

Transport for London

Safety and Sustainability Panel

Subject: Workplace Assaults

Date: 19 March 2013

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update a review undertaken by Safety, Health and Environment Committee (SHEAC) on 15 December 2011.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to note the paper.

2 Background

- 2.1 TfL deplures violence both to its direct employees and the employees of the contractors who deliver our services¹. This has been the case from the inception of TfL in 2000. TfL has long taken the view that the actual nature of the assaults is not the issue, whether it is actual physical violence, incidents of spitting, verbal threats more common types of verbal abuse, all these acts represent an abuse which is not acceptable and cannot be tolerated. TfL will take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of workplace assaults to our staff to a level that is as low as reasonably practicable.
- 2.2 In 2004 the Rail Personnel Security Group (RPSG), defined workplace violence in its Good Practice Guide, as:

'Any incident where, in circumstances related to their work, a member of staff is assaulted, threatened or abused, thereby affecting their health, safety or welfare.'
- 2.3 This wide definition has been adopted by TfL, and has underpinned the approach ever since, with respect to assaults on our staff. We know violence to staff impacts in a number of ways including:
 - (a) stress and fear, which can have a cumulative impact on health;
 - (b) loss of confidence and demoralisation, which can lead to increased staff turnover;
 - (c) negative impacts in staff behaviour which can impact on our customers;

¹TfL is as concerned about assaults on its own staff as about those to contractors staff, and therefore we will use the term 'our staff' to cover both TfL employees and contractors in this paper.

- (d) negative impact on recruitment as people can hear of problems;
and
- (e) financial losses through the need to fund compensation and sick pay schemes, and of course impact on operations due to staff absence.

2.5 The RPSG Guide set out a framework for tackling the problem of violence to staff, which provides an integrated approach, made up of:

- (a) encouraging strong leadership from the top of organisations to make clear that violence to staff is not acceptable and that it has to stop;
- (b) providing easy and better reporting of cases of violence to staff;
- (c) publicising the problem and encouraging open discussion;
- (d) providing effective welfare support for staff;
- (e) analysing who are the vulnerable staff and the situations where they are vulnerable;
- (f) targeting resources to best control the risks; and
- (g) taking effective enforcement.

These elements are now well embedded TfL wide, and are embraced by our contractors² too. The approach that TfL has developed has been underpinned by detailed research, and we have developed a victim centred best practice for dealing with workplace staff assaults, understanding what our staff need to perform their key roles interfacing with sometimes challenging users of our services.

2.6 The paper considers the current picture of workplace violence, and looks at the ways this framework is used to control and mitigate the risks that our staff face within the delivery directorates.

3 The Nature of Workplace Assaults

3.1 It is important to place workplace violence in context. The British Crime Survey³ (BCS), and the occupational data extracted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), can be considered as a useful benchmark of the national picture. The BCS collects data through interviews with a stratified selection of the population, and has been run every year since 2001/2. It provides a credible picture of the more significant workplace assaults that are occurring across the UK. The overall picture for the survey is that assaults on employees at work have generally fallen

² Some of our contractors are termed franchisees and concessionaires, but we have used the term contractor as this is simpler.

³This has recently been re-titled the Crime Survey of England and Wales, but is better known as the BCS so we have used this.

since 2001/2, although more recently the trend has started to level. This is set out in Figure 1 below.

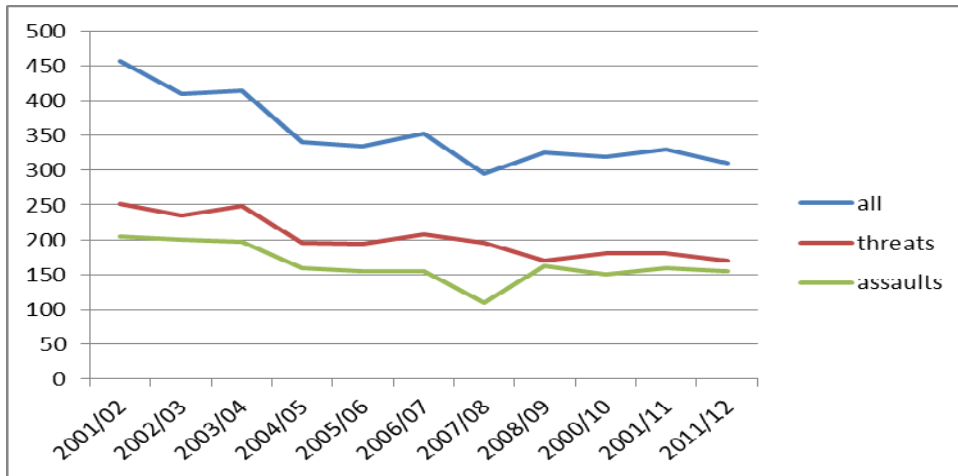


Figure 1 : British Crime Survey : Incidents of physical violence to staff at work across UK, in thousands

The BCS is more credible with respect to physical assaults and threats, than verbal assaults. On verbal assaults the methodology is not as accurate as company based records, and is felt to under score. This is relevant given the TfL picture as a whole.

3.2 The overall picture for TfL is set out in Figure 2 below, which shows the picture for all assaults by quarter over the past seven years.

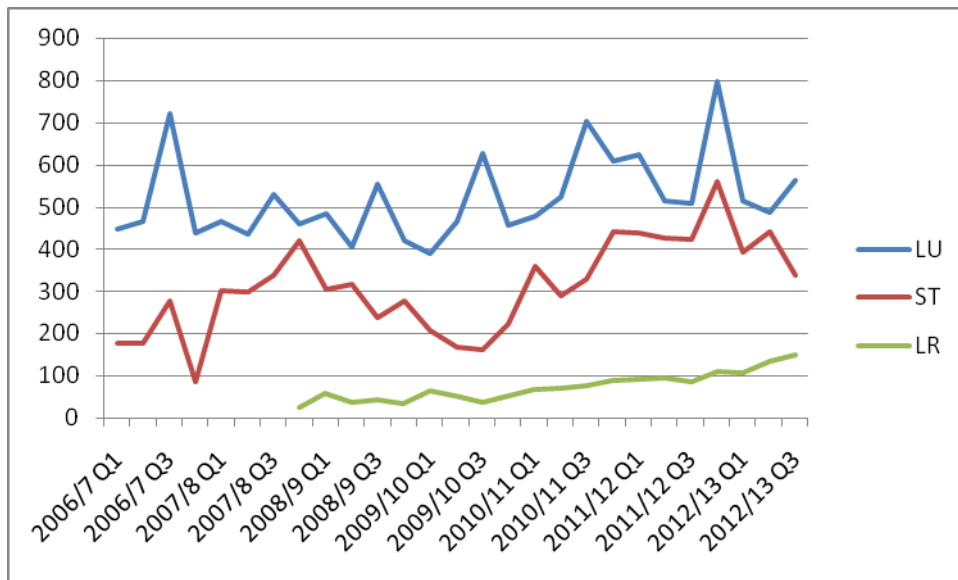


Figure 2 : TfL data for all workplace assaults in absolute numbers by quarter

As can be seen for London Underground, there is slight rise over the seven year period, but over the last year this is a levelling; Surface Transport also shows a rise throughout the seven year period, with the last year showing a falling trend; London Rail shows a steady rise for the five years there is reliable data, although during the period there

was a significant expansion of the London Rail service which needs to be taken into account.

- 3.3 While overall there has been a rise and then more recently a levelling in workplace assaults across TfL, the balance between the types of assault has changed over the five to seven year period. Within TfL the categorisation of assaults is not identical. London Underground distinguish physical assaults (covering more significant physical assault) to spitting to pushing and shoving; threats (situations where our staff are threatened) such as being told by a customer that they 'will return with their mates another day to sort them out', which can clearly be very upsetting; and verbal assaults (lower level verbal abuse, though clearly upsetting especially when made with a gender or racial overtone). This is set out in Table 1 below

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (to p 11)
Physical	438 (23%)	526 (23%)	462 (19%)	374 (20%)
Threat	535 (28%)	772 (33%)	800 (33%)	653 (35%)
Verbal	959 (49%)	1010 (44%)	1184 (49%)	863 (45%)

Table 1 : Breakdown in LU of types of assault over past 15 periods

As Table 1 shows Verbal assaults are generally about twice physical assaults year on year. Physical assaults are stable to falling. Verbal assaults are relatively level, if a little volatile. Threats are rising. In Surface verbal assaults are currently about twice as common as physical ones (including spitting attacks). Some of this can be explained by reporting variances, some of the change is down to creating a supportive environment in which reporting is encouraged and managing the post event and follow up really developed. Some may be down to social trends.

- 3.4 There are also differences in the work groups in which our staff work and the levels of assault they experience. In London Underground assaults are mainly on employees, in particular, those in the Chief Operating Officer Group (train drivers, station staff, revenue protection staff etc). In ST there are fewer assaults on employees, but those occurring are mainly to Revenue Protection staff. In London Rail, assaults are almost all experienced by our contractors (train drivers, conductors and revenue protection staff), and in Surface Transport, the contractor staff most at risk are bus drivers. This is highlighted in the two graphs below Figures 3 and 4. In these graphs the numbers of assaults have been normalised by the numbers in the work groups, to give a better idea of rate.

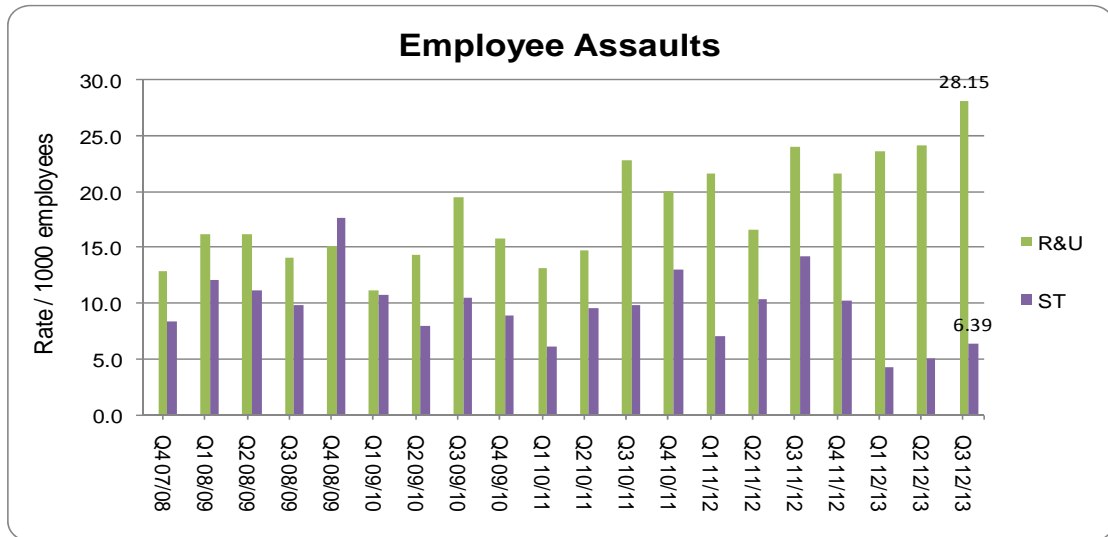


Figure 3 :Rates per 1000 for Employees who have been victims of all types of assault

Note that there are no assaults in the London Rail employee group over this period.

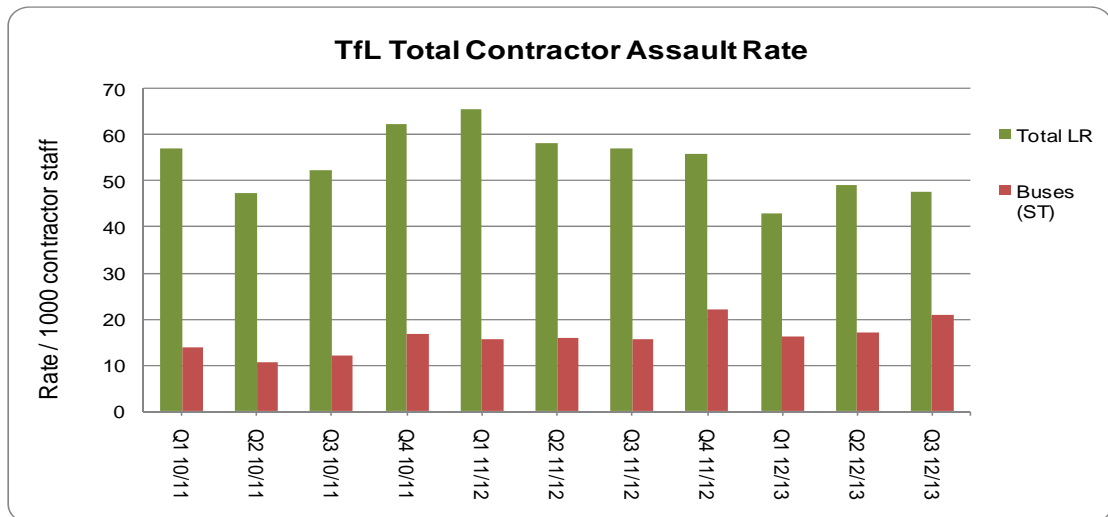


Figure 4 : Rates per 1000 of TfL Contractors who have been victims of all types of assaults

The data in Figure 4 includes all employees in Surface Transport.

- 3.6 The Health and Safety Executive has taken the BCS data and broken it down by occupation using the BCS distinction of assault (a physical attack) and a threat (a verbal attack). As the numbers are low this is combined over a two year period. Table 2 below shows the data from the most recent 2011/12 survey report, but covers 2009/2011, so is a little behind where we are now. This data shows that transport is the fourth highest of the workforce categories picked.

	Percentages in workforce category experiencing violence during the past 2 years		
Occupation	Assault	Threat	All*
Police, Fire, Prisons	7.3	1.9	8.4
Social services	1.8	2.0	3.5
Health Service	0.6	2.6	2.9
Transport	0.7	0.8	1.5

Table 2 : BCS percentages in workforce experiencing violence at work

*(note the all category is not a simple addition as the data includes double counting when both have occurred, so is not directly comparable to our data).

3.7 It is often quite difficult to disentangle root and contributory causes of incidents, and there is often more than one factor; some of these causes are related to social factors which are outside of our direct control, such as general behaviour to perceived figures of authority. However there are three areas where changes in the patterns over the last few years can be seen: alcohol, racial abuse and revenue disputes.

3.8 The first area is the impact of drugs and alcohol. The BCS survey provides data on the proportion of those incidents in which drink and/or alcohol were involved, in Table 3. However the categories are not exactly the same as for TfL

	Percentages of incidents of workplace violence in which drink or drugs were a factor in during the past two years		
	Assault	Threat	All
Alcohol	41	37	39
Drugs	26	18	22

Table 3 : BCS data on the role of Drugs and Alcohol in workplace assaults

While the situation on London Underground is set out in Table 3, and shows a lower proportion than for the BCS, the trend is rising, showing that alcohol is more likely to be a factor than it used to be.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (to p 11)
Physical	18%	27%	30%	31%
Threat	18%	22%	24%	23%
Verbal	20%	19%	19%	27%

Table 4 : Showing the proportion in LU in which alcohol is related to types of assault.

The comparative figure for Surface Transport, set out in Table 4 above, shows that only three per cent of assaults were attributed to drugs and alcohol, although a further 20 per cent are recorded as “passenger behaviour problem”. The data for Surface Transport is not as robust in this area as for London Underground and is currently being further developed.

3.9 There has also been a rise in racially aggravated attacks. With a workforce that increasingly mirrors the ethnic diversity of the capital across TfL, this is something TfL will monitor closely, and in addition to continuing to ensure staff are provided with appropriate training to avoid conflict, is something we will provide full support for if they are subject to such an attack. The data here in Figure 5 is just for London Underground as it is not yet collected in this way in Surface Transport or London Rail, but this is now being considered.

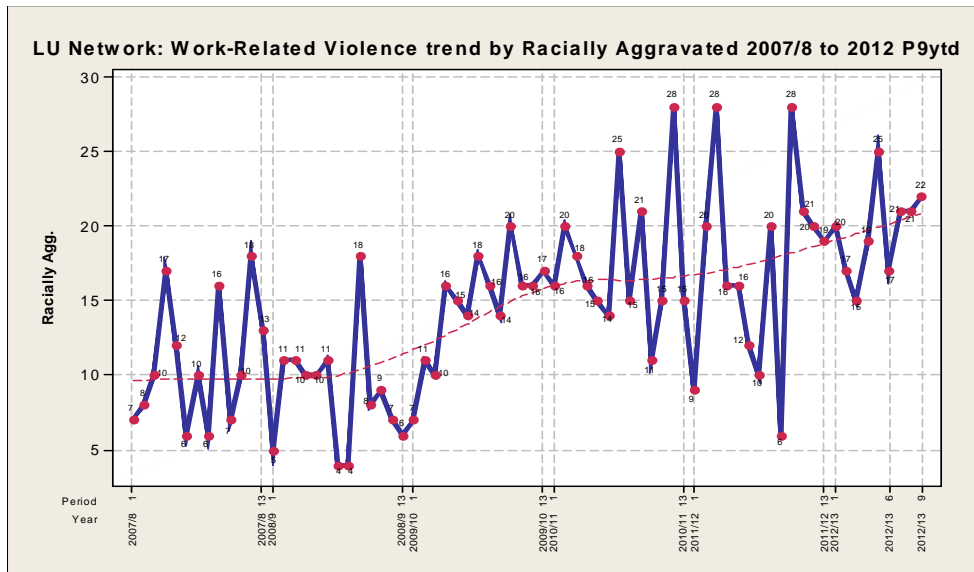


Figure 5 : Events of Work Place violence in LU related to racially aggravated attacks

3.10 Thirdly, and perhaps the most significant, as it accounts for over 50 per cent of the categorisations for workplace violence, is the increasing trend for workplace assault to be related to matters linked to revenue protection. Table 5 shows the data for London Underground, and Table 6 for Surface Transport.

Year	LU Workplace Assaults	Revenue Disputes Total	Revenue Disputes Total %	Revenue Oyster %	Revenue No Ticket %
2007/8	1916	686	35.8%	-	-
2008/9	1861	812	43.6%	13.0%	16.2%
2009/10	2162	1124	51.9%	16.2%	20.1%
2010/11	2437	1352	55.5%	17.6%	23.4%
2011/12	2331	1235	53.0%	18.8%	24.5%
2012/3 (to P9)	1555	807	51.9%	18.8%	25.0%

Table 5 : Events of Workplace Assaults in LU related to revenue protection

Overall transport crime reached an eight-year low during the year 2011/12, but the levels of assaults on staff has risen, albeit verbal assaults remain the most significant. And many of these incidents took

place when people were pushing through the gate lines without paying and were being rightly challenged by staff.

Year	ST WRV Total	Ticket or fare disputes total	Ticket or fare disputes %
2010/11	1996	500	25%
2011/12	2630	820	31%
2012/13 (to P11)	1925	606	31%

Table 6 : Events of workplace assaults in ST linked to revenue events

Workplace assaults violence within Surface Transport identified as originating from ticket or fare dispute has remained broadly constant in the previous two years, and is lower than in London Underground.

4 Combating Workplace Assaults

- 4.1 The core of our strategy has been set out in paragraph 2.5 above. In this section the individual elements are considered.
- 4.2 **Leadership** - within London Underground the approach to workplace violence to staff has been a core focus for senior management for over 15 years, and LU has had a leading role in developing staff support, publicity and legal enforcement, which in turn has led to changes in staff and public attitudes toward assaults on staff. We understand the workplace risks our staff face, and have ensured they have the training and senior support codified within the safety management and Company Management Systems. Within Surface Transport each directorate has a Safety Management System that contains a 'Violence at Work and Lone Working Policy'. This provides Surface Transport managers and staff with support and guidance on how to manage the risks posed by workplace violence, including the need for the identification of training needs through comprehensive risk assessment and training needs analysis. This is replicated by the concessionaires running Surface Transport services, in particular in London Buses. The concessionaires working for London Rail all have clear policies on staff assault, fully supported by their leadership teams, and have a similar focus as in London Underground and Surface Transport.
- 4.3 **Reporting and Governance** - London Underground requires all instances of workplace assault to be reported using the London Underground electronic incident reporting system, which has been made easier to use in the past two years. Reports from this data collection are considered locally and in the Workplace Violence Working Group. There is an annual review of workplace assaults and quarterly monitoring of trends by London Rail and Underground Directors. All instances of workplace violence to Surface Transport staff

are required to be reported to the Surface Transport Safety Team via the incident reporting system. This data provides the basis for the reports at Safety Committee and Safety Governance Meetings (from business level to Board level), and is considered by the ST WVU. It is also discussed in the Bus Operators Forum with all the contractors. London Rail collects the data from the concessionaires each period, reported through the concessionaires own reporting systems. The topic is considered at the contractors monthly safety committees and is reviewed at the London Rail Quarterly HSE meeting. All of these reviews lead to action at both local and company levels as appropriate.

- 4.4 **Publicity Campaigns** - TfL reinforces the message of zero tolerance by running public awareness campaigns aimed at deterring abuse towards staff and fully supporting legal action. This is carried through posters, local newspapers, the TfL website and targeted campaigns supported by British Transport Police (BTP) and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). For example in December 2012 a pre Christmas campaign was run which covered London Underground, London Overground and Docklands Light Railway stations, London Buses and London Tramlink. The poster and press release led campaign, warned would-be perpetrators "Don't take it out on our staff". The campaign reinforced the TfL commitment to tackle workplace violence head on and to further encourage staff to report instances of abuse, whether physical or non-physical, and highlighted the funding of dedicated workplace violence police officers to work with TfL and staff to investigate cases, provide support for victims and seek legal enforcement for reported incidents. The TfL HSE Annual Report makes clear the importance we attach to the issue.
- 4.5 **Providing staff welfare support** – both TfL and our contractors have provided effective welfare support for staff, which is sensitively and proportionately provided throughout the range of workplace violence interventions, assisting those who have suffered actual physical violence and those who have been threatened and verbally abused, so they feel good about returning to front line work. Information is provided on the state of cases being taken through the legal system and staff are kept informed of successful cases.
- 4.6 **Analysing vulnerable staff/vulnerable location** – as we have shown above in section 3, we collect and analyse data to target our interventions and those of our partners in the police. The data is collected by the Workplace Violence Units in London Underground and Surface Transport (see more detail below) and is reviewed.
- 4.7 **Targeting Resources to reduce risk**- this covers the deployment of people, equipment and processes. In fact combating workplace violence starts from the very beginning with staff recruitment procedures include reviewing behaviours, including an ability to deal with stressful situations and managing challenging people.

- 4.8 London Underground staff training on workplace violence post recruitment has been a core element throughout the last decade. Originally branded as Managing Challenging Behaviour (MCB) it is delivered to all Underground front-line staff as part of the continuous learning programme. The training is delivered to front line staff, new recruits and those taking promotion to station supervisors.
- 4.9 At key locations where there is a greater experience of incidents of workplace violence, and the local British Transport Police Neighbourhood Police Teams (NPTs) are able to input their local knowledge to the local training workshops for staff on avoiding workplace violence. This input also enhances the role of the NPTs and facilitates LU/BTP engagement and partnership working.
- 4.10 All business areas in Surface Transport are required to carry out an assessment of training needs in relation to workplace violence, and where deemed necessary arrange for Conflict Avoidance training to be delivered. Methods of training delivery vary dependant upon the business areas; in some areas it is a compulsory part of the staff training package (such as Revenue Protection Inspectors).
- 4.11 The services run by London Rail are operated by private sector operators as are those in Surface Transport. Conflict avoidance training is a key part of the operational control in each of the London Rail businesses.
- 4.12 All revenue protection staff, and a significant number of other potentially vulnerable staff across TfL, have been provided with DNA capturing kits (commonly called 'spit kits') from about 2007 to assist in DNA based identification of attackers.
- 4.13 All contracted bus companies have their own staff training arrangements that include conflict avoidance elements. In addition TfL requires all drivers to be BTEC trained within their first year, a qualification that contains a customer care module covering effective customer interaction techniques.
- 4.14 All drivers are issued with the "Big Red Book"- which is a guide produced by London Buses - that gives guidance on correct practices and protocols aimed at reducing possible conflict situations.
- 4.15 All buses are fitted with assault screens. These have been a mandatory fit for many years in TfL and are aimed at reducing the consequences of attacks upon drivers by creating an effective barrier in an environment where the driver is necessarily static and can be more vulnerable. TfL was an early adopter of these screens, and strongly believes they provide a considerable staff benefit. The experience of other bus operators in the UK is also that the introduction of these screens reduces violence to staff.

- 4.16 There is CCTV on all buses, and Tube, Overground, DLR, and London Tramlink vehicles, as well as on stations, platforms and London River services piers. This has proved invaluable in helping identify people attacking staff, and assisting in gaining criminal convictions for episodes of workplace violence.
- 4.17 All buses are fitted with 2-way radio systems that allow the driver to communicate with the staffed control centre – CentreComm - to summon assistance as required. All buses are fitted with comprehensive CCTV, which can be used in supporting legal action against those who assault our staff.
- 4.18 A phone operated (one button panic push) system for ST Revenue Protection staff is used, which activates a 2-way communication channel with a staffed control room, that can assist the inspector by requesting assistance (e.g. Police) in real time. The trained operator can listen in on the event and react on behalf of the revenue inspector, allowing the inspector to concentrate on their own safety instead of struggling to make an emergency phone call. This is all recorded and used as evidence if required. Additionally, the service allows staff to pre-record a message outlining their location, environment and intentions, which can be replayed by the operator if the staff member is unable to communicate effectively. London Underground provides CONNECT radios for front line staff. These radios have an emergency button, which when pressed connects through to the Network Operations Centre (NOC), alerting them. The NOC can pick up location by Phone Cell, send assistance and record any conversations, which can be used in legal proceedings.
- 4.19 All the piers at the staffed locations on the London River Services are provided with Airwave radios and enhanced emergency call points which are linked back to CentreComm to provide effective communication links.
- 4.20 Within Traffic Directorates a web based system to monitor location of staff who are working away from the office has been implemented, and this is being rolled out across Streets.
- 4.21 **Taking effective enforcement action** – this has been a key part of the overall strategy. We know from the employee research undertaken that this is a key determinant in staff engagement in this area, and determines the extent to which they perceive TfL takes this seriously. Both of the Workplace Violence Units have been a key player in this.
- 4.22 The London Underground Workplace Violence Unit (LU WVU) was set up in 2007. It is a partnership between London Underground and the British Transport Police to support operational staff. It has 3 major aims:
- (a) Improve both the level and standard of staff assault investigation;

- (b) Provide enhanced care to victims; and
 - (c) Ensure more cases are successfully prosecuted.
- 4.23 The Unit was intended to start in an investigative/supportive role, but developed over a number of years and has become more strategic, helping with implementing and co-ordinating measures to help tackle violence against staff and become, over time, a one-stop shop and centre of excellence for all workplace violence issues.
- 4.24 Independent survey work on the role of the LU WVU has shown it has been associated with a range of beneficial outcomes for LU staff including:
- (a) more positive attitudes towards the BTP;
 - (b) less perceived fear and vulnerability;
 - (c) improved attitudes towards customers;
 - (d) better work attitudes among staff (e.g. higher levels of organisational commitment); and
 - (e) greater health and well-being.
- 4.25 Since its creation the London Underground Workplace Violence Unit has been involved in assisting with over 3,000 instances of staff assault and public order offences against staff. Just under 1,200 cases have been taken to court, and of these 84 per cent have resulted in a successful outcome. A further 1,000 have had a positive result without going through the court process by means of police cautions, youth reprimands, etc.
- 4.26 The unit provides support to staff attending court, feeding back prosecution results through communication media, and assisting in the development of training and raising awareness of workplace assaults generally.
- 4.27 The Surface Transport Workplace Violence Unit (ST WVU) was created in 2009 to support frontline staff, who were victims of abuse and violence at work. It is a partnership unit staffed by TfL and the Metropolitan Police under the Safer Transport Command (STC), reporting in to the Community Safety, Enforcement and Policing Directorate (CSEP) of TfL.
- 4.28 The ST WVU supports both TfL staff and our contractors by:
- (a) Fully investigating crimes against staff and pursuing prosecutions in the courts;
 - (b) Monitoring and supporting Borough police in their investigations;

- (c) Analysing data and determining trends in crime patterns; and
 - (d) Providing a single point of contact for staff, with WVU “owning” the case until a court conclusion, regularly updating staff, and visiting staff in order to make statement taking easier for the individual.
- 4.29 In the period January 2009 – October 2012, the ST WVU investigated 1,026 cases, with a successful conviction rate of 91 per cent. During this period there has been an increase in confidence amongst our staff that cases were being taken seriously. There have been improvements in reporting, and a clear demonstration to the public that we (TfL and the Police) will push for the severest penalties against those subjecting our staff to workplace assaults.
- 4.30 Across the transport network, there are more than 2,500 police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who, along with the deployment of more than 12,000 CCTV cameras on the Tube and CCTV on all London Buses, have helped to secure successful convictions against around 90 per cent of offenders taken to court for abusing staff on TfL’s networks in the last five years.
- 4.31 Recently the Director of Safety for the Office of Rail Regulation commented that ‘ORR considers LU/TfL is leading in the Rail Industry on developing and implementing procedures and processes to manage work related violence and its consequences.’

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 TfL takes assaults on our staff very seriously. We know that our understanding of this important issue has developed over a number of years, during which we have pioneered a range of initiatives that have made significant differences. We will continue to seek out ever better ways to combat the problem, aware that we must continually understand the changes in the environment that we work within. We will work with key stakeholders, in particular the BTP and MPS, and continually learn from others. We will continue to seek to deploy our approaches to ever greater effect.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The committee is asked to NOTE the paper.

7 Contact

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