



RED FLAG WEEKLY

ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

EDITION 12

MONDAY 6 JULY 2026

SAFETYSOLUTIONSTRAINING.CO.UK

THIS WEEK

Five stories. One clear message for employers.

Frontline staff are facing rising abuse, wider legal duties and increasing personal safety risks. This edition turns five real stories into practical intelligence for organisations with public-facing teams.

NHS

Nearly 2,000 incidents of abuse recorded.

01

RETAIL

New offence for assaulting shop workers.

02

LONE WORKING

Half of lone workers avoiding unsafe tasks.

03

EDUCATION

Teachers report violence inside classrooms.

04

LEGISLATION

October 2026 covers every protected characteristic.

05

01
NHS

NHS / URGENT CARE

NHS Trust Rolls Out Emergency Security Measures as Assault Rate Hits Three-Year High

One in seven NHS workers say they were physically assaulted by a patient or member of the public last year, the highest rate in three years.

REPORTED INCIDENTS

Nearly 2,000

STAFF AFFECTED

20,000

SECTOR

NHS urgent care

RESPONSE

Body-worn cameras and formal warnings

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust, which runs hospitals in Brighton, Worthing, Haywards Heath and Chichester, recorded nearly 2,000 incidents of verbal threats, assaults and aggressive behaviour against its 20,000 staff in twelve months. The trust has already introduced body-worn cameras and knife amnesty bins, and is now adding a formal warning system that can bar abusive patients or visitors from its sites except in emergencies. The latest NHS staff survey found almost one in three ambulance staff reported unwanted sexual behaviour at work.

VINCE'S VIEW

Cameras and warning letters certainly have an important role to play, but they tend to tell us what has happened rather than helping to prevent it. What really makes a difference is giving staff the confidence to recognise the early warning signs of conflict and knowing when and how to take a step back before a situation escalates. That is where practical, scenario-based training can have a real impact.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Train staff to recognise early signs of escalation.
- Review how warning markers and formal letters are used.
- Ensure staff know when to step back and seek support.

02
RT

RETAIL / LEGISLATION

Assaulting a Shop Worker Becomes a Standalone Criminal Offence

Attacking a shop worker is no longer just common assault buried in the statistics, it is now its own crime with its own sentencing framework.

LEGAL CHANGE Standalone offence	ROYAL ASSENT 29 April 2026
MAXIMUM SENTENCE Six months	DAILY INCIDENTS Around 1,600

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026, creating a specific offence of assaulting a retail worker in England and Wales, carrying up to six months in prison and a presumption of a Criminal Behaviour Order on first conviction. Commencement is staged, with the retail worker provisions expected to come into force around 29 June 2026. The British Retail Consortium’s 2026 Crime Report recorded roughly 1,600 incidents of violence and abuse against retail staff every single day.

VINCE'S VIEW

The introduction of this new offence is a positive step and sends an important message that violence and abuse towards retail workers will not be tolerated. However, legislation on its own cannot support someone dealing with an aggressive customer during a busy Friday evening. The greatest benefit comes when employers combine legal protection with practical training, so staff feel both supported and equipped to manage challenging situations confidently.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Brief staff on what the new offence means in practice.
- Train colleagues to disengage safely when a customer escalates.
- Make reporting simple, quick and worthwhile.



LONE WORKING / SURVEY

Half of Lone Workers Are Now Avoiding Tasks Because They Feel Unsafe

Half the lone workers in a new UK survey said they had skipped a task or a location altogether because they did not feel safe doing it.

SURVEY SAMPLE 2,500 frontline workers	EXPERIENCED ABUSE 56 per cent
WEAPON THREATS 61 respondents	REPORTING GAP More than a third unreported

SoloProtect's Lone Worker Survey 2026, based on 2,500 frontline workers across housing, healthcare, charities and local government, found that 56 per cent had experienced verbal or physical abuse in the past year and 61 respondents had been threatened with a weapon. More than a third of those incidents were never formally reported.

VINCE'S VIEW

The finding that around a third of incidents go unreported is particularly significant. In many cases it is not because staff do not care, but because reporting can feel time-consuming or they are unsure whether anything will change as a result. Organisations should make reporting as straightforward as possible and ensure staff see that their concerns are acted upon. Combined with effective training, this helps build a stronger culture of safety and continual learning.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Review lone worker procedures against real tasks.
- Check reporting routes are clear and trusted.
- Act visibly on reports so staff know it matters.

04
ED

EDUCATION / SECTOR WARNING

Teachers Vote for Action After Being Grabbed, Kicked and Spat At in Classrooms

Teachers are reporting violence and aggression inside classrooms, often without immediate support once the lesson begins.

SURVEY SIZE

Over 10,000 teachers

BEHAVIOUR DISRUPTION

Two in three

REPORTED BEHAVIOURS

Grabbed, kicked, spat at

CORE ISSUE

Early intervention and support

A teacher told her union conference she now spends more time managing violent pupils than she does teaching. Delegates at a national teaching union conference voted for action on classroom violence after members described being grabbed, kicked, punched, spat at and cornered by pupils. A separate survey of over 10,000 teachers found two in three said disruptive pupil behaviour regularly interrupted lessons. Union leaders said schools lack the staffing and specialist support to intervene early.

VINCE'S VIEW

Once a classroom door closes, teachers are often managing challenging situations without immediate support, something that is not always fully appreciated. This goes beyond traditional classroom management. It is about recognising the early signs that behaviour is beginning to escalate and having the confidence and practical skills to respond appropriately. That not only helps keep teachers safe, but also protects every pupil in the classroom.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Recognise that staff safety is part of safeguarding.
- Give teachers practical escalation and disengagement skills.
- Review support routes for incidents inside classrooms.

05
ER

LEGISLATION / EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT 2025

October 2026 Is Not Just a Sexual Harassment Deadline. It Covers Every Protected Characteristic.

From October 2026, employers become directly liable for third-party harassment relating to any protected characteristic unless they can show they took all reasonable steps to prevent it.

DEADLINE October 2026	DUTY All reasonable steps
SCOPE All protected characteristics	GUIDANCE Expected after duty applies

Most employer briefings on the Employment Rights Act 2025 focus entirely on sexual harassment, and that is only half the picture. From October 2026, employers become directly liable for third-party harassment relating to any of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, unless they can show they took all reasonable steps to prevent it. That means a customer’s racist remark to a member of staff, a client mocking an employee’s disability, a patient’s homophobic abuse towards a nurse, or age-related insults directed at a younger or older worker can all trigger employer liability, not only incidents of a sexual nature. The secondary regulations defining what all reasonable steps actually means are not expected until 2027, following a public consultation whose call for evidence has already closed and is now being analysed.

VINCE'S VIEW

There is a common misconception that these changes relate only to sexual harassment. In reality, the duty extends much further. Abuse or harassment linked to race, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation or any other protected characteristic all fall within an employer’s responsibilities. My advice is not to wait until further guidance is published in 2027. Organisations that begin preparing their staff now through clear policies, awareness and practical training will be in a far stronger position to meet their legal duties and, more importantly, create a safer working environment for everyone.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Update policies beyond sexual harassment alone.
- Train staff using role-specific public-facing scenarios.
- Make reporting routes clear, trusted and acted upon.

Under Three Months to October 2026. And It Is Not Just About Sexual Harassment.

3

MONTHS REMAINING UNTIL THE
EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT 2025
DEADLINE

From 1 October 2026, the duty to prevent sexual harassment moves from reasonable steps to all reasonable steps. What is less well understood is that employers also become directly liable for third-party harassment across all nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, not sexual harassment alone.

This affects hospitals, housing teams, charities, local authorities, transport operators, retail teams, schools, and any organisation whose staff deal with the public.

- Generic e-learning covering sexual harassment alone will not meet the full standard.
- A policy that only mentions sexual harassment leaves every other protected characteristic exposed.
- Training needs to be role-specific, cover all forms of harassment, and be supported by reporting routes staff actually trust.
- The regulations defining all reasonable steps are not expected until 2027. The duty applies before the guidance exists.

Under three months is still enough time to prepare properly. It is not enough time to wait for clarity that will not arrive before the deadline.

RED FLAG

WEEKLY

ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

Training Built Around What Your Staff Actually Face

Safety Solutions Training Ltd delivers practical, role-specific training across the NHS, social care, housing, local authority and third sector.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

LONE WORKER SAFETY

MANAGING CHALLENGING PHONE
CALLS

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

SAFEGUARDING

DANGEROUS DOGS AWARENESS

VISIT [SAFETYSOLUTIONSTRAINING.CO.UK](https://safetysolutionstraining.co.uk)

Role-specific. Practical. Defensible.

Safety Solutions Training Ltd | 7 Coryton Crescent, Cardiff CF14 7EP | 02920 657753 | info@safetysolutionstraining.co.uk
Registered in Wales No. 10515885 | safetysolutionstraining.co.uk

Red Flag Weekly is researched and written by Vince Donovan, Director, Safety Solutions Training Ltd. Every story in this edition is verified against a named, public source. No statistics are invented or estimated.