



RED FLAG

WEEKLY

ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

EDITION
21

MONDAY
19 OCTOBER 2026

safetysolutionstraining.co.uk

THIS WEEK'S BRIEFING

Frontline Aggression Tests Staffing, Powers and Court Outcomes

This edition looks at sexual abuse faced by London ambulance staff every day, sentences handed to men who assaulted paramedics, violence in police custody suites, a tethered dog used against a supermarket security guard, needle threats against retail staff, and new enforcement powers for council housing officers.

HEALTH

London Ambulance Service reports 462 sexual abuse incidents in a year. **01**

COURTS

Magistrates hand community orders to men who assaulted paramedics. **02**

CUSTODY

UNISON survey finds 77% of police custody staff face physical threats. **03**

RETAIL

A shoplifter urges a tethered dog to bite a supermarket security guard. **04**

THREATS

A serial robber is jailed after threatening a shop worker with a needle. **05**

HOUSING

Swansea housing officers are handed statutory anti-social behaviour powers. **06**



HEALTH / SEXUAL HARASSMENT / AMBULANCE

London Ambulance Service Staff Report Sexual Abuse Every Day

Trust figures record 462 incidents over 12 months, with almost a third of reports involving call handlers abused over the telephone.

REPORTS 462 incidents between July 2025 and July 2026	CALL HANDLERS Almost a third of all reports targeted phone staff
STAFF SURVEY Almost two-thirds of women on ambulances affected	ACTION Violence Reduction Unit, CCTV, audio and body-worn cameras

On 14 October 2026, London Ambulance Service NHS Trust reported that staff were recording sexual abuse every day. Between July 2025 and July 2026, they logged 462 incidents, including sexual threats, groping, indecent exposure, explicit comments and sexual violence. Almost a third of these reports involved call handlers being abused by callers over the telephone.

The trust launched its "We show up. Show some respect." campaign, using footage from ambulance CCTV and body-worn cameras. Paramedic Gosha Graf described being groped by a patient she was assessing. The patient then refused care, and records showed that he had sexually assaulted another paramedic earlier that day. He was jailed for 18 weeks for sexual assault in March this year.

Chief Executive Jason Killens said this behaviour was not part of the job and that the trust would push for prosecution where crimes had been committed. Chief Paramedic Pauline Cranmer acknowledged that the figures still underestimated the true scale of the problem.

The NHS Staff Survey found that almost two-thirds of women working on ambulances had experienced unwanted sexual behaviour from patients, service users, relatives or members of the public during the previous 12 months. More than one in five said it had happened at least three times.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff so far as is reasonably practicable. That includes protecting workers from work-related violence. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must maintain suitable and sufficient risk assessments.

The current preventative duty under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and section 40A of the Equality Act 2010 requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees. From 30 October 2026, section 20 of the Employment Rights Act 2025 raises that standard to all reasonable steps. That change is not yet in force on this cover date.

London Ambulance Service has a dedicated Violence Reduction Unit that supports staff from the point of reporting, helps gather evidence and liaises with police and prosecutors. Ambulances have CCTV and audio recording, crews can use body-worn cameras, and incident reports are reviewed to identify patterns and repeat offenders. These systems can provide valuable evidence, but the learning must lead to practical changes in how the next call or visit is managed.

VINCE'S VIEW

These figures make it clear that sexual harassment is not confined to offices. Frontline crews and call handlers face deliberate sexual abuse while carrying out their jobs. Staff answering emergency calls should never have to accept sexual threats as part of their working day.

Recording incidents is important, but it is not enough if the same caller can ring back and target another member of staff. Employers need to take responsibility for repeat callers, make sure records are flagged promptly and give workers clear support when they need to end an abusive call.

We cover these issues directly in our Managing Challenging Phone Calls and Conflict Management training. Staff need clear procedures they can follow, and managers need to make sure those procedures work in practice.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Set clear procedures for call handlers to warn callers and terminate sexually abusive calls.
- Ensure incident records immediately flag repeat phone numbers and aggressive individuals.
- Use audio and video evidence systematically to support police investigations.
- Train public-facing staff to recognise and challenge inappropriate sexual behaviour at an early stage.

02
CRT

EMERGENCY SERVICES / VIOLENCE AGAINST STAFF / SENTENCING

Community Orders for Violent Attacks on Paramedics

Magistrates' courts in Wolverhampton and Wrexham have imposed community sentences on men who assaulted ambulance staff while they were providing treatment.

WALSALL ATTACK

Two female paramedics. Fingers bent back, breast grabbed

WALSALL SENTENCE

12-month community order, £120 fine, £100 compensation

WREXHAM ASSAULT

Paramedic of 28 years punched in the face in ambulance

WREXHAM SENTENCE

12-month community order, probation, £100 compensation

On 17 October 2026, Birmingham Live reported that Ion Tudor, 57, was sentenced at Wolverhampton Magistrates' Court on Monday 12 October 2026. West Midlands Police had arrested Tudor on 15 June 2026 after an ambulance was called to an unconscious person in Walsall.

Inside the ambulance, Tudor refused treatment and became obstructive. He gripped a female paramedic's wrist, made sexual comments, bent her fingers back and then grabbed another paramedic's breast. Both paramedics pressed their panic buttons.

Tudor, who had a 2022 caution for assaulting an emergency worker, admitted two counts of assault by beating of an emergency worker and one count of using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour. The court imposed a 12-month community order with alcohol and mental health treatment requirements, a £120 fine, a £114 victim surcharge and £100 compensation for each victim.

In a separate case, reported by the Wales Times on 10 October 2026 from an original report by The Leader, Callum Goult, 30, was sentenced at Wrexham Magistrates' Court. On 5 October 2026, Welsh Ambulance Service paramedic Michael Jones attended a red-graded call for Goult, who had a head injury.

While waiting in the ambulance at Wrexham Maelor Hospital, Goult punched the paramedic in the face "with malice". Goult admitted assault by beating of an emergency worker and two shop thefts. He received a 12-month community order with probation, a six-month alcohol treatment requirement and an order to pay £100 compensation.

These assaults highlight the physical risks faced by frontline workers in confined environments such as ambulances. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, employers must protect staff from foreseeable violence so far as is reasonably practicable. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess these risks and put appropriate controls in place.

Employers cannot control the sentences handed down by the courts, and their internal safety arrangements cannot depend on court penalties to protect staff. Panic buttons, support from a second crew member and clear ways to withdraw quickly are essential practical controls when a patient becomes hostile.

VINCE'S VIEW

Sentences like these can leave frontline staff feeling that the system has not protected them. When a worker is punched in the face or grabbed sexually inside an ambulance, a fine or community order may seem a poor reflection of the harm caused.

That makes the employer's own safety arrangements even more important. We cannot rely on the courts to deter every assault. Risk assessments, Lone Worker Safety arrangements and panic alarm systems must provide practical protection when an incident develops.

Staff also need to know that management will support them if they withdraw to a safe place and wait for the police. That decision should never be left in doubt when violence is taking place.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Check vehicle panic alarms to ensure alerts are transmitted immediately and include reliable location data.
- Reinforce dynamic risk assessment training so staff can step back before entering confined spaces with agitated individuals.
- Provide appropriate trauma and welfare support after any physical or sexual assault.
- Give crews clear authority to withdraw to a place of safety and call the police when violence begins.



CUSTODY / STAFFING LEVELS / WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Staff Shortages Drive High Violence in Police Custody Suites

A UNISON survey finds that 77% of detention staff face physical threats, while unsafe staffing levels have become a regular concern.

SURVEY COHORT 612 police custody and detention staff	PHYSICAL THREATS 77% faced physical threats from detainees
FIRST AID NEEDED 35% assaulted badly enough to need first aid	STAFFING CRISIS 68% report staffing shortages on most days

On 15 October 2026, UNISON published the findings of its In Detention 2026 survey, which examined the working conditions of 612 police custody and detention staff across England, Wales and Scotland. The respondents were police staff rather than police officers.

The findings show that 77% of custody staff had faced physical threats from detainees. Meanwhile, 63% had experienced violence that did not require medical attention, and 35% had been assaulted badly enough to need first aid.

The survey also found that 85% had endured verbal abuse, 45% had faced sexism or misogyny, and 42% had experienced racism.

Alongside these levels of violence, 68% reported staff shortages on most days, 51% said staffing fell to unsafe levels at least weekly, and only 24% worked under an agreed minimum staffing ratio.

UNISON reported that 80% had experienced stress, low mood, anxiety or other mental health difficulties during the previous 12 months. Of those, 94% linked their difficulties to work, and 93% of that group identified insufficient staffing as a cause. General secretary Andrea Egan called on police leaders to introduce safe minimum staffing levels to protect detention workers.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, employers must provide a safe working environment so far as is reasonably practicable. In secure custody settings, safe staffing numbers are a primary control under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

When staffing falls below safe operating levels, controls intended to prevent harm during cell checks and detainee handling are undermined. Staffing is not simply a question of resources. Where violence is foreseeable, it is part of the risk control.

VINCE'S VIEW

These figures describe a working environment under considerable pressure. Custody suites are high-hazard workplaces where staff regularly deal with agitated, intoxicated and volatile individuals. Managing that risk requires enough people on duty.

When staffing falls, basic safety arrangements can break down and staff may be left dealing with people alone when they should have support. We see similar pressures in social care, mental health units and supported housing.

A risk assessment cannot simply assume that the right number of staff will always be available. It needs to set out what happens when staffing falls below safe levels. If there are not enough people to manage the risk safely, activities must be reduced or stopped until adequate cover is restored.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Establish and enforce clear minimum staffing ratios for all high-risk operational areas.
- Set explicit trigger points for stopping non-essential tasks when staffing levels fall.
- Include de-escalation and breakaway training suited to confined custodial environments.
- Monitor stress, burnout and mental health indicators as key health and safety measures.



RETAIL / DANGEROUS DOGS / WEAPONS

Shoplifter Weaponised Tethered Dog Against Shop Security Guard

A thief in Stockton tried to set a large dog on a supermarket security worker during a violent confrontation.

INCIDENT DATE 10 August 2026. Aldi, Portrack Lane, Stockton	AGGRESSION Thief took hold of tethered dog and ordered it to bite
PRIOR CONVICTION Jailed for 27 months in 2023 for dog out of control	OUTCOME Defendant jailed for 18 months at Teesside Crown Court

Teesside Live reported on 16 October 2026 that Matthew Graham, 29, had been jailed for 18 months at Teesside Crown Court.

On 10 August 2026, Graham entered Aldi on Portrack Lane in Stockton. A security guard saw him putting chicken into his pockets and told him to leave. As Graham left, he grabbed a crate of Bud Light.

During a struggle with the guard, Graham took hold of a large black dog tethered outside the shop and "called for the dog to bite the guard", the prosecutor told the court. Faced with the immediate threat of a dog attack, the security worker released his hold on Graham.

The dog's owners then came out of the shop and asked for their dog back. The court heard that Graham had previously been jailed for 27 months in 2023 for being in charge of a dog dangerously out of control causing injury, after using his own dog as a weapon. He had also been banned from keeping dogs.

The sentence covered a Greggs burglary, further thefts, and possession of an offensive weapon and a pointed article. During the Greggs incident, the manager had waited alone for four hours for the police to arrive.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, commercial employers have a legal duty to protect frontline workers, including retail and security staff, from foreseeable violence. The risks posed by dogs are not limited to residential visits. Animals left tethered and unmonitored outside commercial premises can also create a hazard.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require risk assessments to consider the area outside a shop, where a physical confrontation can spill over. Using a dog as an improvised weapon shows why security interventions must prioritise distance, tactical disengagement and personal safety over protecting property.

VINCE'S VIEW

This incident shows how quickly an everyday confrontation can escalate when someone uses whatever is available to them. A dog tethered outside a shop entrance is an environmental risk that staff may pass every day without giving it much thought.

Retail and security workers can feel under pressure to prevent theft, but no crate of beer or food is worth a serious dog bite or physical injury. Our Dangerous Dogs Awareness training covers recognising animal body language and keeping a safe distance. Staff also need clear permission to let an offender go when a dog or another weapon enters the situation.

Employers must make it clear that any physical intervention should stop as soon as a new and immediate hazard makes it unsafe to continue.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Instruct security and retail staff to disengage immediately if weapons or animals are introduced.
- Assess shop entrances for hazards, including tethered dogs left without supervision.
- Review lone-working procedures for retail managers attending call-outs to closed premises or waiting for emergency responses.
- Ensure security staff, including contractors, are fully included in incident reporting and welfare arrangements.

05
SHP

RETAIL / WEAPONS / REPEAT OFFENDERS

Serial Supermarket Robber Threatened Staff with Needle

A three-year prison sentence follows repeat supermarket robberies in Folkestone, where retail workers faced threats involving weapons.

OFFENDER Melissa Goldstone, 42. Jailed for three years	LOCATIONS Sainsbury's Park Farm and Tesco Dover Road, Folkestone
THREATS Staff member threatened with a needle. Guard threatened with stabbing	CHARGES Three counts of robbery and assaulting an emergency worker

On 13 October 2026, Kent Online reported that Melissa Goldstone, 42, had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment after targeting supermarkets across Folkestone.

According to Kent Online, she threatened to stab a staff member with a needle after being challenged about a trolley full of stolen shopping. Her offending began at Sainsbury's in Park Farm. She returned the following week and threatened to stab a security guard who approached her.

On 22 July, at Tesco on Dover Road, she made several threats of physical harm against a shop worker. She was charged with three counts of robbery and assaulting an emergency worker, admitted all the offences and was sentenced to three years in prison.

Following the sentencing, investigating officer PC Samuel Glennie said that nobody should face threats or intimidation simply for doing their job.

A threat involving a needle presents both a physical and a psychological risk to the worker. Employers have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to protect staff, so far as is reasonably practicable, from violent behaviour.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess the risks associated with confrontational customer interactions, particularly where repeat offenders are involved. Where individuals are known to carry sharps or weapons, routine theft-prevention approaches are not appropriate. Controls should focus on early identification, banning procedures, liaison with the police, and clear instructions that staff must not pursue or physically challenge aggressive shoplifters.

VINCE'S VIEW

A threat with a needle can be one of the most frightening situations a frontline worker faces. The worry about possible blood-borne infection can continue long after the incident itself has ended.

When an offender returns to the same shop, staff safety cannot depend on informal warnings passed between shifts. There needs to be a formal system that identifies repeat offenders, alerts the relevant staff and makes it clear when nobody should engage with the individual.

On our Conflict Management courses, we work on recognising signs that an assault may be about to happen, maintaining physical distance and knowing when to step away. Property can be written off. The safety of the people working there cannot.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Introduce clear procedures prohibiting staff from physically detaining suspected shoplifters.
- Establish prompt alerting systems so staff across local sites know about repeat aggressive offenders.
- Provide timely psychological support and medical assessments for staff exposed to threats involving sharps.
- Review shop layouts to ensure staff have clear escape routes at till points and exits.

06
HOU

HOUSING / ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR / STAFF SAFETY

Swansea Housing Staff Granted Direct Enforcement Powers

The council cabinet has delegated statutory powers to housing officers, increasing the need for effective conflict management and personal safety arrangements.

AUTHORITY

Swansea Council cabinet. Reported 16 October 2026

POWERS

Community protection warnings, notices, and closure orders

LEGISLATION

Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

PARTNERSHIP

Backed by South Wales Police for serious nuisance and cuckooing

The Swansea Standard reported on 16 October 2026 that Swansea Council cabinet had approved the delegation of formal anti-social behaviour enforcement powers to housing and city centre management staff.

Under provisions in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, designated housing and city centre staff will be able to use community protection warnings and community protection notices, while housing officers will be able to use closure orders. These powers are intended to address serious nuisance, criminality, exploitation and suspected cuckooing, with support from South Wales Police.

Deputy leader Andrea Harrington referred to "a significant rise unfortunately in complex behaviours", while council leader Rob Stewart described the powers as a "really valuable tool in our armoury". The cabinet report stated that training and oversight would be provided for staff using these powers.

Giving housing staff direct enforcement powers changes the nature of frontline visits. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires local authorities to maintain safe systems of work so far as is reasonably practicable. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require risk assessments to be reviewed when there has been a significant change in the work.

Serving legal warnings or preparing closure notices for properties linked to criminality and exploitation can substantially increase the risk of hostility. Figures published by Inside Housing Management on 2 September 2026 showed that councils recorded 4,403 assaults on housing staff in 2025, an increase of 16%.

Moving from housing support to formal enforcement requires robust controls. These may include double-crewing, joint visits with the police for closure orders, and verified lone-worker tracking.

VINCE'S VIEW

Giving housing officers legal enforcement powers changes their relationship with residents. Serving a community protection notice or closing a property linked to cuckooing or criminality can put workers directly in the path of people who are hostile, vulnerable or desperate.

An enforcement visit cannot be treated like a routine tenancy audit. In our Lone Worker Safety and Conflict Management courses, we stress that increased authority can bring an increased risk of confrontation. Staff need thorough training before using these powers, clear rules about when visits must be carried out by two people, and firm management backing to withdraw if a situation becomes volatile.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

- Update risk assessments to reflect the increased hostility that formal enforcement action may generate.
- Require double-crewing or police accompaniment when serving notices at properties where volatility is a concern.
- Provide comprehensive Conflict Management and de-escalation training tailored to enforcement duties.
- Establish formal communication arrangements with local police to share intelligence before notices are served.

11 Days Until the Harassment Reforms Take Effect. The Steps Must Be Real.

11

DAYS FROM THIS COVER DATE TO
30 OCTOBER 2026

The current statutory duty sits under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which inserted section 40A into the Equality Act 2010 on 26 October 2024. Employers are currently required to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees. This is a duty to prevent sexual harassment, not a general duty covering all work-related violence.

On 1 October 2026, the government made The Employment Rights Act 2025 (Commencement No. 6 and Transitional and Saving Provisions) Regulations 2026 (Statutory Instrument 2026/1065). Regulation 3 brings the following provisions into force on 30 October 2026:

- Section 20 of the Employment Rights Act 2025, which raises the sexual harassment duty in the Equality Act 2010 from reasonable steps to all reasonable steps.
- Section 21 of the Employment Rights Act 2025, which introduces employer liability for harassment by third parties such as customers, clients, service users, contractors and members of the public, where the employer has failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent it.
- Section 22 of the Employment Rights Act 2025, which gives a power to make provision about "reasonable steps".

These reforms are prospective. They are not in force on this cover date of 19 October 2026. Current duties remain governed by section 40A of the Equality Act 2010, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Acas guidance on third-party harassment explains that third parties can include customers, clients, service users such as school students or healthcare patients, contractors and members of the public. The interactions may take place face to face or online.

In preparation for 30 October 2026, Acas says employers could take the following steps:

- Regularly assess the risk of third-party harassment and take action to reduce it.
- Monitor and record incidents and the action taken.
- Put clear policies in place and communicate the consequences of harassment directly to the public.
- Train workers in staff safety and de-escalation.
- Strengthen controls in high-risk environments, for example through security cover, personal alarms or body cameras.
- Review lone-working policies and record the operational reasons whenever an identified preventative step is judged not reasonable.

With 11 days remaining, employers need to make sure their preventative arrangements are documented, specific to each role and fully operational across all frontline teams.

legislation.gov.uk · Acas

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2026/1065/made>

The Employment Rights Act 2025 (Commencement No. 6 and Transitional and Saving Provisions) Regulations 2026, made 1 October 2026. Acas, Third party harassment: harassment law changes (guidance page, undated):

<https://www.acas.org.uk/employment-rights-act-2025/harassment-law-changes>

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, social care providers, the NHS and the third sector.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

LONE WORKER SAFETY

DANGEROUS DOGS AWARENESS

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

MANAGING CHALLENGING PHONE
CALLS

DISCUSS TRAINING

Role-specific. Practical. Defensible.

Safety Solutions Training Ltd | 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 checked 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.