

UK Hazards 2013

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UNISON & Scottish Hazards
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Strategy & Campaigns
Workplace Stress

Introduction & context

- Public sector budgets slashed
- Pay freeze & Pension attacks
- Welfare Reform
- Poor morale & climate of fear
- Increase in Stress & Bullying
- ILL treatment & longer hours
- City bonuses & salaries continue

Background

- Glasgow City Council
- Revenues & Benefits Service
- Around 350 staff
- Key frontline service
- Council Tax & Housing Benefit
- City centre & local offices
- Vulnerable client group

Workplace Issues

- Increasing number of HB/CTB claims
- Increase in customer numbers
- Fewer resources
- Reduction in staffing levels
- Management styles
- Management behaviour
- Lack of support

Collecting information

- Local Safety rep receives initial complaints
- Branch meeting with members
- Information packs to members
- Gain agreement to distribute HSE survey
- Agreed timescale for completion & return
- High return rate
- 24 out of 26 staff completed the survey
- Data input to HSE analysis tool
- Results produced

Collecting information (2)

- Primary & Secondary data
- Sickness Absence statistics
- Disciplinary figures
- Grievance figures & categories
- Exit interview data
- Hot spots?

Employer statistics

- Number of incidents reported
- Violent incident reports
- Absence due to psychological issues
- OHP referrals for psychological issues
- OHP referrals – work related
- Counselling figures – work related
- Stress claims – outstanding or settled

Stress Risk Assessment

- **Demands:** workload, work patterns, and the work environment
- **Control:** How much say the person has in the way they do their work
- **Support:** encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- **Relationships:** promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **Role:** Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- **Change:** How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

Focus Groups

- Clear commitment from Service director
- 2 focus groups
- HSE recommended method
- 2 senior managers heading groups
- 2 UNISON Safety reps in groups
- Corporate Health & Safety officer involved

Focus group findings

- Unrealistic work demands
- High staff turnover
- Imbalance in share of workload
- Poor training provision
- Inadequate workstations, hot desking
- Lack of support & encouragement
- Staff meetings being cancelled
- Poor handling of disciplinary issues
- Social interaction, 'laughter being discouraged'
- Managers not being trained properly
- Absence management causing 'climate of fear'

Further action required

- Review of work allocation to ensure fairness
- Integration of PL/HA teams
- All teams to have 4 weekly minuted meetings
- Complaints procedure to be revised
- Ensure exit questionnaires are completed
- Filling of vacancies
- Review of training provision
- Quarterly staff forum with UNISON input
- Communication strategy to be revised

Employer Duties

- Do they have a Workplace Stress policy?
- Has the trade union been involved/consulted?
- Is the policy being implemented effectively?
- How many Stress Risk Assessments have been completed for Occupational Groups?
- Is the Stress policy and statistics discussed at Elected member or Board level?
- Are members aware of the HSE Standards?

Member Issues

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation
- Hyper-tension
- ILL treatment
- Lack of respect
- Atmosphere in work
- Targets & surveillance

Recent studies

- Cardiff University, Vevre et al, July 2011
- 4,000 interviews, 4 case studies
- Insight into workplace ill treatment
- Conventional prevention ineffective
- Interventions need more flexibility
- Proper training & resources essential
- Mandate of fairness & respect needs to be built into management structure
- Disabled, younger, LGBT, long term sick are more likely targets

Activists Issues

- Increasing workload
- More complex issues
- Facility time issues
- Lack of support
- More training
- Recruitment
- More activists
- Morale



Branch strategy

- Raise awareness among members
- Training, support & more training!!
- Tactical use of formal Grievance procedures
- Both collective and individual
- Concerns must be lodged in writing
- Standing agenda item at liason meetings
- Gather stats & information
- External involvement, HSE
- National & local publicity

Further information

- [Unison.org.uk/safety](http://unison.org.uk/safety)
- [Hse.gov.uk/stress](http://hse.gov.uk/stress)
- [Workstress.net](http://workstress.net)
- [Hazards.org](http://hazards.org)
- [Scottishhazards.co.uk](http://scottishhazards.co.uk)
- [Samh.org.uk](http://samh.org.uk)
- <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/insight/illtreatment/index.html>
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Questions ?