

## IS MENTAL HEALTH A CONSEQUENCE OF THE WORKING PRACTICES AND BAD MANAGEMENT IN OUR WORKPLACES AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT IT?

JOAN MCNULTY.

ASSISTANT BRANCH SECRETARY STOCKPORT LG. UNISON  
ACTING CO-ORDINATOR FOR STRESSNETWORK UK.



The average NHS worker is now taking more than 15 days off sick a year, with soaring levels of stress leave, new figures show.

Data provided by 100 hospital trusts in England shows doctors, nurses and other front-line staff took 845,966 sick days for stress, anxiety or depression in 2014/15 – a rise of 227,471 days since 2011/12.

In total, 16.4 million days were lost to sickness absence in 2014/15 – an increase of 1 million days in a year, official figures show.

The statistics show that the average NHS employee took 15.5 days off sick – a rise from 14.8 the year before.

Jonathan Isaby, chief executive of the Taxpayers' Alliance, raised fears of a "sicknote culture" in some parts of the NHS.

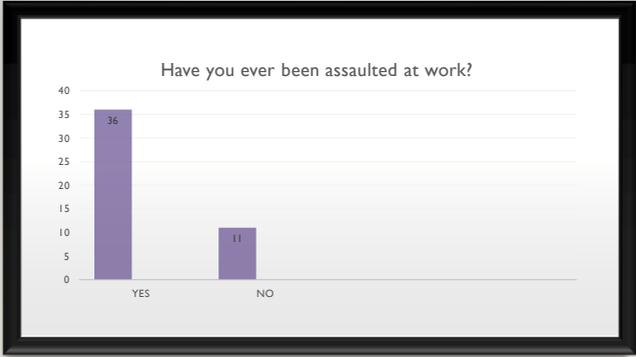
He said the amount of leave being taken was "remarkably high," even allowing for the extra exposure to sickness from working in hospitals.

"There's no question that we need a cultural shift not just in the NHS but across the whole public sector because taxpayers can't afford to keep paying for individuals not to be at work," he said.

The significant increase in so-called "stress leave" is particularly concerning - we need to ensure staff have the support they need, but we must also ensure that each of those absences are genuine."

## **DO YOU EVER READ HEADLINES LIKE THIS?**

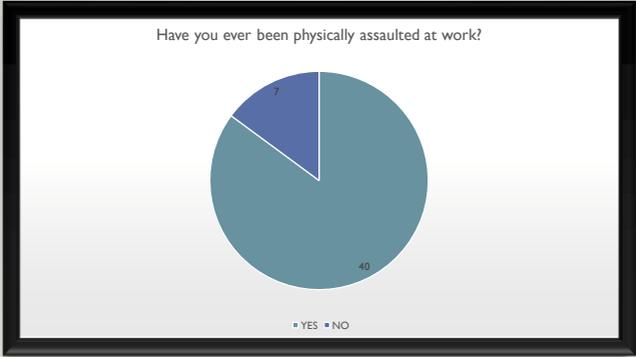
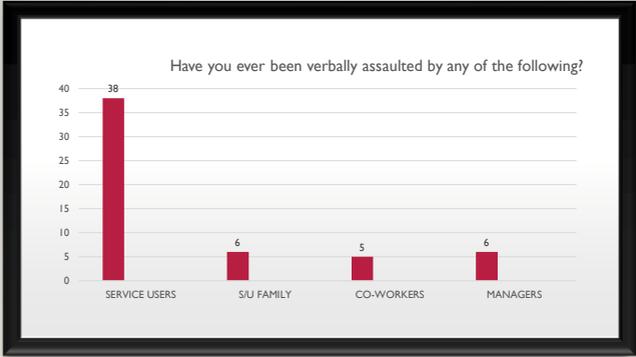
- **1/3 of care staff have been bullied in work by management**
- **85% of Care Staff have been physically assaulted by a service user in work**
- **Up to 71% of care workers are penalised for taking time off sick, due to an assault by residents**

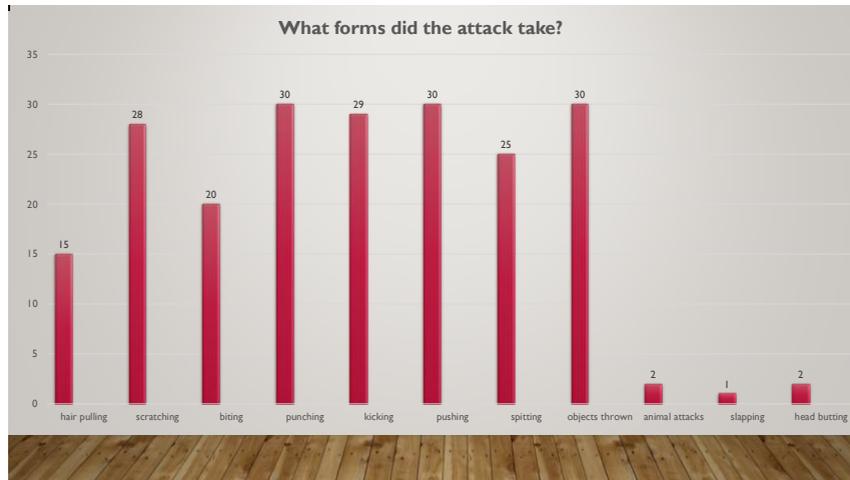


Examples of comments provided were:

**F\*\*\* O\*\* I don't like you.  
Pack your bags and go.  
You bald B\*\*\*\*\*.  
Been called "fat cow"/stupid cow.  
You old B\*\*\*\*\*.  
You fucking B\*\*\*\*.  
F\*\*\* O\*\***

**These are the ones we could print**





### SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

---

- ❖ do you have a Health and Safety Committee set up in your branch? If not set one up. (Regulation 9, SRSC REGS 77)
- ❖ Ask for sickness stats.
- ❖ Have you got a stress policy? Is it fit for purpose? If not, consult to change it.
- ❖ Consult your members.

- Carry out a questionnaire about stress.
- When you do a workplace inspection, ask members about stress/Mental Health levels of sickness.
- Does your workplace have mental health first aiders?
- When a ISRA is been carried out, ask if the person doing it is COMPETANT to do it.



### Stress Policy

#### Risk assessment and Action Plan Template

This template should be used in conjunction with the Mental Wellbeing Toolkit

Stress Risk Assessment and Action Plan				
Service area/Team/Individual:		Date: 15/02/18		
Health Safety & Wellbeing				
Management Standard	Issues Raised or Current State	Practical Solutions Taken/To Be taken	Who will Take Forward	Action Completed
Demands	<p>The workload is reasonable at present but there are times of increased and high demand on the service. This happens if serious accidents occur or serious safety issues arise which require immediate and prolonged response and investigation.</p> <p>There are also times of high demand when school audits need completing. Demand can also be placed on the team from corporate colleagues who sometimes require quick or immediate help with health &amp; safety or wellbeing issues.</p>	<p>Option to increase hours of part time officer if needed, can also be flexible about days he works in order to manage diary more effectively.</p> <p>Officers aware that they can discuss with colleagues the sharing of workloads.</p> <p>Regular team meetings are fully minuted and issues or problems regarding demand can be raised at these.</p>	All officers to use	Completed March 2018
	<p>Workloads are shared fairly and consistently across the team members and the manager keeps an eye on individual workloads to ensure that no one is struggling to cope.</p> <p>Service level agreement timescales are achievable in most instances. I part time officer on occasion has to extend deadlines to fit in with his working hours. This is acceptable under the circumstances and officers are aware of their ability to work flexibly within these timescales.</p>	<p>Use Trello as a team to look at individual workloads.</p>		

Relationships	<p>Positive relationships are promoted and conflict avoided.</p> <p>Unacceptable behaviour is challenged and reported to manager.</p> <p>Aware of Dignity at Work Policy</p> <p>Work information is shared.</p> <p>Colleagues are supportive of each other.</p>	<p>Continue to promote a positive work environment with the support of the manager.</p> <p>Learning &amp; development activities to equip employees in dealing with inappropriate behaviour to be considered.</p>	Manager
Role	<p>All officers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Job description available</p> <p>Training and skills needs are identified.</p> <p>Conflicting priorities are managed.</p>		
Change	<p>Team meetings</p> <p>Communication from team manager re any changes within the team or any changes to affect the team.</p>	<p>Team Meetings</p> <p>!:</p>	

Control	<p>Officers feel they have a lot of freedom to manage their diaries and time.</p> <p>They are aware of the flexible working policy and working at home is possible in some instances. For example if officers or manager has a large report or piece of work to finish or to allow starting and finishing on site where this meets the needs of the service and is more efficient.</p> <p>The business continuity plan also makes provision for officers to work from home due to adverse weather conditions.</p> <p>Officers working from home must be available to come into the office or go out on site if possible weather permitting.</p>	<p>Discuss any new skills that are required in the team. Officers encouraged to develop new skills.</p> <p>PDRs</p> <p>Team Meetings carried out so that awareness of how the work the team does fits into the overall strategy and priorities for the council.</p>	
Support	<p>Manager has open door policy with regards to raising any concerns.</p> <p>Team are aware of internal policies for raising concerns.</p> <p>Officers aware of the counselling service and coaching service and how to access it.</p>	<p>Awareness of L1wellworkwell</p>	

Environmental Factors	<p>PPE provided</p> <p>Dynamic risk assessments carried out on site.</p> <p>Officers aware of risks on site.</p> <p>Clean and well ventilated office environment provided.</p>	<p>DSE assessments to be carried out when move to new office</p>	All	
Feedback to Employee's				

Manager Signature:  
Date:

---

Employee Signature:  
(If done for individual)  
Date:

---

Review date:

By who:

## Other people not being such twats 'can help treat depression', finds study

JUST TO FINISH OFF WITH A LITTLE HUMOUR, OR IS IT? AS THEY SAY;

"MANY A TRUE WORD HATH BEEN SPOKEN IN JEST"

**Not being surrounded by utter twats has significant mental health benefits, according to a study published this morning.**

Researchers claim to have established a clear, causal relationship between significant improvements in mental health and just having a few days off from other people's utter dickishness, and are expected to recommend the NHS set up 'no twat zones' in a bid to tackle the issue.

The study showed that under laboratory conditions simply telling people acting like twats to 'fuck off' had immediate and lasting effects, and experts strongly recommend the findings are rolled out across the country without delay.

“We’ve spent years telling people that a long walk in the country is good for their brain chemistry, but this study shows it’s not because of all that wonderful nature going on around them, but because they get some time off from the insufferable bastards they’re usually surrounded by,” said NHS spokesman Dr Simon Williams.

“We’re hoping that from now on doctors will be able to issue prescriptions for ‘time off’ from other people being total jerks.

“ “You’ll get a note from your GP that says ‘Stop being such an utter tit’, which you would then show to people in order to tackle your – and, frankly, their – symptoms. It would be from a doctor, so they can’t ignore it, obviously.

“If that didn’t work medical professionals would be able to offer stronger remedies, such as a service where an ambulance comes round, and the paramedics punch the offending wanker on the nose.”