1. Introduction

Throughout this Policy, the words ‘Translink’ ‘Company’ and/or ‘the Group’ refer to all corporate entities under the ownership of the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHC). This includes the parent company and each subsidiary either individually or taken together as a group.

2. Scope

Translink acknowledges that there is an ongoing risk of actual or potential violence to its employees whilst they carry out their normal duties.

This Policy demonstrates how Translink:-

- Is committed to providing, as far as is reasonably practicable, a safe working environment for its staff.
- Manages situations where staff may be at risk and assure staff that, so far as is reasonably practicable, preventative measures will be undertaken.
- Informs staff what action they should take if facing a threat of violence.

The Health & Safety at Work Order (NI) 1978 places duties on all employers and employees to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other people with whom they come into contact. Translink, as employer, in addition to continually reviewing and where practicable upgrading preventative and protective measures provides each mobile operational staff member with an emergency information contact card with emergency contact numbers.

Staff have the duty to report any incidents of violence, whether physical or verbal, to the Company and other relevant authorities. Translink, whilst committed to providing a service to its customers, may withdraw services from certain areas if it feels that staff safety is being put at an unacceptable risk.

3. Legislation

“The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations” (RIDDOR) – requires that Employers must notify their enforcing authority (HSENI) of any accident at work to an employee resulting in death, major injury or incapacity for normal work for three or more days. This includes any act of non-consensual physical violence done to persons at work.
4. Procedure if you are the victim of assault

If you are the victim of assault / violence you should report the incident to a supervisor as soon as practicable

If a member of staff is injured during an assault, they should be seen by their line supervisor at the first available opportunity. Staff may require medical attention or onward transport to their final destination. Under no circumstances put yourself in personal danger whilst dealing with an assault. If a situation is likely to or spirals out of control, retreat to a ‘safe area’ if available and call for assistance.

If medical support is required make the appropriate arrangements directly through Metro / NI Railways Control.

Wherever practical verbally report the circumstances of the assault / violence to the PSNI, Depot Inspector, Metro Control and / or NI Railways Control at the first available opportunity.

You must then complete the necessary accident / incident report form. Whenever practical, this should be done before you book off duty. If you are unable to make the entry yourself, because of the nature of your injuries, then someone else can be nominated to do this for you. A completed accident / incident form MUST be completed and submitted to your Line Manager or Supervisor as soon as possible.

REMEMBER: The law only allows you to use reasonable force to protect yourself.

Where an assault is anticipated:-

- Attempt to remove yourself from the risk of harm.
- Attempt to diffuse the situation.
- Do not reciprocate aggression with aggression.
- Summon assistance, by whatever means appropriate, radio control, NIR Control Office, PSNI etc.

In the event of an assault:-

- If possible remove yourself from risk of further harm.
- Use reasonable force to defend yourself.
- Summon help via Radio Control, NIR Control Office, PSNI etc.
• Do not reciprocate aggression outside of the need to use reasonable force to defend yourself or other innocent parties.

You should be aware however that in law, any retaliation could be considered an assault.

5. Definition of violence

"Violence is any incident in which an employee is physically or psychologically abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public or other employee in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of, his or her employment".

This may be in the form of:

• A physical assault
• A threat by word, weapon or action which suggests a possible future act of assault and/or persistent harassment

Verbal abuse is not considered to be a violent incident but will be recorded, monitored and seen as a possible indicator of future violence. However, excessive or prolonged verbal abuse may have a psychological impact.

Where staff are threatened with violence to give up company monies under their charge they are advised to hand over such monies without resistance and under no circumstances to engage in any confrontation, either verbal or physical.

6. Prevention

The company and all employees must do everything possible to prevent any incidents of violence against staff. Translink welcomes and encourages the assistance of Trade Union Representatives in managing violence through their active participation in Translink Health and Safety Committees.

Where possible the Company will equip vehicles and locations with appropriate security measures and take due cognisance of available security features when purchasing new vehicles.

It will incorporate through training awareness of good practice when dealing with confrontational situations.
The organisation will engage with the relevant enforcement agencies, community leaders and groups as well as schools and youth services to promote a climate of respect towards our staff and property. It will review all reported incidents of violence and engage proactively with staff and their representatives when considering operational implications.

Where appropriate it will use the full rigours of the law to prosecute offenders and advertise our willingness to do so.

7. Risk Assessment

Managers and Supervisors are trained in risk assessment techniques and will, in conjunction with staff representatives:

- Ensure that adequate risk assessments are carried out to identify hazards in the workplace, working environment and in working practices which may result in violence towards staff
- Evaluate whether existing controls are adequate or new hazards have emerged. Where existing controls are not suitable or sufficient, the risk assessment will identify, where practical, any necessary additional controls to prevent or adequately minimise the risk in each case
- Record all findings from the risk assessment, informing staff of the results
- Ensure risk assessments are reviewed periodically

Individual risk assessments are carried out for certain locations/events that may give rise to violence against staff.

8. Reporting a violent incident

Act quickly
Safety first
Seek advice
Advise Control/Line Manager
Use witnesses
Leave or label evidence
Take a record of events
All incidents involving violence/abuse must be reported to:-

- Identify risk areas
- Ensure appropriate measures are enforced to reduce future incidents
- Provide evidence to support withdrawals of services, support complaints and claims
- Comply with legal requirements under the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations

Members of staff must report all incidents of violence, including verbal abuse, on the Translink Incident Report Form as soon as practicable after the incident and before their shift ends.

No member of staff should fail to report an incident of violence because they feel it is “part of the job” nor because of fear they may be criticised by colleagues, supervisors or managers.

9. **Line management response to incidents of violence**

Management responsibility entails:-

- Caring for the victim(s)
- Investigating the incident
- Reviewing the effectiveness of preventative measures
- Debriefing the members of staff and any other members who were present and ensuring proper recording of the incident
- Encouraging staff to engage in counselling
- Consultation with employee representation

10. **Support**

Translink will support staff who are subjected to violence. This support is provided by counselling and, if necessary, time off work to attend these sessions.

11. **Welfare Officer**

The Welfare Officer provides support to staff affected by assaults. The Welfare Officer provides advice and support to Managers on how to help and support
employees who have been affected by these unfortunate occurrences. Violence often takes place when least expected and, depending on the severity, may cause shock, disbelief and anger and may often be accompanied by fear and guilt. Early interventions in such cases are therefore important and counselling will be offered where appropriate.

The Translink Welfare Officer provides:

- Individual support to staff affected
- Advice and support to Managers
- Advice and reports on risk reduction, protective measures and diffusion strategies.
- Resources specialist assistance where appropriate

12. **Counselling**

Translink provide a range of counselling services and, where appropriate, allow staff time off work to attend. Employees who suffer assaults should be encouraged to attend counselling and in some cases it may be mandatory.

13. **Related Documents**

This policy should be read in conjunction with other related policies such as:

- Translink Health & Safety Policy
- The Employee Charter
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Prosecution Guidelines

14. **Previous Versions of Policy**

Original issue date: January 2006

Revised: January 2011