

**Hazards
Campaign**



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2008

Is anyone implementing the HSE Stress Management Standards?

It remains a seemingly endless plea that employers do what they are statutorily obliged to do and take steps to recognise and implement their duty of care towards their workforce. Despite four years passing since the [HSE Stress Management Standards](#) were first introduced, there seems to be very little evidence that they are being introduced into many workplaces.

However, the Standards covering six key aspects of work, remain voluntary; and yet HSE claims that they are legally enforceable. Nevertheless we see little evidence of any such action, or even interest in investigation to ascertain how workplaces are handling stress factors. Shop Stewards and Safety Representatives often confirm ignorance of the Standards personally for themselves and generally within their workplace.

What is needed is a concentrated campaign to ensure awareness, top-down organisational commitment and application of these measures and associated risk assessments.

According to employment lawyer Gordon Turner, the HSE standards on stress are *so rigorous that many employers fear details of their working practices becoming public*. "It's so easy to slip up. If an employee takes a grievance as far as an employment tribunal, companies often settle rather than risk a public hearing that might attract the attention of the HSE."

Both the HSE and stress management trainers are influenced by the major survey of the health of British civil servants known as the Whitehall II study. Led by Prof Sir Michael Marmot, epidemiologist at University College London, Whitehall II has tracked the lives of thousands of civil servants for more than 20 years in an attempt to assess the effects of job status on health.

According to Professor Marmot, it is not stress per se that has an adverse effect on health and life expectancy. Rather it is working in a job where there are high demands accompanied by a lack of control. "People of high status tend to have high demand and that doesn't seem to cause as many illness problems."

The Management Standards

Demands

- The organisation provides employees with **adequate and achievable demands** in relation to the agreed hours of work
- People's **skills and abilities are matched to the job demands**;
- Jobs are designed to be **within the capabilities of employees**; and
- Employees' **concerns about their work environment are addressed**.

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Control

- Where possible, employees have **control over their pace of work**;
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;
- Employees **have a say over when breaks can be taken**; and
- Employees are **consulted over their work patterns**.

Support

- The organisation has **policies and procedures to adequately support employees**;
- Systems are in place to enable and **encourage managers to support their staff** ;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- Employees know what **support is available and how and when to access it**;
- Employees know **how to access the required resources** to do their job; and
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

Relationships

- The organisation promotes **positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict** and ensure fairness;
- Employees share information relevant to their work;
- The organisation has **agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour**;
- Systems are in place to enable and **encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour**; and

- Systems are in place to enable and **encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviours**.

Role

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different **requirements it places upon employees are compatible**;
- The organisation provides **information to enable employees to understand their role** and responsibilities;
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the **requirements it places upon employees are clear**; and
- Systems are in place to enable employees to **raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts** they have in their role and responsibilities.

Change

- The organisation provides employees with **timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes**;
- The organisation ensures adequate employee **consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals**;
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
- Employees are **aware of timetables for changes**;
- Employees have **access to relevant support during changes**.

What to do?

If your workplace is not aware of these Standards and does nothing to handle the causes of stress-related illness, then it is failing in its duty of care. This issue should be taken up within your Shop Stewards Committee or your Safety Committee, and pursued with vigour and vigilance to

eradicate the causes of unnecessary work - related psychological and physiological illnesses.

Failure to do so is a serious breach of Health & Safety legislation, and can be taken via your union to the HSE direct. In turn the HSE should act and take steps to ensure that worker well-being is recognised.



Convenor's Report

June 2008

We are pleased to confirm that planning for our November **Conference on Bullying** is well

in hand, and bookings are now being taken. Don't delay, check the application form at <http://www.workstress.net/downloads/Conference%202008%20booking.doc> and reserve your places for the Early-Bird discounted rates.

Once more we can report continued high level activity on our website at www.workstress.net. We continue to get over 38,000 visitors per month with many thousands of advice and information pages downloaded.

This year we have been invited to exhibit at Trades Union Conferences, for NASUWT in Birmingham, UNISON Health Sector in Manchester and for UNITE at Brighton.

Have you visited the Hazards Campaign website to see details of the Annual Conference at Keele university, July 18th to 20th? Don't be disappointed and miss your opportunity to attend this regular event.

Ian Draper (Network Convenor)

Diary Dates

- **Network Steering** Group Meetings July 5th, September 12th 2008
- **Hazards Campaign Meeting** June 19th, UNISON HQ, London
- **Hazards Conference**, July 18th to 20th, Keele University
- **Stress Conference**, November 15th to 16th, Rednal, Birmingham
- **EWHN Conference**, Bologna October 10th to 12th

Other events:-

5th Annual Symposium Events Stress and Mental Health in the Workplace 2008

Building Resilience, Improving Engagement and Overcoming Preconceptions

Thursday 11 September 2008, Central London

Summary

Symposium Events' Annual Stress and Mental Health in the Workplace Forum is now firmly established as the authoritative event for HR and Occupational Health professionals dealing with stress and mental health across the UK. Now in its 5th year, this event will be an invaluable opportunity to share and discuss the challenges related to stress and mental health with the UK's leading experts in the field. Combining best practice case studies, the very latest HSE guidelines and Symposium Events' interactive Knowledge Share and Workshop sessions, the event will equip you with the tools to protect yourself against the risks of litigation, maintain an engaged workforce and reduce stress related absence across your organisation.

The UK National Stress Network is pleased to support this event again

Stress Snippets

Home Secretary, meets with victims of abuse at USDAW annual conference. [May 2008]

Jacqui Smith was at the USDAW conference to re-launch the Union's Freedom From Fear campaign to protect shop workers from violence and abuse in the workplace.

The Home Secretary also unveiled Voices From the Frontline: USDAW's document giving the latest figures on violence against shop workers. Figures from the 2007 survey show that:-

- Two thirds of shop workers were verbally abused over the last 12 months.
- One third of shop workers were threatened in the last 12 months.
- Nearly one in ten shop workers has been a victim of physical violence during their career.

(Case studies of victims of workplace abuse from Blackpool and Cheshire.)

MS Smith commented, "Retail crime is not a victimless crime. The Government is working with USDAW and retail employers to help lower the incidence of retail crime. The union's pioneering Freedom from Fear

Campaign has really moved the issue up the political agenda, which shows how a trade union can effectively engage and protect its members.

"In the Home Office we have established the National Retail Crime Steering Group, which will provide retailers with new, innovative solutions to tackle retail crime. I am delighted that USDAW has agreed to take a seat on the Group, putting the Union at the heart of policy making.

"Freedom From Fear is an important campaign that continues to move the agenda forward and will help all stakeholders to improve safety in stores and deliver respect for shop workers."

John Hannett, USDAW General Secretary, added, "I launched our Freedom from Fear campaign in 2002 to highlight and tackle a rising tide of violence, threats and abuse against our members and all shop workers. The campaign gives a strong message to our members, 'Abuse is not a part of the job'.

"For too long shop workers felt they had to put up with verbal abuse and threats. Now there is hope and our campaign is delivering real improvements. However, there is still a long way to go, and while there is any abuse towards shop workers our job will go on. That's why USDAW is relaunching the campaign and we are very grateful to Jacqui Smith for joining us today to show her ongoing support for this important campaign."

Working lives 'intolerable' for millions in UK

More than two million people in Britain are forced to endure 'intolerably poor working lives' and subjected to daily exploitation and abuse from employers, a new report has found.

Legal loopholes have resulted in employment practices becoming commonplace in the modern workplace that were once attacked as exploitative in the 19th century, according to the first report from the TUC's Commission on Vulnerable Employment. It found problems were particularly acute among those who worked in care homes, cleaning, hotels and

restaurants, hairdressing and beauty, construction and security.

'While this commission expected to find poor treatment, its extent has stunned us all,' said Brendan Barber, the TUC leader. 'Worst of all, much of it took place within a legal framework that fails to prevent exploitation. Much exploitative treatment occurs because the law is not strong enough to prevent mistreatment, with employers using gaps in employment protection to treat staff badly.'

The report, '[Hard Work, Hidden Lives](#)', was published in May 2008. It reveals a hidden Britain where those providing the services on which society and the economy rely are trapped in a cycle of poverty and injustice.

'We spoke to agency employees who worked long days and nights for less pay than their permanent colleagues and who received no paid holiday or sickness leave,' said Belinda Earl, chief executive of Jaeger, who sat on the commission. 'We heard from construction workers who were injured at work but were not entitled to welfare protection.

'There were workers who had spent 70-hour weeks on around £2 an hour who had no choice but to keep working when they were ill, as they could neither afford to lose a day's pay nor risk the sack. I particularly remember the security guards who had worked for months but had never been paid and the chambermaids who had to be available to work from 8am, seven days a week, but who were not paid for the extra hours if rooms were vacated in late morning.

'All the commissioners on this report were shocked by the stories we have heard, and we have evidence that shows they are far from exceptional.'

Paula, 53, a white British single mother of two, worked for a large cross-Channel ferry company as a steward for nine years. For the first eight years she worked through an employment agency, on low pay and with no security of tenure beyond the fortnightly spells she spent on the ship.

'I was paid £4.10 an hour, which was raised to £5.10 when the minimum wage was introduced,' she said. 'There was no holiday or sick pay, maternity leave or pension provision. I worked alongside staff in the

same job, whose pay, conditions and job security were much better than mine.'

Paula worked 14 days on the ship and had 14 days off. When she was on duty, she worked 12-hour shifts. When she was off, she was unpaid and unemployed. She survived from the wages earned in the previous two weeks, while hoping to be taken on again for another two weeks. 'I was entitled to claim benefits for those 14-day unemployed spells, but I didn't because it was so difficult to stop and start claims every two weeks.'

'I was so badly off that I was barely living and still worry how I will manage financially in old age because I didn't manage to build up a pension for all those years.'

The commission is now calling for an end to such insecure employment conditions. 'Loopholes in the laws that are meant to protect workers must be closed,' said Fran Bennett, a senior research fellow at Oxford University, who sat on the commission.

Third of staff 'hung over at desk'

One in three employees admitted they have been to work with a hangover and more than one in 10 has been drunk at their desk, a study suggests.

Staff said they made mistakes, struggled to concentrate and had to go home early as a result of drinking. Four out of five employers say alcohol is the biggest threat to the well-being of their staff, according to a survey for Norwich Union Healthcare.

One thousand people and 250 businesses were interviewed about drinking habits for the survey. Of those who had had a hangover or been drunk at work, 85% confirmed it affected their performance or mood. More than a third (36%) found it hard to concentrate, 35% were less productive, 42% felt tired to the point of being sleepy and 25% did the minimum amount of work and went home as soon as possible.

Worst culprits

Some occupations are worse than others with regard to drinking and the workplace.

Forty-one per cent of people working in media and creative jobs said they had been

to work while still drunk - four times the average.

The number who admitted to have been drunk at work was also high in the construction industry (24%), professional and business services (23%), and information technology (15%).

Don Shenker, from Alcohol Concern, said "After-work or lunchtime drinks are the norm for many and in some cases this is promoted by companies as a way to build teams or just as the way to do business."

Cary Cooper, Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health at Lancaster University, said excessive drinking was a manifestation of stress, and it was endemic in certain industries.

"It's no surprise there is a lot of drinking in the media; it's part of the culture to unwind with a drink. This is not about social drinking. This is about the long-hours culture we have in this country.

"It's the jobs where there is most stress - long hours, high expectations, short-term contracts and bad management - where you get the most excessive drinking."

Professor Cooper said people drank to cope with stress. "Employers need to change the culture of long hours. More flexible working is needed and employers need to offer more healthy options such as more working from home. For people who have a drinking problem employers need to offer help like counselling. Employers cannot afford to ignore this," he said.

TUC calls for better support for hundreds of thousands of workers with mental health problems

The TUC published new guidance to help employers and unions support people with mental health problems at work, in advance of the TUC's annual disability conference.

Every organisation in Britain is affected by mental distress and ill health in the workplace, and at any given time one in six workers will experience depression, anxiety, or stress-related problems. Simple steps - including the prevention and early identification of mental health problems - can

promote the mental well-being of staff and help employers save money by cutting down on days lost to sick leave.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: 'Hundreds and thousands of people at work face ignorance, prejudice and stigma because of mental health problems. Even more - who are both able and willing to work - cannot get a job because of discrimination by employers, even though this is illegal under the Disability Discrimination Act. 'This report provides union reps with the information they need to help people with mental health problems keep their jobs and develop their careers. It will help unions work out how to make adjustments in the workplace for people with these health problems, and help employers keep their valuable and skilled staff.'

The report, produced with Disability Forward Ltd, recommends that unions work with employers to encourage job applications from people with mental health issues and that they urge individuals to disclose any mental health problems they may have.

Other things unions can do to ensure workplaces are supportive include:

- Ensuring that as many reps as possible have had training on mental health at work.
- Training mental health champions, who have a more thorough understanding of mental health problems and know about how people can be better supported in the working environment.
- Networking with other unions to share knowledge and good practice.
- Reviewing policies and procedures to ensure they are not discriminating against members with mental health problems.
- Supporting employers to set up internal or external support meetings with people with mental health problems so that concerns and recommendations can be reported to managers.
- Encouraging employers to set up a formal Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), where individuals can receive counselling and advice.

The report - Representing and supporting members with mental health problems at

work - can be downloaded from <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/mentalhealth.pdf>

Nurses' working hours 'too long'

The Royal College of Nursing says the Welsh Assembly government must address the number of excess hours being worked by nurses. Annual employment figures show nurses in Wales work an average of more than four hours unpaid every week, and more than seven if they do overtime.

The RCN says there needs to be an effective way of measuring the hours nurses work each week. The organisation has given evidence on workplace planning and put forward six recommendations to an inquiry by the health, well-being and local government committee into the issue.

RCN Wales interim director Richard Jones said: "We cannot stress enough how important it is that the Welsh Assembly Government heed these recommendations and take action by improving their systems of collating data. There needs to be an effective way of measuring the hours that nurses and healthcare assistants work and indeed the excess hours that staff put in during their working week. This will help to effectively plan the future workforce and ensure that our members are treated fairly and equally.

Agency staff to get equal rights

Agency workers will be given the same employment rights as permanent staff after 12 weeks under proposals agreed between the government and unions.

Union officials said the government had agreed to table legislation later this year to guarantee agency staff enjoyed equal treatment in the workplace.

Unions, which have campaigned for the measure for years, said the agreement offered much stronger legal protection.

Employers groups described the agreement as the "least worst option".

There are estimated to be about 1.4 million agency workers in the UK.

The breakthrough on agency workers' rights came after fierce wrangling between unions

and employers and amid growing pressure by Labour MPs on ministers to broker a deal.

Under the proposals, agency workers will be given equal pay after 12 weeks in a job, enjoying the same treatment with regard to "basic work and employment conditions".

However, there is some confusion about whether the rights will extend to overtime and other employee benefits.

The CBI said sick pay and pension payments had been "rightly excluded".

Employers groups, led by the CBI, had lobbied for a period of at least six months arguing that it could lead to firms taking on fewer employees or even letting staff go.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has said a situation in which agency workers can be paid less for doing the same job as full-time staff is "unfair".

Earlier this year Mr Brown offered to set up an independent body, modelled on the Low Pay Commission, to look at ways of finding a solution to the controversial issue.

But there has been intense pressure from Labour backbenchers over the issue with more than a third of MPs, including John Prescott and Peter Hain, backing a private members' bill on agency workers rights in February.

The TUC said the issue had been "crying out for attention for far too long. "Too many agency workers in the UK face unfair treatment and injustice," said general secretary Brendan Barber.

Flexible working to help 4.5 million more parents

An extra 4.5 million parents in Britain will gain the right to request flexible working, following the publication of the government's independent review today.

Business Secretary John Hutton accepted the recommendations to extend the right to request flexible working to parents of children up to age 16. The government will now consult on implementing the proposals.

John Hutton said, "This is an excellent report that will give a big boost to busy parents who need more help balancing work and family life. It can also help employers who often find

they get the best out of mums and dads when they allow them to work flexibly.

"It is important that employers retain control over deciding whether it suits their business to allow people to work flexibly, but extending the right to request to parents of older children will allow families to take priority when decisions are made."

Imelda Walsh, HR Director at Sainsbury's said, "Support for more flexible and creative ways of working has made significant progress over the past 10 years, through both legislation and voluntary change. The challenges which parents with older children face are considerable, and that the arguments for raising the age to 16 are compelling. This change would offer an important opportunity for parents to have extra flexibility at key times in their children's lives."

Women and Equalities Minister Harriet Harman said: "Families are the framework of our lives. Parents want both to earn a living and do the best they can in bringing up their children, but need more flexibility at work."

'1,000 heads' leave over workload

More than a thousand head teachers and deputies are quitting the profession early every year because of work pressures, teachers' leaders say.

The National Association of Head Teachers said these school leaders were leaving before retirement age and often with no pension or job to go to.

General Secretary Mick Brookes blamed a long-hours culture which saw nearly 44% of his members working 60-hour weeks. He urged ministers to act urgently to ease the burden on school leadership.

The NAHT, analysed its database of more than 28,000 school leaders and discovered that 1,091 had quit early in 2006 and 1,031 in 2007.

Mr Brookes said a survey of 3,000 heads, deputies and assistant head teachers suggested nine out of 10 worked longer than 48 hours per week. He blamed the failure of the national agreement aimed at easing pressures on head teachers by giving them dedicated time for their extra duties."



Annual Conference

Eradicating Workplace Bullying, including Cyber-Bullying - *The Case for Dignity at Work*

Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rednal Nr Birmingham

Courtesy of NASUWT

Saturday, November 15th 9.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and
Closing at 12.30 p.m. Sunday, 16th 2008,

This conference is aimed at Trades Union Shop Stewards, Health & Safety Representatives, Health & Safety and Human Resources Specialists, Stress Management Consultants

What is Bullying?

The persistent use of offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious and insulting behaviour; the abuse of power or unfair penal sanctions which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, thus undermining their self-confidence and causing them to suffer stress. More recently members of the public have used the use of electronic means to intimidate and victimise workers. The issue of Workplace Bullying and the lack of Dignity at Work is a growing problem and many hundreds of workers are affected by it daily – often without recourse to sympathetic hearings and attitudes. Over 35% of Stress at work cases are caused by Bullying.

The Conference will provide an opportunity to hear from and discuss issues with speakers, attend a range of workshops and participate in an additional session of Masterclass discussions on the handling of stress at work and related cases.

Programme outline

Saturday morning – panel of speakers with Q&A session to follow

- Prof. Charlotte Rayner, Portsmouth University - researcher for 'Working Together to Tackle Bullying and Harassment at Work' project
- Legal Update on progressing case in Tribunals and the Courts [TBC]
- An Employer's success in implementing anti Bullying Policy [TBC]
- Speaker from UNITE (AMICUS) - the trades union response [TBC]
- A speaker from one of the Bullying advice organisations [TBC]

Saturday afternoon

Workshops followed by Discussion forum – details to be confirmed in due course

- Bullying in the Workplace Policy
- Dignity at Work Campaign
- Management Style, Bullying/Relationships and HSE Stress Management Standards

Sunday morning

Masterclass/discussion/interactive sessions aimed at guiding Representatives in organising members, gathering evidence of Bullying, dealing with casework, looking at grievances with a follow-up closing plenary session and lunch – details to be finalised

With an overnight stay in pleasant, comfortable rural surroundings to the SW of Birmingham, it is hoped that this weekend event will provide a wide range of networking opportunities for delegates.

Don't delay – Book NOW to avoid disappointment and get the benefit of discounted delegate fees.

Please complete a *separate form for each delegate* and staple together if necessary.
Photocopies are acceptable. Please type or write clearly

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| NAME (BLOCK CAPITALS) | |
| CONTACT ADDRESS (BLOCK CAPITALS) | |
| | Postcode |
| TELEPHONE No. | |
| EMAIL | |
| ORGANISATION | |
| SPECIAL NEEDS (Please specify) | |

| | Totals |
|--|---------------|
| 1 DAY DELEGATE (SATURDAY 15 th November only) Full Rate £70 Unwaged Rate £30 | £ |
| RESIDENTIAL DELEGATE (SATURDAY 15 th November and SUNDAY 16 th November) Includes accommodation on Saturday night Full Rate £120 Unwaged Rate £70 DEDUCT £8.00 IF SHARING A ROOM | £ |
| Optional extra B&B (FRIDAY 14 th November) if required Single room £36 Shared room £28 per person. NO Separate Unwaged Accommodation Fee | £ |
| SUB TOTAL | £ |
| Less Early Bird discount of 10% (if booked before 30th September 2008) | - £ |
| FULL TOTAL | £ |

Complete this section if you have opted to share a room

| | | |
|--|------|--------|
| Name of person with whom you are sharing. | | |
| Type of room | TWIN | DOUBLE |
| Is this person a delegate? | YES | NO |
| <p align="center">COMPLETED APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE SENT TOGETHER WITH CHEQUE(S) PAYABLE TO UK NATIONAL WORK-STRESS NETWORK TO:- LES ROBERTS, CONFERENCE SECRETARY, 33 OLD STREET, UPTON UPON SEVERN, WORCS WR8 0HN EMAIL ADDRESS: LESVROBERTS@HOTMAIL.COM</p> | | |