

Case Study - Probation Service Officer



I am a Probation Service Officer in the National Probation Service. I arrived at work this morning to discover that a light in the car park had been smashed. I must report this to the office manager, in order that it can be quickly repaired. It's essential that the car park is well lit, as staff may leave work in the dark. A well lit car park offers a degree of protection from individuals who bear a grudge against our authority or who simply want to make mischief.

I have a key fob to gain entry to the secure side of the office. I keep this around my neck, along with my personal identification (ID). The tape on which my ID is held is designed to break if someone were to attempt to throttle me with it. I always sign in and out of the office register to ensure that the responsible officer knows who is in the building. In the case of fire, or other evacuation, this register will be used to account for all staff in the building.

During the day, I see several offenders in interview rooms fitted with panic alarms, for use in difficult situations. This is essential support, as in my job I need to challenge anti-social behaviour and sometimes this may lead to an aggressive situation in the interview. To counter this, I've received training in how to challenge anti-social behaviour in a manner that engages the offender. I plan for the interview and always make sure that a colleague knows who I am interviewing. If there is any indication on the case file to suggest an aggressive response, I interview the offender with a colleague present. It's important to make sure that the layout of the interview room situates me near the door so that I have a chance to escape if necessary. In circumstances that escalate out of control we have also developed systems that will alert the police.

I manage my work in consideration of my own safety, that of my colleagues and other people in the building. If I am involved in an incident I will use the skills I've been taught to try and diffuse the situation. I know who the first aider is in case of injury and following an incident, I will ensure that a true and accurate record is made and spend time debriefing my colleagues.

On a later occasion I will also offer the offender the chance to reflect on his/her behaviour and to learn to behave differently in the future.