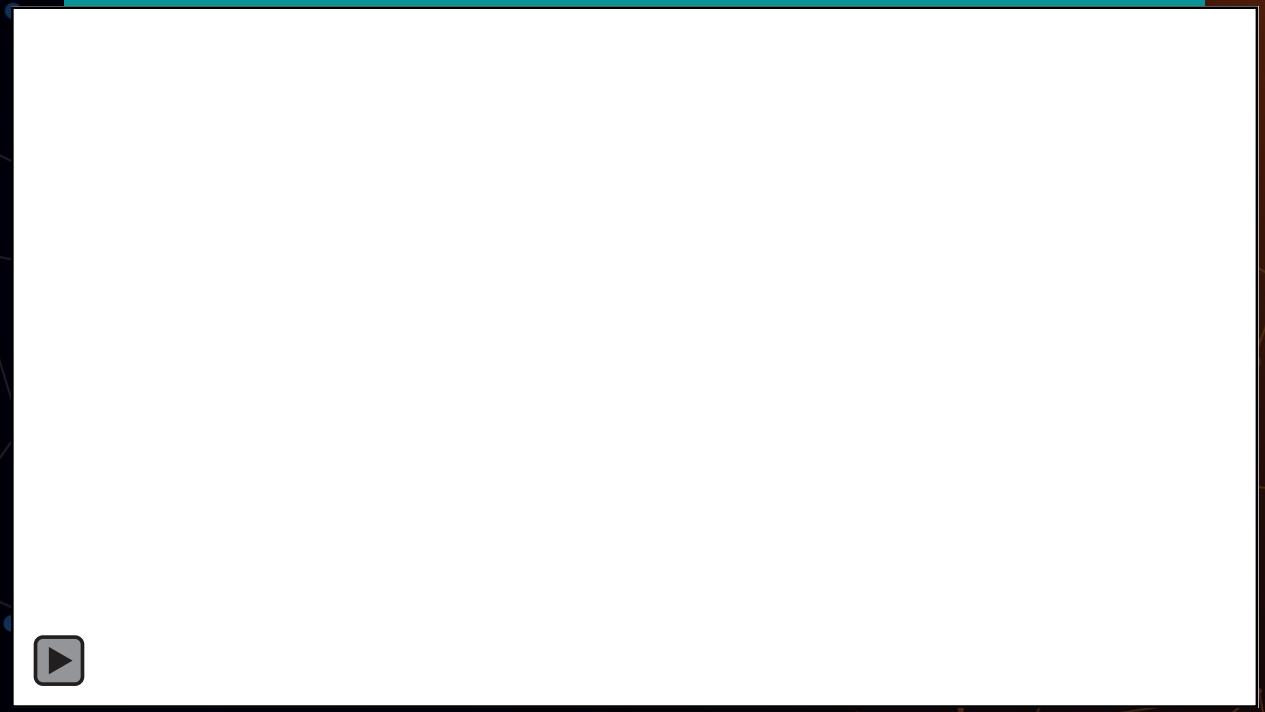
Message

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Bringing Human Factors thinking into your risk assessment enables:

- Design systems of work to optimise performance
- Reduce risk
- Build a stronger safety culture
- Promote workforce effectiveness

New: Human Factors Animation

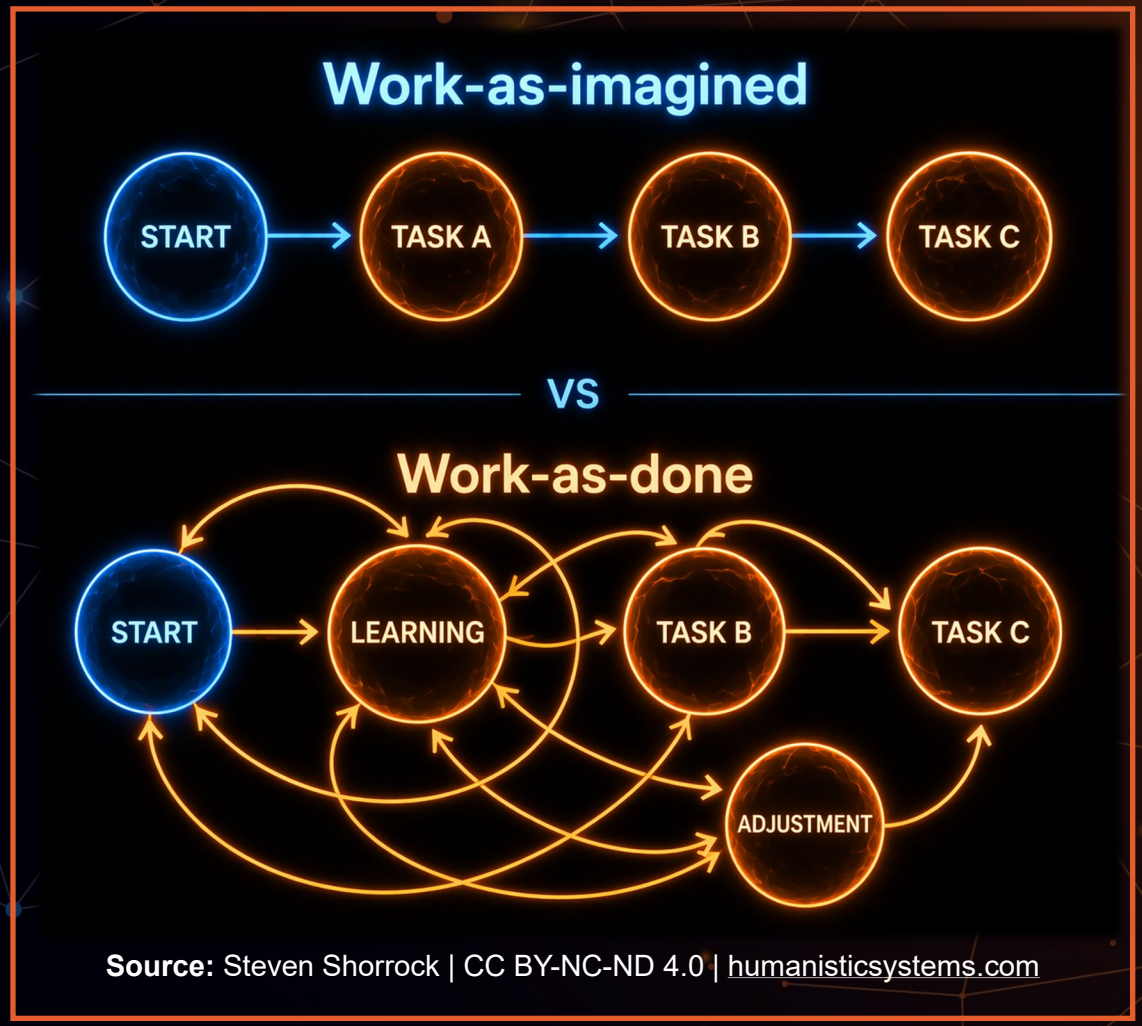


Human Factors in Risk Assessment

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Involve workers to understand:

- How tasks are carried out in reality – ‘work as done’
- Where the task can ‘go wrong’ or go well
- What influences the likelihood of things going wrong/well
- What control measures are effective and why



Source: Steven Shorrock | CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 | humanisticsystems.com

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Other HSA Human Factors Resources

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HSA Human Factors e-learning



HSA Human Factors Webinars




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