**Safer Community Pharmacies for staff and patients**

**Everyone should feel safe at work. Unfortunately, those in front-line, public-facing roles – including Community pharmacists and their co-workers – are all too often subjected to aggressive, abusive and sometimes even violent behaviour.** **With patients sometimes unable to get convenient appointments due to overwhelmed GP surgeries, and supply chain issues leaving pharmacies without stocks of prescribed drugs, the recent spike in violence may be set to continue.**

**At a time when staff shortages are widespread, employers must do everything within their power to ensure employees feel able to continue working in community pharmacy, and that starts with creating a working environment where people feel safe.**

**The NPA hosted a webinar titled Preventing crime: protecting yourself, your staff, your premises and your stock which featured top tips from a police superintendent. To watch back the crime prevention webinar,** [**click here**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CAsrPwNktE)**. If you wish to display a poster in your pharmacy informing patients that you operate a zero abuse policy** [**download here**](https://www.the-pda.org/zero-tolerance-of-abuse-in-pharmacies-poster/) **or additional posters can be found** [**here**](https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-primary-care/nhs-staff-respect/)

**Legal duties:**

Under the UK’s primary health and safety legislation, the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, employers have a general duty to ensure, so far is reasonably practicable, the health, safety at welfare at work of their employees. This includes ensuring that the risk of encountering harassment or violence whilst at work is properly assessed and prevented/controlled.

As would be expected for any other workplace risk – such as stress or slips, trips and falls – the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to carry out a risk assessment around work-related violence to:

* Determine how significant the risk is;
* Identify ways to prevent or control the risk; and
* Develop a clear management plan to achieve this.

From there, pharmacies should be in a position to develop a policy and procedure(s) for dealing with violence, which will form part of a pharmacy’s wider health and safety policy.

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”. Assessments and subsequent policies and procedures should therefore consider both:

* Physical violence, including kicking, spitting, hitting or pushing, as well as more extreme violence with weapons; and
* Verbal abuse, including shouting, swearing or insults; racial or sexual abuse; and threats and intimidation.

It is important to have procedures in place in the pharmacy covering a range of areas to reduce the risks of aggressive, dangerous and violent incidents in community pharmacy.

This document includes some key resources to assist pharmacies putting measures in places to enhance the security of your pharmacy staff and premises.

Written policies and procedures must be in place covering the following areas:

* **Staff training** – ensure all staff are fully trained in understanding the security policies and procedures in place; training should be reviewed annually. Training of the pharmacy team should cover areas such as:
  + Types of security risk
  + How to operate security equipment – for example CCTV
  + Procedures for addressing a security breach in the pharmacy and where to report crimes/attacks.
  + Emergency call out procedure.
  + Managing situations to prevent crimes taking place – for example dealing with suspicious customers. Ensure all members of your pharmacy team(s) are security-aware, for example, understanding the need to refrain from discussing security-sensitive matters such as closing-up procedures or who is carrying shop/Controlled Drug (CD) cabinet keys in front of customers/patients.
* **Review security –**ensure that basic security measures are in place and being implemented; this includes ensuring doors are locked as appropriate, premises and CD keys are kept secured, seating in consultation rooms enable quick escape for staff, controlled stationery, such as pharmacy vouchers, are stored securely, alarms are set as required, key codes are not shared, ensuring adequate lighting at staff entrances, and there are pass codes on doors. Consider installing a panic button. Ensure security processes are reviewed regularly, especially in the event of any incidents.
* **CCTV**  
  Consider using CCTV to enhance staff safety in consultation rooms whilst maintaining patient confidentiality; for example, by ensuring sound recording is not used and the camera is positioned in a way that protects patient confidentiality so that lip-reading cannot take place. If CCTV is used in the consultation room, a notice must be clearly displayed indicating that CCTV is in use. Patient consent obtained for use of the CCTV should be documented. Ensure that the system is operational, and procedures are in place to ensure images captured are clear and stored securely in case a crime takes place.
* **Alarm system**Ensure an appropriate alarm system is fitted. Some alarm systems differentiate between the normal sounds made in your pharmacy and those associated with a forced entry. When activated either by forced entry when closed, or panic button when trading, the alarm can be useful for calling for help and facilitating a response from the police.  Ensure that the alarm is tested regularly and is fully functional.
  + Ensure that the working alarm system in place covers all areas of the pharmacy, particularly where medicines and confidential patient information is kept; any keypad/alarm codes should be changed regularly.
  + Where you have an external monitoring contract in place for your alarm system, ensure that it is current, and all staff are aware of the relevant contact details and actions to take in the event of a crime taking place.
* **Incident Reporting and Review –** if there is a security incident at your premises, members of the pharmacy team should:
  + Contact the police (and ambulance services in case of injuries)
  + Try not to touch anything, or only touch minimally, to preserve forensic evidence without contaminating it; any spilt blood must not be touched as there may be a risk of biological contamination and it can damage valuable DNA evidence.
  + Document full details of the event including, the time, notified persons and what was observed etc.
  + Notify appropriate persons both within and outside the organisation; his may include managers, area managers, superintendent pharmacist, pharmacy owner, local Controlled Drugs Accountable Officer (CDAO), Police CD Liaison Officer (CDLO), and the local HSCB team, Pharmaceutical Society NI as appropriate.
  + Contact [Victim Support](https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/)  an independent charity which helps people affected by crime.
  + Liaise with [Pharmacist Advice and Support Services (PASS)](https://www.pfni.org.uk/pass/who-we-are/) that help pharmacists and their families to manage stress.

**Taking action:**

There are a number of practical steps employers can take to tackle the recent spike in work-related violence in pharmacy.

**- Be proactive**

The best time to address workplace violence is before incidents occur. Develop a violence prevention plan to identify potential risks in your pharmacy and describe the controls to be used to deal with those risks – be sure to consult your staff.

**- Implement physical controls**

This may include:

* Ensuring clear sightlines, both inside and outside the pharmacy. Use low shelving or mirrors or position sales counters near windows so that employees can see out and the public can see in.
* Redesigning your pharmacy. Again, this may be a low-cost option that allows for better visibility so that customers and cash tills can be seen more clearly.
* Look at the layout of your consultation room, always seat your patient at the far end of the room and yourself closest to the door so you have a clear exit should you need to leave swiftly.
* Installing barriers such as wider counters or plexiglass partitions that separate employees from customers.
* Considering product placement. Discourage shoplifting by placing high-value items behind counters or in locked display. Similarly, keep controlled drugs out of the sight of counter areas, and be careful not to inadvertently draw attention to additional quantities of drugs on the premises.
* Maintaining good lighting.

**- Put up warning signs**

Warning signs on premises can be used to highlight the deterrent measures in operation at your pharmacy, including:

“Cash in time-lock safe”

“Security cameras in use”

“Shoplifters will be prosecuted”.

**- Provide training**

All employees should be given specific training on work-related violence so that they are aware of the potential workplace security hazards and the procedure to follow in the event of an incident.

**Employers should also:**

* Provide specific written procedures for lone working.
* Provide specific written procedures for higher-risk situations, such as opening, closing and cashing out.
* Evaluate employee scheduling. Consider how many employees are on shift and who they are.

source document reference: [https://www.npa.co.uk/news-and-events/news-item/safer-community-pharmacies-for-staff-and-patients/](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.npa.co.uk%2Fnews-and-events%2Fnews-item%2Fsafer-community-pharmacies-for-staff-and-patients%2F&data=05%7C01%7Clindsay.clode%40nhs.net%7Cc0fb7fe45175492cee2008db6e83ce89%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C1%7C638225284607619867%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=rBB8Tr3EULd9BAuwDdYpcKu8wq27sGYJ9cKL05mQB0U%3D&reserved=0)

<https://www.inpharmacy.co.uk/business-support-and-development/what-must-employers-do-tackle-violence-against-pharmacy-staff>