

Safety and security — a natural part of working in a housing association

COMMENDED

Boligkontoret Aarhus, AAB Aarhus AAB and ESL, Denmark

www.bk-aarhus.dk

Fewer than
100 workers

The issue

Violence, threats of violence, abuse and harassment from residents have been a growing problem for property workers in Denmark's housing organisations in recent years. A combination of working alone and a tradition of not speaking about emotional pressure and stress at work, as well as accepting violence as 'just part of the job', led to mental overload among property workers in Boligkontoret Aarhus.

Action taken

A method to systematically and effectively prevent violence, threats and harassment against property workers was developed. An analytical tool was used to map the employees' experiences and wellbeing both before and after the project.

Clear procedures for recording and following up on incidents of violence and threats were created by drawing up an anti-violence policy and updating existing crisis management plans. Experience exchange groups were set up, in which property workers analyse the challenging situations at work together and exchange experience concerning preventive measures.

Enabling property workers, alone or in partnership with the safety and health group, to make assessments and take preventive measures was key. In addition, the fact that managers visibly backed the project was critical to its success. By doing so, employees felt supported and found that management took their incident reports seriously and, importantly, acted upon them. Experience exchange groups were also set up to encourage discussion of incidents of violence among property workers.

A comprehensive training programme was developed, delivered in the form of seminars for property workers. Video clips were also produced to support the training. All new employees are introduced to the training concept.





Results achieved

- A reduction in the number of incidents of violence and threats.
- A reduction in stress and symptoms of mental overload among property workers.
- Increased awareness among property workers of the influence of violence on wellbeing and job satisfaction.
- Considerable change in attitude among property workers towards speaking freely with each other about incidents of violence.
- Substantial improvement in the experience of support from both management and colleagues after experiencing incidents of violence.
- Three-quarters of the property workers and managers participated in the seminars.
- Property workers feel their relationship management skills at work had improved.

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