



STRESSBUSTERS



UNITE CONQUERING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

June 2010

Introduction to workplace representatives and members

Stress at work is increasingly becoming the major cause of occupational ill health in the Not for Profit Sector which employs about 750,000 people.

With the increased use of commissioning processes to obtain funding, coupled with the short term nature of contracts, competition has increased the pressure on organisations to cut their margins to a minimum to retain and win contracts.

The pressure on Not for Profit organisations continues to grow as private sector providers also bid for services, and can do so on a loss making basis in some cases, and/or take a more functional rather than holistic approach to service delivery. Not for Profit organisations, still committed to quality standards, are therefore finding it increasingly difficult to compete.

With staffing being the most expensive costs of most organisations, this has meant that there has been a reduction in staffing levels, and cuts to staff terms and conditions, leading to yet more increased expectations on those that remain. In short, the renewed expectations have been dubbed as demanding "more for less".

There have also been increased demands emanating from the coalition government for justifying how public finance is used through bureaucratic auditing and monitoring processes. At this time of economic insecurity, demands on many services have also increased and the challenging nature of the issues presented to organisations demand even more creative solutions.

The sector workforce, who are dedicated to their work and service users, are already at or beyond full stretch. This has led to staff working excessive hours to complete their work and meet the increased demands of their organisations and staff working under extreme pressure.

Without management action plans in place to safeguard employees, staff have taken the full brunt of pressures placed on them by funders, their organisations, and their service users - and this has resulted in work-related stress.

Whilst some employees end up being ill or having to leave or take time off, many others continue to work under increasing levels of stress, but can also testify the impact that this has had on their personal health, their family, the quality of their work, their organisation and service users, and their morale.

The tragedy is that this is avoidable. If management undertook risk assessments of the situation and enacted an action plan, as is their duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), then work related stress would not be as prevalent.

Unite is campaigning on issues related to funding and monitoring and believes that management have to act responsibly in their discussions with funders to ensure that their bids for funding do not compromise the wellbeing of their workforce.

The sector has been silent on the issues impacting on the workforce, and therefore it is time that we changed the culture and give real recognition to the importance of workplace health, putting the staff first.

Even if these issues are yet to hit your workplace, having risk assessments, policies and processes in place to address these issues are of upmost importance.

Unite is running a year long campaign to help you transform the place where you work. We will ensure that you are equipped to make a difference there.

Campaign outline

In June 2010, we are asking all Unite representatives to conduct a workplace survey. If you are able to conduct this survey with the support of management or jointly with them, then this would be very positive in moving the campaign forward. Of course, in some workplaces this will not be possible.

The survey is accessible electronically or in paper format. We will then be asking representatives to analyse the results of this survey.

It is important that your management is also supportive of the work you are doing, and therefore we have enclosed a letter to management about this campaign in this pack which you can address, sign and forward.

If you do not have a representative in your workplace, we very much hope that you will also use the tools provided to effectively bring change in your workplace.

We expect you to form a working party with management as early as you can during this campaign, but once you have analysed the results, the next step is to have a meeting with the management.

Even if there are policies and processes in place, it is important to review their effectiveness and upgrade action plans where necessary. A working party may be part of your negotiations and consultations committee, health and safety committee, or a new sub-group.

In September 2010, we will be issuing our representatives guide on work-related stress, which will provide you with the information you need to put good policies and practices in place. This can be added to this pack. There is also a lot of information on the internet available.

At the same time, we will be providing you with resources to help you raise awareness in your workplace. Unite will also be running training for representatives to ensure that you are best equipped to lead this campaign in your workplace.

Towards the end of 2010, Unite will be holding a one day conference in London for you and your management to hear from leading experts in the field and help you as an organisation develop an on-going action plan.

From the outset, Unite encourages you to get involved and get others involved too.

The survey

From a national survey report of the sector, Unite discovered

- that 92% of respondents identified that they were stressed at work or experiencing negative side effects as a result of the pressures on their organisation.
- from previous work 43% of Unite members said that they had experienced workplace bullying, which has also had an impact on work-related stress.

While this is useful information, most management will first want to know if it is an issue within their organisation.

Unite has therefore designed a questionnaire for you to distribute and analyse during the months of June and July 2010.

We have enclosed hard copies of the survey. At the bottom, there is space for you to add details as to whom staff should return their survey to, and by when. These can be photocopied and circulated or more copies can be ordered by contacting stress@unitetheunion.org.

Should you wish to run this survey electronically, you may wish to use an electronic survey tool like Survey Monkey, which is available free on line and is simple to set up.

You may want to alter the survey to meet the needs of your organisation. Should this be the case, then please feel free to do this, or discuss this with your regional officer.

Increasing participation in the survey

When people are busy at work, filling out a survey may not be their number one priority. We have therefore listed a number of ideas below which could help encourage staff to complete their survey.

- carry out survey with staff by interviewing staff
- go round your workplace gathering surveys
- have a day when you have a box in your main entrance for people to hand in their surveys
- have a lunch time meeting about the campaign, and get people to complete and hand in their surveys then
- hold a prize draw for those that hand in their survey
- if you have run an on-line survey, send out reminders for people to return their survey
- if you are using the paper format of the survey, you can still mail out electronic reminders.



Analysing the survey results

When you have received the survey results, you need to analyse what is going on in your workplace.

Questions that ask for yes or no responses can be analysed as a percentage. For example 42 people said "yes" and 8 people said "no". You can then say 84% said "yes".

Where there are questions calling for respondents to identify priorities, i.e. what has been the impact of stress on you (tick all that are relevant), then you can list the most relevant in order of which had been ticked the most.

Where there are open questions, i.e. what do you believe your organisation can do to reduce the levels of stress placed on you, then it is worth quoting these, and as you read through these, seeing which similar answers occur most commonly, e.g. looking for trends.

You may also want to have some discussions with members of staff at the organisation by way of a follow-up. This is especially important if particular issues have been brought to light in your survey.

Once you have finished analysing the results of the survey, then write a brief report highlighting the results. Unite would find it very helpful if you can e-mail this brief report to stress@unitetheunion.org. It is likely that you will present these findings to management.

Remember, one case of work-related stress is one case too many, and therefore your organisation should still press ahead ensuring that it has an effective action plan to deal with this issue.

We don't have a representative in our workplace

We would normally expect a union representative to co-ordinate this work, but recognise that some organisations do not have a representative. We, therefore, want to include you in the campaign too.

If there are a number of Unite members in your workplace, it would be wise to discuss this with them, and work together with them to co-ordinate the campaign in your workplace.

If you are the only member in your workplace, we would still encourage you to carry out the survey and follow this role. This may be an opportunity to elect a workplace representative.

This campaign will provide you with an excellent opportunity to encourage other people in your workplace to join Unite and get involved.

Whether a single employee or one of thousands, this work is very important.

Setting out your action plan

All campaigns take planning. Unite suggests that you agree a timetable for your campaign at the outset alongside the support that we are providing you. At each stage we will give you tools for the campaign and lots of ideas that you can use. This will give your campaign structure, and help everyone to focus. We have spaced this campaign out over a year, so that you can pace yourself.

We want to help you to run this campaign in the best way you can in your workplace. You know what will work best for your organisation and the support that you need from Unite to achieve this.

Activity	Detail	Date Start	Date Finish	Who responsible
Survey	Unite recommends that you carry this out in June/July 2010			
Survey Analysis	Unite recommends that you carry this out in July/August 2010			
Send in Survey report	Send survey report to management and Unite by 1 Sept 2010			
Meeting with management	Unite recommends that you set a date for a meeting to discuss this issue in depth with management in September 2010. However, to set a date for this meeting forward the manager's briefing as soon as possible			
Training	Unite will send round dates of regional and national training for the autumn			
Campaign week	Hold workplace activities and awareness			
National Conference	4 November 2010 in London for representatives, activists and management			
Completion of workplace policy and action plan				
Re-survey workforce				
Analysis of campaign				

Getting others involved

Finally, it is important that this campaign is not seen as something that the representatives are doing, but a campaign for the whole workplace. As we progress through this campaign, we will set out how others can get involved, and can work with you to bring about change in your workplace.

As a first step it is really important to communicate with your colleagues across the workplace. If your organisation is spread across different sites, you could seek out volunteers to represent their project or workplace.

Some union members may have a particular interest in this issue, and will want to get involved in the campaign.

This campaign provides you with a good opportunity to get others involved with the union. Equally, colleagues should be encouraged to join the union. Stress permeates every part of your life, and the fact that the union is working to reduce and remove work-related stress, should be a motivator in itself for people to join the union and be part of the campaign. The more members in the union, the more effective you will be on all issues.

We have, therefore, added a couple of questions into the survey to encourage greater engagement at this stage, but will also be issuing other tools later on.

Next steps

1. Meeting with management

We hope that you would have had the opportunity to work with management on the survey, however recognise that many colleagues would not. Our aim is for your analysis of your surveys will be completed by the end of the summer, so we will encourage you to set up a meeting with management to discuss the results.

2. Reps Guide

We are producing a comprehensive guide to representatives over the summer so that you can have the latest information about work-related stress, on how to support individuals, about producing a workplace policy and action plan, and organise around this issue.

3. Training

We will give you a full list of opportunities to receive training from Unite about stress at work, and how to combat this.

4. Conference – 4 November, 2010, Friends Meeting House, London

Details are to follow on the one-day national conference that Unite is organising in London on work-related stress. We encourage all representatives and/or stress campaign co-ordinators to attend, and to bring your managers along too so you have a shared understanding of making your workplace stress-free.

5. Raising Awareness and organising

We will be sending you briefings for staff, posters and other tools so that you can really raise awareness in your workplace about work-related stress. We will provide you with ideas for campaign days in your workplace and how you can use these tools to.