

## Preventing Violence against retail staff

### 1. Who should use this booklet?

#### a) Store owners

i) Store owners and their senior managers have responsibility for setting and putting into practice a safety and security policy and strategy for managing the risk of violent incidents that may occur in retail workplaces. This will include being actively committed to measures to reduce the risks, responsibility for monitoring success or failure of measures, and introducing new measures as well as revising and adjusting the strategy; and

ii) Small retailers, who want to know what practical steps can be taken to reduce the risk of violence occurring at work.

#### b) Store managers

i) Managers have responsibility for implementing the safety and security policy and strategy, management systems and training programmes that take into account the issue of violence and its impact on staff, as well as upward flow of information to senior managers and shop owners.

#### c) Store employees

i) Staff who have a role in developing safety or security policies and procedures, that can effect change in the business.

### 2. Introduction

a) Violence at work and the fear of it can affect anyone. For retailers, violence and its impact can lead to low staff morale, high absenteeism and staff turnover, expensive insurance premiums and possibly compensation payments. For staff, it can cause physical and mental pain, stress and disability. These can all have a secondary effect on the success of the business, often leading to loss of sales and profit.

b) Many retailers are realising that where their staff are involved in a violent incident and are absent as a result, their business could be losing someone with vital skills. Valuable time is then lost in retraining or recruiting other staff. Retailers therefore

have a keen self-interest in setting up and maintaining safe working practices that can safeguard their resources.

c) This Crime Prevention Bureau booklet provides practical guidance for retailers and their staff on how the problems and causes of violence might be tackled. It sets out an approach that can be adopted as everyday practice. Action need not be expensive or complicated. Simple measures such as changing a pattern of work can help to ensure that staff are not put at risk.

d) The booklet is intended for all staff in the retail sector. However, much of the information and guidance contained will be relevant to all businesses and can be adapted to suit individual needs.

e) Bomb threats require special consideration and measures to deal with them are not covered by this guidance. Regional Crime Prevention Offices will be able to provide further advice on this issue.

### 3. Violence

a) What is violence?

i) Violence can take many forms, ranging from life-threatening physical attacks to verbal abuse. Agreeing a definition is the first step in setting up a system to prevent, control and manage the issue of violence at work. This will help decide what policy on violence should cover. It is important that all staff are aware of the definition and their responsibilities under the policy.

ii) The Health and Safety Executive (UK) defines violence to staff at work as:

‘any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of his/her employment.’

This definition may not fit every workplace. If not, it may be useful to talk over and agree an alternative with staff.

iii) Verbal abuse and threats will probably be the most common type of incident. Verbal abuse can be very distressing. Awareness of the warning signs that could lead to a violent situation places staff in a better position to take action

to reduce or prevent future incidents.

iv) Physical assaults, explicit threats and their effect can be clear, but verbal abuse and its impact may be harder to determine. People will have different perceptions about the behaviour they find threatening or offensive. Some will find the abuse annoying; for others it will cause distress. It is important to treat each reported incident seriously to ensure that staff are aware of commitment to the matter.

v) The guidance contained in this booklet will help to deal with violent and abusive situations and provide sources of help.

b) Who is at risk?

i) Anyone who has contact with members of the public is at risk. In particular, people who handle money, work alone on night shifts or whose work takes them out of the workplace. Specific examples include:

- Branch managers and shop managers;
- Checkout operators;
- Retail sales staff
- Petrol filling station staff;
- Car park staff;
- Mobile service workers, for example TV repair staff;
- Staff carrying cash;
- Mobile shops;
- Security staff;
- Delivery staff;
- Maintenance and repair staff;
- Managers of small businesses, particularly when taking on a security role;
- Restaurant and fast food operators who work late at night;
- Drivers of delivery vans;
- Licensed goods vehicle drivers; and
- Mobile workers.

This not an exhaustive list of all groups at risk.

ii) Some incidents may occur outside the workplace but may still be related to the work activity, for example an attack on a shop assistant by a customer in the street,

following an incident in the shop. It could also include a kidnap and hostage situation. Although these may be uncommon, managers with staff in high risk positions may wish to consider seeking advice from their Regional Crime Prevention Officer. It is important to be aware of all possible instances where violence as a result of work might happen.

iii) Look at all the jobs/tasks done by staff to identify which particular groups will be at risk. It will be important to take into account the views of staff themselves.

c) What causes violence/aggression?

i) There are many causes of violent behaviour. Some may be easy to identify, such as frustration, anger, misunderstanding, stress, communication problems, conflict with authority and theft/robbery. Some can happen between staff and customers because of poor retail service or inferior products. People can become excited and tensions and inhibitions are let out, increasing the chances of verbal or physical abuse. How staff react to these could determine whether a situation is inflamed. For example an unsympathetic attitude may result in increased frustration, anger etc. leading to a violent incident, although poor service by staff does not justify violence.

ii) There will be particular incidents where it will be hard to analyse why a person behaved in a particular way, but it will still be possible to think of ways of mitigating such situations. Accepting that there are risks and wanting to find a solution is vital in dealing successfully with the issue.

iii) Training will help to identify some causes early on. It can also provide practical skills and information on how to deal with potentially violent situations and on avoidance techniques.

#### 4. Policy

a) Developing a policy statement

i) The policy will be a clear and well-defined statement of views on robbery, shop theft and violence at work and actions are proposed to take to tackle them. The policy shows that the risk of violence towards staff is a serious matter. In a large retail company the policy should be agreed at a very senior level to ensure commitment from the top down. A senior manager should be given the overall

responsibility and control of the policy. This should not be delegated to junior staff.

ii) The policy provides an authoritative statement on how the risk will be controlled. It should also set out how preventative measures will operate, for example training, changing work patterns or the environment. It will also enable all staff to be aware of their own responsibilities as well as those of their employer.

iii) It is important that senior management provide support and commitment to the policy to ensure that it is carried out. The support should be visible, strong and active in order to have an effective impact on the business culture.

iv) A successful policy and its measures will need the support and cooperation of all staff. Consultation with managers, supervisors, security, personnel, safety officers, and staff on the content, implementation, monitoring and review is a valuable way to secure support, and is vital in determining its success. This may take more time, but it will produce better results.

v) An integrated policy will need to include:

- Recognition of the problem(s) and a commitment to introduce measures for dealing them;
- Arrangements throughout the process for consultation and communication with staff;
- Setting up reporting arrangements for formally reporting, classifying and recording all incidents;
- Arrangements for security and safety issues, deciding who is responsible, in terms of individuals or a committee;
- Declaration of full support for all staff who have suffered verbal abuse or physical injury;
  
- Arrangements for after-care support, including counselling, special leave, and advice on legal action;
- Appropriate monitoring and investigation of all incidents and identifying action to be taken; notification to be appropriate authorities;
- Training for all staff on all aspects of violence, for example how to recognize it, how to deal with the potential impact etc., information on staff procedures for support;
- Training for managers and supervisors on how to identify the impact of violence which may develop at a later stage and how to deal with it when

it happens;

- Action, where possible, to mitigate risks by considering practical measures: this could include changes in the design of the working environment, whether installation of safety and security devices etc. will be effective; and
- Monitoring and reviewing the effect of all the measures.

vi) Once agreed, staff need to be made aware of the policy by circulating a copy to all staff; holding staff meetings on the issue; including an item on the policy in induction courses and health and safety courses.

vii) The policy provides a framework for action and initiatives. A successful policy will require effective monitoring and regular review to ensure that it is meeting its prime objective, the control of risk.

#### b) Consulting staff

i) Consulting and involving staff throughout the process will have significant benefit to the business:

- It will show a genuine commitment to tackling the problem;
- It will ensure that any reporting or monitoring scheme is practical and effective;
- The knowledge and experience of staff are valuable resources when deciding on practical preventative and protective measures; and
- Staff who have been fully consulted will have a stronger commitment in helping to implement the policy and measures.

ii) Regular consultation will help to monitor and review the policy, to make sure that preventive measures are useful, that protective procedures are being followed, and that training is working.

#### c) Finding out if there is a problem

i) The first step is to find out if violence in workplace is a problem. It may not always be obvious as staff can hide their concerns. The best way to find out is to seek the views of all staff, particularly those who deal with members of the public. They will have firsthand knowledge and possibly experience of either an actual violent incident, or where the potential for one exists. Consultation will also help to ensure that the true scale of the problem is established. Risk assessment will help to identify

areas of concern.

ii) It is important to include information from incidents where no one was actually hurt but the potential for harm was there. This can often be useful in preventing a future more serious occurrence. Since the risk of violence will vary according to area, it is important that this exercise is carried out in individual shop premises with staff, not at a retail business headquarters. Small retailers could talk to other retailers and similar businesses about incidents in their area.

iii) The initial investigation should cover the whole range of violent incidents where staff have felt threatened or experienced stress. Find solutions by allowing staff to contribute their own experiences. This will help to ensure their support for any action that may be needed as a result of the findings.

iv) The evaluation may reveal vulnerable jobs or tasks and where to target resources and action to areas that need the most effort.

d) Building up the picture

i) There are a number of methods that could use to build up a picture of incidents. These may include a mixture of the following:

- Small staff discussion groups;
- Interviews with individual staff;
- Employee questionnaires;
- Existing reporting and information systems;
- Staff meetings;
- Workshops and/or training courses; and
- Information from police, retail networks etc.

ii) It will often be helpful to give the overall responsibility for the task to one person and set objectives to help identify the priorities for action.

iii) When using interviews to find out the scale of the problem, it is important that questioning techniques are carefully considered and the interview properly carried out. The issue of violence, especially if it relates to a personal incident, may be particularly upsetting for staff. They will need to feel that they are in a secure environment in which they are able to talk about their experience and feelings and

do not feel threatened. Staff carrying out this particular exercise will need appropriate training.

e) Reporting procedures

i) The next stage is to consider setting up formal procedures for reporting incidents. Collecting and analysing data will help to establish whether there is a pattern of incidents, and identify particular targets or practices at risk. It will also help to review and monitor the policy and measures to ensure that the position has not changed.

ii) Reporting systems and forms need to be clear and easy to follow. Staff should be encouraged to report confidentially any incident which causes them harm or anxiety. Some staff do not report because they are concerned that they may be held responsible for the incident, or that they believe that they contributed to the cause. They may also assume that such incidents are part of the job and therefore acceptable. Some may even be unaware that a reporting system exists. Circulating information on the system and its importance in ensuring safety at work, may help to ease fears and concerns.

iii) Classifying:

The data will identify what kinds of incident are happening and why. One way to achieve this would be to classify the information into various categories. These could include:

- The situation: location, environment, possible motive, regularity, timing;
- The victim: job, gender, age, experience, training;
- The assailant: gender, age, behaviour, appearance, whether previously involved in similar incidents; and
- The outcome: emotional disturbance, physical injury, fatal, long-term emotional/disabling impact and reports to outside authorities, including the police.

To analyse the data, group similar incidents and try and identify common features. For example, particular departments/areas/tasks/time of day/frequency of occurrence.

Whenever there are groups of similar incidents, it should be possible to build up a fairly precise picture of common causes, areas, times etc. This will help to target resources and measures to those areas of greater risk.

f) What influences the issue?

i) Before deciding what preventative systems and measures might be necessary, take into account factors in the environment or procedures which could be making the situation worse. Matching the information to certain areas or activities of the organisation may highlight the need for changes.

ii) Environment:

Many aspects of the working environment might affect the risk of violence. These include:

- Geographical location, whether urban or rural, local crime rate and risk;
- Shop/office design such as lighting, entrances and exits, position and height of furniture and goods, screens;
- Poor quality of service/goods; and
- Current security precautions and arrangements.

iii) Procedures:

Revising or changing some procedures might include:

- Timings of opening/closing/deliveries;
- Cash vulnerability;
- Effective visible cash management procedures in place at all times;
- Queue management;
- Complaints policy; and
- Banking and delivery methods.

g) Checking control measures work

i) Measures will need regular and continual monitoring to check if they are effective, and revision if not applicable or unsuccessful. This will ensure that efforts and resources are being directed at the measures most effective at dealing with the issue. Staff should be aware of the monitoring exercise and its importance, and where possible involved in the process.

ii) Large retailers may set up a small working group including staff, and managers. Another option would be to issue a staff questionnaire/survey

to gauge opinion on the efficacy of the measures.

iii) Small retailers may not always need a formal approach because they will be working closely with all their staff on a regular basis. Making a note in a diary about keeping the situation under review could be all that is needed if communication is good.

iv) Recording incidents determine whether problems have decreased or increased, as well as used for better targeting of resources.

v) A monitoring and review process should cover all the measures introduced, such as the policy systems, hardware and training.

vi) There are likely to be occasions when measures may need to be tested before a final solution is found. Sometimes a simple modification may be all that is required to enable security control measures to be more effective.

vii) For large retailers, piloting a control measure in one department, and monitoring against another department that has not been involved allow comparison of the effectiveness of the measure.

## 5. Prevention

### Preventive measures

It is likely that a mixture of preventative measures will be needed to achieve control and manage the problem effectively. It is important that the measures are appropriate and adequate for the task and cost-effective. Staff should be made aware of them and trained where appropriate. Installing expensive security hardware, without changing inadequate systems and procedures, is not likely to be sufficient.

#### a) Environment

i) The way that workplace is designed and laid out might help to prevent incidents of violence. The following measures may be beneficial:

- Providing clear visibility and lighting for staff so that they can either leave quickly or they can raise help. This might also help to identify suspicious behaviours;
- Siting cash tills away from customers, or providing physical security at cash tills;

- Ensuring that the minimum necessary cash is kept in tills by adopting procedures to move cash quickly and safely to more secure zones;
- Preventing the build-up of cash in tills;
- Placing high value goods out of easy reach;
- Widening counters and/or raising counter heights;
- Ensuring adequate queue management by using clear and sufficient signs and ensuring easy access;
- Arranging access to a secure location for staff;
- Changing the layout of any public waiting areas by providing better seating, lighting, decor;
- Providing bright lighting outside the store and removing possible cover for assailants;
- Ensuring good quality control on service and products;
- Installing screens or similar protective devices for areas where staff are most at risk; and
- Monitoring high risk entrances, exits and delivery points.

ii) Before undertaking an expensive redesign of the store, make sure that it is risk commensurate and relevant to the needs of business.

#### b) Procedures

Revising working procedures or introducing new methods might help to prevent incidents of violence to staff. The following measures may be beneficial:

i) Ensuring that staffing levels are appropriate to the particular task and the time of day, and if there is a high risk;

ii) Providing adequate and appropriate information to staff on procedures and systems;

iii) Ensuring that customer care programmes are adequately designed and managed, such as dealing with complaints;

iv) Including specific training on violence to staff as part of a health and safety management training programme;

v) Establishing clear emergency procedures, for example for staff on what to do and

where to go in the event of an incident, emergency telephone numbers etc.;

vi) Varying the times when cash is taken to the bank, such as changing the route or using professional cash collection services;

vii) Paying staff by cheque or direct credit rather than cash whenever possible;

viii) Using, where possible, cashless purchasing;

ix) Ensuring that experienced or less vulnerable staff are used for high risk tasks;

x) Rotating high risk jobs so that the same person is not always at risk, or doubling up for particularly high risk tasks;

xi) Providing additional staff for high risk mobile activities or providing communication links;

xii) Ensuring that details of staff schedules are held by the base;

xiii) Providing personal alarms for high risk staff;

xiv) Putting up clear signs asking those wearing crash helmets to remove them on entering the shop, checking identification of callers seeking access to restricted parts of the store; and

xv) Providing training on recognising and dealing with violence, and the potential for violence.

### c) Security systems

These will generally include security equipment specifically designed to prevent or deter violent crime. Before deciding to install such equipment, consider whether it is commensurate to the risk. It is pointless buying expensive and sophisticated CCTV systems if the risk is minimal. It should also avoid creating an environment where security is excessive.

i) The level and design of equipment will need to take into account:

- Ease of use by staff;
- The pattern and type of business;
- The way the building is used, for example when occupied/unoccupied;
- Geographical location which may affect the local crime rate; and
- The need for emergency access/control.

ii) Contact Regional Crime Prevention Officers for advice about in-house security measures;

iii) Training staff on how to operate and maintain security equipment, as equipment will only be as effective as the staff trained to use it. Staff with specific security duties will need to practice skills before having to deal with a real event, this will help them to build up confidence;

iv) Certain aspects of security procedures should be treated as highly confidential. These details should be given out on a 'need to know basis' only. This will help to contain the risk of violence. However, all staff, including part-time or casual workers, will need training in some aspects of security. It may also be useful to display notices so that the public are aware that certain security devices are used in the store; and

v) Items of equipment such as alarms will need regular maintenance checks to ensure that they are reliable and effective. Also monitor and evaluate systems to confirm that they are still appropriate. Before installing new security equipment, consider compatibility with old/current security systems.

#### d) Training

i) Training will be an important element in managing and preventing the risk of violence to staff. It can be used to brief everyone on policy and procedures; to deliver advice, information and skills on prevention; to involve staff in sharing experiences and thoughts on the subject; and as a catalyst to bring about change within workplace.

ii) Training on prevention might include:

- The policy and systems in dealing with the issue;
- Recognising and dealing with abusive and aggressive customers – irrational behaviour, avoiding eye contact, nervousness, hostility, aggressive stance;

- Exploring the causes of violence and aggression; anger, frustration, unhelpfulness;
- Explaining to staff what to do and what is expected of them in the event of a robbery or shop theft, for example how to raise the alarm, where to go for safety, not to resist or follow violent offenders;
- Managing confrontation by using positive interpersonal skills; listening, remaining calm and confident, being assertive rather than aggressive; defusing situations before they escalate by being non-confrontational and offering a compromise; attracting the attention of colleagues and if all else fails ensuring an escape route;
- Effective handling of incidents; letting staff know what to do, who to tell, advice on the degree of risk and using role playing to help staff feel comfortable and confident about security equipment e.g. panic alarms;
- Effective customer care; being polite, calm and helpful, recognise the other persons' point of view;
- Safe working practices; if staff are mobile ensuring that someone at the fixed workplace is aware of their exact movements; avoiding where possible working alone or in isolation; and
- After incident support and care including the impact it can have on staff; and the arrangements for support.

iii) Managers have a key role in identifying the training needs of staff. It is therefore important that they are provided with sufficient training to help them be competent in their management role. Consider providing specific training for managers moving from low risk to high risk tasks. They should be thoroughly briefed on areas of concern to help them reduce any foreseeable risk;

iv) Small retailers may be able to seek assistance and help on training in risk management from their Regional Crime Prevention Officer. Victim support providers will be able to assist with training and providing help and information to staff;

v) Training needs should be monitored and reviewed regularly and training courses evaluated for their effectiveness. Remember to include part-time staff in plans;

vi) Staff should be made aware of any risk which they could face in their job, for example during shifting working etc. Being aware and able to recognise the potential for danger will help staff to be prepared. It also ensures that they react to a situation in a positive way, they know what could happen and what would be the best way to deal with it. Training in awareness should include examples of good practice in recognition and effective response. It should provide staff with practical knowledge

and information on preventative measures such as systems, procedures and equipment. Awareness can often help to avoid incidents, although it will not always guarantee prevention; and

vii) A policy on apprehending criminals will need adequate staff training and information to ensure that staff always act within the law.

#### e) Networking

i) Networking with other business will help to pool knowledge and experience and share information on best practice. It will also help to build a safer working community. Specific sectors such as late night economy and petrol stations may find that by networking with similar retailers in their area, they are able to set up crime prevention initiatives;

ii) Lessons can be learned from sharing information on styles of management, strategies, systems and the skills required to underpin them. Violence to staff should be a concern to all retailers in the area. It will however be important to agree ground rules for sharing information when it relates to particular security measures used by local retailers;

iii) Networking could also provide a means of support for small retailers who are victims of serious violent incidents. It helps to prevent isolation and encourages the network to work together and to reduce crime. Large retailers will also be in a good position to set standards and help those businesses which may have fewer resources and less information available to them. Positive efforts could lead to an improved and safer environment for local businesses and increased profit; and

iv) Regional Crime Prevention Officers may be able to provide further information on local crime prevention initiatives and security measures, and may be contacted on the following telephone numbers or email:

- HKI — 2860 7805;

- KE — 2726 6250;

- KW — 2761 2311;

- NTN — 3661 3310;
- NTS — 3661 1291;
- MAR — 2803 6179; and
- Email: crimepre@police.gov.hk

#### Post incident support

Providing support for staff should be part of the overall policy on preventing and controlling violence at work. Support measures will help to minimise and control any impact on staff and ensure that they recover from the incident as soon as possible. The policy should identify staff with responsibilities for support so that everyone is informed of their role and what they are expected to do.

#### a) Impact of an incident

i) A violent incident is a sudden, frightening experience, and invariably unpredictable. The impact on employees' physical and mental health can be long lasting and may sometimes not be obvious.

ii) During and immediately following an incident staff are likely to suffer a number of impacts which, if not acknowledged and dealt with, can lead to low staff morale and inefficiency. They may also not be evident until quite a time after the incident.

#### iii) Impacts are likely to include:

- Anger;
- General mistrust of strangers and wariness of customers;
- Fear and anxiety attacks, largely connected to a fear that the incident could recur. Fear of returning to work is a common reaction. Some may feel uneasy or anxious about dealing with customers. There may also be the fear of recognition or of being followed by the assailant;
- Feelings of helplessness, isolation, frustration, vulnerability;
- Guilt that they somehow contributed to the incident and are therefore partly responsible;

- Loss of confidence, loss of concentration and sometimes loss of memory.

Despite this, recall of the event will generally be vivid, and staff are likely to show signs of a need to talk about the experience; and

- Physical symptoms might include sleeping difficulties, loss of appetite, trembling or outbursts of crying.

iv) Training can be helpful in lessening shock - preparation can reduce its impact. Managers need basic training in dealing with staff during and immediately after an incident. Support and understanding are the key factors in helping staff to recover from traumatic event. Managers will know and understand about the impact of shock and how to handle it. They will need the support of their own senior managers on site, and they will need practical operational help if they are expected to keep the business running.

#### b) Initial response

i) An effective, sensitive initial response is crucial for people to cope in the longer term, and should be done as soon as possible after the incident;

ii) The initial response may cover practical issues such as:

- An outline of incident reporting;
- A report on the progress of any investigation or action taken, including what is likely to happen next, to assist staff in dealing with the police and their procedures;
- What further support is available to the victim and how they might contact that support;
- Whether special leave to allow victims to recover from the incident is needed; and
- Legal advice and help in taking proceedings against the assailant.

iii) Group discussions can be particularly effective as a means of sharing experience, concerns and feelings. They can help to ensure that staff do not feel isolated and are aware that there are others with similar reactions and fears. Group discussions can involve those who are directly or indirectly affected, but depends on the willingness of everyone to take part;

iv) Support needs to be a combination of emotional support and practical information. Staff should be reassured that this is not being used as an information

gathering/investigation process. They must also feel that they are able to express anxiety and stress, without fear of any impact on their future progress within the company;

v) Learning from the feedback on the experiences of staff is often helpful in avoiding a recurrence; and

vi) Follow-up action should be taken after a period of time to ensure that staff have recovered and do not require additional help. Information and further guidance could also be given on any police action taken, and staff prepared for an eventual court case.

c) Long-term support

i) Some staff may require extra help and time to overcome their fear, anger and stress, which cannot be provided in the initial response. This should be assessed at any follow-up sessions; and

ii) Retailers may not have the resources for long-term support. Small retailers in particular may need help from outside organisations such as victim support and local retail community groups.

d) Police liaison

i) If the incident involves a criminal act, a nominated member of staff should take control and immediately contact the police, and get medical help, if necessary;

ii) Useful information to gather will include:

- A full description of the event and offender;
- Whether someone was injured;
- What happened afterwards; and
- How and where the offender escaped.

iii) In cases where criminal proceedings are likely, staff may need particular care and support. Many will not have any experience of the court and criminal system

and will be worried about dealing with the police and giving evidence. Help and advice should start at the initial response stage and continue through to the police investigation and the court hearing. Issues to consider will include support for staff called as witnesses or involved in identification parades, as these can often bring back memories of the incident.

## 7. Specific issues to consider

### a) Small businesses

i) Small retail business may not have the resources to implement sophisticated management systems aimed at reducing violence. The length of time open, the unsociable and long hours worked, the small numbers of staff and the fact that staff will not necessarily all be present at any particular time in the shop, will all pose problems for the prevention and control of violence;

ii) Physical security measures such as CCTV, screens etc., may be costly and inappropriate. However, concealing tills and providing good visibility in the working are practical and relatively easy to achieve preventative measures. Simple changes to procedures can also be effective, such as keeping the amount of cash available at a low level, changing the method of banking cash, for example varying the mode of transport, the route or the person carrying the cash etc.;

iii) Small retailers should keep a simple log, containing information on the nature of incidents, the timing, method etc. This may help to establish over a period of time where particular action or measures are needed, or where further advice is required;

iv) Regional Crime Prevention Officers can provide advice on basic measures which are tailored for small business needs. They might also be able to bring together small local self-help groups. These groups could help identify particular local problems, develop and implement ways of preventing them, and act as a means of mutual support, including circulating newsletters for those retailers who are unable to attend meetings; and

v) There may be the potential to join crime prevention schemes with some of the larger retailers. Such schemes can help to circulate practical advice on

well-established strategies and successful measures.

b) Working alone

i) There may be situations when it is not possible or practical to work with other members of staff, for instance in petrol stations. Particular attention will be needed to ensure that working alone does not make staff more vulnerable.

ii) Safe working arrangements may include:

- Providing training to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty to avoid panic reactions to unusual and risky situations;
- Ensuring that solitary staff fully understand the risks involved in their work tasks, and also what safety precautions to take. Some examples include ensuring that they are contactable; portable phone/radio; varying the pattern of work; and pre-arranged calls;
- Providing training in handling specific risks and how they can play a role in deflecting or minimising the risk;
- Establishing emergency procedures in the event of an incident, including quick access to a safe area, or exit from an unsafe location, evacuating other staff and informing the police; and
- Providing devices which raise the alarm in the event of an emergency.

iii) Where possible lone staff should be regularly visited by a supervisor to monitor their safety. If this is not practicable, then regular contact via a telephone or radio should be maintained. Solitary staff will feel more secure and confident if they know that help or support is available if and when needed.

## 8. Risk assessment

a) It is a legal requirement for employers to assess risks in the workplace. An assessment involves a careful examination of what could cause harm to people to weigh up whether enough precautions have been taken or more should be done to prevent harm;

b) A risk assessment does not need to be complicated. It will involve checking hazards from the work itself or from working practices and procedures. A hazard is

anything which can cause harm. A risk is the chance, whether great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard;

c) The following five steps set out what should be considered in assessing the risk of violence in a retail store:

i) Identify hazards:

Identify situations where staff could be harmed such as taking cash to the bank. Talk to staff, they may have noticed things which are not immediately obvious. Also look through accident and incident report forms for information about robbery, shop theft and violence used against staff;

ii) Decide who might be harmed, and how:

Think about people who may not be in the workplace all the time, for example part-time staff, in addition to full-time staff;

iii) Evaluate the impact of the hazard(s) and decide if existing precautions are adequate, or more should be done:

Decide whether the impact of the hazard is significant and if so whether mitigating measures have been taken. For example, installing protective screens, or arranging extra security cover late at night. Precautions may include providing staff with adequate information, instruction and training or organising the work so that exposure to the hazard is removed or reduced to as low as is reasonably practicable;

iv) Record findings:

Write down findings of assessments on hazards that could cause significant harm, and then record the most important conclusions; and

v) Review assessment:

From time to time, review and revise assessments. New procedures could lead to new and significant hazards, therefore review and revise assessments to take this into account.