



# Violence at Work Survey

Teachers, Nursery Nurses and PSAs

**EIS survey**

**1140**

**responses**

*Approx 35% of total  
membership*

**UNISON survey**

**238 responses**

*Approx 35% of total  
membership*

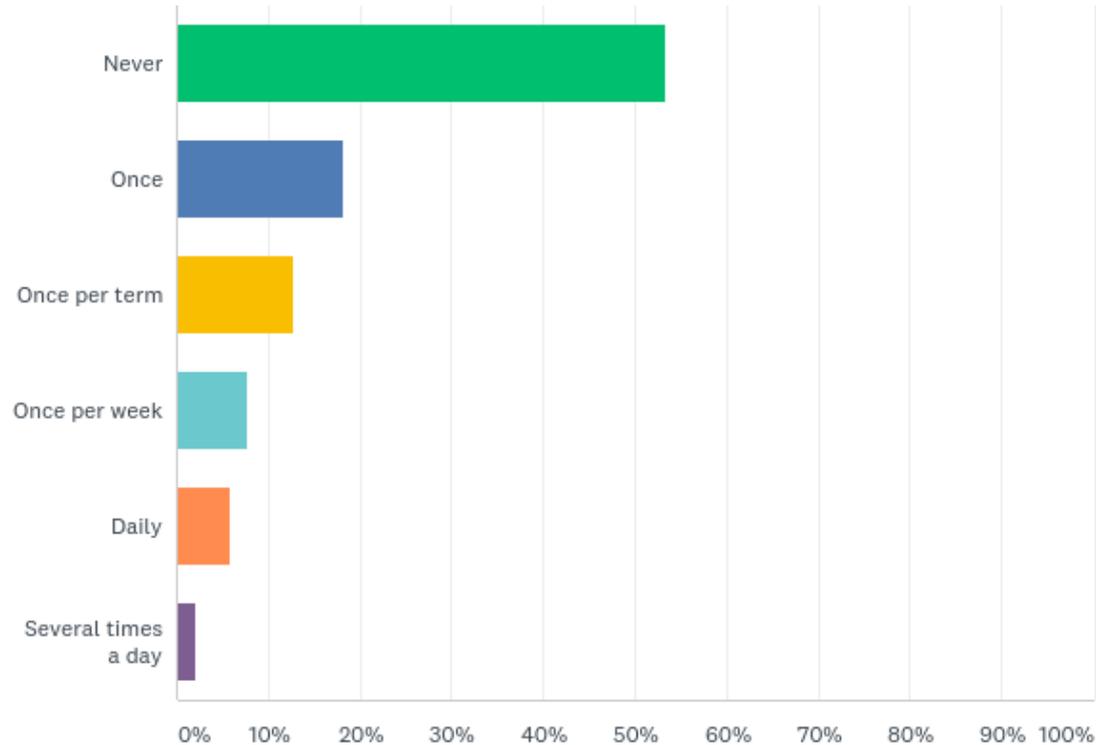
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## Summary

- Due to the increased numbers of members contacting us about Violence at Work in schools, the UNISON Communities & Families Committee decided to conduct a survey with members.
- The EIS decided to conduct a similar survey, due to similar concerns.
- The survey was primarily based on the council's Violence at Work questionnaire for staff, with some amendments.
- Both surveys were completed over late September to mid-October.

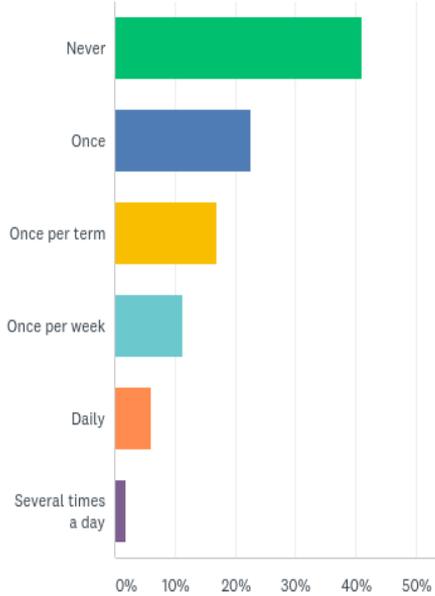
# In the past year I have directly experienced physical violence - EIS

Overall responses: Answered: 1,127 Skipped: 13

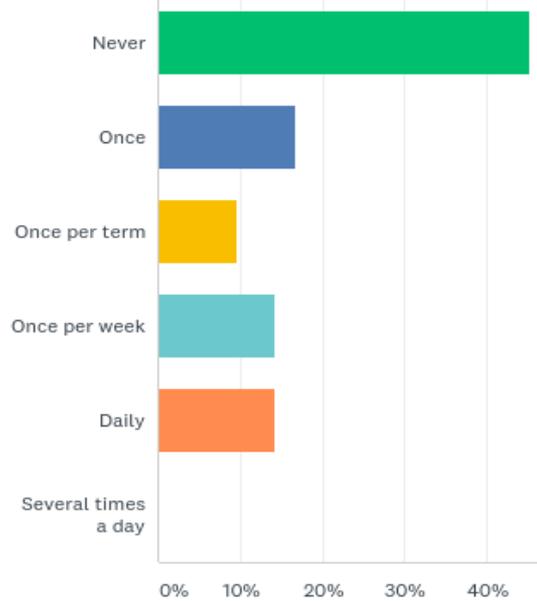


# Answers by sector - EIS

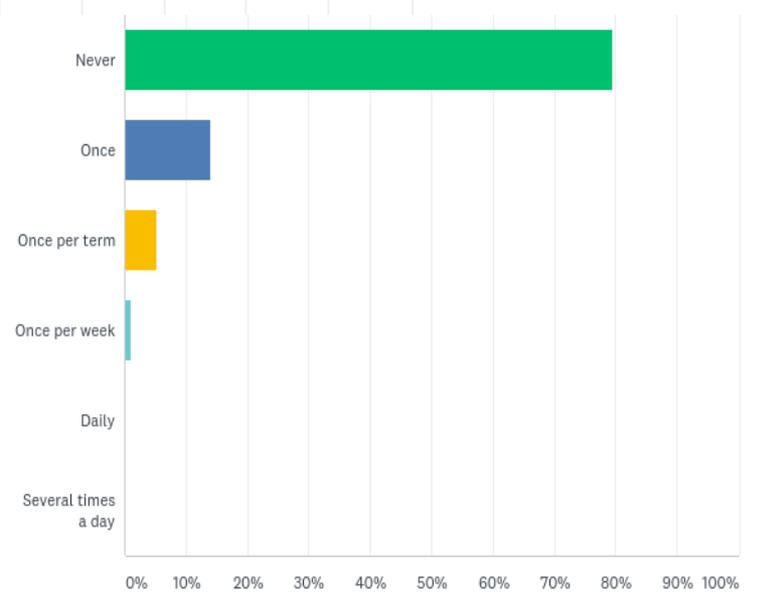
## Primary



## Early years



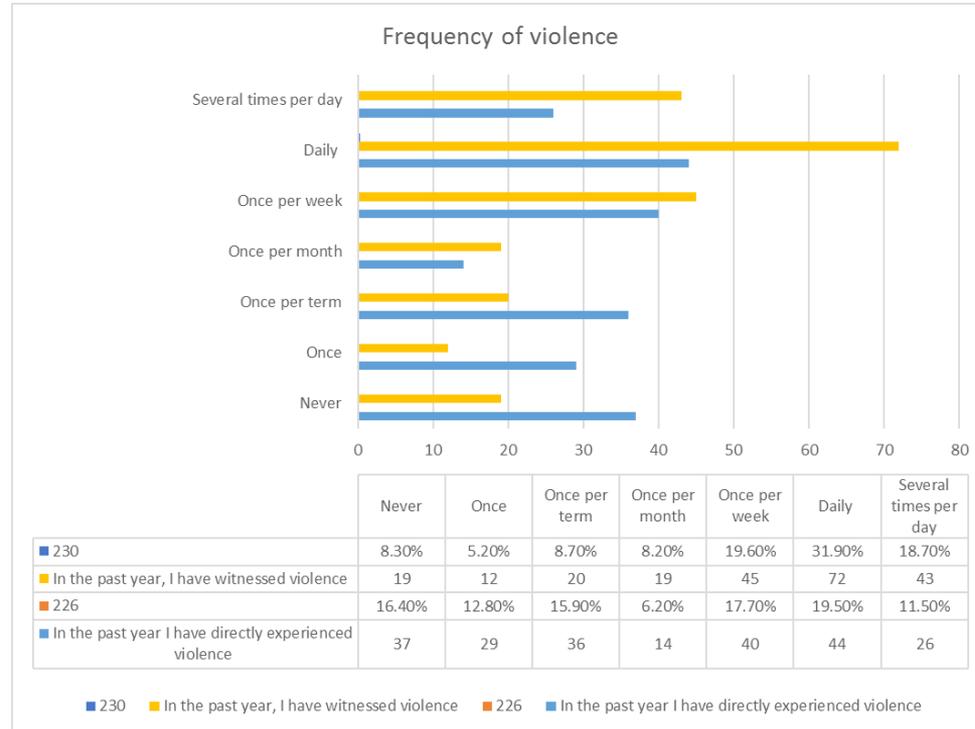
## Secondary



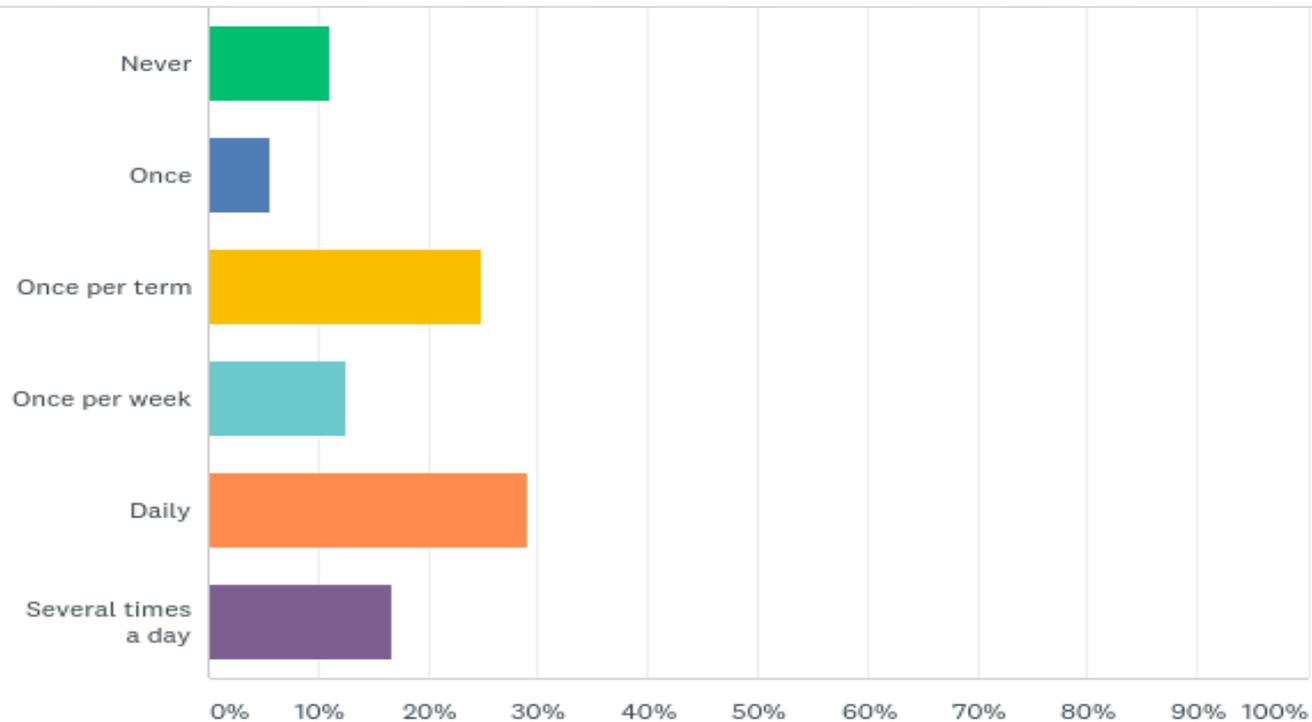
# Frequency of Violence

48.7% of respondents have directly experienced violence at least once per week.

50.6% of respondents have witnessed violence daily or several times per day.

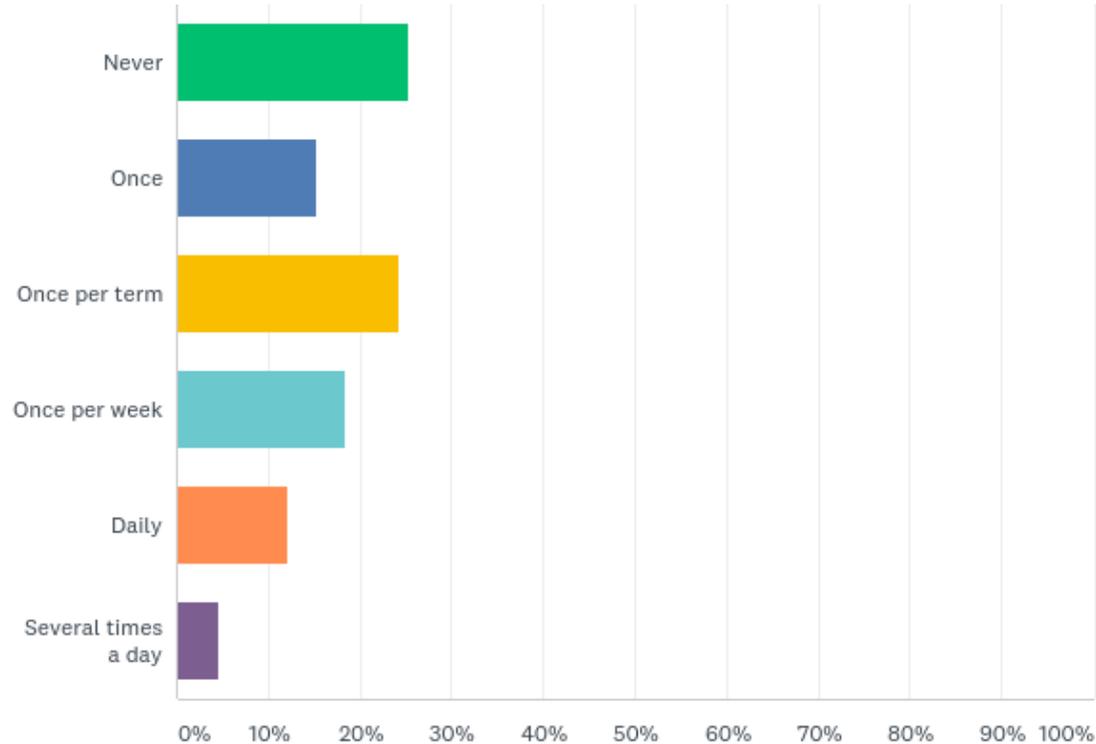


## Special schools - EIS



# In the past year I have directly experienced verbal abuse – EIS all

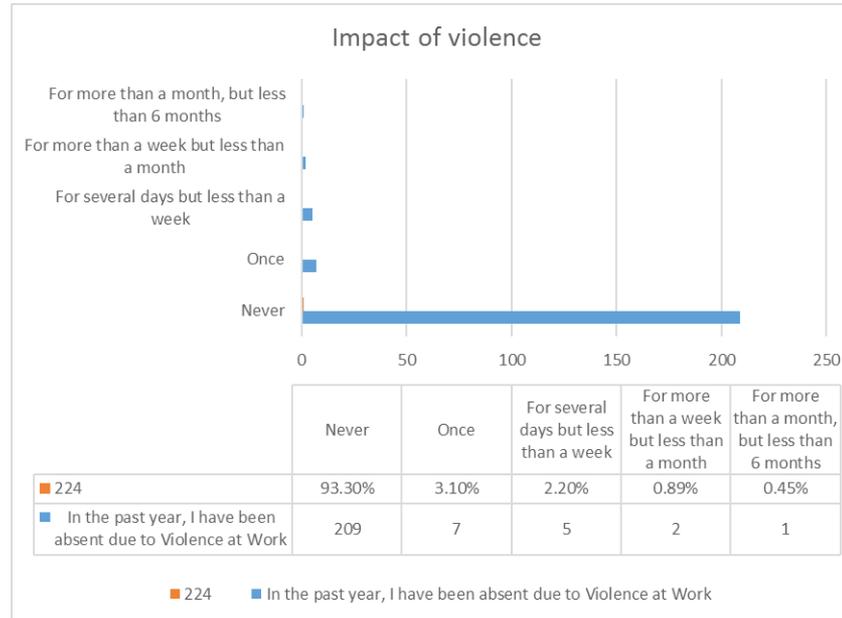
sectors  
Sample: 129 Skipped: 11



# Violence Related Absence

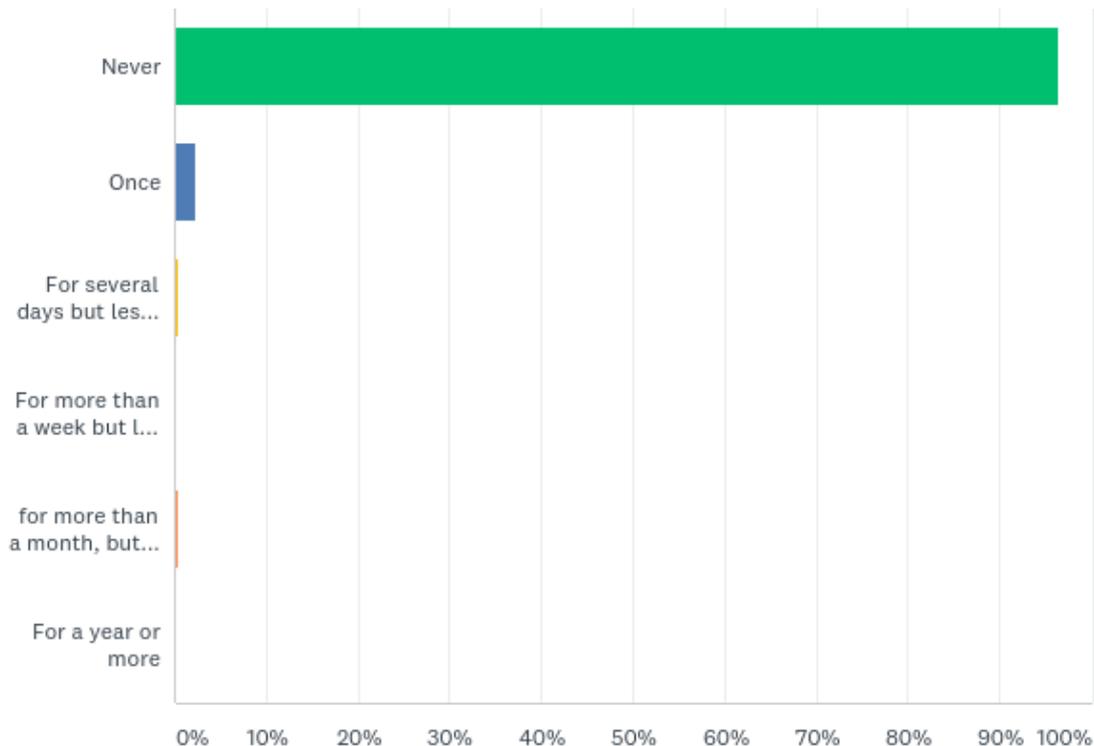
93% of respondents have had no time off due to violence.

This figure reflects the level of commitment shown by staff, but is of concern to UNISON, as staff may be minimising the impact violence at work is having on them.



# In the past year I have been absent due to violence at work – EIS all sectors

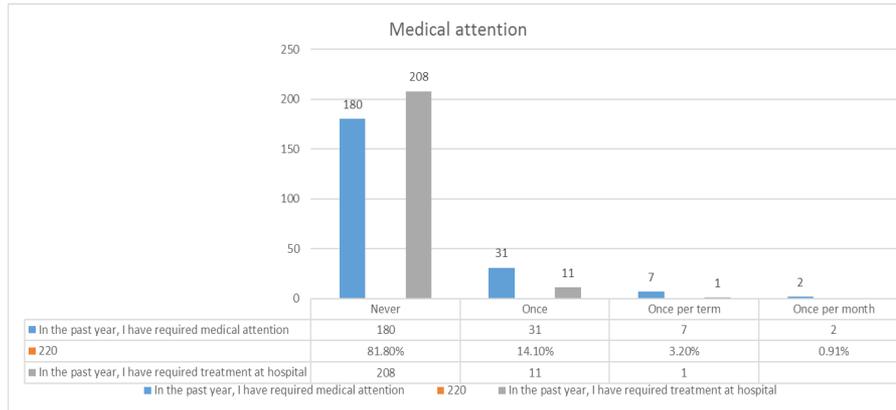
Answered: 1,129 Skipped: 11



# Medical Attention

At first glance, the figures for requiring medical attention and hospital treatment are positive.

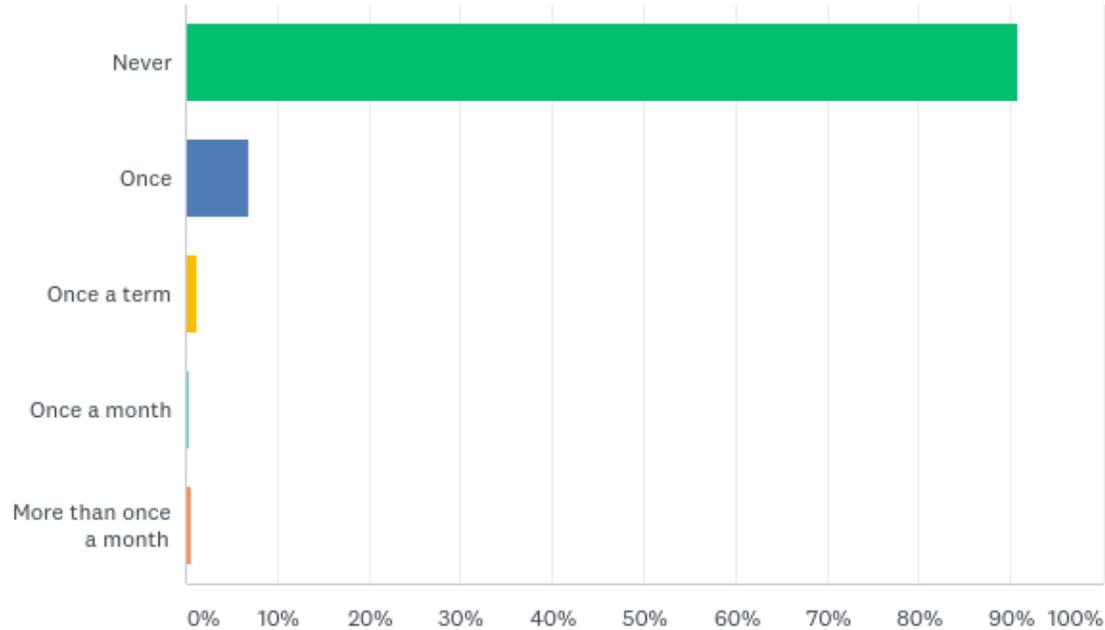
However, we have anecdotal evidence from members that Violence at Work causes them stress, which has an impact on them professionally and personally.



# In the past year, I have required medical attention from a doctor, or school first aid – EIS all sectors

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Answered: 1,128 Skipped: 12



## Member Experience

70% of respondents believed that violence was seen as part of the job by their employer.

54.6% of respondents were unsure whether their school used the SHE Portal to record violent incidents.

31.2% of respondents hadn't read the Violence at Work policy.

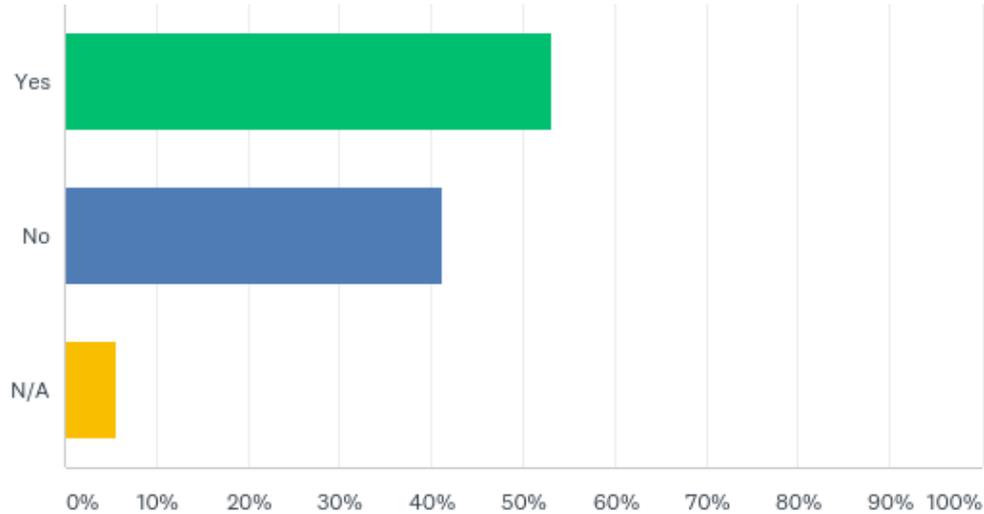
32.6% of respondents didn't feel safe at work.

62.4% of respondents are dissatisfied with how the council manages issues of violence and aggression.

Member Experience	Yes	No	Don't Know
Violence, verbal abuse or threats are accepted as 'part of the job' by managers, supervisors and/or employees 223	136 70%	63 28.3%	24 10.8%
I communicate information about potentially assaulting/threatening visitors/service users to appropriate people in the organisation 223	193 86.6%	11 4.9%	19 8.5%
I am regularly informed regarding violent incidents that have occurred 223	76 34.1%	123 55.2%	24 10.8%
My school uses the SHE portal to record all incidents of Violence at Work 218	86 39.5%	13 6%	119 54.6%
I am aware of the council's Violence at Work policy, and have read it 215	117 54.4%	67 31.2%	31 14.4%
I generally feel safe at work 215	121 56.3%	70 32.6%	24 11.2%
I am basically satisfied with the management of violence and aggression within the council 221	42 19%	138 62.4%	41 18.6%

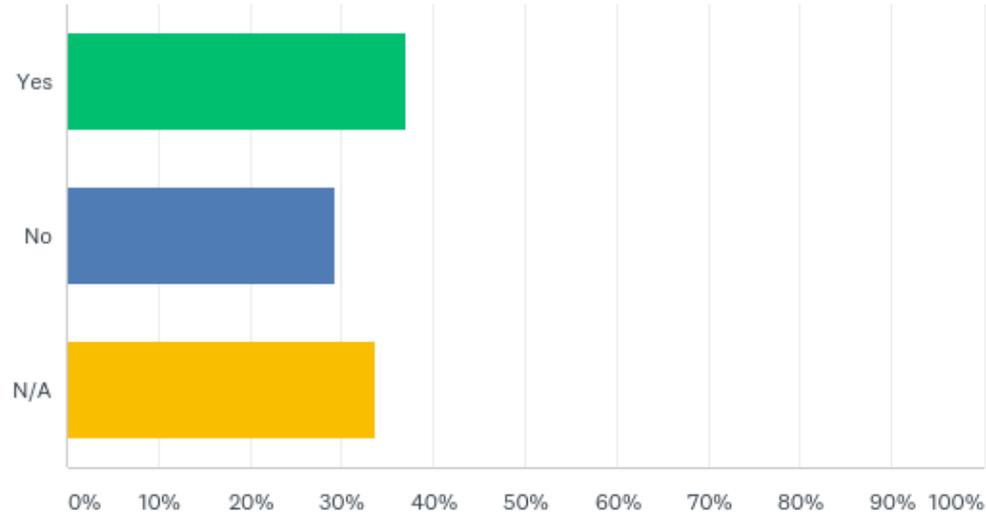
# Violence, verbal abuse or threats are accepted as 'part of the job' by managers, supervisors and/or employees – EIS all sectors

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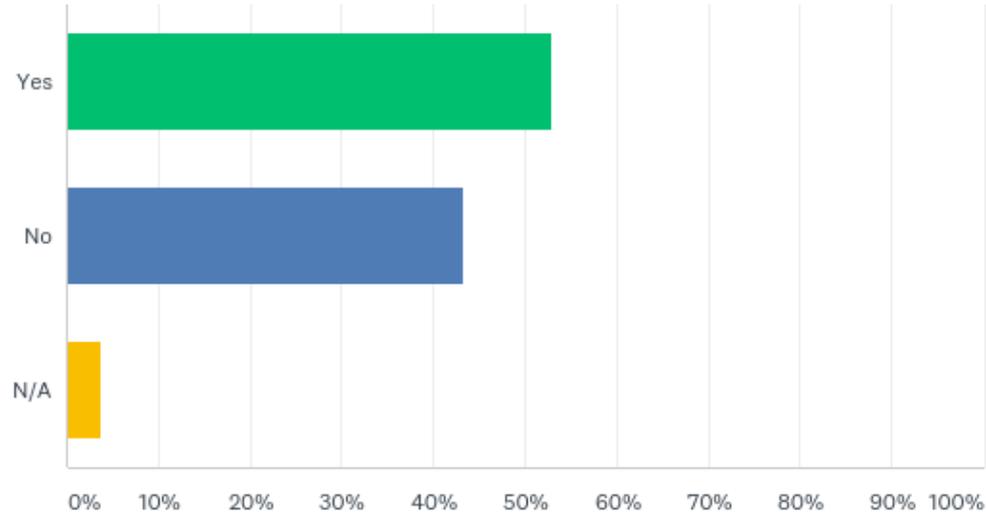
# My school uses the SHE portal to record all incidents of Violence at Work EIS all sectors

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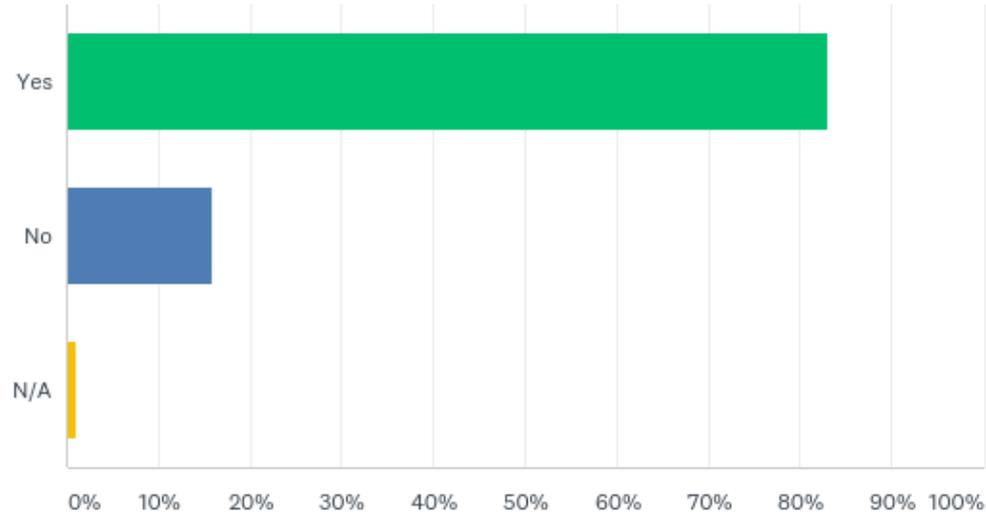
# I am aware of the council's Violence at Work policy, and have read it.

Answered: 532 Skipped: 9



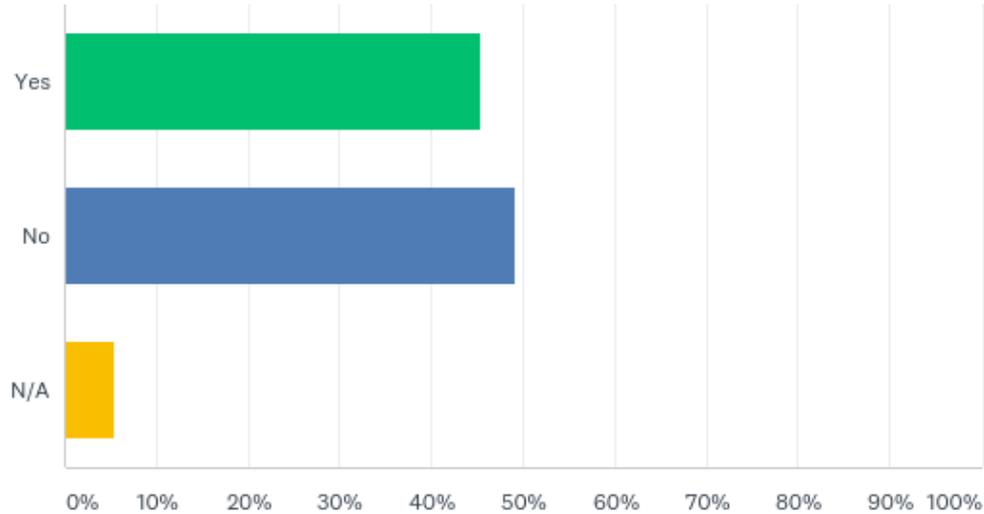
# I generally feel safe at work - EIS all sectors

Answered: 1,132 Skipped: 8



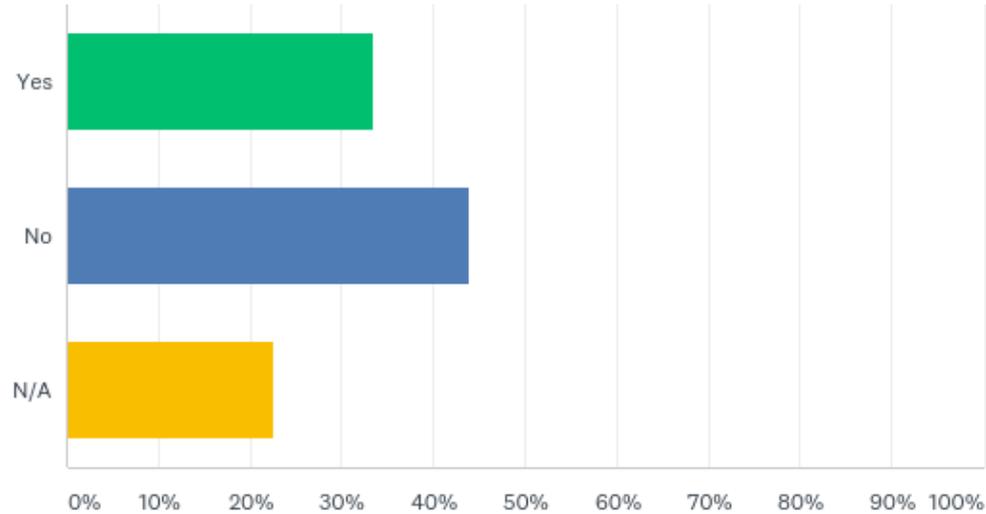
# I am generally satisfied with the management of violence and aggression within my school - EIS all sectors

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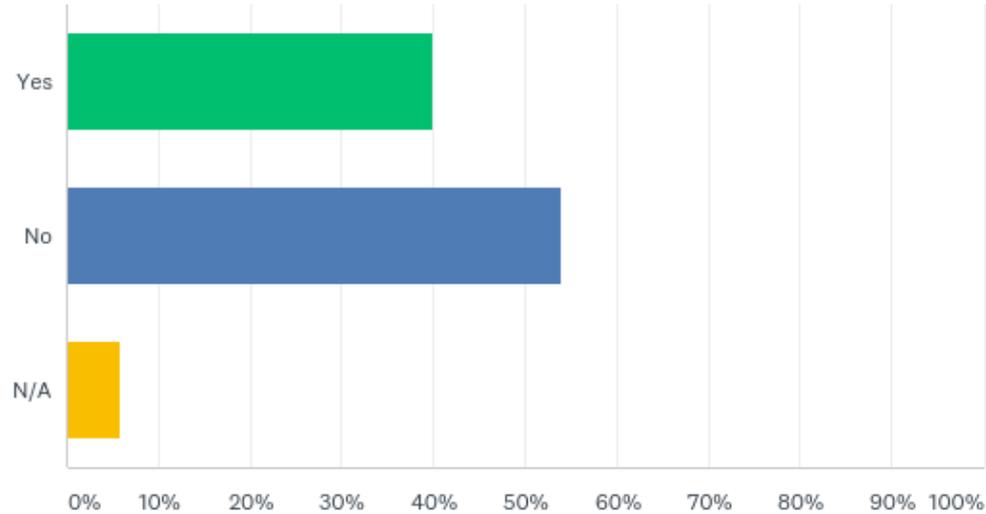
# I get feedback about incidents I have reported - EIS all sectors

Answered: 1,129 Skipped: 11



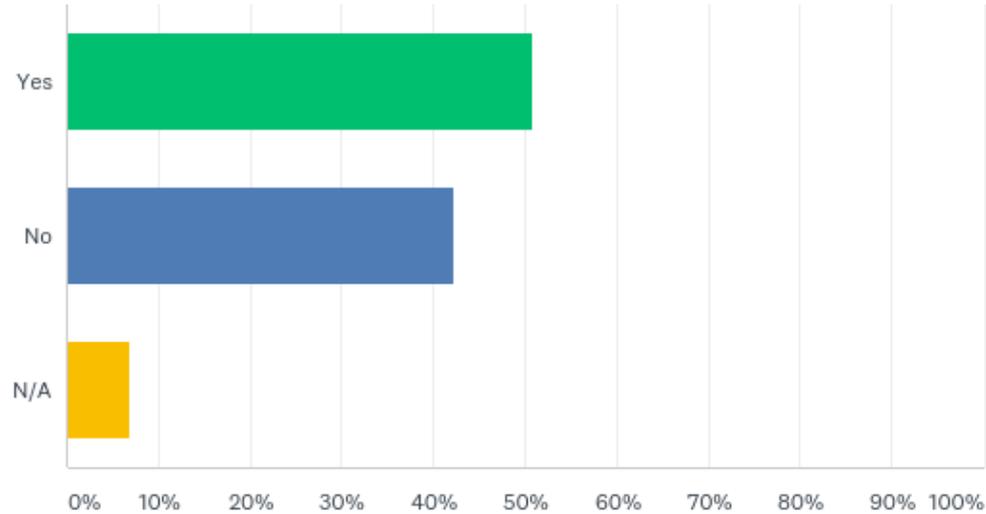
# I feel anxious about going into some classrooms / teaching some classes because of worries about violence - EIS all sectors

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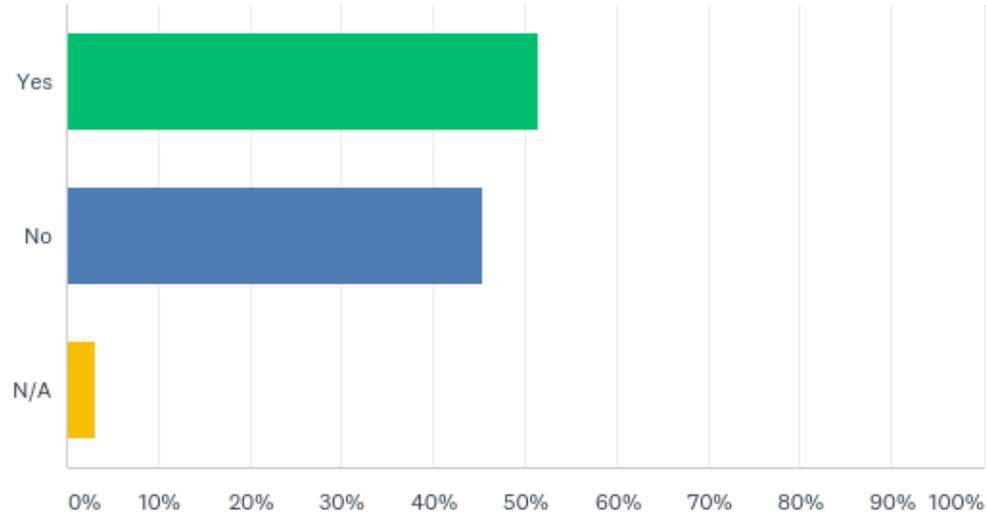
# I feel confident that my concerns will be taken seriously - EIS all

sectors  
Sample: 101 Skipped: 9



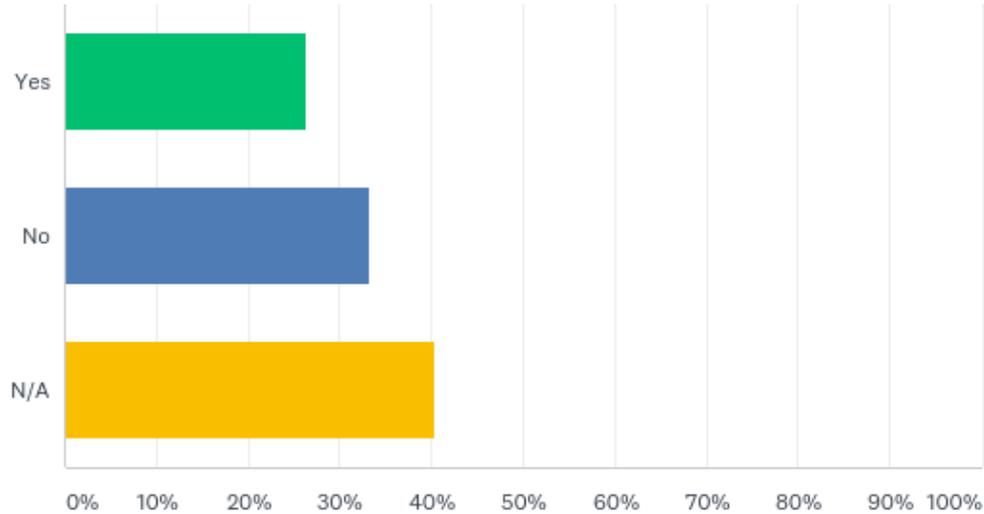
# I am aware of the support I should be offered by my management team if I experience a violent incident - EIS all sectors

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# When I have experienced violence I have been offered appropriate support by management - EIS all sectors

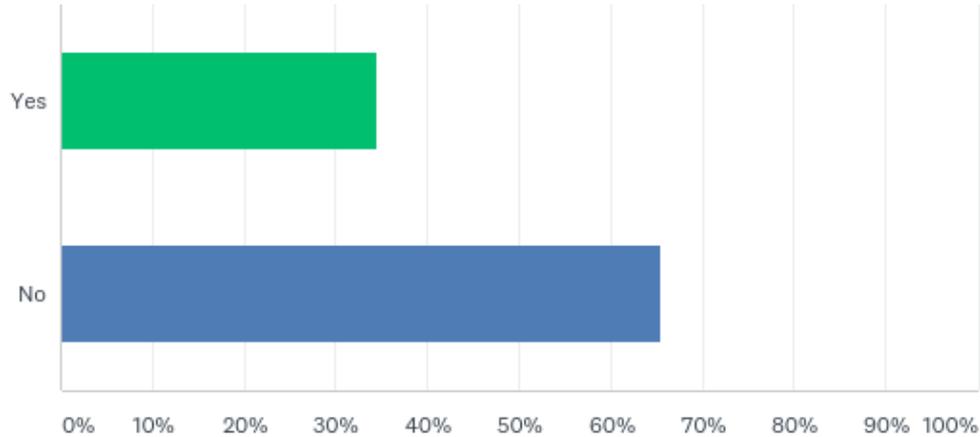
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# Have you experienced mental health/stress problems as a result of violence or verbal abuse at school? EIS all sectors

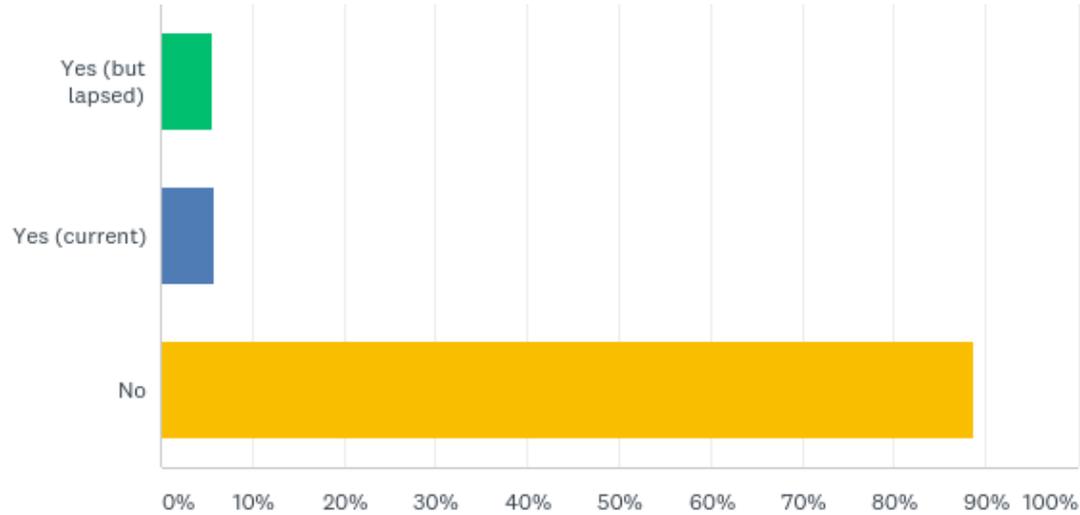
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# Are you C.A.L.M trained? EIS all sectors

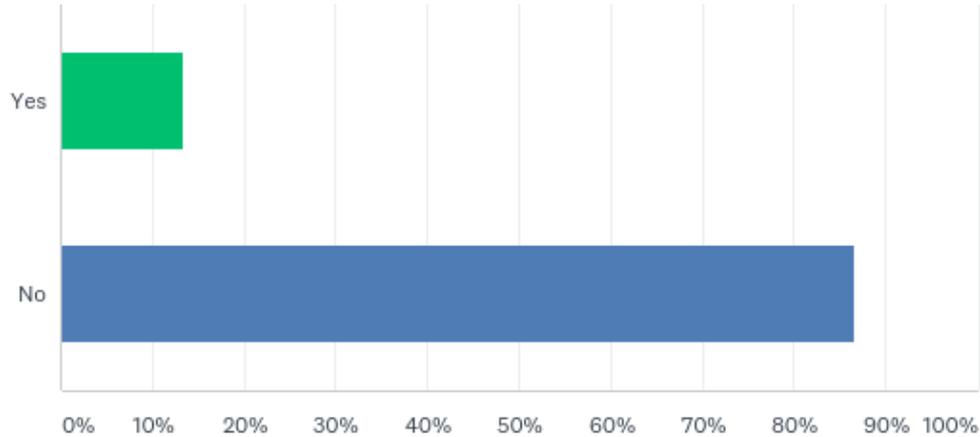
Answered: 1,134 Skipped: 6



# Have you had any relevant training on dealing with violent behaviour in school? EIS all sectors

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Not seen  
Skipped:



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## Comments from Members

I am committed to working with children with additional needs and accept that violent behaviour can result from these needs. However, I feel we are increasingly at risk from this due to policies which push inclusion, but DO NOT provide funding and resources to support this safely.

Working in such a stressful environment impacts on children as well as adults at school. A lot of staff are stressed but cannot afford to take time off work, which is the situation I am in.

Aggression from some of our pupils has always existed, but I feel that incidents have increased in the last 5 years to an unacceptable level, and in the last year I feel that staff safety has been compromised. I no longer feel safe at work, and don't feel there is a duty of care from management.

## Members Comments Continued

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I haven't as yet been seriously assaulted to the extent where I have had to seek medical attention, but I do experience physical assaults on a daily basis. The management are very supportive, however, I do not feel supported by City of Edinburgh Council.

Incidents are reported on the SHE Portal, but there is never any follow up, or an acknowledgement to the physical and verbal abuse we experience daily. This is physically and mentally exhausting, but we are expected to continue and try and be positive, not react, and continue working with our assailant. I don't know of any other working environment where people would be expected to do that and their employer thinks this is acceptable, just because you work in a special school.

We are unable to manage the number of children with complex emotional needs and it is only a matter of time before there is a terrible tragedy. I don't say this lightly, but this is based on my experience.

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## Member comments

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Objects thrown at me

Swearing

Spitting

I have recently moved school due to negative experiences in a challenging school. I was not supported by the management team and ended up taking time off due to stress and anxiety. Eventually I felt strong enough to recognise the issues were not all my fault and applied to work elsewhere. I am now happy in a different school but feel staff should know the systems that exist just in case needed.

I have witnessed a pupil being violent to another teacher. The teacher did not want to take the incident further, despite having been physically abused by the same pupil two weeks earlier. The HT knew of both incidents , and in my opinion, preferred that the incidents were not formally recorded.

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## Member comments

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I have been bitten, punched, kicked, spat on, been pulled by the hair to the ground and even had a child try to get their fingers into my eyes regularly over the past year.

I had my foot stamped on and toenail damaged so badly that I couldn't wear closed shoes for around 10 months.

When you get on a bus or go to the doctor/hospital there are signs saying that their staff have the right to work without the threat of violence. Why is it acceptable for school staff to be regularly beaten?

I feel fully supported by the management in school but I know that their hands are tied. I know that this is a side effect of inclusion and children not being in the right environment for their needs.

I think the level of violence and verbal abuse has increased greatly in my 20 years of teaching. I think what we 'accept' as 'norm' in 2018 would not have been accepted in 1998. In my school the general feeling is that school staff are treated differently to those in other council establishments where there is signage and clear policy about abuse and violence not being tolerated. In my own experience (school leader) recently I have found myself thinking 'if I'm being hit/abused at' then it is better that than my staff - that cannot be a

## Member comments

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Based on my experience I believe that the inclusion of a greater number of students with severe behavioural and learning needs, and diagnosed conditions such as autism, into mainstream state high schools is a significant contributor to a rise in violence towards staff. In my school, almost all incidents - albeit few - of physical violence towards staff has come from learners with significant behavioural and/or learning needs. Often the same young person will display this behaviour on a recurring basis. What is frustrating is that this behaviour is known about these students by the time they arrive at high school, but the control measures identified to prevent it have either already proven to be inadequate through previous incidents, or are inappropriate for mainstream education due to staff (rightly) not receiving the specialist training required. Often the authority (and parents) back the right of that learner to access education in mainstream classes, and the rights of staff - and other learners - to feel safe and not face violence is seen as secondary. My experience is that due to public service cuts, mainstream classroom teachers are increasingly expected to meet the needs of learners who require some of the highest levels of support alongside all other learners - this is a pipe dream in terms of what one person can consistently achieve in their work! The truth is that teachers are put in an almost impossible situation and these learners are all too often failed from an L&T perspective. This leads to young people who already have behavioural and emotional challenges becoming

## Recommendations

- A culture is created where all staff feel their health & well being is paramount, and that violence against staff is treated seriously, and not seen as an inevitable part of the job.
- Previously, staff who were assaulted at work received a letter from the department to acknowledge an incident had occurred. This should be looked at again, as it helps staff feel their wellbeing is taken seriously by the employer.

# Recommendations

- There is a clear procedure for management to follow when there has been a violent incident involving staff in school.
  - Checks that everyone in every school is clear about how incidents are to be dealt with in their particular school
  - Where this is not clear, time, training and support to do this
  - A confirmation email, showing the detail of the SHE report, to be sent to the staff member who has

## Recommendations

- In schools where violence is a regular issue, make facilities available for staff where they have a quiet space and can decide whether they are able to return to work. There is also sufficient staffing to enable this to happen.
- In schools where the building, or other infrastructure issues, are contributing to injuries, there are shared action plans to address problems.

## Recommendations

- There is a review of criteria for placing children in special schools/LCCs, and schools are properly staffed to deal with actual intake.
- Greater clarity about what happens when schools cannot meet the needs of a child.
- An audit of staff training needs, and provision of high-quality, funded training.
- Much better use of risk assessments
- Much clearer, two way communication about use of SHE

## What the unions will be doing next:

- Press release
- Media campaign
- Branch meetings
- Continued training for members on what should happen – and what actions can be taken where legitimate concerns are not being addressed

## What we want to see from CEC:

- A detailed response to our recommendations, with timings for implementation or alternative suggestions.
- This to be a standing agenda item for the foreseeable future
- Once immediate issues have been resolved, move to a strategic action plan to achieve long-term improvement for staff and pupils – this to be drawn up with significant input from unions.