



**VIOLENCE AT
WORK -
A SURVEY OF
UNISON
EMPLOYERS
IN SCOTLAND
2017**

October 2017

UNISON Scotland
Health & Safety Conference
20 October 2017

Violent Assaults on Public Service Staff in Scotland
Survey 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

UNISON Scotland has carried out an annual survey of assaults to public sector workers by issuing a Freedom of Information (FoI) request to employers of UNISON members in the public sector since 2006. This year's survey was carried out from July to October 2017 by e-mail.

We ask employers to tell us the total number of assaults which have been reported in the latest year for which they have information. The aggregated returns for 2017 indicate there were **42,421** assaults in total reported in the most recent year - an increase of **1,255** compared with the overall figure of **41,166** in our 2016 survey.

Local Government assaults have risen to **22,006** in our 2017 survey - an **increase of 4,401** over the previous total **17,605**.

In Health Boards there has been an **increase of 2,054** from **17,116** in 2016 to **19,170** in the 2017 survey.

Our first survey of public sector employers in 2006 reported just over 20,000 violent incidents in the NHS and local government - so **the total had already more than doubled in the decade to last year - and it continues to increase.**

UNISON has been in the forefront of the campaign, along with other unions, to have the issue of violence at work recognised, and we believe there is some evidence in the current survey to suggest that the increases we are reporting will have at least been partly due to improved awareness and reporting amongst workers and employers.

However, there are still public sector employers for which low figures and poor information on the issue suggests we still face a good deal of under-reporting. Whether reported or not, every assault on a worker serving the public is an assault too many. But **if we do not have accurate and reliable systems for reporting all violence against public sector workers, truly effective measures to overcome and eliminate the problem will be impossible to achieve.**

Workers in the community and voluntary sector are employed by organisations which are largely funded by the public purse and which work with government, councils and the health service.

In recent years we have been campaigning in the community and voluntary sector for better terms and conditions for workers who provide essential services - especially in social care.

In the last report we included some findings from research amongst UNISON members in this sector which indicated that they often face violence at work.

We have recently published an action toolkit called 'Not Part of the Job' to help in the campaign and have begun to expand this annual survey to include some community and voluntary employers which not currently covered by Freedom of Information legislation.

The massive scale of the problem of violence against public sector workers - including those in the community and voluntary sector - has slowly begun to emerge over the last decade. It is now time for action by employers and stronger legislation, regulation and oversight by government to end the epidemic.

2. LEGISLATION

UNISON Scotland has long been in favour of legislation on violence against all public service workers. We campaigned for and welcomed the introduction of the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act (EWA) in 2005 and its subsequent amendments - although we argued for legislation much wider in scope, covering not just a limited group of emergency workers, but all public service workers.

It remains our view that all workers providing a service to the public should be given specific legal protection.

The EWA has been used extensively since it was passed in 2005, despite claims from some quarters that claimed that there would be no successful prosecutions as common law and other statutory provisions covered most of the Bill's provisions. Proceedings have averaged around 300 per year, and the conviction rate is high as can be seen from the tables below.

People proceeded in Scottish Courts for offences under the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005										
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
EWA 2005 Total	212	287	309	290	336	372	354	310	302	272
EWA Section 1(1)	47	44	76	117	140	164	152	135	134	133
EWA: Section 2(1)	78	95	79	39	42	34	39	31	41	29
EWA: Section 3(1)	3	2	4	2	5	1	2	1	-	2
EWA: Section 5(1)	84	145	150	132	149	173	161	143	127	108

People convicted in Scottish Courts for offences under the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act 2005										
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
EWA 2005 Total	200	275	301	281	323	356	334	292	290	260
EWA Section 1(1)	44	40	74	113	136	159	142	126	131	128
EWA: Section 2(1)	74	90	76	37	39	34	36	30	38	26
EWA: Section 3(1)	3	2	4	2	4	1	2	1	-	2
EWA: Section 5(1)	79	143	147	129	144	162	154	135	121	104

S:1(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder constable/fire officer/person providing assistance in terms of S:35 or S:36 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005/ambulance worker.

S:2(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder other emergency workers responding to emergency circumstances

S:3(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder person assisting emergency worker responding to emergency circumstances

S:5(1) - Assault, obstruct or hinder health worker/ambulance worker/assistant to said workers on hospital premises

(Table extracted from a Scottish Government workbook www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00513047.xlsx published as part of the Criminal Proceedings in Scotland 2015-16 statistics: www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Datasets/DatasetsCrimProc/EWA1)

The emphasis of the EWA is on emergency services - but all workers who deal with the public are at risk of violent assault, as our survey results show. The narrow focus on 'blue light' workers provides protection to predominantly male groups of workers, rather than nurses, care workers and classroom assistants, who are mainly female - and this continues to be an equal opportunities issue.

UNISON supported Hugh Henry MSP's proposed Protection of Workers (Scotland) Bill in 2009 which would have widened the scope for prosecutions, but this fell when opposed by the Scottish Government.

We will support further attempts by MSPs to extend the legislation - and reiterate our call to the Scottish Government that action is necessary and we will continue to hold them to account on this.

3. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION SURVEY 2017

Our annual Violence at Work survey is sent to all local authorities and area health boards in Scotland, as well as to other public sector areas in which UNISON organises which are subject to the Freedom of Information legislation, asking for details on the number of assaults on workers during the past year, broken down by job title or department and nature of assault.

In response to the 2017 survey, we received data from 30 of the 32 local authorities, and 12 of the 14 area health boards, 18 out of 26 FE colleges, 14 universities and seven NDPBs. It is heartening that an increasing number of public bodies are responding to our survey.

It is disappointing to note that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has failed to respond over the past three years. Police Scotland, having also failed to respond over the last two years, has provided a figure for assaults on police officers, but not a full report covering all employees including support staff in detail, which once again they said would prove too costly to prepare - despite providing these over previous surveys both as Police Scotland and the predecessor area forces.

Local Government

Local government figures for violent incident reports have risen by **4,401** over the previous year, from **17,605** to **22,006**.

This year, of the 30 that responded, **23** councils had increases in their assault levels, only **7** had shown decreases, and those that did not respond were categorised as remaining the same. Over the past year, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire councils reported increases of more than 100 violent incidents each. The number of reported incidents in Glasgow went from 2,922 to 3,925 - a rise of 1,003 over the previous year.

Again it is noticeable that local authorities of similar population size can have large differences when it comes to reporting violent attacks on their staff.

To take example we used in last year's report, Orkney and Shetland are the smallest councils by population, each with fewer than 25,000 people, and are broadly similar in many other ways. Yet they continue to have a large difference in reported violent incidents. Shetland had reports of 336 violent incidents in the latest year - down 11 on 2016 - compared with only 19 for Orkney - a rise of 7.

When asked about systems used to enable staff to record incidents - and whether changes or improvements have been made to these in recent years the responses of the councils was as follows:

Orkney: *The staff are required to report these type of incidents through use of the Accident/Incident form. This form was revised earlier this year.*

Shetland: *We use an internal, on-line recording system. The system has been updated to enable bullying incidents to be recorded too.*

It is notable that both are developing their systems, and it could be this is the reason for the rise in the Orkney figure. However on the face of these numbers, it does appear that there is a difference in the basic categorisation of violent incidents in each system. This supports our view that a wider framework, enforced by

legislation, would help to remove anomalies and give a more accurate picture of the real scale of the problem.

We also compared North and South Lanarkshire in the last report - with about 335,000 and 315,000 residents respectively, they are Scotland's fourth and fifth largest councils by population. North Lanarkshire had consistently reported a substantially bigger number of violent incidents each year – ranging from 730 to 861 in the last four surveys - whereas South Lanarkshire had reported substantially fewer, ranging from 347 to 504. But this year, though North Lanarkshire has reported an increase to 912, South Lanarkshire has had a much bigger increase and reports 802 incidents.

It is difficult to judge what the exact causes of this are - but both councils noted in their responses that they have not changed their systems of reporting.

North Lanarkshire: *North Lanarkshire Council uses a software system, Council Incident Reporting & Information System (CIRIS) to record all incidents. There have not been any significant changes to the system relating to incidents reporting in recent years.*

South Lanarkshire: *Violence reports are accepted on either a violent incident report form or a health and safety incident form. No change has taken place within the last 12 months.*

This would support the suggestion that increasing awareness of the problem continues to promote increasing reporting - but worryingly it also supports the perception of an increase in the actual level of violence faced by public service workers.

The largest council by population, Glasgow unsurprisingly has the highest level of reported incidents - and also showed a very substantial increase in the latest year, from 2,922 to 3,925, a rise of 1,003.

In response to our question about systems used and changes or improvements, the reply was as follows:

Glasgow: *The HANDS system. This is a bespoke electronic incident management system introduced in October 2016 which has enhanced management system information related to all types of violent incidents.*

It is likely that the new system has helped to improve the numbers of staff who report incidents - but it reveals an even greater and increasing issue.

The violent incidents in the Glasgow response were categorised as follows:

Physical - 1928
Verbal - 644
Both physical and verbal - 1363
Threatening Behaviour - 90

Edinburgh, the second largest council, reported 1,808 violent incidents in the last year - an increase of 391 from the previous total of 1,417.

Regarding systems used and changes or improvements, the reply was as follows:

Edinburgh: *The City of Edinburgh Council use an electronic recording system called SHE Assure which was introduced in June 2014. Employees access the SHE Assure system through a web portal and there are arrangements in place for those with no IT access. There is a working group supporting an ongoing improvement plan to further tailor the system and the arrangements associated with it to better serve the needs of the Council. Improvements made since the introduction of SHE Assure include the question templates and terminology used, the council structure on the system and how incidents are processed.*

The total number of assaults reported in Edinburgh has more than doubled since 2013, from 902 to 1,808.

The violent incidents in the Edinburgh response were categorised as follows:

Physical Assault - 1396

Threatening/ Aggressive/ Challenging Behaviour/ Verbal Abuse - 334

Other - 8

Reported incidents were down in Dundee by 105, from 739 in the previous year to 694 in the present survey. Meanwhile Aberdeen showed a rise of 155 from 742 to 897.

Dundee had very much the highest level of violent incident reports in the surveys conducted in 2013 and 2014 - with totals of 2,370 and 2,394 respectively. The response to the question about systems of reporting and changes or improvements was as follows:

Dundee: *Aggression and incident reports are provided electronically and can be completed by any employee. These are completed by the victim and passed to their supervisor/manager to investigate and determine remedial actions. The recommendations are then passed up the management chain for approval / and for implementation of remedial measures. The employee is consulted throughout the process and advised of the measures being taken.*

A pilot is to take place using a Mosaic reporting system which will be utilised in one service to avoid the duplication of forms. This will be monitored to determine its effectiveness.

The Council introduced a Potentially Violent Persons Database to record the names and addresses of potential aggressors, and access is made available through specific routes to enable employees to check prior to meeting with the public. This has been well used with a further 23 % increased use by employees over the past 12 months. The aim is to ensure that precautions are taken before meeting a member of the public to try and avoid a situation that leads to the safety of our employees being compromised.

Dundee categorised the 694 reports of violence towards staff into:

Physical - 383
Animal attack - 1
Verbal threats - 10
Damage to Council Property - 22
Verbal Aggression - 123
Damage to Private Property - 1
Brandishing a weapon - 44
threatening behaviour - 42
Other feeling vulnerable - 8

Aberdeen replied to the question on systems and changes or improvements as follows:

Aberdeen: *Corporately we have an Accident/Injury and Incident/Near Miss Investigation Process which includes an electronic recording system. This is reviewed and improved on an ongoing basis. The near miss report forms have been amended to highlight primary and secondary root causes in conjunction with the related Services / Directorates.*

Social Care

Initially the recording of incidents were paper based forms which were collated manually but now everything has been streamlined to be inputted on an electronic system which everyone has access to. Staff are encouraged to record all incidents on this system and where access is limited, staff can still complete a paper copy which can be inputted electronically by their Line Manager.

Education

- Improved violent Incident recording procedures*
- Staff encouraged to complete these to provide data*
- Recording is now done electronically to enable the data to be interrogated*
- Information shared with Quality Improvement Officers*
- Person Centred Risk Assessment process devised to enable robust planning to prevent incidents*
- Currently undertaking benchmarking exercise with other authorities on the definition, reporting and recording of incidents*

Fife Council, which saw the second highest increase in local government for the current survey, reported 1,267 violent incidents - more than doubling from 573 in the previous year, an increase of 694.

There was no response to the question about changes in systems.

Fife reported the types of violence as follows:

Injury/harm by physical assault - 108
Violence, aggression or threat, physical - 826
Violence, aggression or threat, verbal - 334

The categories of worker assaulted in Fife were as follows:

Teaching - 264

Non-teaching - 386

Residential Care worker - 42

Social Worker - 4

Caretaker - 3

Employees within Communities Service - 14

Social Care Workers (Incl care assistant, home carer, Unit Manager, Mobile emergency care) - 173

Housing officer/accommodation Mgmt - 19

Plumbers/electricians, janitor, Joiners, catering, cleaner, roadworker, waste collector - 90

Parking Attendant - 14

Admin - 6

The three councils showing the biggest falls over the current year, Stirling, Midlothian and Dundee, also share the fact that their numbers have fluctuated widely over the past few years. The figures for Dundee, which had the third biggest fall this year, are discussed above.

Midlothian Council had the second biggest drop in recorded incidents in local government - a fall of 142 from 458 last year to 316 in the current survey. The figure for last year however was more than double the total of 221 incidents reported in 2013.

The response to the question about systems and changes was as follows:

Midlothian: *The Council have introduced a new on-line incident reporting using 'Rivo' Health and Safety Management Information System. Employees report incident to their line manager as part of the incident reporting process.*

Stirling Council reported a total of 606 incidents in this year's survey. This was a fall of 223 from 829 violent assaults recorded in 2016. The number of assaults record in Stirling has fluctuated widely over the last few years - from a low of 152 in 2013 to the peak of 829 last year.

The Stirling total of 606 this year was made up of:

Physical Assault - 360

Verbal Assault - 246

The response to the question on systems and changes was as follows:

Stirling: *Incidents are recorded on a Corporate Form and sent to the Corporate Health & Safety email account, then input to an Access Database.*

The Corporate Form has been revamped in the last year to include more details about incidents to allow easier analysis of the information provided. We will shortly be changing to using iTrent (our HR/Payroll system) for recording incidents.

It will be interesting to see how this further change alters the numbers reported next year.

Whether the underlying reasons for the changes in overall violent incidents reported in local government are more to do with changing systems, or greater awareness of the issue - or indeed an real increase in violence - it is clear that the rise we have identified from 14,879 in 2013 to 22,006 in 2017 represents a huge problem which must be addressed urgently.

UNISON Scotland continues to call for all councils to put the guidelines produced in 2010 by the Scottish Centre for Health Working Lives fully into practice, in order that we can make the level of violent assaults fall across Scotland.

Health Service

Our aggregate figure for violent incidents in the territorial health boards rose in the last year by **2,054** - from **16,617** last year to **18,671** in the current survey for 2017.

Last year reported incidents of violence against health workers in these NHS area boards had decreased by 1,520 over the previous year. However this year's total is 47 per cent higher than it was in 2013 when the figure was 12,687.

Six of these health boards showed a fall in their figures and six showed a rise - but the increases greatly outweighed the declines.

Ayrshire and Arran, Dumfries and Galloway, Forth Valley, Orkney, Scottish Borders and Shetland were the areas which had lower figures this year, while Fife, Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Highland, Lanarkshire, Lothian and Western Isles recorded increases over the previous report.

The largest area board by population by far is Greater Glasgow and Clyde, where the number of incidents reported was 4,948 in the 2017 survey. This total was the largest of any employer and was an increase of 1,339 over the previous year's total of 3,609.

In the response, Greater Glasgow and Clyde noted the increase and wrote:

Greater Glasgow and Clyde: *This increase has been investigated by our Moving and Handling Service Lead, who reports that the percentage share of incidents across the various categories of assault is similar between both reported years suggesting an overall increase in reporting of these types of incidents, rather than an increase in the number of assaults that are occurring.*

The 4,948 incidents reported by the Glasgow board were categorised as follows:

Patient Physical Assault on Staff - 3049

Physical Assault by Other - 31

Stalking - <5

Threat of Physical Violence - 940

Verbal Abuse - 882

Verbal Abuse (Disability) - 5

Verbal Abuse (Homophobic) - 5

Verbal Abuse (Racial) - 33

Verbal Abuse (Religion) - <5

Fife Health Board reported a total of 1,417 violent incidents in the year. It was the second largest increase in this year's survey, a rise of 397 over the previous total of 1,020 in 2016, but down from a peak figure of 1,653 in 2015.

The categorisation of incidents this year was as follows:

Verbal - 1,678

Physical - 871

Threatening Behaviour - 379

The breakdown by staff groups was as follows:

Clinical (doctors, nurses, AHPs) - 1,376

Admin - 14

Estates (portering, domestic, security, catering) - 27

Acute/A&E - 204

Community - 1,195

Primary Care - 18

Ayrshire and Arran and Scottish Borders area health boards showed the largest falls over the past year, of 204 and 209 respectively.

The Ayrshire and Arran total of 1,235 was down by 204 from the previous figure of 1,439.

Categories reported were:

Actual physical assault: due to medical condition / medication - 323

Actual physical assault: no weapon involved - 393

Actual physical assault: weapon involved - 56

Bullying/Harassment (patient/visitor initiated) - 45

Bullying/Harassment (staff/contractor initiated) - 6

Racial abuse/harassment - 14

Religious abuse/harassment - <5

Sexual abuse/harassment - 6

Sexual assault - <5

Threat of physical violence: no weapon involved - 164

Threat of physical violence: weapon involved - 48

Verbal abuse - 177

Scottish Borders reported 937 violent incidents, a decline of 209 on the previous year total which had been 1,146. The numbers for this board have fluctuated widely in recent years, with a minimum figure of 684 in 2015 and a peak in 2014 of 4,370 reported incidents.

The types of assault in the 2017 response were recorded as follows:

Alcohol related aggression and violence -47

Personal safety vulnerable -54

Physical aggression by other - <5

Physical aggression by patient - 500

Use of weapon - <5

Verbal aggression by other - 67

Verbal aggression by patient - 263

Overall it is clear that the numbers of violent incidents being reported in the NHS are rising. Again the issue of the root causes are debatable - but the scale of the problem has become increasingly clear as the reports mount up.

Police Scotland

As noted in the introduction, Police Scotland refused to provide a full response on the grounds it would be too costly - but did give a figure of 922 for 'injuries due to assault' on police officers in 2016/17. The last full response was in 2014. The information provided this year is below:

***Police Scotland:** As you may be aware the current cost threshold is £600 and I estimate that it would cost well in excess of this amount to process your request... By way of explanation, SCOPE, the Service's personnel management system is not designed to record the details of verbal or non-injury assaults. If held, details including the nature of such assaults on staff or officers will be recorded by Police Scotland, but in a series of disparate sources and or systems – e.g. incident recording systems, crime recording systems, custody systems or even police officer notebooks. It would therefore be necessary to cross refer all officer and staff records referred to above with the information held on these other systems – an exercise which I estimate would far exceed the cost limit set out in the Fees Regulations.*

...

However to be of some assistance the total number of reports relating to 'injuries due to assault' for the most recent financial reporting period 2016/17 was 922... the 922 'injuries due to assault' refers to police officers.

In response to the question on systems of reporting and changes or improvements, Police Scotland said:

SCOPE, the Service's personnel management system is used to report accidents and incidents, where injury is suffered. As a relatively young organisation, Police Scotland systems are constantly evolving to accommodate improvements to our

policies and practices e.g. work is ongoing at the moment to review the online report form and make it more user friendly.

Fire and Rescue Scotland

Fire and Rescue Scotland unfortunately failed to provide a response to this survey for the second year running. The figure of 255 in 2015 is the most recent we have under report.

Universities and Colleges

Most universities provided responses this year. There was a total 12 of violent incidents reported by the 14 universities which replied to this year's survey.

Queen Margaret University offered this evidence when reporting one single violent incident in the last year:

Queen Margaret University: *There has been one recorded instance of verbal assault on a member of the staff in the last year. This concerned a member of the security team. Verbal assaults are somewhat common place within a security team and they are not normally logged. Given the nature of the role it is unlikely that these type of assaults would justify a report unless the assault was of a specific focus, i.e racial/ sexist, or if it was particularly personal. That is why there is only one incident that merited an incident report.*

The number of colleges providing figures this year has gone up once more, with 20 out of 26 responding. Again, none of the three large Glasgow colleges replied.

The total number of violent incidents reported by the colleges in 2017 was 60, which is a substantial increase on the 17 assaults reported in the last survey. These are mainly accounted for by 11 reported by Fife College and 36 reported in Ayrshire College. Most of the others reported either one assault or none in the year.

Overall the universities and colleges continue to report very low numbers of assaults. UNISON remains concerned that this could be due to under-reporting.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs)

Seven NDPBs responded and provided figures this year. There were 24 assaults in total – similar to the 27 reported last year and 26 the year before. The Care Inspectorate noted 11 incidents, compared 13 last year and none in the previous year. Skills Development Scotland reported 6, the same total as last year, and down from 14 in the survey of 2015.

4. COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

UNISON Scotland has long argued that employers are failing workers in the community and voluntary sector by viewing violence at work as inevitable. Many workers in the sector have reported a prevalent attitude amongst employers that violence is “just part of their job”.

As part of our campaigns to tackle this culture UNISON Scotland launched **It's Not Part of the Job** - a new health and safety guide in September 2017.

The guide is aimed at the representatives and stewards for workers in the community and voluntary sector who are most vulnerable to violence at work, and provides policies and strategies for tackling workplace violence.

Results of a survey of UNISON Scotland members in the community and voluntary sector which we covered in our 2016 Violence at Work report only underlined our longstanding concerns over violence in the workplace. Of the members – mainly women – who had experienced violence in the course of their work:

- Half (50%) had been physically assaulted
- 61% had faced threatening behaviour
- 56% were verbally abused
- 56% had experienced a combination of all three

Members said these were often frequent and sometimes daily occurrences. All of these workers had reported at least one violent incident to a manager. Only 56% said their report had been followed up and only 44% felt the report was taken seriously.

A new survey published in October 2017 by UNISON UK of staff working for charities and housing associations has also revealed widespread abuse, ranging from verbal threats to being “slapped and bit”, “hit and kicked”, “punched in the mouth” and having their “car vandalised” at work.

Almost half the staff (47%) working for charities and housing associations have experienced violence or aggression, either from people who use their services or from colleagues.

The survey also revealed that a quarter (26%) of staff felt unsupported when working alone, with many feeling in “danger” due to a lack of training and managerial support.

Almost half the respondents (47%) said that they were regularly required to work beyond the end of their shifts because of understaffing. More than three-quarters (79%) also admitted that they were stressed because of their work.

The UNISON Scotland guide ‘It's Not Part of the Job’ is partly based on the Healthy Working Lives strategy and toolkit published in 2010 and the UNISON UK health and safety guide on tackling violence at work produced in 2013.

It also includes the recently-launched UNISON UK Violence at Work Charter which commits voluntary sector organisations to comply with their duty of care to staff when it comes to violence in the workplace:

- collecting and monitoring data on violent incidents;
- proper structured support for staff who experience violence;
- thorough risk assessments when staff are placed in vulnerable situations;
- training for staff so they know how to deal with threatening situations.

The tools provided in this guide along with the new charter on violence at work will give UNISON activists in the community and voluntary sector the means to ensure that violence is never “part of the job”.

Freedom of Information

Unfortunately the Freedom of Information legislation which we use for this annual survey does not cover all of the areas in which UNISON has members, e.g. councils’ Arms Length Bodies, charities, private care homes, etc. As a result we cannot easily obtain accurate data on violent assaults on staff in the community and voluntary sector who are doing vital but frequently underpaid and jobs looking after vulnerable people in our communities. Many of the clients they care for present challenging behaviours and often the workers also face poor levels of support from their employers, even when they report violent incidents.

We have sought responses from community and voluntary sector employers and with continue to press for the extension of Freedom of Information legislation to cover these organisations which are largely funded by the public purse to provide public services.

5. CONCLUSIONS

More than twice as many violent assaults on public workers are being reported now than when we began our annual survey on this issue in 2006.

The underlying causes of this rise may be partly to do with increased awareness as a result of our campaigns around the issue of violence at work, and partly to do with improvements in reporting systems and processes by employers. However it may also worryingly be due to a real increase in the levels of violence against public service workers. Any attack is one attack too many - we need now as a society to act urgently in order to eliminate the problem of violence against workers altogether.

UNISON Scotland supports the extension of legislation covering violence at work to cover all workers engaged in delivering public services - and not just the emergency services. We call on the Scottish Government to move urgently to address this issue.

UNISON Scotland calls for all employers engaged in delivering public services - whether in local government, health or any of the other services and importantly the community and voluntary sector - to put the guidelines produced in 2010 by the Scottish Centre for Health Working Lives fully into practice, in order that we can make the level of violent assaults fall across Scotland.

Further information/links:

UNISON Scotland Health and Safety page

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/about-us/health-and-safety/>

It's not part of the job

UNISON Scotland Health and Safety guide and toolkit for reps and stewards in the community and voluntary sector

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/2017/09/19/not-part-job-health-safety-guide-tackling-violence-work/>

UNISON UK Health and Safety page

<https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/>

UNISON charter to commit employers to tackle violence at work, UNISON Community Conference, March 2017

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2017/03/community-violence/>

Healthy Working Lives

<http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/>

Managing Occupational Violence and Aggression in the Workplace Tools and Strategies Resource produced by Healthy Working Lives for employers and employees to tackle the issue of violence and aggression in the workplace - April 2010

<http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/resources/managing-occupational-violence-and-aggression-in-the-workplace-tools-and-strategies-55264>

TUC's Work SMART page

<https://worksmart.org.uk/work-rights/health-and-safety>

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