



Date: 26 June 2017

Item: Work-Related Violence Reduction

This paper will be considered in public

1 Summary

- 1.1 Following the meeting on the 21 March 2017, the Panel requested an update on workplace violence, with a particular steer from London Underground (LU) on whether the closure of ticket offices had resulted in an increase in staff assaults. This paper provides an overview of how workplace violence against front line staff is tackled across TfL.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Panel is asked to note the paper.**

3 Background

- 3.1 TfL takes workplace violence extremely seriously and we always encourage staff to report any instance of abuse whether physical or non physical so that preventative measures can be taken, and the strongest penalties brought against offenders.
- 3.2 LU draws a distinction between aggression and violence. Verbal abuse and abusive gestures are defined as workplace aggression, while physical assault and threatening behaviour are defined as workplace violence.
- 3.3 TfL has staff dedicated to workplace violence reduction embedded or working alongside the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and British Transport Police (BTP). These special Units were established to investigate physical assault and verbal aggression on staff, public order offences and hate crimes, among other offences. The Units have significantly improved the quality of staff assault investigation and feedback, as well as victim care and support.
- 3.4 The LU Unit offers additional services (to the BTP) in gathering evidence to prosecute offenders, working with staff and managers to help reduce the incidence of workplace violence across the network and in providing additional support to those staff who have to give evidence in court.

3.5 The LU Unit's principal aims are:

- (a) to improve both the level and standard of staff assault investigations;
- (b) to provide enhanced support to staff through the criminal justice process; and
- (c) to ensure more cases are successfully prosecuted.

3.6 The LU unit, many of whom have operational experience:

- (a) take statements from staff victims and witnesses and collate information on incidents;
- (b) offer ongoing advice, assistance and updates to victims throughout and after the investigation;
- (c) analyse CCTV down-loads, compiling visual evidence that can be circulated (in order to track down suspects) or for use in court;
- (d) carry out searches of oyster data in order to help identify suspects;
- (e) assist BTP officers in investigations;
- (f) give guidance and assistance to operational managers and staff; and
- (g) provide support to staff victims at Court.

3.7 Currently some 50 per cent of assaults and threatening behaviour against our staff are detected. Over the past five years more than 1,300 people have been prosecuted for such offences and a further 180 people dealt with by other means (usually a police caution). We have also prosecuted offenders for other crimes against our staff such as disorderly conduct (causing harassment, alarm and distress) and unacceptable behaviour (by-law offences).

3.8 A monthly newsletter, "Challenging News" provides regular updates to staff on successful court cases together with articles about the criminal justice system in general and about aggression and violence including guidance.

3.9 LU has put in place and maintains an action plan to develop and promote an integrated organisational approach to ensure that workplace aggression and violence is constantly and consistently tackled. The approach requires action at all levels of the organisation in both policy and practice at three principal time points in order to determine:

- (a) what can be done to prepare and plan before any incident takes place;
- (b) what can be done in the way of de-escalation, calming and peaceful resolution in order to make certain personal safety is assured as incidents unfold; and
- (c) what can be done in terms of after-care, rehabilitation and learning following incidents.

- 3.10 Within Surface Transport, the Workplace Support Team (WST) is a TfL team, in the Enforcement and On-Street Operations Directorate (EOS) that is integrated with a small team of police officers in the MPS Roads and Transport Policing Command (RTPC).
- 3.11 The principle aims of the team and the embedded partnership with the MPS are similar to those within LU. i.e. to provide a high quality support service to frontline staff (including bus operator staff and other contracted services) who have been the victim of an assault and to help manage the relationship between the victim and the police (particularly where staff may be worried or reluctant to provide information).
- 3.12 The WST support all front line staff in Surface Transport and its contracted services; from initial report of incident through to prosecution. During the process, the WST offer support, take witness statements, collect DNA, providing case updates and attending court with the victim.
- 3.13 The WST investigate a range of crimes including:
- (a) public order offences;
 - (b) criminal damage;
 - (c) actual bodily harm / grievous bodily harm;
 - (d) harassment;
 - (e) common assault (spitting);
 - (f) hate crimes (racial, faith, homophobia etc.); and
 - (g) offences involving weapons.

4 Assaults, Patterns and Trends

- 4.1 Appendix 1 shows bus staff assault figures for the years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. This shows a steep rise in assaults from January – March 2017. This reflects a management and WST focus on staff reporting verbal assaults which were previously under-reported. Previously such assaults would have been reported as a 'near miss'. Staff continue to be encouraged to report verbal assaults to allow issues to be identified and dealt with appropriately.
- 4.2 It is worth noting that staff assaults for Surface Transport do not have their own specific crime incident category and are included in the overall MPS crime figures. However, the Surface WST do identify assaults from the MPS crime recording system when the occupation of the victim is bus driver or another identifiable Surface Transport related occupation.

- 4.3 This year so far (January – May) the joint TfL/RTPC WST has dealt with 150 assaults on frontline staff on the bus network. The majority of these cases involve common assaults and public order offences, rather than serious violent crime.
- 4.4 Appendix 2 shows the comparison between the number of reported physical assaults and threats to LU staff. These are at their lowest levels for the last five years. Over a number of years, there has been a perception of a rise in low level disorder incidents e.g. shouting and aggressive behaviour at suburban stations and a reduction in police visibility. However, the actual number of incidents or work related violence reported has declined.
- 4.5 Since the introduction of Night Tube the number of customers drinking alcohol on our system and the number of customers entering the system in an inebriated state is being monitored.
- 4.6 Overall the majority of LU reports (45 per cent) of work-related violence remain related to fare evasion, in particular not having a ticket or oyster card for travel. (28 per cent). Alcohol is a contributory factor in 28 per cent of incidents. Last train issues, service disruption, moving undesirable people on, begging/busking and implementing station control contribute 2-3 per cent each to the overall number of incidents reported by staff.
- 4.7 The majority of incidents in 2016/17 took place at the gateline (40 per cent) or in the booking hall (29 per cent) and are more likely to take place in the afternoons, or late evening peak. The introduction of Night Tube has had a positive affect on Friday and Saturday late evenings where the number of incidents has reduced. Overall the number of threats reported has fallen since 2014/15 and the number of physical incidents have remained stable over the last five years.

5 Preventative Activities

Early Intervention and Engagement

- 5.1 Early intervention to stop incidents escalating is key. We therefore continue to work in partnership with the BTP to deliver Operation Spearhead in LU. This is an early intervention tactic to prevent low level anti-social incidents escalating to staff assaults. Reporting persistent fare evaders who abuse staff, ticket touts or younger people causing problems which do not need immediate police attention are reported to the BTP by means of a special report form. BTP officers then follow up within 24 hours. The principles of this are incorporated into Customer Service Supervisor training, with a pilot scheme trialled during January 2017.
- 5.2 Prevention work is a fundamental activity therefore an essential part of the WST is to engage with the over 500 directly employed front line staff. Engagement is carried out through a range of site visits, presentations, attendance at operational staff checkpoints and team secondments. Frontline staff across Surface Transport are also part of the engagement process with regular meetings being undertaken at bus garages and other key locations. In 2016/17 the WST delivered over a 100 such engagements sessions.

Training

- 5.3 To further support the LU workforce a new 'Handling Workplace Violence and Aggression' training module was rolled out via e-learning to our operational frontline employees. A new one-day training course which incorporates these modules has been put together and is being piloted.
- 5.4 The WST also works with colleagues across Surface to lead on and develop a range of preventative advice and training for front line staff. The aim is to ensure that appropriate measures are in place and that staff safety is always at the forefront of all that we do.
- 5.5 For example all operational staff in EOS (which includes Surface revenue staff) receive detailed training in conflict management, dealing with challenging behaviour and disengagement skills as part of their probationary training.
- 5.6 Training courses cover important aspects such as how to recognise and reduce risk, understanding human behaviour, how to develop positive interactions and how to defuse, calm and resolve incidents. Alongside this, staff are trained in post incident considerations to ensure that if an incident occurs that evidence is collected where possible to ensure a higher likelihood of prosecution.
- 5.7 All training is constantly kept under review and refresher training undertaken every two years and where appropriate one to one coaching sessions are offered to staff to review incidents and look at casual factors in more detail.

Incident Review

- 5.8 In EOS each incident is reviewed at the periodic Safety Committee Meeting (SCM) by the Trade Unions, a Safety Manager and a member of the Senior Management Team this may lead to a change of procedures or working practices. Incident review meetings also provide an opportunity to identify trends and identify improvements to working practices.
- 5.9 Alongside incident reviews, a regular review of operational staff procedures is carried out bi-annually, this allows any updates to procedures to be made in light of incidents and staff and management feedback.
- 5.10 Through EOS' daily operational deployment process robust risk assessments are carried out on all on-street activities, this includes the regular review of incident data to identify high risk activities / areas; specific instructions for certain times of day or types of work (no lone working at night) and ensuring the correct deployment of equipment, such as mobiles, assault alarms and spit kits.
- 5.11 The LU Workplace Violence Working Group meets quarterly to review work related violence incidents and trends and to consider further mitigations as appropriate. This Group consists of managers and Trades Unions health and safety representatives and is consulted to ensure that an Aggression and Violence Reduction Action Plan is maintained and updated.

6 The Effect of the Closure of Ticket Offices

- 6.1 Following the removal of around 700 operational staff posts, in statistical terms the closure of ticket offices has not resulted in an increase in reported incidents of workplace violence (assault and threat). However, reports of workplace violence have been declining for several years. In 2014/15 there was an average of 110 reports per period; in 2015/16 this had dropped to an average of 81 incidents per year and, over the last year, this has fallen further to an average of 74. During the past two years there has also been a small but steady increase in customer numbers.
- 6.2 Reducing staff numbers means there are also fewer staff exposed to the potential of violence. Other factors influencing this reduction in the reported number of incidents also need to be considered; the growth in contactless cards has certainly reduced the potential for violence at gate-lines, as has the work to improve self-service ticket machines. Work still continues to investigate the implications of these closures as there is anecdotal evidence of staff feeling much more vulnerable at suburban stations.

Workplace Aggression and Anti-Social Behaviour reporting

- 6.3 Research among front-line LU staff several years ago revealed that they perceived difficulties in reporting workplace violence and believed that LU discouraged the reporting of low level abuse. They cited the impracticality of the process of reporting via the electronic reporting system (E-IRF) where they often had to negotiate with their supervisor to make out a report. This led to the development of a reporting system "E-IRF lite", the Workplace Aggression and Anti-Social Behaviour (WAASB) system and the provision of an App which allows front-line staff to record incidents on their I-Pad and to report direct.
- 6.4 The App was rolled out as part of the technology supporting the introduction of the new stations operating model in April, 2016. The original intention to report incidents of workplace aggression and anti-social behaviour has been widened to include fare evasion and, now over 90 per cent of all 91,000 reports made over the past 14 months are on fare evasion.
- 6.5 For incidents of aggression and violence the system is sophisticated such that when an individual makes a report the manager is notified at the same time in order that he/she may undertake the appropriate duty of care. The reports can be turned into E-IRF reports and the data is fed back to local managers and the revenue control manager. More recently the material is being provided to the British Transport Police in order to assist their deployment.

List of appendices to this report:

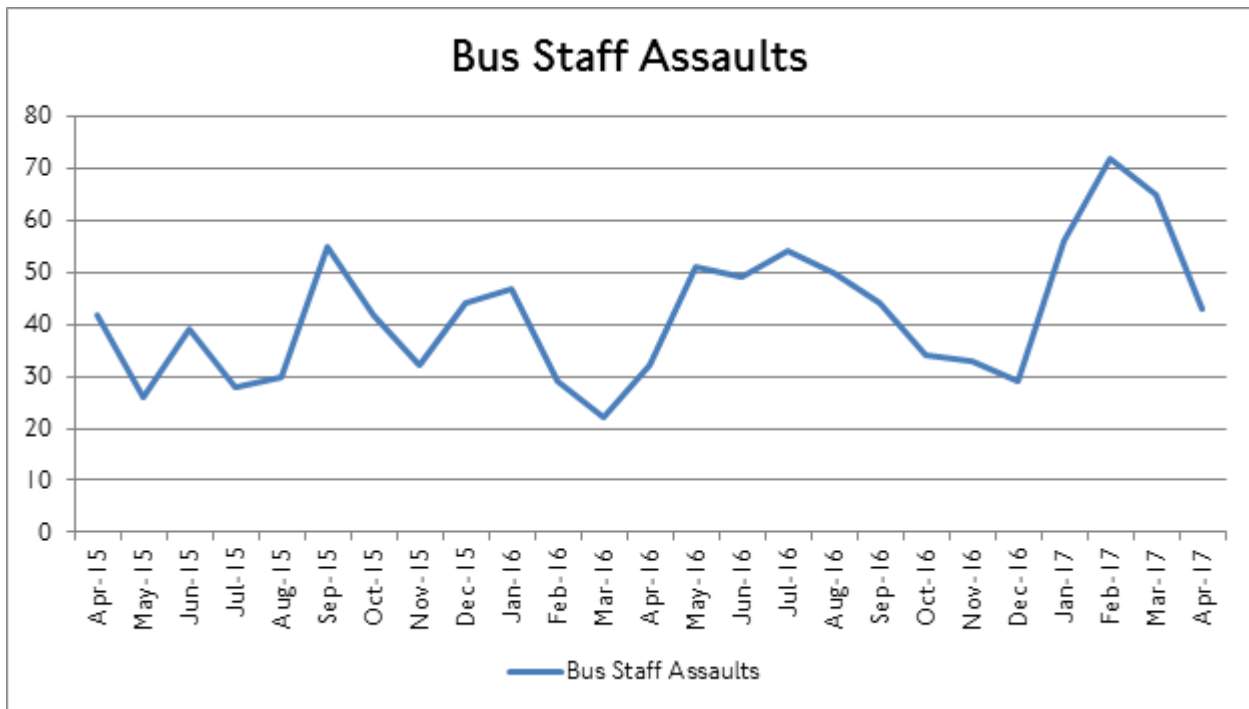
- Appendix 1 – Bus Staff Assaults 2015-2016 and 2016-2017
Appendix 2 – London Underground Work-related Violence Nature.

List of Background Papers:

None

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Appendix 1 - Bus Staff Assaults



Appendix 2 - London Underground Work-related Violence Nature of Incident

