

Violence in class: new figures on staff injuries

CLASSROOM-BASED support staff are exposed to more violence at work than most other jobs in the UK, according to a new GMB study.

Only care assistants, nurses, police officers and prison-service officers suffer more recorded injuries caused by violence. Data obtained by GMB from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) also shows that:

- There are three incidents a month of educational assistants suffering **major injuries** involving violence, e.g. fractures and dislocations.

- Every other day, an educational assistant suffers a violent injury which leads to at least three days' **absence from work**.
- Educational assistants are **more vulnerable** to violence than most other parts of the school workforce.

The figures come as GMB responded to a Government consultation about discipline in schools. GMB has called on the Government to recognise the risks encountered by school support staff. The Union has also recommended that more training be made available in areas like behaviour management.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

	Number of total injuries	Rate per 100,000 employees
Care assistants & home carers	1842	260.5
Nurses	678	129.0
Police officers (sergeant & below)	529	317.9
Prison service officers (below principal officer)	450	994.6
Nursing auxiliaries & assistants	337	157.4
Educational assistants	281	58.0
Security guards & related occupations	249	141.9
Bus & coach drivers	161	129.8

Source: HSE, reported number and estimated rate per 100,000 employees of injuries caused by violence at work, 2009/10 (provisional), by minor occupation codes with the largest number of reports.

IN SCHOOLS

	Number of major injuries	Number of over-3-day injuries
Educational assistants	34	247
Primary and nursery education teaching professionals	4	26
Secondary education teaching professionals	12	44

Source: HSE, injuries to workers by specific education occupation codes involving violence as reported to all enforcing authorities under RIDDOR 95 regulations in 2009/10 (provisional).

...nursery nurses, secretaries, bursars, learning support practitioners, sitekeepers, school meals staff, teaching assistants, learning mentors, administrators, cleaners, cover supervisors, librarians, midday supervisors, personal care assistants, technicians, higher level teaching assistants... **GMB your union in school**

Minutes of the School Support Staff Meeting held on the 10th May 2011

- Twenty eight GMB school based stewards attended the meeting which included a number of first time attendees.
- Introductions were made.
- Delegates approved the minutes of the previous meeting.
- Matters arising.

Administration of Medicines

The previous regional meeting voted unanimously to oppose any attempts to impose the administration of medicines into people's contracts. Sheffield City Council is currently attempting to include this policy into school contracts inside that authority. The GMB national committee was also asked to endorse this stance. Leeds School Support Branch has submitted a motion to GMB 2011 Congress.

A discussion took place around the issue of toileting and the risks involved in carrying out this task alone. Staff were advised to always work in pairs because of the fear of false allegations.

The third issue in the theme of "risks" was incorporated in the latest School Workforce News and that was "Staying Safer on School Trips". It was agreed that the guidelines highlighted in this publication can be adapted to fit other risk situations. Head teachers should ensure that:

- The risk assessment has been carried out.
- Appropriate safety measures are in place.
- Training needs have been assessed by a competent person.
- There is adequate and relevant insurance cover.
- The ratio of supervisors is appropriate.

Leeds Superintendents' Agreement

Leeds have been attempting to change the Superintendents' (caretakers) Agreement for a number of years and this has led to some frustration as the process has taken so long. Negotiations have seemingly concluded and the trade unions are waiting for the employer side to provide them with a proposed draft agreement. Once the GMB is in receipt of that information they will consult with all those affected.

Sharon Holder - National Officer

The meeting warmly welcomed Sharon who recently moved from other national duties to her new post as national officer for schools. Sharon stated that she was extremely pleased to attend and meet so many staff from schools around Yorkshire and North Derbyshire.

She took feedback in relation to the revamped School Workforce News (if you wish to receive this monthly publication by email, simply contact me at bill.chard@gmb.org.uk). The meeting approved the new format and concluded that the lead article on School Trips was relevant and informative. Sharon stated that she had written to the relevant Government Minister regarding a national policy on the administration of medicines. She did receive a reply and was due to meet with government policy officers.

Academies and Free Schools

Michael Gove, Tory Secretary for State and Education, is seeking to reduce guidance to schools under the cover of reducing red tape. His approach gives a signal to head teachers that they can do what they want - Academies, Free Schools, free from local authority guidance or control.

Many schools are attempting to change staff terms and conditions once they have converted to Academy or Free School status. Members are strongly advised not to sign any new contract without speaking to their GMB representative.

It is imperative that GMB stewards or contacts get in touch with the union straight away and alert them to the fact that their school is converting. GMB members at converting schools should change from check off to direct debit and a new recognition agreement must be signed between the school and the GMB.

Unfortunately, there has been an unstoppable rush towards Academies, and the GMB must respond by organising workforces in schools, every school workforce needs to organise an election for a GMB representative in order to be ready for the changes ahead.

Presently schools are finding the financial incentive involved in becoming an Academy irresistible but this may well be a short term view; what would happen if a new Academy discovered asbestos? They would have to fund its removal at an enormous cost. The Academy could end up bankrupt as a result.

We also need to ensure that the school agrees to pay for the services of the GMB convenors in order that members are properly supported.

Pensions

The GMB is launching a Judicial Review into the government's imposed change to the public sector pension scheme's indexation of pension benefits. Members are already losing a 1.5% increase in their pension. This government is also looking at reducing pension benefits and raising the scheme pension age. The government is planning to make members of the

scheme pay substantially more and receive less in return. Many school based staff are saying that they may have to leave the scheme because they cannot afford an increase.

The GMB will work with the other public service unions in order to fight and resist these changes. If the government push ahead then industrial action will be seriously considered.

Education White Paper

It was extremely disappointing to note that support staff are not referred to in the government white paper on education. This demonstrates again that they do not acknowledge the valuable work carried out by support staff.

Two Hundred and Fifty Pounds One Off Payment

George Osborne, Chancellor, promised public sector workers a one off payment of £250 in 2011 if they earned less than £21,000 a year.

Unfortunately, this promise was reneged on and local authority employees, including school support staff, have been excluded from the payment. You now have the ludicrous situation whereby an unqualified teacher will receive the payment while support colleagues will miss out. Except in Sheffield City Council, the Labour group promised to honour the £250 payment if they managed to win control from the Liberal Democrats. Labour gained overall control in Nick Clegg's back yard and school support staff in that city will receive the payment.

Nursery Nurses in Leeds

Leeds has been trying to reduce the terms of nursery nurses for some time. Prior to 2005 this grouping were paid for 52 weeks whilst working 39, treated much the same way as teachers. Nursery nurses employed since 2005 have been employed on term time only. Leeds are seeking to impose changes to pre 2005 staff but the NJC National Agreement says "nursery nurses are to be regarded as full-time employees if regularly employed for 10 sessions or more per week during the school week or where a sessional basis is inappropriate, 32.5 hours. There will be no abatement of days not required to be worked during school holidays. The situation is ongoing.

Vertical coaching

Some schools have initiated "vertical coaching", staff are encouraged to take classes and share their life experiences with the pupils. Some have been asked to participate in parent evenings called "meet the coaches" all for no extra remuneration. Only HLTAs are paid to direct classes in this way, cover supervisors are paid to hand out the cover supplied by the teacher, no other staff members should take classes.

<p>Date of next meeting 11th October 2011 at 10.30 am Regional Office Wakefield</p>



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How many hours a week do you work? Pay No

Work Tel Pay Date

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