RED FLAG WEEKLY

ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

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THIS WEEK'S BRIEFING

When Staff Need Help, What Happens Next?

A member of staff is threatened on a station platform. A nurse reports racist abuse. A housing officer activates a lone worker alarm.

In each situation, the next few minutes matter.

Staff need to know when to step away, how to call for help and who will respond. Just as importantly, the people responsible for providing that support must know what is expected of them.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE 01
HSE figures show violence accounts for 11% of reported non-fatal employee injuries.

TRANSPORT 02
Nearly 4,000 incidents involving London Underground and Overground staff.

NHS 03
A hospital trust strengthens its response to violence and racist abuse.

LONE WORKER SAFETY 04
A care home assault and a housing provider's investment in monitored protection.

RETAIL 05
A serious shop worker assault raises questions about pursuing suspected thieves.

26
RFW

THIS WEEK'S BRIEFING | CONTINUED

When Staff Need Help, What Happens Next?

This week's Health and Safety Executive figures highlight the scale of workplace violence. The other stories bring the issue closer to everyday working life, from staffing and emergency procedures to personal safety devices and support after an incident.

For me, the question is straightforward: When someone needs help, will the arrangements actually work?

This week's five stories

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE 01
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RETAIL 05
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01
WPV

01 | WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Workplace Violence Accounts for 11% of Reported Non-Fatal Employee Injuries

The latest figures are a reminder that violence and aggression remain significant workplace risks.

Health and Safety Executive | 19 November 2026

The Health and Safety Executive published its annual workplace health and safety statistics on 19 November 2026. In Great Britain, employers reported 6,271 non-fatal employee injuries arising from acts of violence under RIDDOR during 2025/26. These accounted for 11% of reported non-fatal employee injuries, compared with 10% the previous year.

Separate figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales provide a broader picture of workplace violence.

The figures

- 6,271: Non-fatal employee injuries linked to acts of violence reported under RIDDOR.
- 11%: Share of reported non-fatal employee injuries attributed to violence.
- 616,000: Estimated incidents of workplace violence in the Crime Survey for England and Wales.
- 266,000 assaults and 350,000 threats: The estimated breakdown of those incidents.

These two sources measure different things. RIDDOR records injuries that meet statutory reporting requirements. The Crime Survey estimates experiences of workplace violence, including threats and incidents that may not result in a reportable injury. The figures should not be added together or treated as directly comparable.

Why this matters to employers

A serious assault may be the incident that attracts attention, but earlier warning signs can be overlooked. Repeated threats, intimidation and verbal abuse may indicate that risks are increasing, even where no physical injury has occurred. Employers need to understand what their staff are experiencing, not simply what appears in formal injury statistics. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to protect employees' health, safety and welfare so far as is reasonably practicable.

Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires suitable and sufficient risk assessments.

The figures do not establish why individual incidents occurred or whether particular employers failed in their duties.

VINCE'S VIEW

When we work with frontline teams, I regularly ask what staff experience on a difficult day and what they consider worth reporting. The answers can be revealing. Some employees have experienced threatening behaviour so frequently that they no longer regard it as unusual. Others may report physical assaults but not the intimidation or repeated verbal abuse that came beforehand.

Those earlier incidents can provide important warning signs.

I would want managers to compare what staff are telling them with the incidents being formally recorded. If employees are experiencing threats that never reach the reporting system, the organisation may not have an accurate picture of the risks.

01
WPV

01 | WORKPLACE VIOLENCE | CONTINUED

Workplace Violence Accounts for 11% of Reported Non-Fatal Employee Injuries

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

1. Speak with frontline staff. Ask about threats, intimidation and repeated abuse, including incidents that may not have been formally reported.
2. Review the working arrangements. Check whether staffing, risk assessments, communication and emergency procedures reflect the situations employees actually encounter.
3. Practise realistic scenarios. Make sure staff understand when to withdraw, how to summon help and what happens after an incident. Apply RIDDOR reporting requirements where relevant.

Sources and legislation

HSE, Health and Safety Statistics 2025 to 2026, 19 November 2026 (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/health-and-safety-statistics-2025-to-2026-annual-release)
HSE, Non-fatal injury statistics (https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causinj/overview.htm)
HSE, Violence at Work 2025/26 (https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causinj/violence/index.htm)
HSE, RIDDOR non-fatal injuries by kind of accident (Table 2), published 19 November 2026 (https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/assets/docs/ridkind.xlsx)
HSE, Reporting and learning from workplace violence (https://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/employer/reporting-learning-from-incidents.htm)
Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 2 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/2)
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulation 3 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/regulation/3)

02
TRN

02 | TRANSPORT

More Than Ten Incidents a Day Involving London Transport Staff

Threats, physical assaults and hate-related abuse continue to affect staff working on London's transport network.

Transport for London | Reported 17 November 2026

Figures obtained by the Press Association show that Transport for London recorded 3,922 incidents involving Underground and Overground employees in the year to March 2026. That represents an average of more than ten recorded incidents each day.

The figures

- 3,922: Recorded incidents involving Underground and Overground staff.
- 840: Physical assaults.
- 1,131: Threats.
- 1,951: Verbal or gestural abuse incidents.
- At least 455: Hate-related incidents within the overall total.
- 1,476: Incidents reported to police, the highest number in at least five years.

The figures highlight the risks faced by staff working at stations, on platforms and in public-facing enforcement roles. The RMT union has called for increased staffing, an end to lone working, safe places of refuge and greater police presence. Transport for London has described measures including body-worn video, enforcement activity and conflict management training.

What the law requires

Since 30 October 2026, section 20 of the Employment Rights Act 2025 has strengthened the Equality Act 2010 duty requiring employers to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment. Section 21 also means an employer must not permit a third party to harass its employees in the course of their employment, and is liable where it failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent the harassment. This can include sexual harassment or harassment related to race by a passenger, where the statutory requirements are met.

These provisions apply in England, Wales and Scotland from 30 October 2026, so they did not apply to the incidents in the TfL figures above.

Not every abusive encounter constitutes unlawful harassment under the Equality Act. However, threats and violence must still be considered under employers' wider health and safety responsibilities.

VINCE'S VIEW

I would want to walk through a difficult shift with the people who actually work it. If someone becomes threatening at a ticket barrier or on a platform, where can the employee go?

Can they withdraw to a safe location? How do they call for assistance? And who is available to respond at that particular time of day? Body-worn video can provide valuable evidence, but it does not replace the need for a safe withdrawal route or an effective response.

The same applies to personal safety alarms and radios. Staff need to know that help is available, how to request it and what will happen when they do. That means practising the response with both frontline employees and the people responsible for supporting them.

02 TRN

02 | TRANSPORT | CONTINUED

More Than Ten Incidents a Day Involving London Transport Staff

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

1. Walk through a threatening incident. Check where staff can withdraw, how they summon assistance and whether help can reach them promptly.
2. Review lone working and staffing arrangements. Consider the risks associated with particular locations, duties and times of day.
3. Test the response. Practise with frontline staff, supervisors and security teams. Check that responsibilities are understood and that reporting and post-incident support arrangements work.

Sources and legislation

Press Association reporting via LBC, 17 November 2026 (https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/tfl-staff-london-abuse-5HjdmRQ_2/)
Government guidance, Workplace sexual harassment and third-party harassment (https://www.business.gov.uk/campaign/employment-changes/employers/workplace-sexual-harassment-and-third-party-harassment/)
Employment Rights Act 2025, sections 20 and 21 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/36)
Commencement Regulations 2026, regulation 3 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/1065/regulation/3/made?view=plain)

03
NHS

03 | NHS

NHS Trust Strengthens Its Response to Violence and Racist Abuse

Hospital staff need confidence that reports of threatening and discriminatory behaviour will be taken seriously and followed up.

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust | 19 November 2026

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust has outlined how it is working more closely with police to improve the response to violence and racist abuse. The trust is participating in Operation Cavell, an initiative bringing together the NHS, police and Crown Prosecution Service to improve protection for healthcare workers.

The reported findings

The trust reported 23 incidents of racism-related violence and aggression since August 2026, compared with four during 2025. It has described changes to incident reporting, information sharing and follow-up arrangements. Staff have also been given opportunities to speak directly with police about concerns, personal safety and managing difficult situations. The trust's wider violence and aggression campaign includes a patient red-card process, with decisions about restrictions taking account of clinical needs and patient safety.

Why this matters

Healthcare employees may encounter aggression from patients, relatives and visitors while carrying out essential duties. Some incidents involve distress, confusion or complex medical needs. Others involve deliberate threats, intimidation or discriminatory abuse. Employers need arrangements that protect staff while recognising clinical responsibilities, safeguarding requirements and the needs of patients.

Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Since 30 October 2026, the third-party harassment provisions introduced by the Employment Rights Act 2025 are also relevant where racist harassment of employees by patients or visitors meets the statutory test and the employer has failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent it.

VINCE'S VIEW

When a member of staff reports racist abuse, they should know who will take responsibility and what happens next. I would bring clinical staff, reception, security and the duty manager together and talk through a realistic incident.

Who intervenes when the behaviour starts? Who decides whether the employee should withdraw? Who can consider restrictions while taking account of clinical needs? And importantly, who checks on the member of staff afterwards?

If those involved give different answers, there is something practical to address. A clear response depends on people understanding their responsibilities and having the confidence to act when required.

03
NHS

03 | NHS | CONTINUED

NHS Trust Strengthens Its Response to Violence and Racist Abuse

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

1. Agree who takes responsibility. Make sure clinical staff, reception, security and managers understand their roles when threatening or racist behaviour occurs.
2. Practise the response together. Use realistic scenarios to test how staff summon assistance, withdraw safely and escalate concerns.
3. Check what happens afterwards. Review incident reporting, evidence preservation, management follow-up and support for affected employees.

Sources and legislation

BHR Hospitals, Working with the police to protect our staff, 19 November 2026 (https://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/news/working-with-the-police-to-protect-our-staff-from-violence-and-racist-abuse-5879)
BHR Hospitals, Violence and aggression campaign (https://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/violence-and-aggression)
Employment Rights Act 2025, section 21 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/36/section/21)
Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 2 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/2)

04
LNW

04 | LONE WORKER SAFETY

Lone Worker Protection: Having a Device Is Only Part of the Answer

Two separate reports highlight different aspects of staff safety: the risk of sudden violence and the importance of reliable arrangements for calling for help.

Kent Police | 13 November 2026

Abri contract notice | 18 November 2026

Care home employees assaulted

Kent Police reported that a burglar had been sentenced to two years and eight months' imprisonment following offences involving several incidents. During an incident at a Romford care home in the early hours of 6 August, the offender assaulted a carer who challenged him and attacked a second employee who came to assist.

The police account does not establish the staffing arrangements or whether the first employee was working alone.

It would therefore be inappropriate to draw conclusions about the care home's lone working procedures or whether particular safety equipment would have changed the outcome.

Abri invests in lone worker protection

Separately, a contract award notice published on 18 November records a £452,717 contract, including VAT, for a lone worker protection service for housing provider Abri. The service is expected to support approximately 1,200 users, subject to confirmation. The specification includes an app and/or dedicated personal safety devices, professional monitoring and emergency response arrangements.

The contract demonstrates investment in a monitored protection service. It does not establish how individual employees currently use the equipment or how effectively the arrangements operate in practice.

Why the response matters

Personal safety devices can provide important support for employees working alone. Depending on the service, they may offer emergency alarms, location information, two-way communication, monitored escalation and welfare support.

However, issuing equipment is only one part of an effective lone worker safety system. Employers also need to consider training, supervision, device checks, emergency procedures and how staff obtain help when they feel concerned. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess and manage foreseeable risks, including those associated with lone working.

VINCE'S VIEW

From our experience, issuing a lone worker personal safety device can easily become a tick-box exercise. A signature confirms that someone has received the equipment. It does not demonstrate that they know how to use it confidently. I want employees to show me how they would activate an alarm, explain when they would use it and describe what they expect to happen next.

Staff often need more guidance and practice than a single demonstration provides. Supervisors should also check that devices are charged, working and being carried during lone working duties. A device left in a charging pod is of little use when someone needs help. I would also test the response, not simply the alarm.

Who answers? Can they establish where the worker is? What happens if the employee cannot speak? Who arranges assistance?

04
LNW

04 | LONE WORKER SAFETY | CONTINUED

Lone Worker Protection: Having a Device Is Only Part of the Answer

VINCE'S VIEW

There is another feature I believe deserves much greater attention. Some monitored services offer a live "stay with me" or virtual buddy facility. This allows an employee to speak with a person who can remain on the line, listen, provide reassurance and arrange an appropriate response if concerns escalate.

Consider someone leaving a difficult home visit, returning to their vehicle where people nearby are causing concern, or walking along a secluded lane. They may not yet be facing an emergency, but they would feel safer knowing someone is listening and available to help. Staff should understand when to use this support and when an immediate emergency alarm is necessary. Regular practice helps both the employee and the person responding know what to do when it matters.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

1. Check staff competence. Ask employees to demonstrate how to use their personal safety device, including emergency activation and any available welfare or virtual buddy functions.
2. Check the equipment. Confirm that devices are charged, operational, carried during duties and checked in accordance with the provider's procedures.
3. Practise the complete response. Arrange authorised test alarms, including during relevant evening or lone working periods. Check who responds, how location and risk are established and how assistance is arranged.

Sources and legislation

Kent Police, Care home burglar jailed, 13 November 2026 (https://www.kent.police.uk/news/kent/latest/policing-news/care-home-burglar-jailed-for-nearly-3-years/)
Abri, Lone Worker Protection Service contract award notice (https://tenderline.uk/tenders/lone-worker-protection-service-ocds-h6vhtk-07bee8)
HSE, Lone working (https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/)
Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 2 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/2)
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, regulation 3 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/regulation/3)

The care home incident and Abri contract are separate reports. No connection between them is suggested.

05
RTL

05 | RETAIL

Shop Worker Assault: Why Staff Need Clear Instructions About Pursuing Suspected Thieves

An employee should not be left to make a split-second decision about recovering stolen goods without clear guidance and support.

Hexham News | 15 November 2026

Hexham News reported that a man had been sentenced to two years and eight months' imprisonment following an incident at a One Stop shop in Ryton. The offender took approximately £95 worth of wine and was followed outside by the deputy manager. He then repeatedly struck the employee with a tree branch. The case highlights how quickly a confrontation over stolen goods can become a serious physical assault.

Separately, retail trade union Usdaw reported that 12% of respondents to its interim survey had experienced an assault during the previous 12 months.

These are survey findings, not a national estimate of all retail workers.

The wider safety issue

Retail staff may encounter theft, intimidation, verbal abuse and violence while working in shops and other customer-facing settings. Employers should establish clear procedures for responding to suspected theft, including when employees must disengage and seek assistance. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.

Section 45 of the Crime and Policing Act 2026 creates a standalone offence of assaulting a retail worker in England and Wales. At the time of writing, section 45 is not yet in force.

Regardless of criminal offences, employers remain responsible for appropriate workplace risk assessments, training and safety procedures.

VINCE'S VIEW

I would ask every shop worker a straightforward question. What are you expected to do when someone walks out without paying? The answer should be clear from their first shift. Staff should not feel that they are expected to chase someone, recover stock or physically intervene simply because a theft has occurred.

I would make the organisation's no-pursuit rule explicit, show employees where they can withdraw and explain how they summon assistance. Then I would practise the situation with new starters and shift leaders. Protecting staff must take priority over recovering goods. Employees also need confidence that managers will support them when they follow the agreed safety procedures.

WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO NOW

1. Make the no-pursuit rule clear. Ensure staff understand the organisation's policy on suspected theft, disengagement and physical intervention.
2. Practise a realistic scenario. Include new starters, shift leaders and employees who may be working with limited support.
3. Check post-incident arrangements. Staff should know how to report an incident, preserve evidence safely and access management and welfare support.

05
RTL

05 | RETAIL | CONTINUED

Shop Worker Assault: Why Staff Need Clear Instructions About Pursuing Suspected Thieves

Sources and legislation

Hexham News, Ryton One Stop assault court report, 15 November 2026 (https://hexham-news.co.uk/article/hexham-man-jailed-ryton-one-stop-worker-branch-attack)
Usdaw, Respect Week 2026 (https://www.usdaw.org.uk/latest-news/respect-week-26/)
Home Office, Crime and Policing Act 2026: Retail crime factsheet (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crime-and-policing-act-2026-factsheets/crime-and-policing-act-2026-retail-crime-factsheet)
Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 2 (https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/2)

26 KEY

THE WEEK'S KEY MESSAGE

Staff Need to Know That Help Will Come

Across this week's stories, the circumstances are different, but the management questions are remarkably similar.

Do employees know when to step away from a threatening situation? Can they summon assistance quickly? Do the people expected to respond understand their responsibilities? And what happens to the employee after the immediate danger has passed?

For me, these are questions every employer should be able to answer.

A policy, training course or personal safety device can all contribute to protecting staff. But the arrangements need to work together.

Pick one situation your staff could face this week and talk it through with the people on shift. Ask when they would withdraw, who they would contact and what they would expect to happen next.

If the answers differ, you have identified something practical to work on.

Vince Donovan

Director, Safety Solutions Training Ltd

RED FLAG

WEEKLY

ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE FOR SAFETY PROFESSIONALS

TRAINING BUILT AROUND THE RISKS YOUR STAFF FACE

Safety Solutions Training Ltd provides practical, role-specific training for housing associations, local authorities, NHS organisations, charities and other public-facing services across the UK.

Our training helps employees recognise warning signs, manage difficult interactions, make safer decisions and understand how to obtain assistance when needed.

Sessions are tailored to the risks staff encounter in their everyday work and are available face-to-face or virtually, with up to 15 delegates per session.

Our training programmes

- CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
- LONE WORKER SAFETY
- MANAGING CHALLENGING PHONE CALLS
- DANGEROUS DOGS AWARENESS
- PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Further practical guidance

Visit our Safety Hub (https://www.safetysolutionstraining.co.uk/knowledge) for workplace safety guidance, advice and resources.

For training enquiries, contact Safety Solutions Training Ltd (https://www.safetysolutionstraining.co.uk/contact).

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