The Educational Institute of Scotland

Stress Questionnaires

Background

1.1 The following resolution was approved by the 2013 Annual General Meeting:

"This AGM instructs Council to investigate and report on the use and impact of individual and organisational stress questionnaires across Local Authorities. Furthermore, this report will issue advice on good practice and effective models of questionnaire as appropriate."

1.2 The 2013 Annual General Meeting approved a policy paper which highlighted the impact of work-related stress in schools and colleges. The paper also promoted and supported the use of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Stress Management Standards via local association secretaries. The Management Standards define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work related stress are being effectively managed and controlled. The 2013 AGM policy paper is appended (Appendix A).

Legal Duty

2.1 The use of the Management Standards is not a legal requirement on employers. However, the Management Standards do provide a framework which can be used by employers to assist in meeting legal requirements.

2.2 The HSE Management Standards Indicator tool is set out in Appendix B. The HSE website sets out how to use the toolkit and analyse the results. The Management Standards approach requires managers, employees and their representatives to work together to improve certain areas of work. The approach is generally aimed at the organisation rather than individuals, so that a larger number of employees can benefit from any actions taken.

2.3 Employers have a duty to identify potential causes of stress and reduce these before they have an impact on employees. This is set out in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which requires employers to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments on all risks to employers including the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work.

Action

3.1 In processing the 2013 AGM resolution, Employment Relations Committee decided to write to Scottish Councils and EIS local association secretaries in the first instance. The responses from Scottish Councils and local association secretaries are summarised in Appendix C.

Discussion

4.1   The 2013 EIS policy paper promotes and supports the use of the Management Standards.   It is worthy of note that the majority of respondents either use the indicator tool or questionnaires based on it.

4.2   A proactive and supportive stress management policy can encourage commitment and loyalty and encourages employees to think positively of the employer, thereby improving job satisfaction.   However, the need for effective stress management does not relate solely to employee well-being.   For employers, the costs of absence arising from work-related mental health requires management time and effort, the recruitment of temporary staff and can lead to higher levels of staff turnover.

4.2   The EIS over recent years has obtained out of court personal injury compensation for members who have suffered work-related stress. However, it remains the case that significant legal hurdles in terms of the tests of causation and foreseeability must be overcome before any personal injury case can be successfully pursued.   The EIS must therefore continue to give priority to ensure that circumstances do not arise in which members are at risk of permanent damage to health due to stress and overwork.

Conclusion

5.1   The HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool is a model of good practice and it is the policy of the EIS that its continued use should be encouraged.   Evidence from HSE indicates that where employers have fully implemented the HSE's Management Standards for Work-Related Stress, they are more likely to have produced a sound stress management policy.   Local associations and branch secretaries in further and higher education are therefore advised to encourage their employers to adopt the HSE Management Standards Indicator tool if they have not already done so.

5.2   Local associations should seek to ensure that any local authority policy is aimed at the elimination and avoidance of teacher stress as opposed to the "management" of teacher stress.

The Educational Institute of Scotland

Stress at Work

Background

1.1 The following resolution was approved by the 2012 Annual General Meeting:

"This AGM instructs Council to:
(a) Highlight the impact of work-related stress in schools and colleges;
(b) Promote and support the use of the HSE Stress Management Standards via Local Association Secretaries and school representatives;
(c) Campaign through the STUC for regulations or a code of practice to prevent work-related stress."

1.2 The 2012 Annual General Meeting approved a paper which reported on levels of stress. The incidences of work related stress reported was surprisingly low. The EIS concluded that this may have arisen from the fact that stress itself is not a medical condition and in the past it may have arisen from a reluctance to set out work related stress when self-certifying or submitting medical lines. It was also clear that a number of employers do not record work related stress as a separate category.

1.3 The managing of work related stress is a major issue not only for trade unions, but for employers.

Evidence

2.1 In 2011 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development reported that, although overall statistics across the economy had remained static, since 2010 stress was recorded as the most common cause of long-term sickness, replacing acute medical conditions. Over a fifth of respondents indicated that work related stress was the most common cause of long term absence.

2.2 The incidence of work related stress is higher in the public sector than in the private sector. The average level of employee absence across the whole economy is 7.7 days, or 3.4% of working days, but extending to 9.1 days in the public sector.

2.3 The survey also noted that 69% of public sector employers are more likely to be seeking to proactively manage stress (69% as opposed to 49% of private sector employers). However, the ability of employers to provide proactive solutions can be affected by cuts in budgets. It is worth noting that 43% of public sector employers reported that redundancies were being contemplated compared to 17% in the private sector. Job insecurity and uncertainty adds to employee stress.

2.4   It was also reported that more than a quarter of all employers were reporting an increase of "presenteeism" in the twelve months of the survey, that is people reporting for work when ill.

2.5   As far back as 2007, the Sainsbury Centre for General Health estimated that the total cost to UK employers of mental health problems among their employees was nearly £26 billion each year: this included the cost of mental health – related absenteeism, presenteeism and employee turnover.

2.6   Evidence from HSE is appended (Appendix B) setting out evidence from the Labour Force Survey on Stress and Psychological Disorders.

2.7   Dr Jill Miller, CIPD, advised, when commenting on the CIPD evidence referred to the rise in stress absences, that "highlighting the heightened pressure many people feel under in the workplace as a result of the prolonged economic downturn. Stress is a particular challenge in the public sector where the sheer amount of major change and restructuring would appear to be the root cause."

2.8   The HSE evidence cited above places health professionals, teaching and educational professionals and caring personal services staff as occupations reporting the highest rates of cases with work related stress. In August the Scottish Labour Party following a FOISA request, stated that psychological issues accounted for 22 per cent of teacher absence in Scotland, rising to 26% of sick days in Glasgow and 33% in Falkirk.

Legal Duty

3.1   Employers have a duty to identify potential causes of stress and reduce these before they have an impact on employees. This is set out in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which requires employers to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments on all risks to employers including the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work. These regulations built upon the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974.

Managing Standards

4.1   The Health and Safety Executive Managing Standards is not a legal requirement on employment but it does provide a framework which can be used by employers to assist in meeting legal requirements.

4.2   The six Management Standards cover:

Demands – includes workloads, work patterns and the work environment

Control – how much say a person has in the way they do their work.

Support – includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

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 and small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

Relationships – promoting positive working to avoid conflicts and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

4.3 The Management Standards toolkit set out in Appendix C. The HSE website sets out how to use the toolkit and analyse the results.

Other Support Measures

5.1 There are a number of other tools which can be used to support the management of stress in the workplace.

5.2 A number of organisations have developed their own toolkits. An example is appended from an English County Council which is based on the Management Standards but adapted locally. (Appendix D).

5.3 One advantage of an "in-house" toolkit is that it can be devised to cover particular posts, or grades of post.

5.4 Robertson Cooper, a business psychology company, has developed a six essentials approach to guide the process of workplace well-being and employee engagement. Robertson Cooper argue that a clear structure creates the best psychological working environment. The process is appended (Appendix E).

The Case for Stress Management

6.1 The need for effective stress management does not relate solely to employee well-being.

6.2 However, for employers the costs of absence arising from work related mental health requires management time and effort, the recruitment of temporary staff and can lead to higher levels of staff turnover. A proactive and supportive stress management policy can encourage commitment and loyalty and encourages employees to think positively of the employer, thereby improving job satisfaction.

6.3 Stress management is a key element of EIS HASAW training. This paper will inform a rewrite of the paperwork.

Conclusion

7.1 The art critic and social commentator, John Ruskin stated, as far back as 1851 that there are three conditions under which people may be happy with their work: "They must be fit for it, they must not do too much of it, and they must have a sense of success in it."

7.2   All these years later this encapsulates the approach needed to address stress in the workplace.

7.3   This paper should be forwarded to Executive Committee as part of a trade union campaign to ensure regulations or a code of practice are provided to prevent work-related stress.

7.4   This paper should be copied to LA Secretaries and school representatives.

HSE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS INDICATOR TOOL

Instructions: It is recognised that working conditions affect worker well-being. Your responses to the questions below will help us determine our working conditions now, and enable us to monitor future improvements. In order for us to compare the current situation with past or future situations, it is important that your responses reflect your work in the last six months.

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I am clear what is expected of me at work	1	2	3	4	5
2	I can decide when to take a break	1	2	3	4	5
3	Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	5	4	3	2	1
4	I know how to go about getting my job done	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour	5	4	3	2	1
6	I have unachievable deadlines	5	4	3	2	1
7	If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	1	2	3	4	5
8	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have to work very intensively	5	4	3	2	1
10	I have a say in my own work speed	1	2	3	4	5
11	I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	1	2	3	4	5
12	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	5	4	3	2	1
13	I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department	1	2	3	4	5
14	There is friction or anger between colleagues	5	4	3	2	1
15	I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	1	2	3	4	5
16	I am unable to take sufficient breaks	5	4	3	2	1
17	I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	1	2	3	4	5
18	I am pressured to work long hours	5	4	3	2	1
19	I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	1	2	3	4	5

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
20	I have to work very fast	☐5	☐4	☐3	☐2	☐1

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
21	I am subject to bullying at work	☐5	☐4	☐3	☐2	☐1

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
22	I have unrealistic time pressures	☐5	☐4	☐3	☐2	☐1

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
23	I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
24	I get help and support I need from colleagues	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
25	I have some say over the way I work	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
26	I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
27	I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
28	Staff are always consulted about change at work	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
29	I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
30	My working time can be flexible	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
31	My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
32	When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
33	I am supported through emotionally demanding work	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5
34	Relationships at work are strained	☐5	☐4	☐3	☐2	☐1
35	My line manager encourages me at work	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4	☐5

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Summary of Responses

Local Authority	Type of Questionnaire Used
Aberdeen City	Customised survey based on Management Standards principles.
Aberdeenshire	Questionnaire based on Indicator tool with supplementary questions.
Angus	Indicator tool.
Argyll and Bute	Indicator tool.
Dundee	Indicator tool plus additional factual information questions.
East Lothian	Indicator tool.
East Renfrewshire	Questionnaire based on Indicator tool with supplementary questions.
Edinburgh	Indicator tool plus supplementary questions.
Falkirk	Indicator tool.
Fife	Staff wellbeing survey based on Indicator tool.
Glasgow	Customised risk assessment based on Indicator tool.
Inverclyde	Indicator tool.
Moray	Indicator tool.
North Lanarkshire	Customised Individual Stress Risk Assessment which references the Stress Management Standards.
Orkney	Generic staff questionnaire
Perth and Kinross	Indicator tool.
Renfrewshire	Quality of Working Like Risk Assessment.

Local Authority	Type of Questionnaire Used
Scottish Borders	Customised work-related stress notification form (AM3) as part of the Attendance Management Procedure.
South Ayrshire	Customised individual stress questionnaire based on Management Standards principles.
South Lanarkshire	Indicator tool.
West Dunbartonshire	Customised individual stress risk assessments
West Lothian	Indicator tool.