



3 September 2010

1. Introduction

1.1 SCRA welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee on the Protection of Workers (Scotland) Bill.

1.2 We are pleased to note that assaults on SCRA staff by members of the public are extremely rare but nonetheless we welcome the Bill's extension of the protections granted by the Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act to other workers providing public services, whether on a paid or voluntary basis.

2. Detailed response

2.1 We understand that the Bill would cover SCRA staff members including Reporters, reception staff and support staff whose role involves face to face contact with members of the public.

2.2 However, SCRA has a question about the definition of "in the same place, at the same time" contained in s.3(a) of the Bill and whether a narrow interpretation of this part of the Bill might unreasonably withhold protection from a cohort of staff who provide a valuable public service. As an example, our Glasgow office includes a number of Hearings suites on the lower floors where children and families come to attend Children's Hearings. The upper floors accommodate our staff who enter the building by a separate entrance. There are a number of staff members who do not have direct face to face contact with members of the public in the course of their work, but do deal on a regular basis with families over the phone in situations that can often be emotionally highly charged. Should one of them be assaulted leaving the office due to having been identified as an SCRA staff member, it is difficult to see how the provisions of the Bill would apply unless the definition of "in the same place at the same time" was fairly broad. We would not wish to see a lesser degree of protection applied to such staff members and hope that the Committee will consider how this situation might be remedied.

3. Conclusion

3.1 SCRA welcomes the provisions of the Protection of Workers (Scotland) Bill, subject to the comments made above in relation to s.3(a).

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