

**Hazards
Campaign**



www.workstress.net

The UK National Work-Stress Network

APRIL NEWS - 2007

HSC/E Slap in the face for Health & Safety Representatives?

Consultation exercises usually involve asking stakeholders and interested parties to state their views about a particular issue. A period of time elapses before outcomes are published and usually some good notice is taken of the majority view.

Well that's what we always thought before HSC rewrote the rules book on consultation!

Now the pattern seems to be to ask what you think and then totally ignore the demands for change and improvement.

Nice one HSE! Nice one Bill Callaghan!

Press Release, March 15th 2007:-

"The Health and Safety Executive response to Worker Involvement consultation is a slap in the face for safety reps and bad news for safety at work.

Today in Aberdeen the HSE will present a paper to the Health and Safety Commission on the result of the latest Worker Involvement consultation exercise".

Hilda Palmer, Hazards Campaign spokesperson said, "The national Hazards Campaign is extremely disappointed that the HSE response paper has chosen to ignore the evidence and refuse to take steps to improve health and safety at work. Despite 91% of respondents agreeing there should be a duty on employers to consult safety representatives on risk assessment and 96% saying there should be a duty to respond to representations from safety representatives, the HSE still feels no change in the law is necessary!

"The paper is frankly incredible, and embarrassing to read, and we can only hope that the Health and Safety Commission will send it back for complete revision. The HSE paper chooses to engage in policy-based evidence making, and to flout the concept of tripartism by putting far more weight on the views of employers and their organisations than on those of safety reps and trade unions.

Stress Network Conference

**Saturday November 10th 2007, 10.00 a.m. till
4.00 p.m.**

Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rednal, Birmingham

Enforcing the Stress Management Standards

Early-bird Delegate fee:£50.00

[Full Delegate Fee:£65.00 after September 30th 2007]

Unwaged Fee £17.00

Overnight accommodation available

Les Roberts, Conference Secretary: lesvroberts@hotmail.com

Booking form and details – see pages 6/7

Book early to avoid disappointment!

"The HSE plays lip service to the value of safety reps and to worker involvement, but when it comes to making minor legal changes, which arguable merely implement the spirit of the existing Health and Safety Work Act, they resort to bipartisanship and support for business, even when employers support change!"

Bolton North-east MP David Crausby said thousands of health and safety representatives had

been given "a slap in the face" by the HSE. Currently there is no obligation on employers to respond to suggestions by safety officials to improve health and safety at their workplace, nor to involve them in assessing risks, despite the high value placed on their contribution by government.

Network response

On behalf of the Stress Network, Ian Draper (National Convenor) wrote to Geoffrey Podger, Chief Executive of HSE, setting out our vigorous opposition to this decision to ignore the majority view: -

"I write to express our gravest reservations at the decisions announced this week in respect of the outcome of the recent consultation exercise.

Amongst many others we made strong representations to ensure that changes were introduced in order that worker involvement at all levels in respect of Health & Safety in the workplace be brought up to twenty-first century requirements. We find it appalling and unacceptable that despite a large majority view to the contrary, the HSC has apparently shied away from the need to improve and strengthen the law on worker involvement.

We share the commonly expressed view, not just by TUC that the safest workplaces are mostly those where elected Trades Union Safety Representatives play a significant part in helping management to maintain healthy working practices, environments and attitudes. Failure to endorse this practice we believe shows a distinct move away from recognition of the importance of the need for an enforceable legal process to support workers and prevent unnecessary and unwanted work-related deaths, injuries and serious illnesses.

Despite this fact there are many employers who fail to recognise their statutory obligations under safety law, who fail to consult and frequently marginalize the employee view. This is where the law needs to be strengthened, not left to voluntary approaches.

Permitting employers to continue in a cavalier way, running roughshod over the needs of their employees is nothing short of a dereliction of duty. It is clear from much anecdotal evidence that we have from our conversations with Safety Representatives, that many of them have to fight a continuous battle with employers and managers over consultation on safety in the workplace. Equally well we also hear of other workers who find they are never consulted and when they raise issues are often sidelined.

We find it unacceptable that over 90% of views expressed in this consultation exercise are being ignored. We believe that the HSC should review its thinking and take a more pragmatic view, recognising the popular view that more needs to be done to ensure a properly balanced outcome – including from employers as well as employees organisations.

A fully enforced statutory obligation on all employers to consult with workers is what is required, and this network calls for immediate action along these lines. As a contributor to the consultation document, we believe that our view and that of the wider audience should be better reflected.

We remain convinced that safety representatives do an excellent job. We confirm that their endeavours help to keep the workplace a safe environment, largely through working with employers.

Nevertheless for those employers who ignore their duty of care the law must be beefed up. A legal obligation to consult with safety representatives and to enforce risk assessments is an essential requirement. Without dialogue with the workforce, an employer/manager can only acquire a one-sided view and not be aware of the impact of his actions.

Further delay in any modification to the law can lead only to further illness, injury and possibly to deaths at work or related to working practices.

Whilst stress related illnesses are not all (or always) terminal nor indeed permanent, there are many whose serious psychological illness and indeed premature death has been brought on by employer negligence or deliberate action.

**Have you or your organisation written about this to the HSE/HSC?
See our website for more information.**

New ACAS guidance on Flexible working

Amongst many strategies open to employees and employers to help develop accessible work-life balance patterns and to relieve stress in the workplace, the concept of flexible working is something of value. There are many ways in which it is possible to develop flexible working patterns and thus provide support for employees who have a range of other duties over and above that of work. Additionally, flexible working also provides benefit for the employer, provided that a truly flexible approach is developed and that it recognises the benefits for both sides.

ACAS has recently published new guidance on Flexible Working and their free downloadable .pdf file is available at http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/i/t/B20_1.pdf.

Developing a good balance between work and family life can be of great benefit to most people, and specifically those who have a range of caring duties outside their normal daily work routine.

Good employers encourage the adoption of sensible effective Flexible Working policies, in full consultation with their employee representatives.

Convenor's Report

UNISON's 1st ever national Health & Safety Seminar at Birmingham ICC on March 22nd was attended by over 100 Safety Representatives from across the nation. It was agreed that it was an excellent day, and our Workshop input was very well received. Similarly we attended their Further Education & 6th Form Colleges Conference in Eastbourne to make a presentation. We are grateful to UNISON for giving us their platform and for their generous financial support.



Web Activity still growing – we recorded over 38,000 hits in March 2007. Over 2,000 documents have been downloaded for further use in that month.

We have developed more information about our workshop and seminar provisions – see Website for details.

Trades Unions approached for support following discussion at the Network Steering meeting in February, it was agreed that we seek support from as many Trades Unions as we can secure. To that end we have now written to over 30 General Secretaries and Health & Safety Specialists, seeking their support in promoting our work, our publications and our Conference.

We are very pleased to provide more details of our **November 2007 Conference tackling the subject of "Enforcing the Stress Management Standards"**. Speakers from HSE, the world of research and trades unions will set the scene for workshops and discussion groups.

Details are available via Risks E-Zine, Hazards and through Trades Unions, also on our website <http://www.workstress.net/downloads.htm>

Reserve the date – don't miss the opportunity of the year to hear about the HSE Stress Management Standards – Saturday November 10th, 10.30 a.m. till 4.00 p.m. Get your Union Branch to sponsor your attendance.

Ian Draper, April 2007

Diary Dates

Stress Network Steering Group Meetings 2007, Hillscourt Conference Centre, nr Birmingham:- **Saturdays, 9th June & 8th September 10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.**

Hazards Conference July 27th to 29th 2007 Manchester University

Advance Notice

Hazards Conference 2008:- 18th to 20th July, Keele University

EWHN Conference, Bologna, Italy September/October 2008

Stress and other Snippets

Pregnant women 'let down by employers'

More than half of working mothers complain that employers do not know how to manage pregnant staff, says an Equal Opportunities Commission report. The two-year survey of more than 2,000 women also found that the majority did not know what their rights were while they were pregnant or when they returned to work after giving birth.

One in six said they were not treated well by their employer while pregnant, and one in four complained of poor treatment when they went back to work. The commission said the findings showed there was a "knowledge gap" among managers. Jenny Watson, the chairwoman of the commission, warned: "We run the risk of seeing these women drop out of the workforce altogether."

Stephen Alambritis, head of parliamentary affairs at the Federation of Small Businesses, said: "The more support small businesses are given, the greater the chance that they will understand their rights and obligations in this crucial area."

Corporate Manslaughter Act is "missed opportunity"

The Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Bill was awaiting Royal Assent to become an Act as Employee Benefits went to press. David Urpeth, partner at solicitors firm Irwin Mitchell, said the government had "missed an opportunity" by not including individual liability for senior managers. Instead, organisations will be fined if the way its activities are managed causes a person's death.

This was always possible under health and safety law, but it is hoped the new law will make it easier for

enforcement organisations to prosecute. "Personal liability would have focused the minds of directors and [put] the health and safety of workers and the public at the top of the agenda," Urpeth added.

Smoking Ban

Now that the smoking restrictions in workplaces and public places has been introduced and there is less than 3 months to go before the similar restrictions are introduced in England, TUC has produced a final guide on smoking in the workplace. This has been updated to take into account the final regulations which were published earlier this year.

The guide can be found here: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/smokingguide2007.pdf>

Work better? You're having a laugh

NHS and major firms send staff on comedy courses to cut stress and raise productivity

Heard the one about the senior safety adviser who was sent on a six-week course in humour to learn how to communicate with his colleagues? It sounds like the start of a bad joke, but recently a pilot scheme with exactly that aim was launched in Liverpool, partly funded by the NHS. Adviser Laurie McMillan, who helps businesses to solve workplace bullying and abuse said, it was very useful. 'My job is stressful and I can find it highly distressing,' he said. 'What I've learnt is that I can relieve the pressures and remotivate myself by sharing my feelings with colleagues through jokes and black humour.'

Joke-telling is the latest plan by managers to try to get their staff to work better.

After resident poets and away days where staff build boats out of wood and oil drums, it is hoped that humour classes will give a new perspective on team work.

The course, run by the Comedy Trust, was funded by Health@Work, an occupational health and safety charity in partnership with Liverpool PCT on behalf of the local hospitals, the environmental health department and the chamber of commerce. If the charity likes the pilot course - and the deputy director said she found it very impressive - they will work with the hospitals to introduce it across the city in an effort to combat stress in the workplace.

Stress affecting 'one in five British workers'

Stress is becoming an increasingly prominent issue for employees and should be addressed by managers, says a new report. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) says one in five people now experience a high level of stress at work, with almost half revealing they are under 'excessive' pressure every week.

Some 44 per cent of those surveyed by CIPD said they were under pressure once or twice a week, with estimated annual costs for British business of £9.6 billion. Now the organisation is urging firms to train line managers to do more to recognise the symptoms of excessive stress and has published three new guides to help ahead of a conference on the subject in London. Run in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive, the CIPD's publications and events will highlight what employee relations adviser Ben Willmott says is a "common cause of long-term absence".

"[Stress] also damages employee morale and productivity and leads to high staff turnover," he added.

"Employers that fail to manage stress are also vulnerable to litigation and potentially high compensation payouts."

"Good people management can help to prevent most of the problems causing stress at work, such as lack of control over workload."

Managers should foster a calm working environment and also take the lead in managing workload and providing feedback to their staff.

A recent survey by BUPA claimed work-related stress is responsible for six million days of sick leave every year.

Taxi driving 'most dangerous job'

Father-of-five Younis Khan is the third taxi driver to be murdered in Yorkshire in the past year. Mahmood Ahmed, 36, was stabbed to death in Keighley in April 2006, while Mohammed Parvaiz was murdered by a gang in Huddersfield in July.

Editor of trade magazine Taxi-Today, Tony Mite, said he believed the profession had become the "most dangerous" in the country. He said attacks happened at any time during the day and night. One driver who survived a vicious attack was Bill Simpson who was attacked in Leeds while at work three months ago.

Network Comment:- "Cabbies" are largely self-employed and so vulnerable to isolation in their work. Unless their Cab company can provide safety and security support, it is not surprising that they will feel vulnerable to attack.

More claiming benefits over stress

A growing number of Scots blame stress and depression for keeping them off work, figures show. Although the number of incapacity benefit claimants has dropped over the years, those citing mental and behavioural disorders has increased, according to statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Last year there were 282,000 people receiving out-of-work benefits, with around 135,910 citing conditions such as depression and anxiety - almost half (48%) of those applying for cash.

Office workers 'risk blood clots' - It is important to take a break

Workers who spend excessive amounts of time at their desk could be putting their lives at risk, research suggests. The Medical Research Institute in New Zealand found they may have a higher risk of developing potentially fatal blood clots.

The researchers found a third of patients admitted to hospital with deep vein thrombosis (DVT) were office workers who spent hours at a computer.

The study will be published in the New Zealand Medical Journal.



www.workstress.net

The UK National Work-Stress Network
Stress Network 7th Annual Conference

Saturday, November 10th, 2007 10.00 a.m. till 4.00 p.m.

“Enforcing the HSE Stress Management Standards”
How Employers should apply their Duty of Care

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

Early-bird Booking Full Delegate Fee:- £50.00
(£65.00 after September 30th)

Unwaged Delegate Fee:- £17.00

Special rate B&B available at £32.50 (Single Room) £50.00 (Double Room)

Final closing date, October 13th 2007

Outline Programme

Speakers:-

David Snowball, HSE Director of Operations Yorks & NE

Jane Ferrie, Senior Research Fellow, Dept of Epidemiology & Public health UCL – Whitehall II Research Project

Employer – the adoption of the standards at a workplace **TBA**

Stress & Gender – Jane Paul, H&S Consultant

Ian Draper – UK National Work Stress Network, the case for enforcement

Question & Answer session

2 Course Buffet Lunch

Workshops

1. Whitehall II Research Project development
2. Gender & Stress at work
3. Enforcement of Stress Management Standards
4. TBA

Closing Plenary Session Details to be finalised

NASUWT Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rose Hill
REDNAL, Birmingham B45 8RS

Set in the Lickey Hills to the SW of Birmingham close to M5 (J4) and M42 (J1 and J2), this attractive parkland setting provides high quality conference facilities, good overnight accommodation and is acknowledged for its food. The Centre is some 45 mins by taxi from Birmingham New Street Station (c£15.00) and Birmingham Airport and Birmingham International Station (c£20.00).

Disabled Access and induction loop facilities ensure that all events can be fully inclusive.

PRIORITY BOOKING FORM

PLEASE RESERVE PLACES FOR ME AT THE UK NATIONAL WORK-STRESS NETWORK CONFERENCE, HILLSCOURT CONFERENCE CENTRE, NR BIRMINGHAM SATURDAY NOVEMBER 10TH, 2007		
PLEASE PRINT DETAILS CLEARLY		
DELEGATE(S) NAME	B&B REQUIRED? PLEASE INDICATE.	
1	SINGLE OR DOUBLE?	No
2	SINGLE OR DOUBLE?	No
3	SINGLE OR DOUBLE?	No
4	SINGLE OR DOUBLE?	No
CONTACT ADDRESS	TEL No	
	POSTCODE	
EMAIL ADDRESS (BLOCK CAPS PLEASE)		
DISABLED ACCESS?	OTHER NEEDS? GIVE DETAILS	VEGETARIAN?
YES/NO		YES/NO
DELEGATE FEES:-		PLEASE ENTER SUM
EARLY BIRD FULL DELEGATE FEE	£50.00	
UNWAGED DELEGATE FEE	£17.00	
LATE ENTRY FULL DELEGATE FEE	£65.00	
B&B SINGLE ROOM	£32.50	
B&B DOUBLE ROOM	£50.00	
DONATION TO STRESS NETWORK		
TOTAL FEE PAYMENT ENCLOSED		
COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TO BE SENT TOGETHER WITH CHEQUE(S) PAYABLE TO “UK NATIONAL STRESS NETWORK” TO BE SENT TO:- LES ROBERTS, STRESS NETWORK CONFERENCE SECRETARY, 33 OLD STREET, UPTON UPON SEVERN, WR8 0HN WORCS EMAIL Address: LESVROBERTS@HOTMAIL.COM		