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### **Executive Summary**

The Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards advocate a preventive, population based approach to reducing work-related stress. This approach involves targeting six main working conditions (i.e., **demands, control, support, relationships, role, and change**) and specifying management practices that will help to ensure that these potential sources of stress do not actually act as stressors for employees. In this way, it is hoped that the Management Standards will promote better mental health (or less stress) and business, or productivity outcomes (defined herein as decreased absenteeism, lower turnover, and better performance). (Bond, Flaxman, & Loivette, 2006)

The HSE's Indicator tool forms part of the analysis recommended within their Management Standards approach. This study incorporates the HSE's Indicator tool as part of a risk assessment for psychosocial hazards and harm amongst the seventy teachers working at the (Organisation Anonymous) (Anonymous), (Location Anonymous). This study looks at potential workplace psychosocial hazards and, using the General Well Being Questionnaire (GWBQ), any associations with potential harm for those workers experiencing stressors. The HSE Indicator tool is a benchmark against the working population of the UK in 2004. As such it indicates potential problem areas.

The Risk Assessment indicates the following potential hazards and harms:

**Control** - Overall 'control' results measure up well to the UK benchmark although there is room for improvement. The first chart indicates that we fall below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile for question number 25, although chart two shows a lower risk potential for individuals. The most significant finding is that

those individuals who reported poor levels of control were 24.75 times more likely to have lower levels of general well-being than those who reported high levels of control. This number is magnified by the low sample, but what is patently clear is that control is a risk factor, i.e., low levels are associated with impaired well-being in this sample of workers.

**Support** - Overall there is a clear need for improvement as the results are below the UK average, but not within the lowest 20%. Aspects of Peer Support fall within the bottom 20% of UK respondents. Those employees who report low levels of support are more than twice as likely to have lower levels of general well-being as those who reported high levels of support.

**Relationships** - Overall there is a clear need for improvement as the results are below the UK average. The greatest area of concern is the number of respondents who said they were sometimes bullied.

**Change** - Overall the results fall in the bottom 20% of the UK results. Individual questions show there is clear need for improvement in all areas of change.

**Role** - Overall 'role' results show a need for urgent action. Those individuals who reported low levels of role clarity were 3.6 times more likely to have lower levels of general well-being than those who reported high levels of role clarity.

**Demands** - The results overall fall below the UK average and indicate a clear need for improvement, although there were good performance indicators in some areas. No relationship between high demands and lower general well being was found.

**Reward and contribution** - A sizeable proportion of respondents are at higher risk. The most significant finding is that those individuals who reported poor levels of perceived reward were 19 times more likely to have lower levels of general well-being than those who reported high levels of perceived reward.

It is hoped that this data will lead to the advocacy within the (Anonymous), and the wider organisation, of the HSE's Management Standards approach as a proactive tool to ensure the health and well being of its staff.

### **Background to the Management Standards approach**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define stress as the adverse reaction (i.e., mental, physical, or behavioural) that people have to excessive pressure, or other types of demands placed on them. The HSE are particularly concerned with stress associated with working conditions, and justifiably so; survey research (Jones, Huxtable, Hodgson, & Price, 2003) indicates that up to 5 million people in the United Kingdom (UK) feel 'very' or 'extremely' stressed by their work, with approximately half a million experiencing this type of stress at a level that they believe is making them ill. Furthermore, this survey indicates that work-related stress costs British society about £3.7 billion every year (at 1995/6 prices). Consistent with this finding, research shows that people who are less stressed are also more productive at work (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). The question that emerges from this literature is: what can be done to address this predicament?

In June 2000, the HSE proposed a method of tackling this work-related stress problem that focused on promoting good management practice within organisations. Essentially, they were advocating a preventive, population-based approach to dealing with this costly dilemma: a strategy that is advocated by leading researchers in the field of occupational health. Over the following four years, the HSE engaged in widespread consultation that involved academics, practitioners, and employers. From this exercise, and related scientific research (e.g. Cox, 1993), six key sources of occupational stress, or 'stressors', were identified:

- **Demands** – aspects of work to which people have to respond, such as work load, work patterns, and the work environment
- **Control** – the extent to which people have a 'say' in the way they do their work
- **Support** – the encouragement, sponsorship, and resources provided by the organization, line management, and colleagues
- **Relationships** – promoting positive working to avoid conflict, and dealing with unacceptable (e.g., bullying) behaviour
- **Role** – the extent to which people understand their role within the organisation, and the degree to which people do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** – the extent to which organisational change (large or small) is effectively managed and communicated within the organisation.

The Management Standards target these six main stressors, by specifying the management practices, or 'states to be achieved', that will help to ensure that these working conditions do not actually act as stressors for employees. In fact, it is hoped that the Management Standards will ensure that these states to be achieved will promote better mental health (or less stress) and business (or productivity) outcomes (e.g., decreased absenteeism, lower turnover, and better performance). (Extract from Bond et al., 2006)

## **2. Method**

This study began with interviews of eight teachers from the workforce of seventy teachers. The sample endeavoured to be representative by having an equal split of gender, a range of ages, experience and time with the organization. The interview was based on four main questions:

- What are the three best things about your job?
- What are the three worst things about your job?
- What impact do these have on your health?
- What support systems are you aware of within the organisation?

Further probing questions were asked based on the respondents' answers. Keeping the format the same was an attempt to keep the interviews as objective as possible, especially given the author's role within the organisation. The feedback from these interviews allowed the tailoring of the questionnaire to best reflect the concerns of the workforce. The author also interviewed the (Anonymous) Manager as a key stakeholder and gatekeeper to change.

The response rate was high. 45 questionnaires were given out at an end of term teachers' meeting and 35 responses were received back. This is an excellent response rate and a clearly representative sample of the 70 teachers that comprise the work group under analysis.

### **2.1 Psychosocial hazards**

The questionnaire is available in Appendix A. The section on 'YOUR WORK' comprises 35 questions from the HSE's Indicator tool, which is part of their Management Standards approach. There are an additional 9 questions taken from Health Scotland's 'Work Positive' tool, a wider ranging questionnaire than the HSE's and an extension of it. The additional questions reflect the main concerns of interview respondents.

Responses are scored from 1 to 5 and higher scores on the whole are good; they represent a low potential risk. The exceptions are 'Demands' and 'Relations' in which the wording of the questions mean a high score is bad; an increase risk. For each psychosocial risk factor the mean was calculated and this was used as cut off point to distinguish high from low scores. This mean was then used for analysis against potential harm.

### **2.2 Harm**

The section entitled 'YOUR WELL-BEING' is the short version of the General Well Being Questionnaire. It is designed to measure the degree to which a respondent is 'worn out', and has a great deal of scientific literature to support its reliability and validity. Once again, a mean was calculated as a cut off point between high and low scores (comparison with UK norms are available). This was then used to calculate an Odds Ratio to establish any relationship between the likelihood of an individual being

exposed to a stressor and that individual being at harm. An example of how this Odds Ratio is calculated is provided below.

Example:

Odds ratio for control and general well-being

	Poor well-being (high score)	Good well-being (low score)
Low control	(cell A) 11	(cell B) 2
High control	(cell C) 4	(cell D) 18

Odds Ratio =  $A \times D$  divided by  $B \times C$

In other words,

OR = exposed and problematic x non-exposed and non-problematic *divided by* exposed and non-problematic x non-exposed and problematic

OR =  $11 \times 18$  *divided by*  $2 \times 4$  = **24.75**

Conclusion: Those who reported poor levels of control were 24.75 times more likely to have low levels of general well-being than those who reported high levels of control.

### 3. Results

The scores for the 35 questions from the HSE Indicator Tool (the first 35 questions on the Work Positive questionnaire) provide feedback on your performance against the HSE Standards. A lower score indicates poor performance, or a potential problem area. The scores range from 1 to 5. The information is presented in the form of average scores and charts provide:

- Your score on each of the six Management Standards, colour coded to highlight potential problem areas
- A suggested interim target in each of the six areas, based on where you are now
- A suggested longer-term target based on the scores of the top 20% of respondents in a nation wide survey to determine how organisations are performing in terms of managing work related stress. These figures are being used as a benchmark to enable HSE to monitor improvements in stress management. The aim is to get more workers and organisations to where the top 20% are now (2004).

You may find that a relatively high score in your 'role' results is prioritised as 'needing clear improvement' or 'needing urgent action' and similarly a relatively low score on 'demands' results in a lower prioritisation. The reason for this is that the results are weighted in line with the national data. Nationally, scores for 'demand' are lower than those for 'role'. Therefore the same scores on different

Standards do not always result in the same prioritisation as the aim is to bring you up to the scores of the top 20% of respondents in the national survey on each of the Standards (Health Scotland, 2004).

### 3.1 Overall

This allows you to compare your results against the HSE Management Standards. It provides interim targets for improvement. Please note that this is based on the 35 HSE questions and not the additional Work Positive questions.

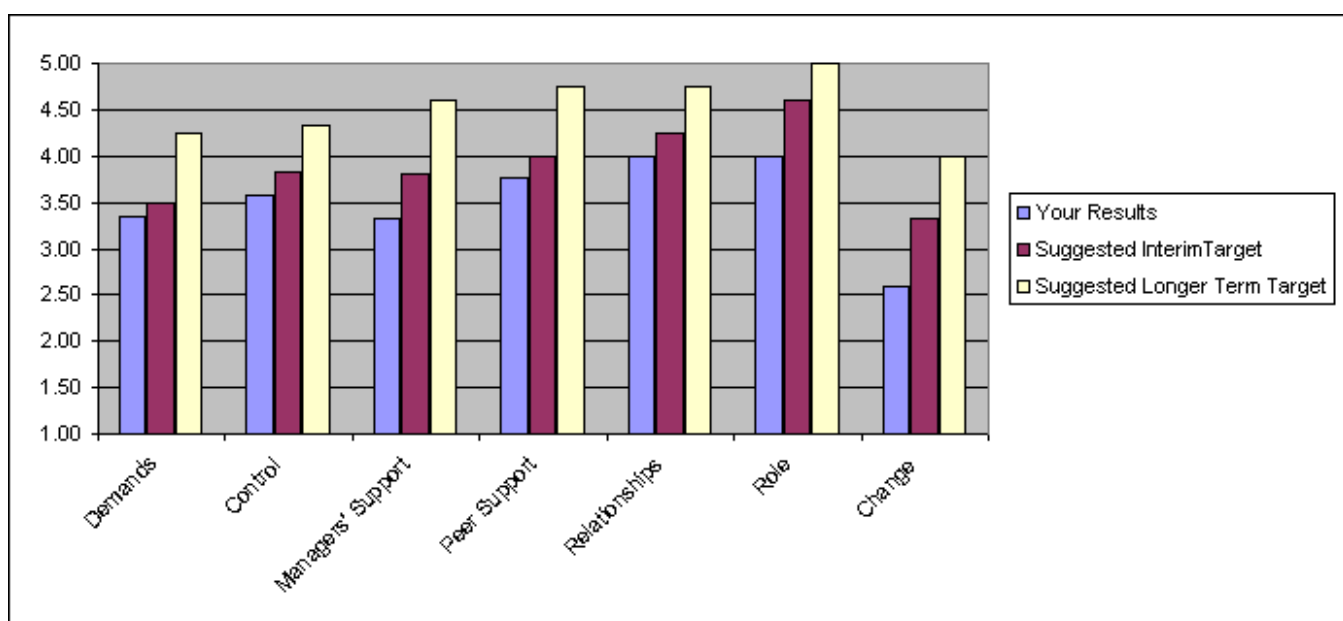
#### Summary of Results

##### Data Set: Psychosocial Working Conditions in Britain in 2004

	Your Results	Suggested Interim Target	Suggested Longer Term Target
<b>Demands</b>	3.35	3.50	4.25
<b>Control</b>	3.57	3.83	4.33
<b>Managers' Support</b>	3.32	3.80	4.60
<b>Peer Support</b>	3.76	4.00	4.75
<b>Relationships</b>	3.99	4.25	4.75
<b>Role</b>	3.99	4.60	5.00
<b>Change</b>	2.59	3.33	4.00

**Key**

- Doing very well - need to maintain performance  
Represents those at, above or close to the 80th percentile<sup>†</sup>
- Good, but need for improvement  
Represents those better than average but not yet at, above or close to the 80th percentile<sup>†</sup>
- Clear need for improvement  
Represents those likely to be below average but not below the 20th percentile<sup>†</sup>
- Urgent action needed  
Represents those below the 20th percentile<sup>†</sup>



### 3.2 Control

The HSE define control as the amount of 'say' that people have in the way that they do their work. People can have control over many aspects of their work, including its pacing, timing, scheduling, and even its definition (Bond et al., 2006).

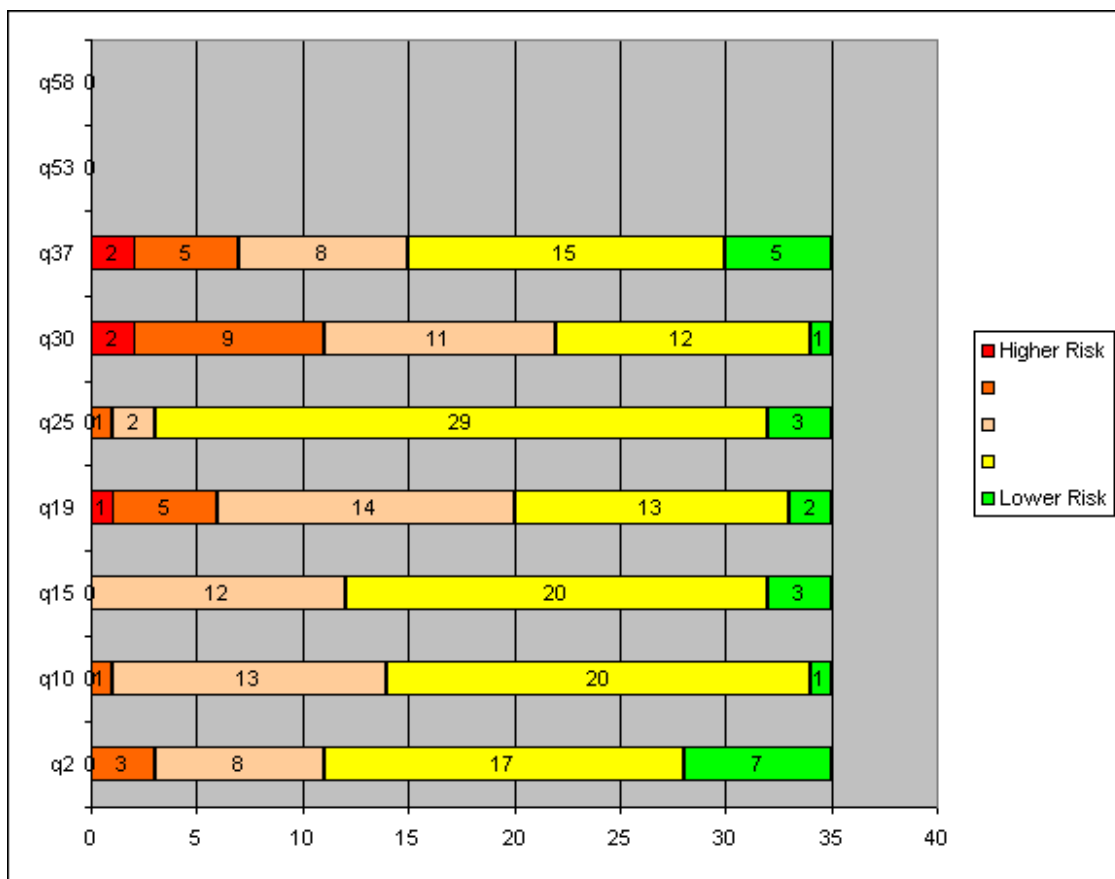
The first six questions are from the HSE tool and the final question, number 37, is from Scotland's 'Work Positive' tool. The additional question is included as participants in the first stage interviews included aspects of 'control' within the 'three worst things about your job' answers. The first chart represents the answers for the HSE tool. The second chart includes the additional question from 'Work Positive'. They give a breakdown of the responses to each question enabling you to easily identify which areas are of particular concern.

Overall 'control' results measure up well to the UK benchmark although there is room for improvement. The first chart indicates that we fall below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile for question number 25, although chart two shows a lower risk potential for individuals. The most significant finding came from the Odds Ratio (OR) calculation incorporating the GWBQ which found that those individuals who reported poor levels of control were 24.75 times more likely to have lower levels of general well-being than those who reported high levels of control. This number is magnified by the low sample, but what is patently clear is that control is a risk factor, i.e., low levels are associated with impaired well-being in this sample of workers. This is worrying for the well being of individuals within this workforce.

Bond et al (Bond et al., 2006) has found that even low impact (low cost, easy implementation) interventions, typical of the Management Standards, can have a disproportionate impact on business, attitudinal, and mental health outcomes. These authors' meta-analysis has clearly shown that small interventions in this area can reduce absenteeism and turnover whilst improving employees' motivation, job satisfaction, mental health and performance levels.

Control		
<b>2</b>	I can decide when to take a break	<b>3.80</b>
<b>10</b>	I have a say in my own work speed	<b>3.60</b>
<b>15</b>	I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	<b>3.74</b>
<b>19</b>	I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	<b>3.29</b>
<b>25</b>	I have some say over the way I work	<b>3.97</b>
<b>30</b>	My working time can be flexible	<b>3.03</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.57</b>

### Control (how much say the person has in the way they do their work)



q37	I feel my job is secure
q30	My working time can be flexible
q25	I have some say over the way I work
q19	I have a choice in deciding what I do at work
q15	I have a choice in deciding how to do my work
q10	I have a say in my own work speed
q2	I can decide when to take a break

### 3.2 Support

The HSE define support as the encouragement, sponsorship, and resources provided by the organisation, line management, and colleagues (Bond et al., 2006).

The first nine questions are from the HSE tool and the final two questions, numbers 52 ND 56, are from Scotland's 'Work Positive' tool. The additional questions are included as participants in the first stage interviews included aspects of 'support' within the 'three worst things about your job' answers. It must also be pointed out that aspects of 'support' were also mentioned by other interviewees as one of the 'three best things about your job' answers. The first chart represents the answers for the HSE tool. The second chart includes the additional questions from 'Work Positive'. They give a breakdown of the responses to each question enabling you to easily identify which areas are of particular concern.

Overall there is a clear need for improvement as the results are below the UK average, but not within the lowest 20%. Management support fares quite well in comparison to peer support. The author feels the questionnaire results are more objective and that interviewee responses will have been influenced by the interviewer being a peer. Interview feedback did show that management support was not consistent and that the level of support depended on the individual manager. None of the interviewees knew of any support systems in place for work related stress. Peer support was most often mentioned as a resource, although sometimes with caveats. Organisational support was judged to be 'in theory' through the employee's Line Manager. However, there were feelings that managers would not always be sympathetic and that an admission of feeling stressed would be 'frowned upon' and detrimental to a career. The second chart shows that the responses for management, rather than peer, support questions have a higher frequency of individuals at high risk. Addressing peer support, questions 24, 27 and 31 represent results within the bottom 20<sup>th</sup> percentile of UK figures and require urgent action. This is reinforced by the results of the Odds Ratio which shows that those employees who report low levels of support are more than twice as likely to have lower levels of general well-being as those who reported high levels of support.

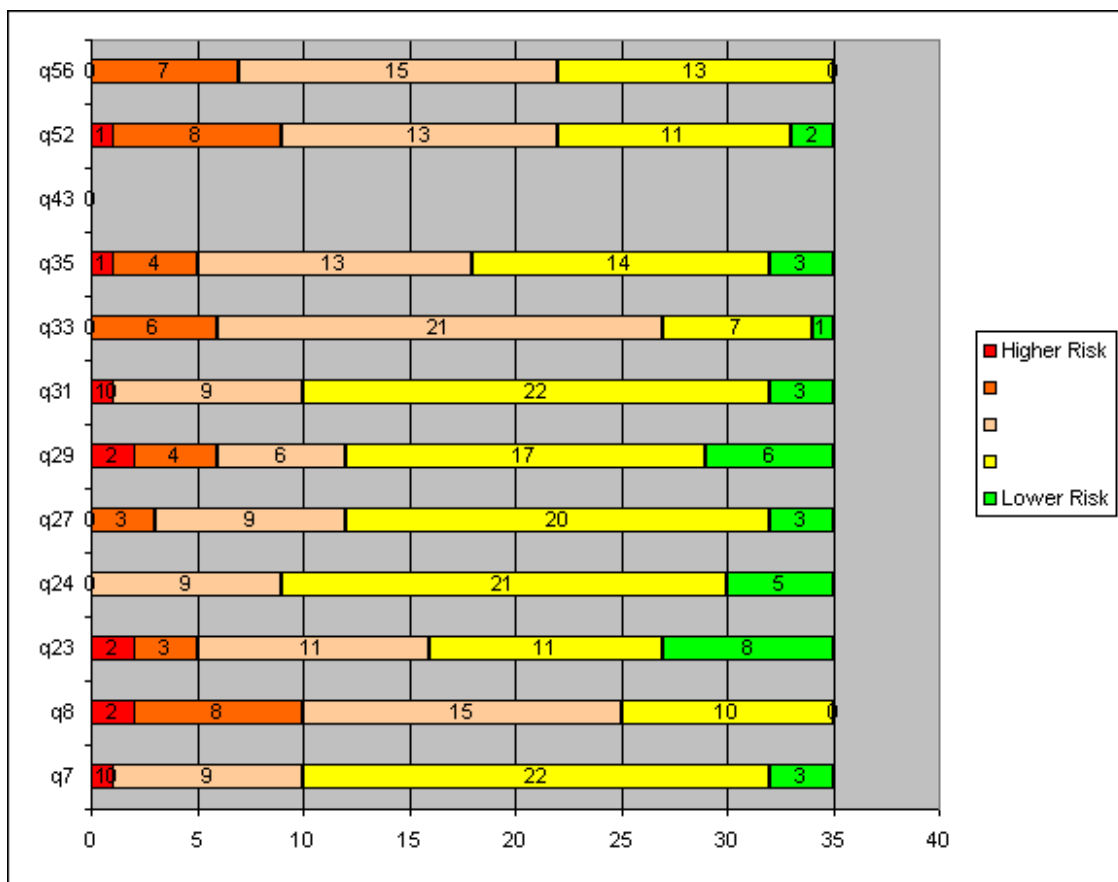
### Managers' Support

<b>8</b>	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	<b>2.94</b>
<b>23</b>	I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem	<b>3.57</b>
<b>29</b>	I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work	<b>3.60</b>
<b>33</b>	I am supported through emotionally demanding work	<b>3.09</b>
<b>35</b>	My line manager encourages me at work	<b>3.40</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.32</b>

### Peer Support

<b>7</b>	If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	<b>3.74</b>
<b>24</b>	I get help and support I need from colleagues	<b>3.89</b>
<b>27</b>	I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	<b>3.66</b>
<b>31</b>	My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems	<b>3.74</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.76</b>

### Support (encouragement, sponsorship, resources, line management and colleagues)



q56	Senior managers are supportive of employees
q52	I receive the training I need to do my job
q35	My line manager encourages me at work
q33	I am supported through emotionally demanding work
q31	My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems
q29	I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me at work
q27	I receive the respect at work I deserve from colleagues
q24	I get the help and support I need from colleagues
q23	I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem
q8	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do
q7	If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me

### 3.3 Relationships

The HSE maintain that work relationships are less likely to lead to stress if organisations promote positive working that reduces interpersonal conflict, and have policies and procedures to prevent and resolve unacceptable behaviour (e.g., bullying, sexual harassment, abuses of power). (Bond et al., 2006)

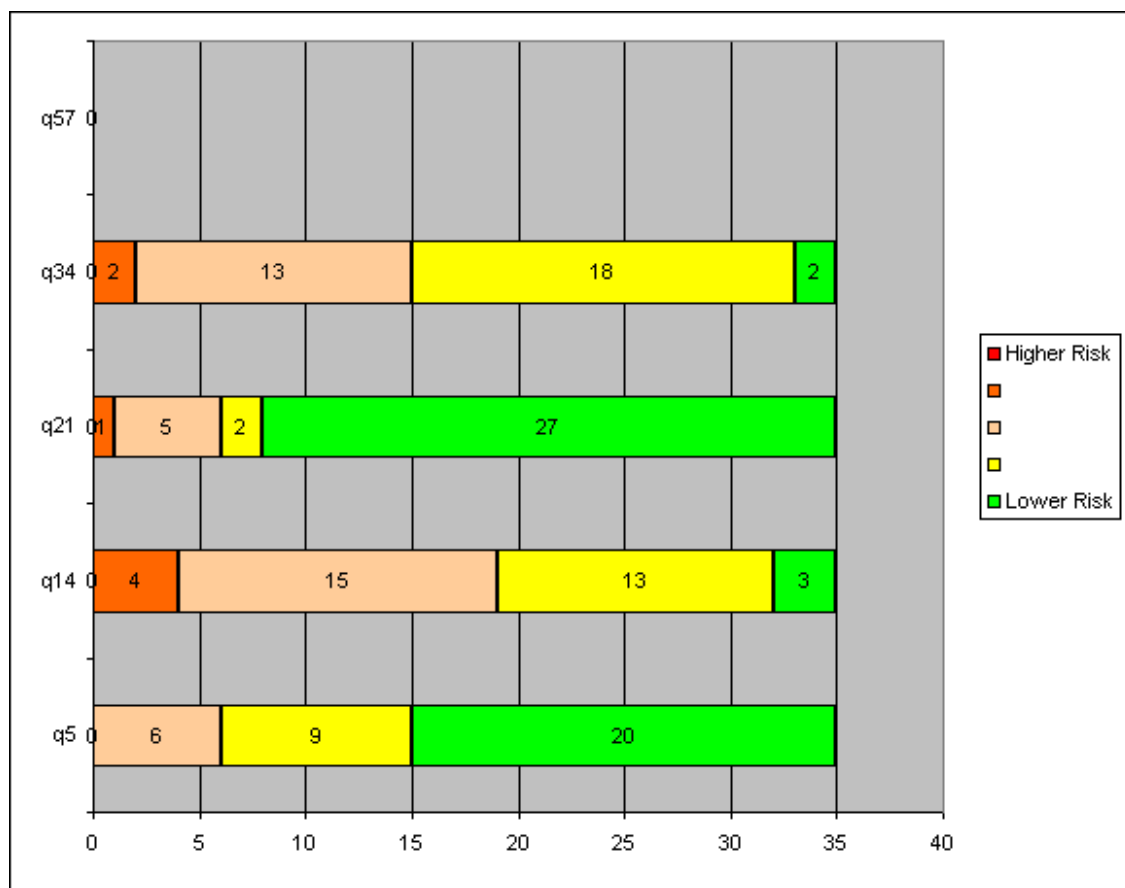
Overall there is a clear need for improvement as the results are below the UK average. Although some interviews gave positive feedback on workplace relationships, there was a more consistent theme of a

'factory feel' and poor staff cohesion. There is a clear and urgent need for action as regards bullying. This has no threshold and is unacceptable in any form and to any degree. Workplace bullying has been linked to employee anxiety and depression, with extreme cases resulting in posttraumatic stress disorder (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999).

**Relationships**

<b>5</b>	I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour	<b>4.40</b>
<b>14</b>	There is friction or anger between colleagues	<b>3.43</b>
<b>21</b>	I am subject to bullying at work	<b>4.57</b> *
<b>34</b>	Relationships at work are strained	<b>3.57</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.99</b>

**Relationships (promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour)**



q14 There is friction or anger between colleagues  
 q5 I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour  
 (N.B. There is an error in Chart 2 Q.21. It should be 6 responses for 'sometimes'.)

### 3.4 Role

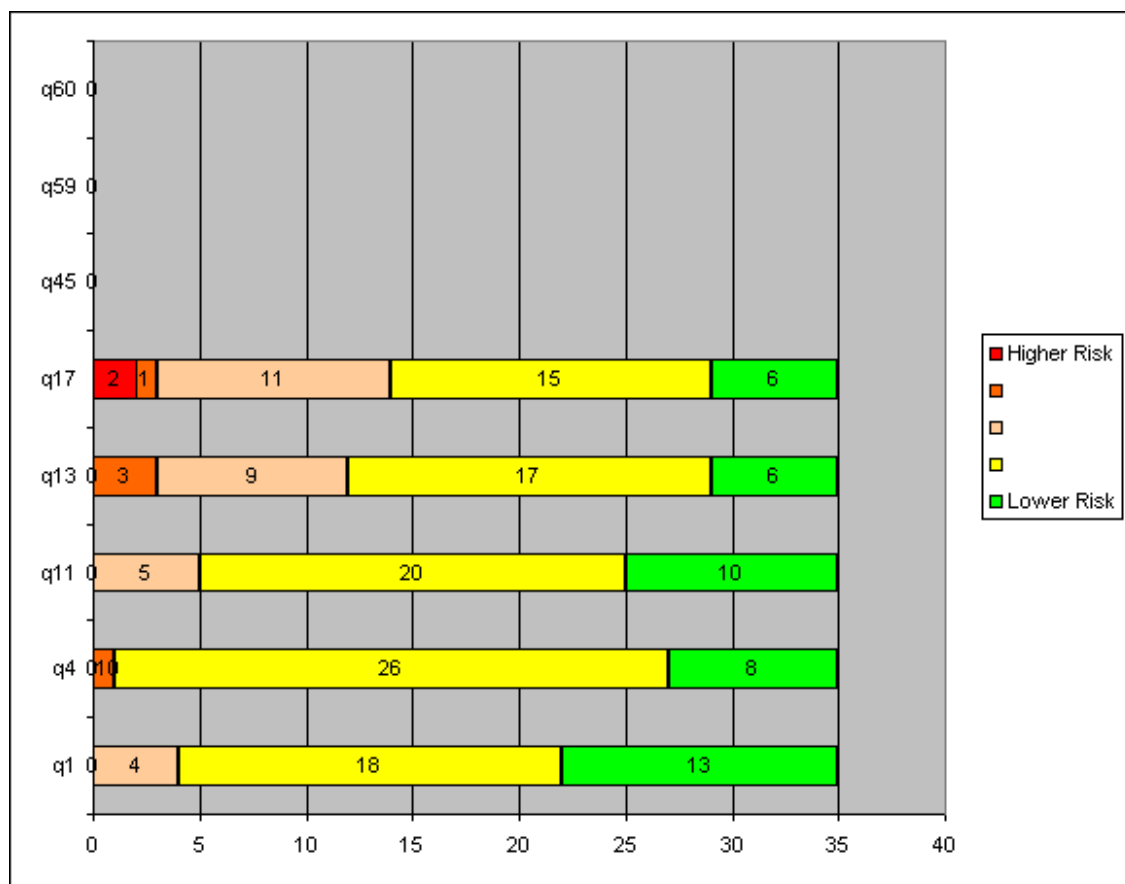
According to the HSE, this source of stress addresses the degree to which people understand, or are clear about, their role within the organisation, and whether the organisation ensures that people do not have conflicting roles (Bond et al., 2006).

Overall 'role' results show a need for urgent action. The first chart indicates that we fall below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile for question numbers 13 and 17, and are below the UK average for all other questions related to role. The Odds Ratio (OR) calculation incorporating the GWBQ found that those individuals who reported low levels of role clarity were 3.6 times more likely to have lower levels of general well-being than those who reported high levels of role clarity.

#### Role

<b>1</b>	I am clear what is expected of me at work	<b>4.26</b>		
<b>4</b>	I know how to go about getting my job done	<b>4.17</b>		
<b>11</b>	I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	<b>4.14</b>		
<b>13</b>	I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department	<b>3.74</b>		
<b>17</b>	I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	<b>3.63</b>		
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.99</b>		

**Role (whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures the person does not have conflicting roles)**



q17	I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation
q13	I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department
q11	I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are
q4	I know how to go about getting my job done
q1	I am clear what is expected of me at work

### 3.5 Demands

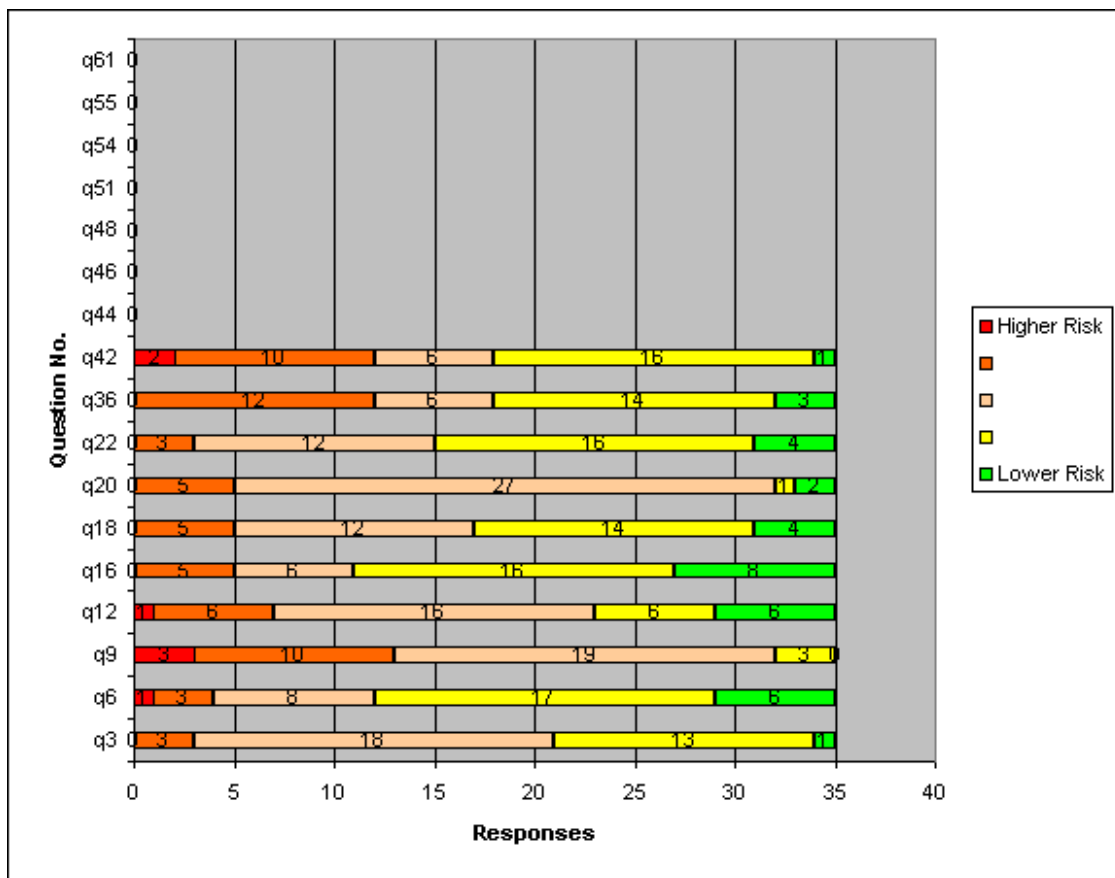
The HSE define demands as aspects of work to which people have to respond, such as work load, work patterns, and the work environment (Bond et al., 2006).

The results for questions 12 and 20 are quite good and above the UK average. However, the results overall and for the remaining questions fall below the UK average and indicate a clear need for improvement. Chart 2 indicates a high degree of risk for a number of individuals. The Odds ratio found no relationship between high demands and lower general well being. This inconsistency may result from the moderating impact that other working conditions, particularly control, have on demands. Even relatively high levels of demands are proposed to have beneficial effects for people, if they have higher levels of control. In contrast, if they have lower levels of control, relatively high demands are thought to have very detrimental results that range from mental ill-health to cardiovascular disease (Bond et al., 2006).

#### Demands

<b>3</b>	Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	<b>3.34</b>
<b>6</b>	I have unachievable deadlines	<b>3.69</b>
<b>9</b>	I have to work very intensively	<b>2.63</b>
<b>12</b>	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	<b>3.29</b>
<b>16</b>	I am unable to take sufficient breaks	<b>3.77</b>
<b>18</b>	I am pressured to work long hours	<b>3.49</b>
<b>20</b>	I have to work very fast	<b>3.00</b>
<b>22</b>	I have unrealistic time pressures	<b>3.60</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.35</b>

**Demands (workload, work patterns, working environment)**



- q42 The work environment is comfortable
- q36 My work patterns/arrangements (e.g. hours, shifts) suit me
- q22 I have unrealistic time pressures
- q20 I have to work very fast
- q18 I am pressured to work long hours
- q16 I am unable to take sufficient breaks
- q12 I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do
- q9 I have to work very intensively
- q6 I have unachievable deadlines
- q3 Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine

### 3.6 Change

The HSE maintain that large or small organisational change is unlikely to lead to high levels of stress, if this change is communicated to employees in an useful manner, and if the change process is managed effectively (e.g., if training is provided where necessary, and if employees have participation in change proposals) (Bond et al., 2006).

Overall the results fall in the bottom 20% of the UK results. Individual questions show there is clear need for improvement in all areas of change. Chart 2 indicates high risk for a large proportion of respondents in this workforce.

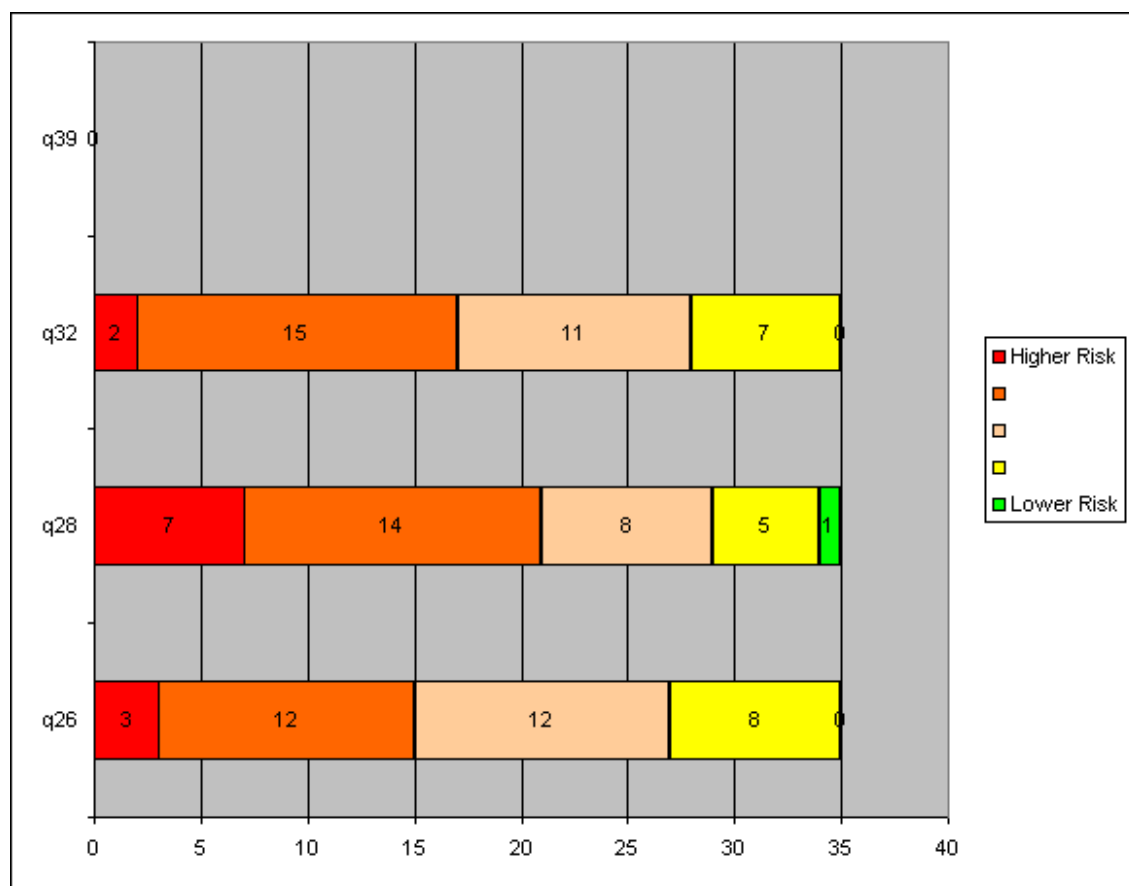
The organisation is and has been undergoing a great deal of change. Making small and large organisational changes, whilst necessary to remain competitive, nevertheless involve transforming, modifying, or altering work design, technology, and/or training and development prospects: a change to any of which might contravene a worker's *psychological contract*, or what people believe are the, probably unspoken but 'understood', terms and conditions under which they work (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Such a violation can often make people want to leave their organisation, or at least put less effort into performing their work (Bond et al., 2006).

This is a complex area of organisational development which would need greater detail than can be provided here. This author's previous work on organisational change in the (Organisation Anonymous) should provide more background (Priest, 2006) (available at <http://buildingteams.biz/PDFgallery.htm>).

#### Change

<b>26</b>	I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	<b>2.71</b>
<b>28</b>	Staff are always consulted about change at work	<b>2.40</b>
<b>32</b>	When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	<b>2.66</b>
<b>Overall</b>		<b>2.59</b>

### Change (how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation)



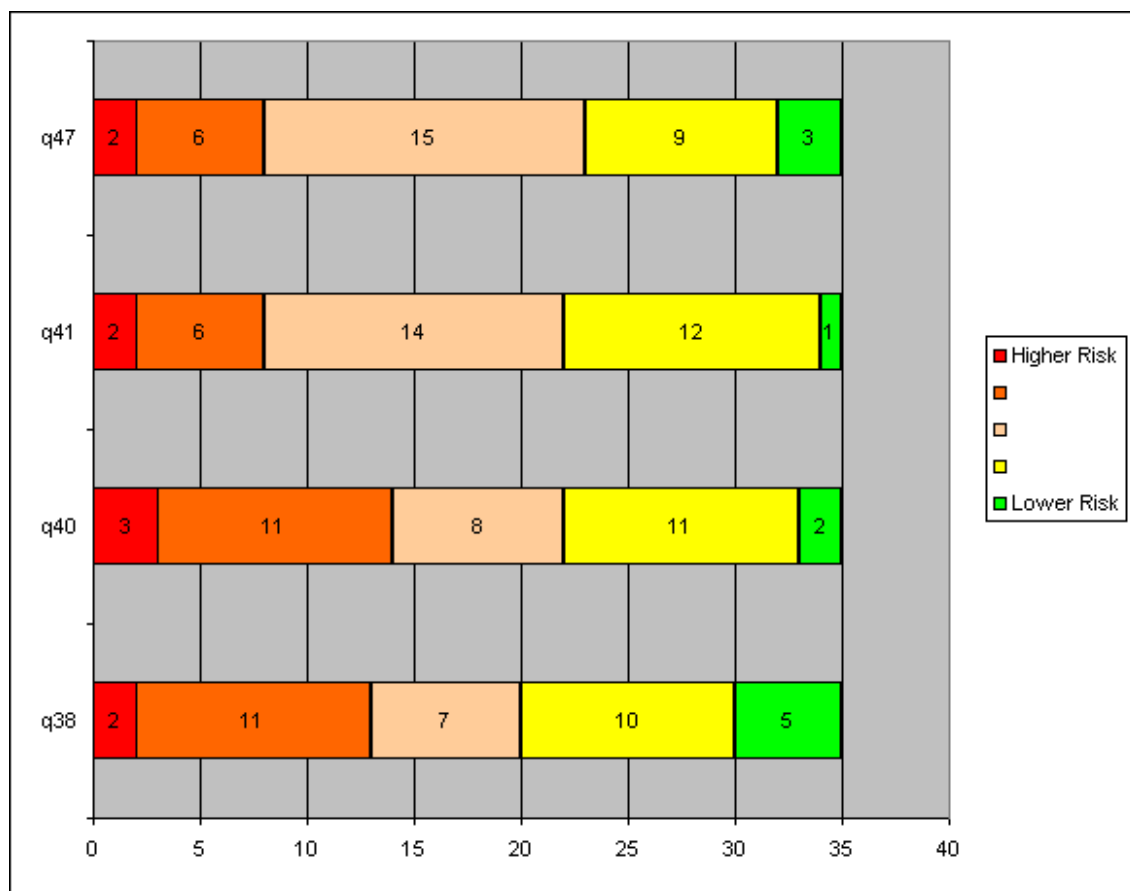
q32	When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice
q28	Staff are always consulted about change at work
q26	I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work

### 3.7 Reward and contribution

These questions do not form part of the HSE's Indicator tool or Management Standards approach. They are taken from the wider ranging questions of Health Scotland's 'Work Positive' questionnaire. They were included in this survey because of feedback from interviews and as the teachers have appealed a recent pay decision made by management. As management admitted it was not a 'negotiation' and the award and the manner at which it was arrived at has caused strong emotion.

The chart shows that a sizeable proportion of respondents are at higher risk. The most significant finding came from the Odds Ratio (OR) calculation incorporating the GWBQ which found that those individuals who reported poor levels of perceived reward were 19 times more likely to have lower levels of general well-being than those who reported high levels of perceived reward. This number is magnified by the low sample, but what is patently clear is that lack of perceived reward is a risk factor, i.e., low levels are associated with impaired well-being in this sample of workers.

**Reward and contribution**



- q47 I receive positive feedback when I do a job well
- q41 I feel that my contribution is valued
- q40 I am happy with the non-monetary benefits I receive
- q38 I feel I am fairly paid for the work I do

**4. A management perspective**

The (Anonymous) management has made an effort to improve communications. One example of this has been consultation with staff on layout and use of work space, resulting in an additional 'quiet room' area and hot desks in the main office area. Management gathers and listens to feedback on allocating work, including requests for flexible working and timetable preferences. This is part of a worldwide organizational strategy of open and flexible working patterns to deal with stress. Improved internal communication has been a focus and management has tried to set manageable deadlines and ensure everyone knows who and where they should go to for help. Staff Representatives have been an important part of this communication process ensuring teachers a voice and acting as a conduit for personal concerns when other channels may not be felt appropriate.

Line Managers are seen as a possible channel of communication for individuals feeling stressed. In fact, catching such concerns in the early stages is a function of the Performance Management and Professional Development (PMPD) system. It is recognized that training for Line Managers may not adequately address the issue of stress. However, the line management system does mean that less experienced managers are able to seek advice and guidance from their, more experienced, Line Managers. Nonetheless, training for managers in recognizing causes of stress is thought to be something that would be useful.

Sickness absence is considered to be low and managers are aware of trends so no records are kept of sickness absence. 'Lower grade' absences may be missed, but there is a policy of not asking too many questions, which may be intrusive, and accepting that someone is sick when they say they are sick. There are procedures in place such as notifying the Duty Manager, and providing a doctor's note for absences of more than three days.

Within the (Anonymous) it is thought difficult to put a policy in place for addressing stress, but the policy first and foremost is to 'talk to people'. Official policy can be found on the Intranet and would be consulted in stress cases. The (Organisation Anonymous) 'ethos is to value our staff and motivate them to be happy at work.' To this end, management recognise stress as a valid issue and so deal with it sympathetically whilst managing operational needs. Management is more equipped for a 'crisis' than prevention, but in such a crisis there is a switch in priorities from operational needs to the best interests of the individual concerned. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) has been recommended for employees in distress once internal counselling has taken place.

Although awareness of work stress and its causes may be quite weak the management of the (Anonymous) do not question the validity of emotions and their impact on health. They recognize that further training is needed and that the system is only as good as the people doing it. They do express a concern for the workforce and are willing to address issues that may be detrimental to any employee's well being.

## 5. Discussion

The basis for the HSE's Management Standards approach is good management. The management of this (Anonymous) express a sincere concern for the well being of its teachers and make efforts to protect that well being. They, on the whole, represent good management and an ethical approach in many of their activities. Yet, the results of this analysis show a pressing need for reductions in potential psychosocial hazards in this place of work. The Management Standards is an approach that aims to protect the work population (see 'Suggestions' in Appendix C). It is only one approach, although a government supported one, to the fulfilment of an employer's duty of care to employees under UK Health and Safety legislation.

The (Organisation Anonymous) applies Health and Safety legislation in the UK as it is mandatory, but outside the UK it only acts as 'good practice guidance' (see Appendix B). Such legislation is a minimum requirement in the UK, put in place to protect basic employee rights. Managers overseas are not given the training and support they need to meet this good practice guidance.

This risk assessment has found the physical environment to be a potential hazard. Management of the (Anonymous) concedes it is not fit for purpose and have made every effort to make changes. Unfortunately, they must gain funding centrally from London. This author's previous work provides strong evidence that the kind of overcrowding experienced in this work place may lead to 'learned helplessness' which in turn has a strong relationship with anxiety and depression (D.A. Priest, 2008). Knowing of this potential hazard but doing nothing would leave the organisation open to litigation in the UK if someone were shown to have been harmed. This lack of action may also have a potential financial cost as stressors such as overcrowding have a negative effect on cooperation in the workplace (D.A. Priest, 2008).

Absence management would be a more effective indicator if we met all aspects of 'good practice guidance' (UK Health and Safety law). We would then need to collect and record data on individual absence in order to ensure accurate payment of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). This, whilst not being too intrusive, would allow the organisation to see trends and possible, but not obvious, associations, such as musculo-skeletal injuries that are often consequences of stress. Using measures of absence such as the Bradford Factor developed by Bradford University, repeated short-term absence is highlighted by giving extra weight to the number of absences:

*index (I) = S x S x H, where:*

*S = the number of absences H = total hours absent in any given period*

This can then be used to formulate a trigger point for further action and possible support. The

(Organisation Anonymous) Intranet has the following as trigger points:

- *10 days absence in three months*
- *three or more absences during a period of three months*
- *six or more absences during a period of twelve months*

However, they are classed as 'unacceptable persistent short-term sickness absence', and the wording may give the impression that they are triggers for disciplinary action rather than counselling and support.

In the first stage interviews with teachers no one was aware of any support systems in place for stress. All mentioned Line Managers as a theoretical channel for concerns, but in practice there were many caveats. Some thought it would show weakness that would be detrimental to careers, others believed management would be unsympathetic, and many conceded the level of support given would depend on the particular manager. All these caveats indicate an underlying need for management training in order not only to be better able deal with these issues, but also to change perceptions of those they manage. The PMPD system was seen to have potential, but once again in practice it was perceived as 'box ticking' and bureaucracy. No one was aware of the EAP, although management have referred staff to it in a 'crisis' situation. Much of these omissions in practice would be rectified if we met, and were provided with the resources to meet, the organization's 'good practice guidance'. As can be seen from Appendix C this would require risk assessments to be conducted, (physical as well as psychosocial), and acted upon.

The annual Staff Survey shows that a minority of teachers agree that 'the BC is genuinely interested in the wellbeing of its staff'. Only 9% of teachers in Sri Lanka in 2007 were 'aware of improvements in the BC as a whole as a result of last staff survey.' These perceptions could be turned around through the use of a recognized and effective framework for addressing potential hazards and harm. The HSE Management Standards is such a tool, and one that it is recognized and used in our UK operations. In addition, Bond et al in their meta-analysis show a compelling business case for the use of Management Standards for stress (see table below).

### Working conditions and their impact on business outcomes

Greater control	<i>Leads to →</i>	Better performance, objectively measured Better performance ratings Less absenteeism Less turnover intention
Better support	<i>Leads to →</i>	Better performance, objectively measured Better performance ratings Less absenteeism Less turnover intention
Better work relationships	<i>Lead to →</i>	Less withdrawal behaviours Better team performance Less absenteeism Less turnover intention
Well-designed roles	<i>Lead to →</i>	Less work withdrawal Better self-rated performance Less turnover intention
Greater demands	<i>Lead to →</i>	Better performance, objectively measured ( <i>in lab studies</i> ) Better performance ratings ( <i>in lab studies</i> ) Less absenteeism ( <i>when demands are accompanied by low levels of control</i> )
More effective change management and communication	<i>Lead to →</i>	Better performance ratings Less absenteeism Less turnover intention

(Bond et al., 2006)

## 6. Recommendations

Using the Management Standards we develop a **5 Step Approach**. This approach is familiar to companies in the UK as it is a requirement of Health and Safety legislation for physical hazards and over many years has proven to be effective. This approach is shown below and broken down into its component parts. We have not followed this ideal route as the risk assessment was primarily produced as the author's MSc assignment. However, we can pick up from Step 4 and return to Step 1 at a later date, as part of a cyclical process of review and action.

### PRIORITISING ORGANISATION STRESS - THE APPROACH

Step 1 Raising awareness, demonstrating and gaining commitment

Step 2 Benchmarking, setting performance indicators

Step 3 Identifying the causes and assessing the risks

Step 4 Avoiding or reducing any risks identified

Step 5 Reviewing the situation

#### 6.1 Step 1 - Raising awareness, demonstrating and gaining commitment

- **Aims**

- To ensure that everyone understands what stress is and what the causes might be
- To inform people about the process and their role in it
- To establish ownership of the process

- **Implementation**

- Establish a representative steering group to co-ordinate the process and manage the communication/consultation
- Use the HSE/Work Positive guidance information by presenting everyone with a copy or as a basis for team meetings etc
- Make sure that everyone is involved, don't forget part-time workers, all shifts, all roles
- Senior managers should champion the process and communicate their commitment to

acting on the findings

## **6.2 Step 2 - Benchmarking and setting the performance indicators**

- **Aims**

- Establish a view of where the organisation is before embarking on the risk assessment process
- To ensure that the steering group are in the right mind set - thinking about identifying and controlling the risks
- Allow a baseline against which to evaluate and measure the impact of this approach

- **Implementation**

- Conduct the benchmark exercise, either the steering group or a small representative number of employees
- Review other performance indicators such as sickness absence figures, turnover of staff, general morale, employee feedback/opinion surveys etc
- Set some targets, if appropriate. E.g. reduce sickness absence by a given percentage.

## **6.3 Step 3 - Identifying the causes and assessing the risks**

- **Aims**

- To systematically review the known causes of stress
- To identify what the potential causes of stress might be
- To prioritise the risks
- To form the basis of an action plan

- **Implementation**

- Decide if you wish to categorise the workforce, by department or role.
- Distribute the questionnaire to all employees with a covering letter informing them of the procedure and any categorisation

- Collect responses (anonymously)
- Issue a reminder, if necessary, to increase the response rate
- Collate the findings using the analysis tool
- Provide feedback to staff as soon as possible to retain momentum

#### **6.4 Step 4 - Avoiding and reducing the risks**

- **Aims**

- Prioritise the risks
- Generate solutions to reduce the risks

- **Implementation**

- Establish the highest priority issues based on the responses to the risk assessment i.e. high risk areas
- Some may be easy to resolve straight away, try to take some action immediately to ensure that employees can see action as a result of their involvement
- Others will require consultation with employees to establish the most appropriate solutions, you may wish to have focus groups for this process or discuss in team meetings etc
- You may not be able to eliminate all risks, be realistic and communicate the reasons for this to the workforce
- Set an action plan with realistic timescales, this should be a working document, reviewed and updated on a regular basis

#### **6.5 Step 5 - Reviewing the situation**

- **Aims**

- To ensure continual improvement
- To identify any new risks

- **Implementation**

- Establish whether the control measures are working, maybe by simply asking employees or by more formal audit / review
- Identify any new risks by re administering the questionnaire (perhaps every few years or following significant change e.g. restructure, significant growth)
- Revisit the benchmark more frequently and readjust the positions as appropriate, the steering group may wish to meet on a regular basis to facilitate this and update the action plan and review performance indicators

## **6.6 Action Planning**

Once your risk assessment has identified areas of concern, it is important that you record your findings and take action to develop solutions. The best method of achieving this is to develop and disseminate an action plan.

An action plan will:

- help you set goals to work towards;
- help you to prioritise;
- demonstrate that you are serious about addressing employees' concerns;
- provide something to evaluate and review against.

An example is provided on the next page. Once areas of concern have been addressed, the type of training needed for managers and individual employees can be discussed.

HAZARD	TARGET GROUP	CURRENT STATE	ACTION	DESIRED STATE	LEAD PERSON	FEEDBACK TO STAFF	REVIEW DATE
Demands: Intensity of work	All staff groups	I have to work very intensively 43% Often, 17% Always Intensity of work was identified as a concern in all staff groups	Develop a process for generating further information about intensity of work and consult with staff on proposed solutions. It is proposed that this process be implemented through the line management / team meeting system and fed back to the steering group for further action	Interim target: Reduce those reporting intensity of work to 25% Often have to work very intensively	AC	Staff involved in process and informed of outcome through line managers	Include realistic timescales for review date
Support: Lack of Senior management support	All staff groups	Senior Managers are supportive of employees 35% Seldom, 26% Never	Article in newsletter from SMT member (rotated) A member of the SMT to attend department meetings if requested Photographs of SMT at reception General visibility of SMT across site	Interim target: Reduce those reporting lack of senior management support to 0% Never and 20% reporting Seldom	RJ	First article in newsletter to be produced by MD and include steps to be taken to increase SM support	Include realistic timescales for review date

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## Appendix A

I would like to undertake an assessment of what things are good and what could be better at work. You are the expert in your work and your views are important. All responses are confidential - no names are required and no individuals will be identified. A summary of the findings will be provided when I have the results of the study.

I would greatly appreciate your help in this assessment, which is entirely voluntary. Please complete the questionnaire - it will take 10-15 minutes of your time. There are some sections where you are free to add your comments and suggestions. I will appreciate these. Please return the questionnaire in the envelope provided. If you require any more information regarding the assessment or have any comments to make, please contact me.

### YOUR WORK

Please look at the following items and indicate how each of the following things about your job has been for you in the last six months (please circle one point on each response scale). Try to answer all the questions.

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

26	I have some say over the way I work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
27	I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
28	I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
29	Staff are always consulted about change at work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
30	I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me at work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
31	My working time can be flexible	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
32	My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
33	When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
34	I am supported through emotionally demanding work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
35	Relationships at work are strained	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
36	My line manager encourages me at work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
37	My work patterns/arrangements (e.g. hours, shifts) suit me	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
38	I feel my job is secure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
39	I am fairly paid for the work I do	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
40	I am happy with the non-monetary benefits I receive (e.g. pension, social events, leave)	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
41	I feel that my contribution is valued	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
42	The work environment is comfortable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
43	I receive positive feedback when I do a job well	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
44	I receive the training I need to do my job	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
45	It is important to establish the main issues and also identify anything that is not covered in the questions above. In order to do this, please indicate below the three main sources of pressure at work for you.					
	1					
	2					
	3					

## YOUR WELL-BEING

This section is to do with your general health. It is directly relevant to measuring the effects of work. Please read each of the questions carefully and decide how often, **over the last six months**, you have experienced the various symptoms that are listed. Please circle just **one** point on each response scale (from **All the time** to **Never**). I would like you to answer all the questions so that I can score the questionnaire fully.

	Over the last six months, how often have you ...?	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Become easily bored?	4	3	2	1	0
2	Become easily annoyed or irritated?	4	3	2	1	0
3	Had to clear your throat for no apparent reason?	4	3	2	1	0
4	Got mixed up in your thinking when you have to do things quickly?	4	3	2	1	0
5	Done things rashly or on impulse?	4	3	2	1	0

<b>6</b>	Been forgetful?	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>7</b>	Found things getting on your nerves and wearing you out?	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>8</b>	Become easily tired?	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>9</b>	Become flushed/hot in the face for no apparent reason?	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>10</b>	Had difficulty in falling or staying asleep?	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>11</b>	Found your feelings easily hurt?	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>12</b>	Found it hard to make up your mind?	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>13</b>	Approximately, how many working days sickness absence have you had over the last 12 months?					
	Days _____	Episodes/Spells _____				

**YOU**

**Please answer the questions below. This information will be used in order to help me understand the questionnaire. It will not be used to identify you.**

**Age** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sex** **Male**

**Female**

## **Appendix B**

### **Managing Stress At Work ((Organisation Annonymous) Intranet document)**

#### Overview

This section explains the (Organisation Annonymous)'s stress management policy and procedures.

#### Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS and/or English and Exams/ OAS staff contracts, subject to local law and conditions.

#### **Responsibilities**

Implementing the (Organisation Annonymous)'s stress management policy is a shared responsibility between:

- all staff
- line managers
- the (Organisation Annonymous) organisation at corporate level.

#### **Policy**

It is (Organisation Annonymous)'s policy to encourage all members of staff to be proactive in their management of stress.

#### **All staff**

All staff must:

- Acknowledge that the management of health and stress hazards in the workplace is a joint responsibility between the organisation and the individual.
- Take personal preventative action in terms of stress management.
- Highlight to their line manager working practices and environments that, if allowed to continue, may lead to stress or other health related hazards.
- Identify any personal health risks at the earliest opportunity and seek help from their line manager, *Employee Assistance Programme* (EAP) provider and colleagues.
- Avoid potentially harmful ways of coping with stress.
- Respect the needs of others and take responsibility for actions that may have an adverse effect on the health of other individuals.
- Challenge and report bad practices to the appropriate line manager.
- Ensure that annual leave and flexible working are used to good effect in reducing stress.

#### **Line managers**

Line managers must:

- Implement effective control measures, precautions, employment adjustments and training to reduce health risks.
- Properly plan for reorganisations.

- Ensure that all staff have the opportunity to receive risk assessment training using this policy and the (Organisation Anonymous)'s *Health and Safety intranet site*.
- Where possible, encourage staff to raise problems arising from work, so that, together, line managers and staff can jointly initiate appropriate action, for example, through one-to-one discussions, supervision and performance reviews and development.
- Ensure the work environment, job design and facilities, as far as is reasonably practicable, are suitable and adequate.
- Raise specific issues of stress to HR Services, or the HR Manager if overseas, as and when appropriate.

### **(Organisation Anonymous)**

The (Organisation Anonymous) must:

- Provide guidelines and advice on working environment and practices.
- Properly plan for reorganisations.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, a risk assessment is carried out for new roles with particular stressors, for example, large project roles that require frequent travel away from home, roles with very tight and frequent deadlines or milestones, or roles with a high impact on and risk to the business and individual.
- Provide and maintain a confidential *EAP*.
- Provide staff with opportunities for personal and career development.
- Develop and organise a programme of health and stress management briefings for all managers in how to identify, manage and risk assess health issues amongst staff.
- Have a Health and Safety Policy for all staff.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Stress Management Policy regularly.

### **Guidelines for dealing with stress**

#### **Background**

Stress is the biggest single health and safety problem in the workplace in the UK, according to a recent Trades Union Congress (TUC) survey. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the UK's governing body for workplace safety, the cost of stress to British industry is £370 million a year, while the cost to society as a whole could be as high as £3.75 billion (figures from 2001 survey).

#### **What is stress?**

Stress is a part of life. We all experience some stress in response to pressures we face every day. Social scientists have devised a list of life events and rated the relative stressfulness of each. The death of a spouse rates 100 on the scale, whereas:

- getting divorced rates 73
- going to jail rates 63
- being dismissed rates 47
- trouble with one's employer rates 23
- a change in sleeping habits rates 16.

The HSE defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them".

As the body responds to stress, the heart beats faster, blood pressure rises, and other body systems prepare to meet the threat. When a person does something active to cope with the threat, these systems return to normal. Running away or fighting (the so-called fight-or-flight reaction) are both successful ways of coping with physical threats.

Problems arise, however, when the body is prepared to cope but cannot do so. Dealing with a difficult situation, for example, can cause the body to prepare for a fight-or-flight response, but when no action can be taken, the body's systems remain over-active. Similar repeated experiences can lead to a sense of being overloaded: this is what is commonly called 'stress'.

### **When is stress likely to occur?**

Stress can occur when demands on a person exceed that person's resources and coping abilities. When it causes problems, stress can lead to poor performance and sickness absence. This affects everyone in the organisation, from the individual who is suffering pain and distress to the teams who may have to deal with the workload of absent colleagues.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 organisations have a duty to safeguard staff health. This includes taking measures to assess risks and ensuring that staff are not unduly subjected to stress.

### **The home and work balance**

For everyone, there are times when the demands of home and work conflict. For example, some emergencies at home can get in the way of working responsibilities, such as when a family member falls ill, a new baby arrives, or you have an urgent dental or medical appointment. At work there may also be demands which make it difficult, if not impossible, to meet the needs of home life. The job may sometimes require long hours and/or frequent travel. Relationships with colleagues may become strained. At the end of the working day, tolerance of any problems back home may be low.

### **Factors known to increase the risk of workplace stress are:**

- poorly designed working environment
- the job: too much or too little to do, conflicting roles and responsibilities, badly designed shifts and rotas
- organisational culture: poor communication between management and staff, uncertainty over change, lack of control over workload, lack of fulfilment
- lack of career development: stagnation, pay and conditions, inadequate training
- conflicting demands of home and work
- relationships with colleagues.

### **Signposts for recognising stress**

#### **How can an individual recognise stress?**

There are numerous signs that might indicate stress. These include:

- disturbed sleep: finding it hard to drop off to sleep, waking early, or the inability to get back to sleep
- tiredness and lack of energy, even after a night's rest
- sudden anxiety
- feeling run down; catching every cough and cold that is going around
- feeling more tearful than usual
- loss of pleasure in things once enjoyed
- changes in appetite: eating too much, or too little
- irritability and impatience; an increasingly short temper.

#### **What can the individual do to help control or alleviate stress?**

- Try to work out what is really causing stress. How much is coming from external sources and how much are you creating yourself?

- Questions you might ask yourself include:
  - Is the stress you suffer work-related or external to the working environment?
  - Do you keep saying "yes" when in reality you mean "no"? Are you late for meetings, missing deadlines? If so, you may consider learning more about being assertive, and time management.
  - Are you able to take time out to relax? If not, you might consider trying to find something you can do every day that you find relaxing and can enjoy, for example listening to music or reading while commuting, allowing time in the evenings to watch television or read a good book, having a warm relaxing bath during the evening, catching up with friends and having a laugh. Also try to ensure that you get a good night's rest to recharge body and mind.
  - Do you take moderate regular exercise, for example, a daily walk, swimming, jogging, or going to a local gym? Above all, though, it is important to take exercise you enjoy.
  - Are you eating and drinking sensibly?
  - If there are situations that cannot be easily changed, is it possible to change your approach or attitude to them?
- Do talk over your worries and concerns. If you are unable to turn to family, friends or your line manager, do consider talking to the *EAP* or your doctor.
- If the stress you feel is work-related, you might ask yourself some of the following questions:
  - Are you clear about what your job responsibilities are?
  - Are you clear about what results you are expected to achieve?
  - Do you feel that you have the necessary skills to do your job?
  - Can you get the information you need in order to do the job?
  - Does the physical environment you work in enable you to do the job?
  - Do you have the authority to make the decisions which are necessary for you to do your job?
  - Do you feel that your views about what you have to achieve are taken into account?
  - Are you able to get the co-operation you need from the people in your team?
  - Are you given feedback about your job performance?
  - Do you feel your skills and abilities are valued?
  - Is communication within your part of the organisation effective?
- If you have concerns over any of the above, discuss them with your line manager. You can then both work towards improving the situation wherever possible and evaluating, on a regular basis, the benefit of any changes you decide to make.

### **How can line managers recognise stress in their teams?**

- Sometimes people experience stress but their mind and body are so good at hiding it that they and others are unaware of it. In such cases the symptoms may be subtle and therefore quite difficult to recognise, but could include any of the following:
  - working endlessly without tiring
  - having little feeling or emotion (except, in some cases, an occasional outburst of anger)
  - increased use of alcohol, caffeine, cigarette or other drugs (which may suppress feelings of distress)
  - behaviour that is out of character
  - an inability to relax.
- If people are under a lot of stress for a prolonged period of time, but do not feel stressed, eventually it can cause more serious and very physical symptoms, apart from the obvious one of depression. Examples of these are stomach ulcers, heart problems, allergies, skin disorders, migraine, and even arthritis, cancer and diabetes.

- As a line manager, you need to be aware that, if members of staff acknowledge being under stress, they, or others in the organisation, could interpret this as a sign of weakness, with potential damage to their career prospects. In such cases, the individual can be tempted to suppress feelings of stress.

### **Impact of stress on teams**

The impact of excessive stress on teamwork is also harmful, and it can damage individual work performance, team performance, working relationships, co-operation between team members and the team spirit.

The more effort team members have to expend in managing their own stress, the less they have to contribute to teamwork and mutual support.

### **Procedures**

Note: As (Organisation Anonymous) UK has an Occupational Health Provider, the procedures for UK staff and line managers include referrals to Occupational Health services. Staff overseas may be able to access their medical scheme for such services. If not, staff should be referred to their doctor.

### **Members of staff**

1. If, as a member of staff, you feel that work is causing you stress in some way, you must discuss this with your line manager.

You should not feel that by discussing it you are failing in any way. Stress occurs for everyone at different times in their lives. Some may feel stressed if they have little motivation in their work life and feel they achieve little, others may feel stressed by the heavy loading of jobs at certain times, travelling a lot for work and being away from their normal support groups, or for a wide variety of reasons. The important thing is to bring this to someone's attention at the earliest possible stage. If you cannot discuss it with your line manager, you can speak to another line manager, or directly to HR Services.

2. When you have discussed your situation with your line manager or another line manager, he or she will, in turn, speak in confidence to HR Services, so that all parties can work together to find ways to make the situation more manageable. The manager will also advise you to contact EAP if this is suitable for you.
3. In addition to EAP, you may consider a referral to (Organisation Anonymous)'s Occupational Health Provider, your local medical scheme, if overseas, or your doctor. This can be done before you need to take any time off work and well before reaching the (Organisation Anonymous)'s trigger points (see *Trigger Points for Further Action*). Such referrals exist so that stress can be dealt with as soon as it is identified, because early prevention is far better than struggling on with a situation that becomes increasingly untenable and affects your health increasingly severely.

Note: If you do not consent to an Occupational Health referral, your wish will be respected, but you should be aware that you may be jeopardising your opportunity of alleviating your stress as soon as possible.

4. As part of the Occupational Health referral, a risk assessment can also be carried out to assess where the stressors are and what can be done to alleviate the stress.
5. Once a referral has taken place, HR Services are sent a copy of the report and can then discuss with you and your line manager what can be done to help alleviate the stress you are

under. At this point, even if you have not discussed the situation with your line manager, he or she must be brought in so you can work together to help alleviate the situation.

If you feel that another member of staff is suffering from stress, try to discuss this with the individual, or his or her line manager, or HR Services, so that help can be given.

### **Line managers**

As line manager, you may wish to discuss the following stress-related issues with your member of staff:

- Is the stress work-related or home related? It is difficult to offer help for home situations but the member of staff may feel comfortable in discussing the situation, and that in itself can be of enormous help and value to the individual.
- Offer the *EAP* avenue of confidential support.
- Does the member of staff have a say in or control over how his or her work is carried out? Low levels of personal control are often related to high levels of stress-related outcomes such as anxiety, distress, irritability and health fears.
- If the stress is work-related, consider the job loading. Is there too much for the individual to cope with? Does the job description require changes?
- Are there specific times that the job loading is too much? Would occasional temporary help be of use?
- Are there other unnecessary work constraints? For example, unrealistic deadlines, staff shortages and additional performance requirements all contribute to staff overload. Other issues of concern to staff include poor leadership and management, job security and lack of recognition and career development.
- Has the member of staff received sufficient training to be able to carry out the role and responsibilities of the job successfully?
- Is the work environment adding to the stressful situation? Is there anything that can be done to adapt or change the environment? If so, then the (Organisation Anonymous)'s Health and Safety Department in Global Estates must also be consulted to ensure that any changes to the environment are both possible and safe.
- Consider suggesting that the staff member talk to his or her GP about the problem.

### **How can risk be assessed?**

The following process is a systematic but simple approach to assessing risk, provided by the HSE. This is what assessors are asked to consider for health and safety purposes; it includes physical risks as well as stress.

1. Identify the hazards: for stress, what are the stressors.
2. Decide who might be harmed, either physically or mentally.
3. Evaluate the risk of the hazards or stressors.
4. Record any significant findings from the risk assessment.
5. Review the assessment at regular intervals and note any changes, for better or worse, and act where necessary.



## **Appendix C**

### **Management Standards for tackling work related stress (HSE, 2004 )**

#### **DEMANDS: ARE YOU DOING ENOUGH?**

##### **How much work is there?**

- Ensure there are sufficient resources to do the work allocated:
  - o If there are insufficient resources seek guidance from management about priorities.
  - o Support your staff by helping them prioritise or renegotiate deadlines.
  - o Cover workloads during staff absences.
  - o Adjust work patterns to cope with peaks (needs to be fair and agreed with employees).
- If people are underloaded, think about giving them more responsibility, but make sure that they have been adequately trained.
- Strike a balance between ensuring that employees are interested and busy, but not underloaded, overloaded, or confused about the job.
- Develop personal work plans to ensure staff know what their job involves.

##### **Are staff able to do the job?**

##### ***Training and development***

- Train staff so they are able to do their jobs.
- Implement personal development/training plans which require individuals to identify development/training opportunities which can then be discussed with management.
- Devise systems to keep training records up to date to ensure employees are competent and comfortable in undertaking the core functions of their job.

##### ***Communication***

- Encourage staff to talk to you at an early stage if they feel as though they cannot cope.
- Develop a system to notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need to work long hours.
- Talk to your team regularly about what needs to be done. This can:
  - o help you understand the challenges the team are currently facing and any pressures they are under;
  - o find ways of sharing the work sensibly and agreeing the way forward with the team;
  - o gain team cohesion and commitment to the work you have planned – the team is likely to be more responsive if it understands what needs to happen and by when. Allocating more work to an already stretched team without explanation is unhelpful;
  - o ensure shift work systems are agreed with employees and their representatives and that the shifts are fair in terms of workload;
  - o gain understanding and commitment to unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need for long hours;
  - o help you manage any unexpected absences or losses to the team – everyone knows the key stages of the project and what each other's role is.
- Lead by example.

##### **How good is the work environment?**

- Have a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to control physical hazards. Further information is available from HSE Infoline: 08701 545500.
- Assess the risk of physical violence and verbal abuse. Take steps to deal with this in consultation with employees and others who can help (eg the police,

charities).

- Change start and finish times to help employees cope with pressures external to the organisation (eg child care, poor commuting routes).
- Ensure your risk assessments for physical hazards and risks are up to date.
- Provide training to help staff deal with and defuse difficult situations (eg difficult phone calls, aggressive members of the public).

### **CONTROL: ARE YOU DOING ENOUGH?**

#### **Are you enabling staff to have their say?**

- Give more control to staff by enabling them to plan their own work, make decisions about how that work should be completed and how problems should be tackled (eg through project meetings, one-to-ones, performance reviews etc).
- Allocate responsibility to teams to take projects forward:
  - o Discuss and define teams at the start of the project.
  - o Agree objectives and goals.
  - o Agree team roles.
  - o Agree timescales.
  - o Agree the provision of managerial support (eg through regular progress meetings).
- Talk about the way decisions are made within the unit – is there scope for more team involvement?

#### **Are you making full use of employees' skills and abilities?**

- Enrich jobs by ensuring that staff are able to use various skills to get tasks completed, and that staff can understand how their work fits into the wider aims of the unit.
- Talk about the skills people have and if they believe they are able to use them to good effect. How else would they like to use their skills?

#### **How much supervision is actually needed?**

- Only monitor employees output if this is essential. Regular meetings with staff could be arranged to see how things are going. At these meetings managers could provide advice and support where necessary and ensure that staff are coping.

**A supportive environment is crucial. Staff need to know that managers will support them, even if things go wrong or if they find that they are unable to cope with added pressures.**

### **SUPPORT: ARE YOU DOING ENOUGH?**

#### **How supportive are you?**

- Give support and encouragement to staff, even when things go wrong.
- Encourage staff to share their concerns about work-related stress at an early stage.
- Hold regular liaison/team meetings to discuss unit pressures.
- Hold regular one-to-ones to talk about any emerging issues or pressures.
- Value diversity – don't discriminate against people on grounds of race, sex or disability or other irrelevant reasons.
- Seek examples of how the team would like to, or have, received good support from managers or colleagues – can these be adopted across the unit?
- Ask how employees would like to access managerial support – 'open-door' policies, agreed times when managers are able to discuss emerging pressures etc.

#### **How do you manage your team's time?**

- Encourage a healthy work-life balance.
- Encourage staff to take their annual leave entitlement and their meal breaks.
- Include 'work-related stress/emerging pressures' as a standing item of staff

meetings and/or performance reviews.

- Introduce flexibility in work schedules (where possible) to enable staff to cope with domestic commitments.

#### **How well do you listen?**

- Listen to your staff and agree a course of action for tackling any problems – it is important for staff to feel that the contribution they make at work is valued.
- Involve your staff – they need to do their bit to identify problems and work towards agreed solutions.
- Talk about ways the organisation could provide support if someone is experiencing problems outside work.
- Disseminate information on other areas of support (human resources department, occupational health, trained counsellors, charities).

#### **How do you meet the needs of the team?**

- Provide your staff with suitable and sufficient training to do their jobs.
- Give new staff a proper induction into your team and the organisation.
- Take account that people's skills and the way they approach the work will differ.
- Develop individual or unit training arrangements and refresher sessions to ensure training and competencies are up to date and appropriate for the core functions of their job.
- Offer training in basic counselling skills/access to counsellors.
- Ensure staff know how to prioritise, or how to seek help if they have conflicting priorities.
- Provide training on time management, prioritisation, assertiveness etc.

### **RELATIONSHIPS: ARE YOU DOING ENOUGH?**

#### **How well do you deal with unacceptable behaviours?**

- Work in partnership with staff to ensure that bullying and harassment never emerge as an issue. One way of doing this is by having procedures in place, such as disciplinary and grievance procedures, to deal with instances of unacceptable behaviour.
- In consultation with staff and their representatives, draw up effective policies to reduce or eliminate harassment and bullying.
- Agree and implement procedures to prevent, or quickly resolve, conflict at work – communicate these to employees.
- Agree and implement a confidential reporting system to enable the reporting of unacceptable behaviour.
- Communicate the policies and make it clear that senior management fully support them.
- Communicate the consequences of breaching the policies.

#### **Do you work for a caring organisation?**

- Create a culture where members of the team trust each other and can be themselves while they are at work.
- Encourage your staff to recognise the individual contributions of other team members and the benefits of the whole team pulling together.
- Encourage good communication and provide appropriate training to aid skill development (eg listening skills, confidence building etc).

#### **How well do you build teams?**

- Select or build teams which have the right blend of expertise and experience for new projects.
- Provide training to help staff deal with and defuse difficult situations.
- Discuss how individuals work together and how they can build positive relationships.
- Identify ways to celebrate success (eg informal lunches/wash-up meetings at the end of projects).

## **ROLE: ARE YOU DOING ENOUGH?**

### **How clear are employees about their role?**

- Make sure your staff have a clearly defined role, eg through a personal work plan which enables them to understand exactly what their roles and responsibilities are.
- Encourage your staff to talk to you at an early stage if they are not clear about priorities or the nature of the task to be undertaken.
- Talk to all your staff regularly to make sure that they are clear about their current job, what it entails, what you expect of them and what they can expect from you.
- Hold team meetings to enable team members to clarify their role and discuss any possible role conflict.
- Display team/department targets and objectives to help clarify the role of the unit and the individual.

### **How well do you manage new recruits?**

- Make sure that new members of staff receive a comprehensive induction into your organisation. If this is not arranged centrally, you should do it locally.
- If your organisation has gone through change, check with members of your team to make sure they understand their new roles and are comfortable with them.
- Develop suitable induction arrangements for new staff – make sure all members of the team understand the role and responsibilities of the new recruit.

### **Do employees understand what you expect from them?**

- Agree specific standards of performance for jobs and individual tasks and review periodically.
- Introduce personal work plans which are aligned to the outputs of the unit.
- Introduce or revise job descriptions to help ensure that the core functions and priorities of the post are clear.
- Hold regular one-to-one meetings to ensure that individuals are clear about their role and know what is planned for the coming months.

## **CHANGE: ARE YOU DOING ENOUGH?**

### **Do employees understand the reasons for change?**

- Ensure all staff are aware of why the change is happening – agree and implement a system for doing this.
- Explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change takes place – explain the timetable for action and what the first steps are going to be. Talk about what the change will mean in terms of day-to-day activity and discuss whether there are any new training needs.
- Communicate new developments quickly to avoid the spread of rumours in the organisation. If the organisation is planning a major change your staff are likely to be discussing job security, whether they will need to relocate, and whether their terms and conditions will change.
- Face-to-face communication is generally best so that people have the opportunity to ask questions and say what they feel, but any means (eg paper, electronic) would be helpful.
- Have an open-door policy where staff can talk to you about their concerns or any suggestions they have for improving the way change is managed.

### **Have staff been involved in the changes?**

- Provide a confidential system to enable staff to comment and ask questions before, during and after the change.
- Involve staff in discussions about how jobs might be developed and changed and in generating ways of solving problems.

- Supporting your staff is essential during a change.
- Involve staff in discussions about how jobs might be developed and changed.
- Have an 'open-door' policy to help staff who want to talk to their managers about their concerns.

**How can you help staff adversely affected by change?**

- Ensure that staff are aware of the impact of the change on their jobs.
- Help staff who are to be made redundant by the change by giving them the skills they need to find a new job, for example by helping them to write a CV and prepare for interviews.
- After the change think about revising work objectives to avoid role conflict and role ambiguity.
- Revise your risk assessment/action plans to see if any changes, for example a decrease in staff numbers, have resulted in increased hazards to staff. Remember that social changes (eg if staff are now working with a completely different group of people) may have more of an impact on the individual than technological or geographical changes.