

College of policing betari s box

Chief constables should ensure officers and staff are sufficiently skilled in the following non-physical aspects of conflict management to reduce the risk of them being assaulted and increase public safety. These include:

The most effective way for officers and staff to develop and maintain these skills is likely to be realistic scenario-based training that draws on evidence from real-world situations (eg, body-worn video footage). Such training should be linked to, and build on, the initial and annual personal safety training on the physical aspects of conflict management that forces deliver to their officers and staff.

This evidence was based on 18 studies that tested de-escalation or conflict management training. The majority of studies were carried out in a healthcare setting, and five in a policing context.

Officers and staff routinely find ways to manage conflict situations without physical force. While many are already highly skilled in the non-physical aspects of conflict management, forces have responsibility for ensuring that all officers and staff have these skills to a consistently high standard.

Dialogue and communication are central to specialist training in public order, crisis negotiation and firearms. How much other frontline officers and staff are taught the non-physical aspects of conflict management currently varies between forces. This is due to competing training priorities and time/resource pressures. These skills are sometimes included in forces' personal safety training, the content and delivery of which is determined locally.

Personal safety training standards are currently set by the College of Policing and supported by the Personal safety manual (you need to log in to our learning platform to see this). The manual comprises a comprehensive set of learning resources and guidance on all aspects of officer and staff safety, including a module focused specifically on tactical communication techniques to prevent, defuse and manage conflict situations without using physical force.

Situational awareness is the ability to perceive and process potential threats in the environment. The importance of maintaining high levels of situational awareness in conflict situations was stressed both by officers and staff in the forces groups, as well as by members of the guideline committee. The evidence review found that situational awareness was a skill that could be taught.

Situational awareness can help officers and staff make a dynamic risk assessment and to decide whether, when and how to be assertive and seek to take control of a situation. The National Decision Model - which officers and staff should understand and be able to use - involves assessing the situation, including any specific threat, the risk of harm and the potential for benefits. Wherever circumstances allow, officers and staff should:

The Personal safety manual sets out a series of "impact factors" that are thought to make potential conflict situations higher risk, such as weapons, crowds, alcohol, prior knowledge about or the relative size and build of the people involved.

Dynamic risk assessments of situations can be supported by officers and staff being aware of such impact factors and taking them into account along with other information about the threats they face.

The evidence review also highlighted factors - mainly from US research - that have increased the likelihood of the police use of force. Some of these are not recognised impact factors and do not justify using force (eg, someone who happens to be young, male, or Black). Others, however, could be relevant to dynamic risk assessments and might be regarded as potential impact factors (eg, weapons, intoxication, or resistance or abusiveness). Understanding which factors can affect safety and give sufficient reason to use force might support better decision making.

There is also growing recognition that using force and restraining people who are in mental health crisis, is experiencing acute behaviour disturbance, or suffering from drug- or substance-induced psychosis can pose a life-threatening risk.

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