

## The social media “influence”



Recently we’ve all seen social media begin to have an impact on our field activities, from Magna Carta quotes that justify customers removing their own meters, to ‘Denial of Access’ notices being posted on front doors. It’s a growing problem and one that comes with some unique challenges.

Unfortunately, we’ve also picked up on another rising trend, one which has a much bigger impact on us all – our people are facing more verbal abuse and physical assaults.

This year we’ve seen a leap in the volume of H&S incidents being raised due to customer behaviours, and the vast majority are linked to Magna Carta situations. Our suspicion is that customers truly believe their actions are legal, meaning their reactions are more severe, but whatever the reason it’s a totally unacceptable change we’re facing into.

One of our most recent cases involved a customer jumping on our officer, pushing him to the ground whilst reaching for the gas meter. Luckily the police were already on site and immediately arrested the customer for assault, however that wasn’t without challenge as the customer stated they ‘didn’t recognise Police authority’.

Our officer wasn’t seriously injured, and the Police were swift in taking further action with the customer being charged for assault. They didn’t appear to their first court hearing, however after a warrant for their arrest was issued the customer was picked up and detained ahead of their next court date.

For us there’s a key message to share in that misinformation is powerful, and customers behaviours are becoming more erratic. We only get one chance to act safely so please take extra care when handling Magna Carta customers.

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