

# RED FLAG WEEKLY

ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

EDITION  
17

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14 SEPTEMBER 2026

SAFETYSOLUTIONSTRAINING.CO.UK

## THIS WEEK'S BRIEFING

# Four serious incidents. One approaching legal change.

This edition examines rising assaults against housing staff, a council operative bitten during public bin duties, a classroom stabbing in Pembrokeshire, targeted abuse of charity volunteers, and the planned harassment reforms due on 30 October 2026.

### HOUSING

01

Rising frontline abuse: recorded assaults against council and housing association staff increased sharply.

### DOGS

02

Canine risk during council duties: an operative was bitten while emptying public bins.

### EDUCATION

03

Classroom attack sentencing: a pupil received four and a half years' youth detention.

### CHARITY

04

Volunteer safety under threat: the RNLI reviewed security after targeted online abuse.

### LEGISLATION

05

Current and planned duties: employers must keep the two legal tests distinct.



HOUSING / WORKPLACE VIOLENCE / STATISTICS

# Assaults Against Frontline Housing Staff Rise Again

Verbal and physical assaults against council and housing association staff rose in 2025. The Health and Safety Executive classifies both as work-related violence.

|                                                                        |                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>SOURCE</div> <div>Inside Housing findings, 2 September 2026</div> | <div>COUNCILS</div> <div>4,403 assaults in 2025, up 16%</div>                        |
| <div>INCIDENT TYPE</div> <div>About 82% verbal</div>                   | <div>HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS</div> <div>3,338 assaults across 29 surveyed, up 20%</div> |

Inside Housing reported Freedom of Information results from more than 200 councils in England, Scotland and Wales. Those authorities recorded 4,403 assaults against housing staff in 2025, up 16%. About 82% were verbal. Physical assaults made up 8% and rose 9% where councils replied in both years. A survey of 29 housing associations recorded 3,338 assaults, up 20% year on year.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees so far as is reasonably practicable. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk. The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related violence as: 'Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.' This includes verbal abuse or threats face to face, online and by telephone, as well as physical attacks. It can come from members of the public, customers, clients, patients, service users and students. The incident must be connected with the work activity.

The Hyde Group is a large housing association and a G15 landlord. It says it owns or manages around 125,000 homes. Chief operating officer Neal Ackcral wrote that threats and assaults on customer-facing colleagues have risen. Across G15 and CASE members, 16% of those roles were verbally or physically abused in 2024. Hyde closed offices six times in 2023 after threats. Hyde calls its response a zero-tolerance approach. That is organisational practice. It is not a named statutory duty of its own.

## VINCE'S VIEW

A policy is only useful if staff can use it under pressure. Can the officer leave the property, end the call and trust the manager to support that decision? Or will the same officer be sent back later that afternoon? Hyde is describing a problem across housing. The legal duty already sits within health and safety law. Employers must turn it into decisions that protect staff.

## WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Record verbal abuse and threats as work-related violence under the Health and Safety Executive definition.
- Give neighbourhood, repairs and income staff clear authority to withdraw, then support that decision.
- Set and enforce consequences for unacceptable behaviour. Review the risk before any further contact or visit.

Inside Housing · Health and Safety Executive · The Hyde Group

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/exclusive-data-from-inside-housing-management-reveals-rising-assaults-against-front-facing-housing-staff-98562>  
Health and Safety Executive: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/employer/index.htm>. Hyde: [hyde-housing.co.uk](https://hyde-housing.co.uk), accessed 13 September 2026.

02  
DOG

LOCAL AUTHORITY / OUTDOOR STAFF / DOGS

## Council Operative Bitten During Routine Public Bin Duties

A large dog on an extended lead bit a Saffron Walden Town Council operative, exposing the dynamic animal risks faced during everyday outdoor work.

## WORKER

**Saffron Walden Town Council operative**

## DATE

**26 May 2026, The Common**

## INCIDENT

**Large dog on an extended lead**

## OUTCOME

**Protective clothing damaged. No serious injury**

Essex Live reported that a Saffron Walden Town Council employee was emptying bins on The Common on 26 May 2026 when a large dog on an extended lead bit them. The operative avoided serious injury. The bite damaged protective clothing. The owner was apologetic. The council said the outcome could have been different and urged owners to keep dogs under control at all times.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires the council to manage foreseeable risks to its employees. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require those risks to be assessed. Grounds maintenance, public-bin duties, inspections and housing visits can all bring staff within reach of dogs. An extended lead is not an effective control if the animal can still reach the worker.

**VINCE'S VIEW**

Every outdoor round needs a practical dog-risk plan. Staff need to know the safe distance, when to stop the task and when to withdraw. The damaged clothing and the near-miss must be recorded. Employers should not wait for a serious bite before they change the controls.

**WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW**

- Include animal encounters in the suitable and sufficient risk assessment for outdoor and visiting work.
- Give staff clear authority to stop the task and withdraw when a dog is not controlled.
- Log bites, clothing damage and near-misses, then flag high-risk locations before the next round.

**Essex Live**

<https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/council-worker-emptying-bins-bit-10987299>

Published: 28 May 2026. Incident: 26 May 2026.



EDUCATION / CLASSROOM VIOLENCE / SENTENCING

# Teacher Stabbed in Isolated Classroom: Pupil Sentenced

A pupil received four and a half years' youth detention after wounding a history teacher in an empty classroom at Milford Haven Comprehensive School.

|                                                                                    |                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>WORKER</div> <div>History teacher Vicki Williams</div>                        | <div>COURT</div> <div>Swansea Crown Court, 3 September 2026</div>     |
| <div>VERDICT</div> <div>Wounding with intent. Not guilty of attempted murder</div> | <div>SENTENCE</div> <div>Four and a half years' youth detention</div> |

The Pembrokeshire Herald reported that a 16-year-old boy, who cannot be named because of his age, was sentenced at Swansea Crown Court on 3 September 2026. He attacked Vicki Williams in an empty classroom shortly after 3pm on 5 February. He asked her to check his work, then produced a kitchen knife from his bag and struck her in the head. She suffered a wound to her scalp, scratches to her back and cuts to her hands. She has not returned to work. The jury convicted him of wounding with intent and cleared him of attempted murder. He had admitted possessing a knife on school premises.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require schools, as employers, to assess foreseeable risks and put effective controls in place. There is no single statutory rule requiring a second adult in every classroom. The assessment must reflect the activity, timing, isolation, known behaviour and available emergency response.

### VINCE'S VIEW

A busy school can leave a teacher isolated in seconds. A closed door, the end of the school day and no colleague nearby change the situation. Staff need a clear way to raise the alarm, leave the room and call for immediate support. The response plan must work in the classroom, not only on paper.

### WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Assess isolated classroom contact, after-school work and known behavioural concerns together.
- Give staff immediate alarm and withdrawal options, supported by a practised response.
- Record the incident, review the controls and provide continuing support without forcing a return.



CHARITY / VOLUNTEERS / ONLINE THREATS

# RNLI Strengthens Security After Volunteers Targeted Online

Names, photographs and reported home addresses were shared after public protests, turning online hostility into a foreseeable safety risk for volunteers and their families.

|                                                                           |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>ORGANISATION</div> <div>RNLI staff and volunteers</div>              | <div>TRIGGER</div> <div>Protests in Portsmouth and Dover, 5 to 6 September 2026</div> |
| <div>RISK</div> <div>Names, photographs and addresses shared online</div> | <div>RESPONSE</div> <div>Security review and branded-clothing guidance</div>          |

BBC and The Independent reported that RNLI volunteers were targeted after anti-migrant protests in Dover on 5 September and Portsmouth on 6 September 2026. Names, photographs and, in some reports, home addresses were shared online. Posts branded crew as traitors. RNLI chief executive Peter Sparkes said some volunteers and staff had faced online abuse and, in the worst cases, physical abuse. He called it wholly unacceptable. The charity said it was enhancing security, reviewing procedures, and advising people that, where appropriate, they could choose not to wear RNLI branded clothing in public. Volunteers were told they could leave a conversation or close for the day if they needed to. Sussex Police said it was supporting the RNLI and checking whether social media content was criminal.

Health and Safety Executive guidance says that an organisation with at least one employee must include volunteers in its risk assessment where its work activities expose them to risk. It should provide volunteers with the same level of protection as employees carrying out similar activities and facing the same risk. The legal position arises under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Organisations run only by volunteers may instead fall outside that Act, although civil duties can still apply.

### VINCE'S VIEW

A volunteer wearing the organisation's clothing is visible to the public. If that role leads to names and home addresses being shared, the threat can follow the volunteer home. The organisation needs a clear withdrawal decision, support for the family and an immediate route to the police. No volunteer should be left to manage that alone.

### WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Include staff and volunteers in assessments of online targeting, protests and public hostility.
- Set clear withdrawal, internal reporting and police referral routes before an incident.
- Review physical security and support anyone whose identity or home address has been exposed.



LEGISLATION / HARASSMENT / EMPLOYER DUTY

# Current and Planned Harassment Duties: Keep the Legal Tests Distinct

The current statutory duty concerns reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. Wider third-party protection remains prospective.

|                                                                                                      |                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>CURRENT LEGISLATION</p> <p><b>Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023</b></p> | <p>CURRENT TEST</p> <p><b>Reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment</b></p> |
| <p>PLANNED LEGISLATION</p> <p><b>Employment Rights Act 2025 sections 20 and 21</b></p>               | <p>PLANNED DATE</p> <p><b>30 October 2026. Re-check before publication</b></p>  |

The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 is the current law in Great Britain. From 26 October 2024, Equality Act 2010 section 40A requires an employer to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees. Sexual harassment here means unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It is not a general violence duty and not third-party liability on its own.

Employment Rights Act 2025 section 20 is planned to commence on 30 October 2026. It will change the Equality Act 2010 section 40A duty to all reasonable steps, while remaining limited to sexual harassment. Employment Rights Act 2025 section 21 is planned to add liability where an employer permits a third party to harass an employee because it failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent it. The provision uses the harassment scope in Equality Act 2010 section 26. It does not cover every protected characteristic. Employment Rights Act 2025 sections 20 and 21 remain prospective. The government timetable gives 30 October 2026, subject to parliamentary processes. Re-check commencement before publication.

VINCE'S VIEW

These duties deal with related risks, but they are not interchangeable. The current duty is about preventing sexual harassment. The planned change adds a higher test and third-party protection. Work-related violence remains a health and safety issue. Policies, risk assessments and training must show which duty they are addressing.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Use the full legal titles and keep current and prospective duties separate.
- Identify roles exposed to third-party harassment and review the controls before 30 October 2026.
- Keep evidence of role-specific training, reporting, manager action and post-incident review.

legislation.gov.uk and GOV.UK timetable

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/36/section/20> · <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-the-plan-to-make-work-pay-and-employment-rights-act/plan-to-make-work-pay-and-employment-rights-act-timeline-update>  
Checked: 13 September 2026. Acas harassment pages last updated 26 August 2026.

# 46 Days Until the Planned Harassment Reforms. Preparation Must Be Evidenced.



The current statutory duty comes from the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and Equality Act 2010 section 40A. It requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. It does not create a general work-related violence duty or standalone third-party liability.

Employment Rights Act 2025 section 20 is planned to raise the sexual harassment test to all reasonable steps on 30 October 2026. Employment Rights Act 2025 section 21 is planned to introduce third-party harassment liability. Both provisions remain prospective and the commencement position must be checked before publication.

- Identify roles exposed to harassment by customers, tenants, pupils, service users and other third parties.
- Provide practical, role-specific training and retain clear delivery records.
- Give managers effective reporting, evidence-preservation and escalation procedures.
- Record post-incident reviews and the changes made to prevent recurrence.

**The evidence must show what the employer did, why it was appropriate and whether it worked 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 for housing associations, councils, charities, shops, schools and other public-facing organisations.

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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. This briefing is not legal advice. Law can change. Check official sources on the day.*