

# RED FLAG WEEKLY

ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

EDITION  
16

MONDAY  
10 AUGUST 2026

SAFETYSOLUTIONSTRAINING.CO.UK

## THIS WEEK

# Five stories. One clear message for employers.

This week covers threats to NHS staff, abuse of social workers on solo visits, violence concerns across nursing, safety fears among parliamentary staff and the October 2026 harassment duty now moving quickly closer.

### NHS

Violence against nursing staff is no longer confined to emergency departments.

01

### NHS

A GP surgery does not need a front counter for staff to be threatened.

02

### SOCIAL CARE

A home visit is not low risk just because it is routine.

03

### PUBLIC SECTOR

Public-facing political staff are often the ones absorbing the anger first.

04

### LEGISLATION

The tribunal question will be what the employer actually did.

05



NHS / STATISTICS / WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

# London Nursing Staff Report a Sharp Rise in Violence

Violence against nursing staff is no longer confined to emergency departments.

|                                                |                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| SOURCE<br>Royal College of Nursing             | PERIOD<br>2020 to 2025                               |
| REPORTED RISE<br>252% in London member reports | RISK<br>Punching, kicking, spitting and racial abuse |

The Royal College of Nursing reported a 252% rise in London members reporting violence and aggression at work between 2020 and 2025. Nursing staff described being punched, kicked, spat at, strangled and racially abused. The RCN said the problem reaches wards, GP practices and community settings, not just emergency departments. It is a clear warning that abuse can become normalised across routine healthcare work.

## VINCE'S VIEW

I would treat this as a warning about normalisation. When staff start expecting violence, the organisation has already lost control of the risk. Employers need reporting routes, local risk assessment and practical training that reflects the setting staff actually work in.

## WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Treat violence as a foreseeable workplace risk, not a local irritation.
- Check whether staff are reporting incidents or simply absorbing them.
- Build training around wards, clinics and community contact, not just A&E.

02  
GP

NHS / THREATENING COMMUNICATIONS / PRIMARY CARE

# NHS Staff Targeted With More Than 1,200 Threatening Emails

A GP surgery does not need a front counter for staff to be threatened.

|                                                                  |                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>WORKER</p> <p>GPs, surgery staff and healthcare providers</p> | <p>THREAT</p> <p>Stabbing and acid attack threats</p>       |
| <p>VOLUME</p> <p>More than 1,200 emails</p>                      | <p>OUTCOME</p> <p>Restraining order and treatment order</p> |

Norfolk Police reported that Gary Lanchester sent NHS workers more than 1,200 emails, including threats to stab staff and pour acid on them. The emails targeted GPs, surgery staff and healthcare providers. He received a suspended prison sentence, a restraining order and a mental health treatment order. The case shows that staff can face serious workplace threats without being face to face with the aggressor.

VINCE'S VIEW

Remote abuse still creates a workplace risk. Managers need thresholds for ending contact, preserving evidence and escalating threats before staff are left to absorb it alone. A behaviour agreement is not a control unless it is monitored and acted on.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Set thresholds for ending threatening calls and emails.
- Preserve messages, recordings and linked incident records.
- Include remote abuse in staff welfare and escalation procedures.

03  
SW

SOCIAL CARE / LONE WORKER / HOME VISITS

# Social Workers Face Abuse on Solo Home Visits

A home visit is not low risk just because it is routine.

SOURCE

**UNISON survey**

SETTING

**Solo home visits**

REPORTED ABUSE

**Verbal abuse, threats and violence**

CONCERN

**More than a quarter did not report abuse**

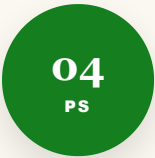
UNISON reported that half of social workers experienced verbal abuse during solo home visits in the previous 12 months. The report included staff examples involving threats of death and physical violence. More than a quarter of those who received abuse did not report it. That gap matters because unreported abuse is risk the employer cannot properly assess.

## VINCE'S VIEW

Solo visits need proper controls, not just diary entries. I would want to see visit planning, dynamic risk assessment, check-in arrangements and clear authority to leave. If staff believe abuse is part of the job, reporting has already broken down.

## WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Review lone-worker controls for visits in private homes.
- Give staff clear authority to withdraw when risk changes.
- Check whether non-reporting is hiding repeat patterns.



PUBLIC SECTOR / POLITICS / THREATS AND HARASSMENT

# Parliamentary Staff Report Threats and Fear at Work

Public-facing political staff are often the ones absorbing the anger first.

|                                                                   |                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>WORKERS</div> <div>MPs' staff</div>                          | <div>RISK</div> <div>Threats, abuse and security concerns</div>         |
| <div>SETTING</div> <div>Constituency and public-facing work</div> | <div>ISSUE</div> <div>Protection for staff behind the public role</div> |

The Guardian reported survey evidence from UK MPs' staff showing serious concerns about threats, abuse and security. Staff described exposure to threatening communications, discriminatory comments and pressure that could compromise safety. The elected representative may be the public target, but the worker answering the phone, opening the door or handling casework can become the person exposed.

## VINCE'S VIEW

Reception staff, caseworkers and administrators are often treated as the face of the organisation. That creates foreseeable risk. Security arrangements must protect the people actually taking the calls, meeting the public and handling the anger.

## WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Assess risk to staff behind public-facing roles.
- Give reception and casework teams clear escalation routes.
- Review threats as workplace incidents, not just political noise.

05  
LAW

LEGISLATION / HARASSMENT / EMPLOYER DUTY

# October 2026 Harassment Duties Move Closer

The tribunal question will be what the employer actually did.

**CHANGE****Reasonable steps to all reasonable steps****THIRD PARTIES****Customers, patients, tenants and service users****TIMING****October 2026****EVIDENCE****Role-specific, current and documented**

Acas states that October 2026 changes under the Employment Rights Act 2025 will make employers liable for third-party harassment unless they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent it. The change also strengthens the sexual harassment duty from reasonable steps to all reasonable steps. For employers dealing with customers, clients, patients, tenants and service users, the practical issue will be evidence of prevention.

**VINCE'S VIEW**

A generic policy and tick-box e-learning will not be enough. Employers need role-specific risk assessment, staff training, manager response plans and records showing that controls were reviewed. The clock is now short enough that preparation needs to be visible.

**WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW**

- Identify where third-party harassment is foreseeable.
- Train staff and managers around real contact scenarios.
- Keep evidence that controls were checked and improved.

# Under Two Months to October 2026. Evidence of Prevention Will Matter.

52

DAYS FROM PUBLICATION TO  
THE EXPECTED OCTOBER  
2026 DUTY CHANGE

From October 2026, the duty to prevent sexual harassment is expected to move from reasonable steps to all reasonable steps. Employers will also face third-party harassment liability across the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 unless they can show that they took all reasonable steps to prevent it.

The practical issue is evidence. A generic e-learning module and signed policy will not show that staff were prepared for the situations they actually face.

- Risk assessments should identify where harassment by patients, customers, tenants, pupils, relatives or service users is foreseeable.
- Training should be current, role-specific and supported by trusted reporting routes.
- Managers should know how to respond, preserve evidence and prevent recurrence.
- Records should show that controls were reviewed after incidents and complaints.

**The tribunal question will be simple: what did the employer do, and was it effective in the real workplace?**

# 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.

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LONE WORKER SAFETY

MANAGING CHALLENGING  
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*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.*