

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE ACROSS TfL

DATE: 15 DECEMBER 2011

1 PURPOSE AND DECISION REQUIRED

- 1.1 This paper provides an overview of TfL's approach to tackling Workplace Violence.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to note the paper.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 TfL takes workplace violence seriously. Whether this involves physical assaults, threats or verbal assaults on our staff or our contractors' staff, it is not tolerated and is followed up robustly and increasingly effectively. TfL has been central to many of the initiatives that have been developed in the transport sector in the UK over the past decade and continues to be wholly committed to tackling the issue and the damage it can cause our people.
- 2.2 In 2004, the Rail Personnel Security Group (RPSG) group was formed within the rail sector, which pulled together Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate, Rail Safety and Standards Board, British Transport Police (BTP), Train Operators and London Underground (LU). The Group produced a Good Practice Guide, which set out a definition for what constituted violence to staff, namely:

'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 The Guide set out a framework for tackling the problem of violence to staff by:
 - (a) encouraging organisations to have strong leadership from the top to make clear that violence to staff was not acceptable and that it had to stop;
 - (b) providing easy and better reporting of cases of violence to staff;
 - (c) publicising the problem and encouraging open discussion;
 - (d) analysing the situations where staff were vulnerable;
 - (e) providing effective welfare support;
 - (f) targeting resources to control best the risks; and
 - (g) taking effective enforcement action.

This approach has been developed within and across TfL. TfL has approached the issue by both learning from others and leading innovations within the transport

sector, with the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) regarding LU as leading best practice within the rail industry.

- 2.4 Workplace violence to staff clearly has an impact on personal safety, health and wellbeing, leading to time off work and increases in staff turnover. It can also have an impact on operational effectiveness, leading to low staff morale. Front line staff undertake a key role in securing operational success and for many customers are the public face of the organisation. TfL, therefore, regards tackling workplace violence effectively as a key element in maintaining good staff morale to help deliver reliable, consistent, high quality services.
- 2.5 As the TfL approach has developed, the importance of management support for staff involved in instances of workplace violence has become clear. This support starts when staff are recruited and during their induction it is made clear how workplace violence is tackled. It develops when actual incidents occur, with immediate post event support and follow up in terms of action to take criminal proceedings against perpetrators wherever appropriate. Where staff suffer mental or physical harm as a result of workplace violence, they are supported to get back to work as soon as practicable. Active work with TfL's contractors ensures a common agenda on this.
- 2.6 TfL works closely with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and BTP to target resources on a risk analysis basis. There has been detailed joint work to understand better what TfL staff need from the Police and what the Police need from staff to combat workplace violence more effectively. This has led to better training programmes and assists and improves joint working. In the last year, an additional 440 MPS and 50 BTP officers have been brought in as part of the Mayor's Crime Prevention Strategy and these officers play an important role in deterring violence to staff.
- 2.7 The development of dedicated Workplace Violence Units in LU from 2005 and in Surface Transport (predominately London Buses) from 2009, with established links to the police forces, has been key in challenging workplace violence more consistently and effectively.
- 2.8 Episodes of workplace violence are experienced across all customer facing roles. These episodes can be triggered from a range of situations; however, there are some well understood concentrations. A significant proportion of incidents relate to revenue inspection duties across TfL. The two other main causes are dealing with unacceptable customer behaviours, which often result from excessive alcohol consumption and violence arising as a result of service disruptions.

3 THE CURRENT POSITION IN TfL OPERATIONAL BUSINESSES

3.1 Overall, there has been a rise in the total number of reported instances of workplace violence, most of which is due to a rise in verbal assaults.

3.2 Figure 1 below shows the number of all reported assaults on a quarterly basis, with all three businesses experiencing rising trends over the last two years. In LU this primarily refers to employees, but in Surface Transport and London Rail the numbers mainly refer to contractors' employees.

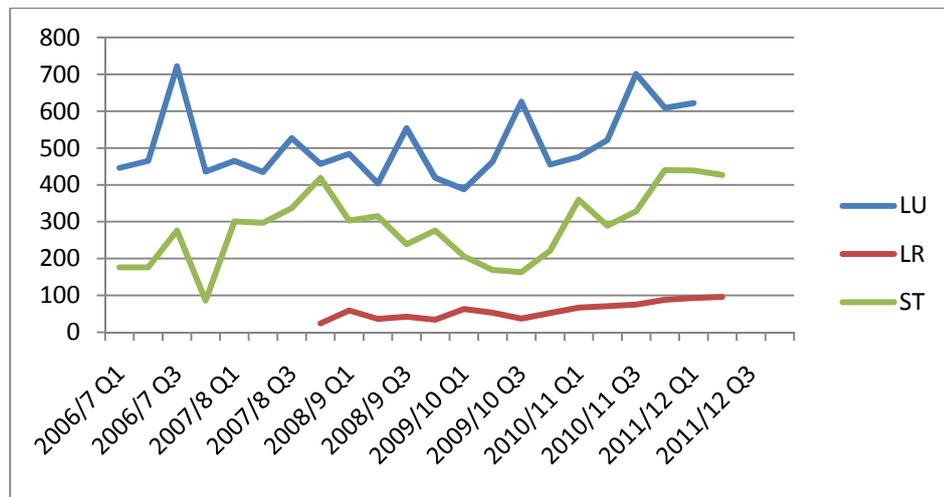


Fig. 1: Total reported incidents of Workplace Violence by quarter

The London Rail data starts from 2008/09, which is when the London Overground services commenced. The 'spikes' in LU Q3 data occur because LU has four periods in Q3, in order to align with national rail reporting arrangements.

3.3 Figure 2 shows the total number of physical assaults by year.

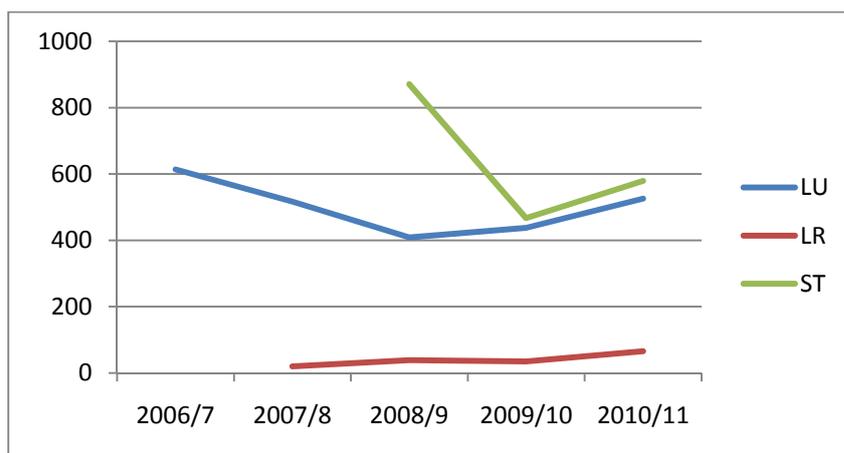


Fig. 2: Number of Physical Assaults by year

3.4 Figure 3 shows the total assaults per million passenger journeys per year. It is currently not fully known why the total assault rate in London Rail and LU is higher than Surface Transport and further work is in progress to understand this.

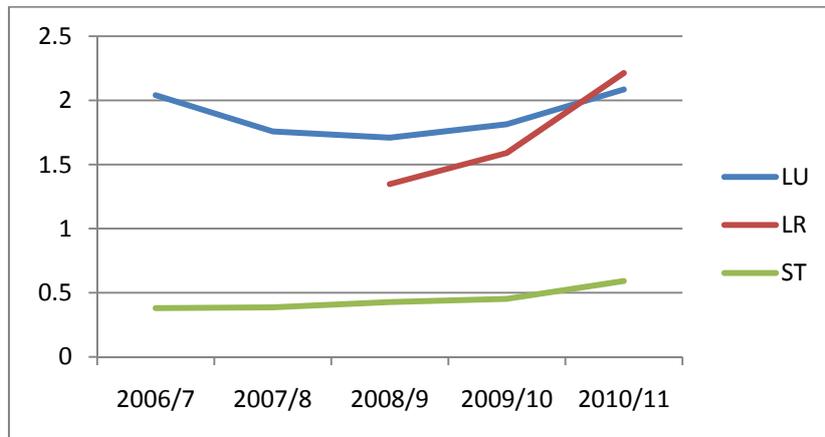


Fig 3: Total assaults as normalised per each million passenger journeys

3.5 Figure 4 sets out physical assaults per million passenger journeys. Separate physical assault data has only been available in Surface Transport since 2008/09 and the fact that it forms a higher proportion of the total number of assaults, suggests that reporting of verbal assaults in Surface Transport may be at a lower rate than is the case in LU and London Rail. Overall, the normalised comparisons suggest that continued focus on improving reporting accuracy, ensuring better categorisation of assault data to permit more accurate and meaningful comparisons and continuing to share and apply best practice will pay dividends if persistently pursued in a sustained manner.

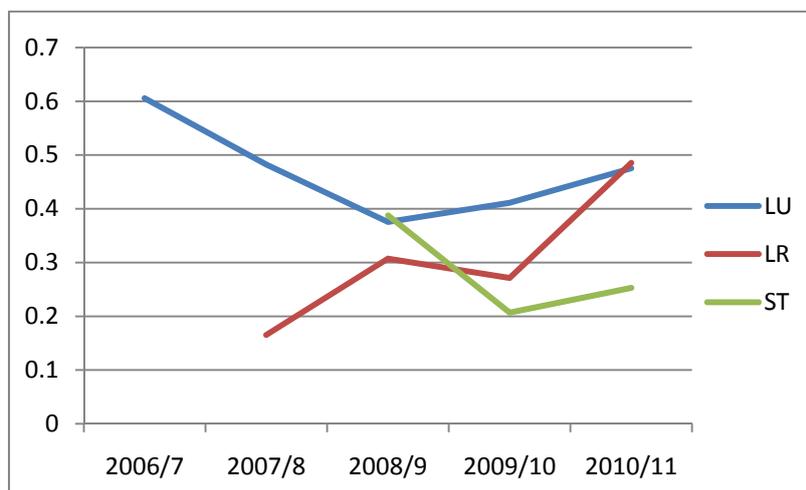


Fig 4: Physical assaults per million passenger journeys

4 MANAGEMENT PLANS TO TACKLE WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

4.1 TfL's plans to reduce workplace violence follow common themes across TfL and across its contractors:

- (a) The lead has been set from the top, with strong leadership in both TfL and our contractors, making clear to staff that workplace violence is not acceptable, and that it will be followed up. This is constantly backed up by comprehensive public awareness campaigns;
- (b) The TfL HSE Annual Report makes clear the importance attached to the issue, and that it is reported on clearly;
- (c) Targeted training for managers is provided to enable them to tackle the issues and to support staff better;
- (d) TfL has made the reporting of cases of violence to staff easier and has put considerable effort into encouraging staff to be intolerant of all forms of abuse, and to feel comfortable about making reports. This is behind the significant increases in reports of verbal assaults; for example, the 75 per cent rise in Surface Transport over the last 12 months;
- (e) There is CCTV on all buses, Tube, Overground, DLR, and London Tramlink vehicles, and stations, platforms and London River services piers. This has proved invaluable in helping to identify people attacking staff and assisting in gaining criminal convictions for episodes of workplace violence;
- (f) All revenue protection staff, and a significant number of other potentially vulnerable staff, are provided with 'spit kits' to assist in DNA based identification of attackers.
- (g) Each business collects comprehensive data, which it shares with the BTP, which is used to target violence hot spots;
- (h) The strong relationship between the Police and the Workplace Violence Units in LU and Surface Transport, which review the data on a risk basis and jointly ensure the deployment of the most effective resources. In LU, the introduction of Neighbourhood Police Teams by BTP has provided a very positive demonstration of support on the ground;
- (i) Providing 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 verbally abused to feel good about returning to front line work; and
- (j) Taking effective enforcement action, including providing good feedback to assault victims of the progress of such action, a much speedier resolution of cases (now nearly three times quicker in LU than eight years ago) and publicising the results.

4.2 Finally, the Mayor's ban on consumption of alcohol on all TfL's services, while making travel more pleasant for everyone, also sends a clear message across the transport system that aggressive and abusive behaviour will not be tolerated.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 TfL takes very seriously workplace violence that threatens its staff and its contractors' staff. The pioneering of a range of initiatives has already made significant differences and ever better ways to combat the problem will continue to be sought. TfL will continue to learn from others where it can. It is believed that the approaches put in place are effective and will continue to be deployed ever more effectively by actively driving best practice across all the businesses.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to NOTE the paper

7 CONTACT

- 7.1 Contact: Martin Brown, Head of HSE, Rail and Corporate
Number: 020 7027 8904
Email: MartinBrown@tfl.gov.uk