



Personal Safety ► Lone Working ► Training & Consultancy

## The Story of Lorraine in Wales

In 2011, a lone care worker in Wales was awarded an out-of-court settlement following a case which demonstrates why the Section 2 requirements (of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974) are so important for managers to understand.

Lorraine was working in a learning disability setting and carried out sleepover shifts in the client's own home. Lorraine was assigned a new client, but her employer failed to tell her about the new client's history of violence, which included assaults on 15 of her colleagues when they had worked with this client.

At the time of the attacks, Lorraine and a male colleague were working in sheltered housing with the client, a woman, who had learning difficulties. Consistent with her history, the client attacked Lorraine one evening shortly after she arrived to start her first shift with her. Lorraine had not been trained in how to deal with violent or aggressive behaviour, nor had her colleague who was with her at the time. Lorraine was attacked from behind. Her colleague was unable to stop the attack as he had not been trained in effective restraint techniques.

When the support worker was finally able to free herself and call for help, her calls were ignored. Eventually, she spoke to her off-duty boss, who was able to get in touch with the on-call officer and area manager.

Rather than travelling to the house to provide assistance in person, the manager told the off-duty boss to contact Lorraine and tell her to lock herself in the staff room until the morning, and to tell the male colleague to leave. She obeyed this request, staying in a locked room with no food, water, toilet or assistance for many hours, even as the client was battering the door trying to get at her.

Lorraine said afterwards, "The situation I was put in was unbelievable. I called for help and was ignored and then told to stay in a dangerous situation until morning. I felt abandoned and terrified in that room."

In the morning when Lorraine answered the door to her colleague, who was there to take over the shift, the client attacked her for a second time. Her colleague, again acting without any training, hesitated but eventually stepped in to assist her.



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### This story demonstrates the following:

- A failure to provide necessary information about a serious or imminent danger.
- A failure to provide the kind of training reasonably practicable to deal with the likely risk.
- A failure to adequately supervise and instruct an employee who is at risk.

Clearly this was a case where information, instruction, training and supervision were not adequately provided to ensure the worker's health and safety at work. The employee took a case and won.