



AVOIDING HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

- IN DANISH MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL WORKPLACES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	3
Framework and agreements	4
Table of definitions	5
Initiatives	6
Introduction to cases	9
Cases	10
Links and references	23
Back page	24

Project-management:
Pia Møller, Danish Regions
Preben Meier Pedersen,
Local Government Denmark
Henrik Carlsen, KTO

Text:
kombic/visionworks
www.kombic.dk

Editor:
Morten Bichel, kombic ApS

Design:
Formidabel

Photo:
kombic, Colorbox, I-Stock Photo

Print:
Scanprint

Circulation:
5.500

December 2010

DANISH
REGIONS



PREFACE

The human consequences can be serious when employees and managers are subjected to harassment and violence in their workplace. The extent of the challenges differs widely from sector to sector, and harassment and violence may affect all workplaces and employee groups.

Since 2008, municipal and regional workplaces in Denmark have been required to actively prepare guidelines for how to prevent harassment and violence. This initiative is part of the agreement on health and well-being at work which were concluded in connection with the renewal of the collective agreement in 2008. This agreement, clearly states, that managing the problems of harassment and violence requires a joint

effort, and that the social partners condemn any abuse in the workplace and any work-related abuse. The agreement implements the European 'Framework agreement on harassment and violence at work.'

This publication describes the Danish approach to preventing, identifying and managing harassment and violence in regional and municipal workplaces. Six different cases illustrate how the agreements made by the Danish social partners are put into practice. They also describe the effort made by the co-determination committees and at a workplace level to help ensure concrete and locally adapted solutions to challenges regarding harassment and violence at work.

Kind regards,

Local Government Denmark

Danish Regions

KTO (Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations)

FRAMEWORK AND AGREEMENTS

Background

For more than 100 years, the social partners in Denmark have had a major influence on the rules governing the working environment. The forerunner of the Danish Working Environment Council was established as early as 1901, laying the ground for the collaboration between employers and employees. This collaboration has resulted in considerable agreements on parts of the Danish Working Environment Act, and the establishment of a comprehensive health and safety organisation and eleven working environment councils covering the different sectors.

The central influence of the social partners has increased through a large number of committees, boards and funds with both employer and employee representation. The regional and municipal social partners in Denmark want to continue to play a strong influential role and this role should be maintained through future agreements.

In this context, it should also be mentioned that the working environment legislation in Denmark has just been subject to the most comprehensive revision

for decades. The new rules entered into force on 1 October 2010. The purpose of the amendments is to ensure that the working environment achieves a strategic position in all Danish public and private workplaces.

The agreement

The binding agreement on health and well-being at work has been incorporated into the entire package of agreements concluded between regional and municipal employers and the Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations in 2008. This means that the EU agreement on harassment and violence is, in general, incorporated into the general framework for informing and consulting employees – the so called co-determination committee system – and it is thus the supreme co-determination committee in municipalities and regions which, based on the agreement, will be responsible for establishing the overall guidelines for how to address harassment and violence.

As a result of the agreement, all municipal and regional workplaces must thus plan their initiatives to enable them to

prevent, identify and manage harassment and violence. The social partners agreed that the work with the local guidelines should be completed by 1 April 2010.

In connection with the implementation of the overall guidelines in municipalities and regions, the social partners have requested that the initiatives will be further adapted locally in the workplaces and within the individual areas, e.g. in the local co-determination committees, in order to ensure that the work to prevent harassment and violence is anchored locally and is adapted to the individual workplace/work area.

The work is in accordance with Danish legislation, which states that the employer is responsible for protecting his employees from harassment and violence at work. The current agreement thus serves both to extend and supplement the legislation.

TABLE OF DEFINITIONS

TABLE OF DEFINITIONS	
Health and safety organisation	<p>The new Danish working environment legislation is wide in scope in terms of how to structure health and safety organisations. An organization can, for example, choose to set up a health and safety group for each department/work area. This means that each institution in the municipality or region can have its own health and safety group consisting of the manager and a health and safety representative.</p> <p>The working environment legislation also creates the possibility to agree on a different health and safety organisation structure, and that its tasks may be handled by a co-determination committee.</p>
Co-determination committees in municipalities and regions	<p>A co-determination agreement is the general framework for informing and consulting employees which ensures and describes the collaboration for the local social partners in municipalities and regions. It is up to the social partners to agree on the local structure, form and content of their co-determination.</p> <p>The co-determination system is based on a main co-determination committee with a number of subcommittees. The main co-determination committee is the supreme committee for co-determination and the supreme committee within the working environment area.</p> <p>All five regions and 95 out of 98 municipalities in Denmark have signed a co-determination agreement.</p>
The Social partners	<p>Local Government Denmark is an employers' organisation representing the 98 municipalities in Denmark.</p> <p>Danish Regions is an employers' organisation representing the five regions in Denmark.</p> <p>The Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations is the joint negotiating body for 46 trade unions which have members employed in municipalities and regions.</p>
Agreement on health and well-being at work	<p>In connection with the collective agreement in 2008, the social partners signed an agreement on health and well-being at work. The previous agreement on preventing, identifying and managing work-related stress was incorporated into this agreement. At the same time, the social partners incorporated provisions on health and well-being at work, measurements of well-being at work and health promotion activities. In relation to this, the European 'Framework agreement on harassment and violence at work' of 26 April 2007 was also implemented in the agreement.</p>
Sector working environment councils	<p>There are a total of eleven sector working environment councils consisting of representatives from the social partners.</p> <p>The sector working environment councils assist enterprises with solving working environment problems based on information, guidance, inspiration, tools and workshops.</p>
The social partners' joint education	<p>The social partners' joint education is a collaboration between Local Government Denmark, Danish Regions and the Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations on developing and offering courses in collaboration, co-determination and working environment to municipalities and regions.</p>

INITIATIVES

The agreement on health and well-being at work entered into force on 1 April 2008, and the social partners thus secured the commitment of municipalities and regions in terms of preventing, identifying and managing harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and third party violence, at work. The parties agreed:

- To address physical, psychological and sexual abuse.
- That abuse can be one-off incidents or more systematic patterns of behaviour.
- That abuse may take place amongst colleagues, between superiors and subordinates or by third parties such as clients, citizens, patients, residents, users, pupils etc.
- That abuse may range from minor cases of disrespect to more serious acts, including criminal offences, which require the intervention of public authorities.

In addition to the definitions, the social partners also agreed on a basic procedure for how to manage specific cases.

Occurrence

A survey conducted by the Danish National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE) in 2005 showed that almost four per cent of all Danes had been subjected to physical violence in their workplace within the past twelve months. Within the same period, eight per cent had been subjected to threats of violence. In practically all cases, third parties such as patients, users or relatives were behind both the violence and the threats.

The same NRCWE survey also demonstrated that more than eight per cent of all Danes have been victims of work-related harassment within the past twelve months. By far the majority of these respondents stated that the harassment was committed by a colleague or a superior. Only one in ten respondents stated that the perpetrator was a third party, e.g. clients or citizens.

Third party harassment and violence

One of the focus areas of the agreement on health and well-being at work has also been to ensure that special efforts are made to address harassment and violence by third parties such as patients, users and relatives. Harassment and violence by third parties may take many forms. It may be very upsetting and serious situations such as anonymous phone calls, Internet harassment, negative comments in chat rooms and even hate sites. It may also take form of repeated complaints or different types of indirect threats, e.g. aggressive behaviour by relatives of patients or citizens receiving nursing care or by parents of pupils. Also pupils, children and young people may subject employees at schools to serious harassment.

The agreement on health and well-being at work ensures that the work of the co-determination committees on the guidelines also includes initiatives aimed at preventing, identifying and managing harassment and violence by third parties.

Guidance and assistance

In 2009, Local Government Denmark and Danish Regions, in collaboration with the Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations, published

two leaflets explaining the background for the work on the guidelines to assist the co-determination committees. The leaflets provide a detailed description of the requirements to be met by the guidelines. They also provide inspiration for how the main co-determination committees can get started on the work and for how to proceed with the local development and implementation of the overall guidelines. Roles and responsibilities in terms of the initiatives are clearly described, and the leaflets encourage the individual organisations to follow up on their initiatives, both centrally and locally.

The social partners' joint education has made a major contribution in terms of qualifying the co-determination committees to handle the task of formulating the guidelines. The social partners' joint education has developed special training courses in connection with the agreement on health and well-being at work, including courses to support the efforts to address harassment and violence.

Other initiatives

In addition to the work on the guidelines specified in the agreement, both the social partners and a number of other stakeholders have taken different initiatives to prevent harassment and violence. The sector working environment councils within different areas for example social and health, public sector clerical and administrative, education and research areas have made a collaborative effort to prevent violence. The social partners have together developed checklists, seminars, inspiration videos and material to support the work of the main co-determination and sector co-de-



termination committees on the violence-preventive aspect of the guidelines as well as various leaflets, dialogue tools and games focusing on how to prevent harassment.

With a number of publications and workshops, the Social Development Centre, an independent non-profit and non-governmental organisation which develops methods for solving issues in relation to socially vulnerable people and the labour market, has also placed harassment and violence on its agenda. The Danish National Research Centre for the Working Environment has also made harassment and violence a strategic focus area. In this context, the NRCWE has committed itself to developing practical tools for

enterprises and their advisors in their work on the subject in the workplaces.

Status

Recently the Local Government Denmark and the Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations conducted a survey to investigate how the work with implementing the agreement on health and well-being and the sub agreements is progressing. The survey concluded that a majority of the Danish municipalities had implemented all subareas, including the formulation of guidelines on how to prevent, identify and manage harassment and violence. A relatively large number of the co-determination committee members

also replied that their municipality, even before the agreement on health and well-being at work entered into force, had implemented guidelines or procedures for several of the subareas of the agreement on health and well-being at work. This should be seen in perspective of the fact that the social partners have focused on how to prevent harassment and violence in Danish workplaces, already long before the introduction of the European framework agreement on harassment and violence at work. Moreover, the five regions have also implemented or are in the process of implementing the agreement.



INTRODUCTION TO CASES

On the following pages, you can read about six very different cases.

The cases will provide a look into three municipalities, a regional institution, a hospital – as well as a campaign partnership between a municipality, a region and a traffic company.

The cases are all inspiring experiences from people, organisations and workplaces that have been actively involved in the practical implementation

Cases:

1. Municipality of Brønderslev
2. Bispebjerg Hospital, Capital Region of Denmark
3. Municipality of Nyborg
4. Municipality of Aarhus, Central Denmark Region and the traffic company Midttrafik
5. Kofoedsminde, a social institution, Rødby, Sealand Region
6. Municipality of Gentofte





Marianne Mortensen, Gitte Grau

LOCAL ANCHORING MAKES SENSE

An ambitious initiative to involve all local co-determination committee members in formulating guidelines for all employees in the municipality has succeeded in the Municipality of Brønderslev. The initiative has focused on the overall guidelines for the different professional fields, a five-day course for all 550 co-determination committee members and a joint 'health and well-being day' with local government politicians.

"Our position is clear: We will not tolerate harassment or violence in our workplaces. The Municipality of Brønderslev has decided that we will not accept this. If an employee is subjected to an incident of abuse, we automatically view this as an attack on the Municipality of Brønderslev. We do not want the individual person to feel that it is her responsibility," says HR Manager Inger Marie Nielsen.

Working environment consultants Marianne Mortensen and Gitte Grau have been instrumental in getting all co-determination committee members through the five-day training course. The decision to allocate so many resources to train the co-determination committee members was closely linked to the municipal merger in 2007; however, the two working environment consultants and the teachers on the courses have subsequently used the courses as a platform for marketing the guidelines and as inspiration for future efforts, both at local level and at the individual workplaces.

"The courses for the co-determination committee members did not really get started until 2009, because we wanted

to make absolutely sure that they had the right content. And now, we can see that it made sense to wait until the overall guidelines were in place and had been approved by the main co-determination committee.

This means that the course participants can talk to each other across professional boundaries, and they can inspire each other and see whether their specific area needs adapting and how. Everyone is thus provided with ideas on what to do locally, as the point of all this is to ensure that what makes sense locally serves as the anchoring point," says Marianne Mortensen.

As an example of this, Gitte Grau singles out the leaflet prepared by the Municipality of Brønderslev which sets out the overall guidelines for the administrative area:

"There is a considerable large difference between, for example, citizens' services and the job centre and the workplaces related to the central administration and payroll. The employees at the job centre thus required a different approach. Among other things, they organised a workshop with a police officer who could tell them exactly what happens when employees report threats to the police. This clearly shows how the needs differ, and this has resulted in different activities and material."

To keep the project in pace, the Municipality of Brønderslev invited all members of the co-determination system to

a joint 'health and well-being day' with local government politicians in April 2010. By then, all co-determination committee members had completed at least one of the course modules and they had

all been involved in working on the guidelines.

In addition to a number of workshops including social events, the municipality also took the opportunity to focus on the guidelines and

the leaflets and material that had been prepared locally.

A number of areas have subsequently finished their leaflets, and work is still going on in a number of working groups around the municipality. For example, the visiting nurses in the municipality would like to have a special leaflet with guidelines for their specific area. In the ongoing process, Marianne Mortensen and Gitte Grau have continually assisted the local working groups and collected the finished material to print and distribute it electronically to the relevant employees.

"It simply improves the working environment and makes it less stressful for each individual employee if she knows what to do in a specific situation. And the guidelines help ensure this. We can see that it works in every corner of the organisation," Marianne Mortensen concludes.

Lene Hansen, mayor of Brønderslev, is also full of praise for the work on the guidelines: "Even though it has been a resource-demanding process for the organisation, there is absolutely no doubt that this has been a sound investment."

"We will not tolerate harassment or violence in our workplaces."



Jytte Kruckow

A SYSTEMATIC INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS HARASSMENT

Measurement of well-being at work, case studies, developing tools and methods as well as a recurring seminar have reduced the incidence of harassment between co-workers at Bispebjerg Hospital in Copenhagen.

"Our ambition is, of course, to reduce the number of harassment cases as much as possible and ideally to eliminate the problem altogether. At the same time, our success criteria is that everyone can say that they sought assistance and felt that they were offered assistance when the problems occurred," says Jytte Kruckow, working environment consultant at Bispebjerg Hospital.

Bispebjerg Hospital started conducting measurement of well-being at work as early as 2003. The employees were asked back then whether they felt that they had been harassed within the past year. Twelve per cent of the respondents replied yes. This result came as a big surprise to the hospital management, which immediately took the first targeted steps to address the problem. A number of initiatives were introduced to become 'an attractive workplace', including being able to prevent harassment between co-workers. Bispebjerg Hospital also used the results of the measurement to formulate four corporate values which were quality, professional development, togetherness and involvement.

In 2006, Bispebjerg Hospital conducted a new measurement of well-being at work and at the same time the management

decided, to employ a psychologist, Jytte Kruckow, as the hospital's first full-time working environment consultant as part of its working environment efforts and its preventive work concerning the psychological working environment.

"One of the first things I did was to design some preventive measures aimed at stress and harassment,"

says Jytte Kruckow. "We set up a working group consisting of trade union and working environment representatives as well as top and medium-level management representatives. The group decided to establish a permanent seminar, which would help develop tools for preventing and managing harassment. The seminar was also intended to be a recurring event, so that we could train a selected group of people to detect signs and signals of harassment."

At the same time, Jytte Kruckow conducted a number of case studies based on the reported harassment incidents at the hospital. This resulted in a comprehensive report with very detailed case descriptions, a psychological study and a detailed description of how the problems had been handled.

During the first project period, 75 employees completed the seminar, developed and tested tools, took a closer look at the three selected case studies and acquired competencies in relation

to preventing, identifying and managing harassment.

With a fully developed concept, Bispebjerg Hospital then launched the initiative at the beginning of 2008, and over the next two years a total of almost 600 managers, working environment representatives and trade union representa-

tives participated in the seminars. During the process, the hospital also prepared a leaflet on harassment for all

3,000 employees and a leaflet on how to prevent and manage harassment and conflicts for members of the co-determination system.

As a concrete result of the initiative, the number of employees who feel that they have been a victim of harassment has seen a significant decrease over the past twelve months. Harassment is no longer a taboo. There are clear expectations of the roles and tasks related to the problem of harassment. At the same time, methods for assistance have been established and communicated to all relevant parties at the workplace.

But even though Bispebjerg Hospital has come a long way, there are still challenges ahead, says Jytte Kruckow: "As human beings we are not always aware of the effect we have on other people. Thus, we may fail to notice the effect we are having on a colleague, which is why it is crucial that we continue talking about harassment if we want to tackle this problem."



"It is crucial that we continue talking about harassment if we want to tackle this problem."



Kirsten Pedersen, Uffe Hvidkær, Kia D. Nielsen, Kjeld Outzen

EVERYONE IS BETTER PREPARED

A comprehensive set of guidelines from the main co-determination committee, useful inspiration from the municipality's HR department and a workshop on harassment between co-workers provided an excellent basis for preventing, identifying and managing harassment and violence for more than 3,000 employees.

"We conducted a measurement of well-being at work in 2008 because we had a relatively high sickness absence rate. We also decided to address the most visible problems revealed by the measurement, and harassment and violence actually ranked among the biggest challenges," says Kirsten Pedersen, deputy chairman of the municipality's main co-determination committee.

At the same time as the results of the measurement were available, the municipality's co-determination committee had – in connection with the agreement on health and well-being at work – been asked to prepare guidelines on how the workplaces should address harassment and violence. The Municipality of Nyborg's main co-determination committee thus chose to apply this agreement directly as the framework for preparing a set of overall guidelines for the work to be carried out by the local co-determination committees.

"I know that they are busy preparing the local guidelines. Some committees have a full set of guidelines ready, but most of the local co-determination committees still have the guidelines on their agenda," says Kirsten Pedersen.

"Yes, we have come pretty far in terms of preventing harassment and violence. Several of the committees had in fact started working on this in connection with the measurement of well-being at work. In relation to harassment between co-workers however, we have not yet progressed to the same extent," says HR and working environment consultant Kia D. Nielsen.

For this very reason, the Municipality of Nyborg made harassment between co-workers the topic of a workshop with the participation of more than 135 managers, working environment representatives and trade union representatives from all the various municipal workplaces. The participants were introduced to the concepts and were given specific knowledge and inspiration for their work on the guidelines for how to prevent, identify and manage harassment between co-workers.

To support the process, the municipality's main co-determination committee has prepared a leaflet containing general guidelines on how to prevent, identify and manage harassment between co-workers and sexual harassment.

"Harassment between co-workers is clearly the most difficult issue to address. It therefore came as a relief to the workshop participants when they were told that harassment is often an act of repeated and systematic behaviour – and only rarely a single incident," says Kia Nielsen. "It also goes without saying that

it makes it much easier to deal with this issue when employees are provided with clear definitions of what we are talking about when we discuss harassment and violence. At the same time, the fact that the incidents of abuse are recorded encourages dialogue."

In her capacity as HR and working environment consultant, Kia D. Nielsen has helped inspire and clarify questions for the local co-determination committees in their work on the local guidelines. Overall, she does, however, find that the local committees have been quite effective at getting the work done without her assistance. They have been good at using the overall guidelines prepared by the main co-determination committee and the material available on the municipality's intranet.

This view is shared by Kirsten Pedersen, deputy chairman of the main co-determination committee:

"It is our impression that when we start up initiatives in the main co-determination committee, the co-determination system does as instructed and makes sure to meet the relevant deadlines. We therefore also clearly expect the local guidelines to meet the requirements and be of a high quality."

Kjeld Outzen, HR Manager in the Municipality of Nyborg, is also convinced that the local co-determination committees will complete the guidelines with flying colours: "Our deadline is 1 January, and we are pretty sure that all the committees will be finished by then, so that we can "tick off" the entire task at our main co-determination meeting in February."

” ” **"We have come pretty far in terms of preventing harassment and violence."**



Lene Stevn, Kasper Kolind

THINK BEFORE YOU SHOUT



The campaign 'Think before you shout' is a result of a unique collaboration between the Central Denmark Region, the Municipality of Aarhus and the traffic company Midttrafik.

"Part of the reason for the initiative was specific incidents of assault and threats that prompted us to start mapping the conditions for different employee groups. This was also the reason why the politicians wanted to launch an actual campaign," says Kasper Kolind, Communications Consultant, Central Denmark Region.

The region's political administration and the Municipality of Aarhus presented the idea for the joint campaign just before the 2009 summer holiday, and the expectation was that the campaign would be rolled out as early as September, making it something of an urgent job. The point of departure was that employees should never tolerate violence, threats or harassment as part of the job, a condition which was actually taken directly from the agreement on health and well-being at work. But the message had to be refined to make the intention clear to the citizens of Aarhus and the Central Denmark Region.

"We wanted to be bold in our approach in order to make the message have the greatest possible impact," says Kasper Kolind. The campaign was therefore launched with messages such as 'The day Carla

met a bitchy nurse', 'The day Tim met a bastard of a bus driver', 'Would your parking ticket be less if you shouted "idiot parking ward"?' and 'Would shouting at your doctor relieve your pain?' The basis of the campaign were four short videos showing scenes with a parking attendant, a bus driver, a welfare officer and a nurse at work, starting out in a harmonious 'children's television' mood

"None of us could have taken the campaign to this level on our own."

as seen through the eyes of a child. The pleasant atmosphere is interrupted when the employees are harassed with outbursts such as "you power-crazy bitch", "you fat pig" and "you stupid idiot". Prior to launching the campaign, the collaboration partners had consulted the various trade unions to make sure that the very direct approach would not cause problems.

And with 60,000 employees acting as ambassadors for the message, the campaign was launched on 7 September 2009. Posters, stickers, TV spots, printed ads, a homepage, postcards and a Facebook group helped create awareness during the approximately three weeks the campaign lasted – with impressive results: Almost 1.5 million visitors to the campaign website, nearly 4 million web banner exposures, 87 debate contributions and extensive radio, television and newspaper coverage.

Lene Stevn is an HR consultant with the Municipality of Aarhus, and she was Kasper Kolind's closest collaboration partner and link to the municipal system in the development of the campaign. She has no

doubt that the considerable success results from the close cooperation between the three parties behind the campaign: "None of us could have taken the campaign to this level on our own." We had a clear distribution of roles with Kasper handling the communications aspect, and Rikke Østergaard of Midttrafik contributing with marketing know-how and how to strike the right balance between the public and the private sector. My role was to help secure the overall quality of the campaign content. It was simply a question of good synergies."

"One very interesting aspect was that we were able to create a huge network, capable of spanning all public employees – from health workers to case officers. We split both the expenses and the work three-ways, and we were able to use each other's text contributions and newsletters and to collaborate on press and PR issues," says Kasper Kolind.

The campaign 'Think before you shout' was aimed at both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, the campaign was visible to employees everywhere from staff rooms to waiting rooms, it created a forum for debate, and an internal survey in the Municipality of Aarhus showed that the material was used in more than 90 percent of the municipal institutions. Externally, the evaluation showed that almost 60 per cent of the citizens had seen the campaign. More than half of them had started to think more about how they conducted themselves, and almost one in five had discussed the campaign – or heard others talk about it.



GOOD TREATMENT MAKES FOR A GOOD WORKING ENVIRONMENT

A two-year development project, intro courses for all employees and a systematic approach to documentation and expertise have radically changed the working day for 250 employees in a social institution for mentally disabled criminals.

“Our starting point is that the work with the institution’s residents and the working environment are closely linked,” says Marcel Rose, who in 2007 was appointed security manager at Kofoedsminde. Back then, working with 50 residents in the institution often involved insults, threats and violence in connection with the work performed by the residents in workshops as well as school and social leisure activities. The management therefore decided to launch an initiative to change the culture and thereby reduce the number of work-related accidents, sickness absence, employee turnover and increase job satisfaction among employees.

“We realised that we needed to change our work culture and professionalise our operations. We needed to take a more systematic approach and to be able to document what we do. And we needed to depart from the idea that ‘everybody knows how to do everything’,” says Marcel Rose, project manager.

By spring 2008, Kofoedsminde had prepared an overall development plan for

the institution, and in September the institution initiated the VENUS development project. The project formed part of the overall development plan which covered a five days intro course for all employees, systematic and daily risk assessment of all residents, documentation and follow-up on all incidents of aggressive behaviour, individual plans for all residents as well as descriptions and training of manager and employee functions.

The institution also established a team of instructors who were to work with violence prevention, and the health and safety environment groups received training in how to follow up on accidents and near-accidents. All of these activities were of course in full compliance with the guidelines laid down by the co-determination committee.

“The activities have strengthened all aspects of our working environment. We now have health and safety representatives in all departments, and we have mentors for all employees. Just the consideration that we now show towards each other really contributes to improving our working environment,” says Søren Larsen, health and safety representative and deputy chairman of the co-determination committee.



“The project has provided us with a common culture and mutual values.”

The documented results of the efforts are impressive: The highly detailed registration of work-related accidents, which was introduced in 2008, showed a staggering 80 incidents, of which 56 involved violence. The number of work-related accidents has now been reduced by a third, and the number of violent clashes has been halved.

The VENUS project has also had a positive impact on the number of times force is used in relation to the residents and both sickness absence and employee turnover have been significantly reduced. In some areas, the project has also resulted in changes to the institution’s physical environment. Among other things, an escape route has been established from a kitchen in one of the closed sections so that staff can avoid direct confrontation, if such a situation occurs.

“The VENUS project has laid the foundations for a lasting improvement of Kofoedsminde,” says Flemming Lund, deputy head. “There used to be many dif-

ferent subcultures at our institution with the departments and the various teams doing things in different

ways. The project has provided us with a common culture and mutual values, which is an advantage that benefits both employees and residents.”



Gentofte

SYSTEMATIC APPROACH PROVIDES OVERVIEW AND OPPORTUNITIES

The wish to incorporate a systematic approach is what characterises the efforts to prevent harassment and violence in the Municipality of Gentofte in the Greater Copenhagen Area. In the process, the main co-determination committee was quick to provide an overall set of guidelines.

“We had policies which we thought needed updating – also because they didn’t sufficiently cover the term ‘harassment between co-workers’. Therefore, we had already begun editing and improving our policies before the agreement with the Danish Association of Local Government Employees’ Organisations was in place,” says Maria Lützen, development consultant with the Municipality of Gentofte’s organisation development department.

The municipality took the initiative to gather all guidelines concerning harassment and violence that had been prepared in the different areas and workplaces. The material was used as a direct source of inspiration for the document ‘Sub-policy for the prevention of inappropriate behaviour towards staff in the Municipality of Gentofte’ which was approved by the main co-determination committee in April 2008.

Not only did the new prevention policy incorporate the new requirements for the efforts as specified in the EU’s framework agreement on health and well-being at work. With the introduction of the common term ‘inappropriate behaviour’ and the wish to protect municipal staff

from negative experiences of a physical and mental nature, the Municipality of Gentofte has set an ambitious goal. At the same time, the municipal guidelines also recommend that incidents and assaults are registered and reported.

“Through the co-determination committees and on our intranet, we encouraged the institutions to establish their own local guidelines where and if required. For example, we haven’t laid down local guidelines in my department, but in our department for ‘jobs and services’, where there is a lot of citizen contact, the employees sometimes encounter citizens who behave inappropriately, and they have therefore made a special laminated miniature edition of the guidelines which has been given to each employee. It explains how to prevent and handle situations involving violent citizens,” says

Maria Lützen, development consultant.

Another institution in the municipality which has introduced special guidelines on how to prevent harassment and violence is ‘The network for the visually handicapped’, where Thomas Elkjær Jensen is shop steward: “For us, the most important aspect of the guidelines was to keep things visible, public and communicated. At the same time, we had to get used to writing the word ‘harassment’ because we didn’t think that it was relevant for us. But now that we have it in writing, it has become more natural to

discuss. And all of a sudden, we were able to see that we were already making efforts to prevent harassment.”

In several areas in the municipality, initiatives have been taken to document physical and mental violence against staff. One example is the area of social and disability services, where Lotte Hansen, head of the health and safety service Gentofte, adds: “This is to clarify that it might be a part of your job, when working with people under special circumstances. It is one of the basic conditions as a professional that you have to keep focus on the work on how to prevent threats and violence. The employees therefore have to relate to it in the same way as paying out benefits and related social services. At the same time,

we also need to take a systematic approach to gain an overview. In other

words, the aim is not just to document the working environment, but also to find out whether there have been changes in some of the areas and whether the pedagogical approach or other aspects need to be changed. This means that, in addition to recording incidents, we need to identify whether there are patterns that we need to follow up on. We can use this experience to develop and educate ourselves. These are just some of the new aspects that we constantly have to try to support,” says Lotte Hansen.



“The most important aspect of the guidelines was to keep things visible, public and communicated.”



LINKS AND REFERENCES

- www.personaleweb.dk – provides an overview of the joint activities of the parties within staff policies
- www.arbejdsmiljoweb.dk – a joint website for the three sector working environment councils social affairs & health – Finance/Public Office & Administration as well as Teaching & Research
- www.etsundtarbejdsliv.dk/Trusler_vold.aspx – a theme page about violence and threats from the sectoral working environment council social affairs & health
- www.arbejdsmiljoviden.dk – a link to the Working Environment Information Centre, which, among other things, has a theme about harassment and violence
- www.arbejdsmiljoforskning.dk – the website of the National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE)
- www.godtarbejde.dk – a campaign website from the Danish Working Environment Council on, among other things, violence and threats
- www.voldsomudtryksform.dk – an initiative coordinated by Social Development Centre SUS to prevent violence in, among other things, municipal workplaces
- www.stopmobning.dk – an initiative coordinated by Social Development Centre SUS to reduce harassment and its harmful effects



Personaleweb (staff web) ...

is the focal point for exchanging the extensive experience and knowledge, data and publications that the social partners jointly generate and initiate in connection with the working environment work.

All the material published by the social partners in relation with the efforts to prevent, identify and manage harassment and violence can be found at:
<http://www.personaleweb.dk/vold>

This booklet (Avoiding Harassment and Violence) can be downloaded as a PDF-file from:
www.personaleweb.dk/violence

The social partners ...

behind the agreement on health and well-being at work from 2008:
Local Government Denmark Local Government Denmark, Danish Regions and the Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations. With the agreement to address harassment and violence at work, the social partners agreed to implement the European 'Framework agreement on harassment and violence at work' in regional and municipal workplaces.

Local Government Denmark represents the 98 municipalities

Danish Regions represents the five Danish regions

The Danish Association of Local Government Employees' Organisations is the joint negotiating body for 46 trade unions.



Local Government Denmark and Danish Regions are affiliated to CEEP

