

Tackling Work Related Stress

A TUC Short Course

Tackling work-related stress – A TUC Short Course

Your name _____

Address _____

Tel _____

E-mail _____

Union _____

Workplace _____

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Publisher's note

1. TUC Education has done its best to ensure that all legal references and extracts quoted in these short course materials were accurate at the time of writing. However, health and safety law and practice are evolving all the time and participants should not rely on these materials as an authoritative statement or interpretation of health and safety law. If you are in any doubt about where you stand legally, seek the advice of your trade union, the Health and Safety Executive or a qualified legal professional.
2. Throughout these course materials there are many references to useful web pages. Although all links were checked for accuracy some may expire over the life of this edition. In such instances participants may be able to find the information they need by going to the root website and navigating from there.

Acknowledgements

- The tackling work-related stress course materials have been prepared for TUC Education by Peter Kirby. In developing these materials Peter has drawn upon a wide range of TUC health and safety material and other sources acknowledged below.
- Examples of stress materials from TUC tutors at Sussex Downs College.
- NATFHE stress resources.
- The use of materials from the HSE, including HSE Management Standards, guidance on risk assessments for work-related stress, and an example of a stress policy.

Pre-course Activity

Finding information on work-related stress

Aims

To help us to:

- prepare for the TUC tackling work-related stress course
- find information that can be shared with others on the course

Task

Before the first session of your TUC tackling work-related stress course, try to find the following information from your workplace.

1) **Members**

Speak with a cross section of your members. Ask them:

- what they think causes stress at work
- do they suffer from any symptoms of work-related stress
- whether they know of any policies or procedures at work to tackle work-related stress

2) **Union branch/other safety reps**

Speak to branch officers and other safety reps. Find out:

- has the branch/safety reps been involved with any work-related stress campaigns (how was it organised and what were the outcomes)
- have any risk assessments been carried out on jobs that involve work-related stress
- if your trade union produced any material on work-related stress

3) **Employer**

Speak to an appropriate manager. Ask them:

- for a copy of the employers safety policy
- for any policies, procedures, or agreements related to stress, violence at work, harassment at work or bullying
- for copies of work-related stress risk assessments (names can be deleted to preserve confidentiality)

Activity

Introductions

Aims

This activity will help us to:

- get to know more about each other
- share our first thoughts about the course
- practise interviewing, listening and note-taking skills

Task

Work with another person on the course (preferably someone you don't know). Use the checklist below to find out some information about them.

- ✓ Name
- ✓ Union and their position(s) in the union
- ✓ Workplace and the job they do
- ✓ How many members they represent
- ✓ Other union courses they have done
- ✓ Initial thoughts on what they want to get out of the course and how the course should be run.

Report back

You will be asked to introduce your partner to the rest of the course

How the course will work

Those of you who have attended TUC courses before know that they aim to be practical and to help you develop your knowledge, confidence and skills. The TUC tackling work-related stress course follows the same principles which include:

- Learning by doing - you learn far more by doing something yourself
- Collective work - work in small groups with regular reporting back
- Action at work - close links between you and your members
- Work on real problems – hazards, experiences and problems faced by members of the course
- Activities - specific tasks that you and other course participants undertake during the course
- Course file - a record of your work on the course. This is useful for a future reference point back at your workplace, and accreditation purposes

Course aims

You will have an opportunity to comment on the course aims and sample programmes which are reproduced below. They are based upon the TUC's assessment of the needs of health and safety representatives. Your tutor will also draw your attention to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the course (Conditions at Work) that has been accredited by the National Open College Network.

The course should help trade union health and safety representatives to:

- recognise hazards and risks associated with specific conditions at work (work-related stress)
- understand how legislation, company policy or other requirements relate to specific conditions at work (work-related stress)
- understand prevention, control and action measures for specific conditions at work (work-related stress)

Course programme

The course can be organised in a variety of ways. For example, it can be run as a three day course on a day release basis using the example programme on the next page.

Example: 3 day short course with workplace activities

| <i>PRE-COURSE SURVEY</i> | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| DAY | AM | PM | <i>ACTION</i> |
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions, aims & how the course will work • What is stress? Causes and effects of work-related stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes to stress • Planning a stress survey | Workplace activity – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertaking a stress survey • finding risk assessments |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying stressors from the stress survey • Finding and using standards on work-related stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HSE Five Steps to risk assessment • Stress risk assessments • Evaluating prevention and control measures | Workplace activity – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting to members on the results of the stress survey • finding stress policies |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-related stress policies • Negotiating a stress policy • ‘Coping’ with stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action planning and steps that need to be taken • Further training • Course evaluation • Accreditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report back to members, unions & employer • Action in the workplace • Further training |

Course guidelines

Equal opportunities are an integral feature of any TUC course. It is important that we identify rules for the course that incorporate equal opportunities principles. Your tutor will ensure that course guidelines are set collectively by the course participants.

Jargon list

During the course you might come across terms that you are unfamiliar with. It is useful to keep a jargon list so that people can check what words, phrases and abbreviations mean or what they stand for. If anyone (including the tutor) uses a word, phrase or abbreviation you are not familiar with then say so. The word, phrase or abbreviation and the meaning can then be written on the jargon list.

Your tutor's role

Some of the things your tutor will be doing are:

- helping to organise the work, by suggesting tasks and ways of working
- organising resources, including basic information, internet access where possible, publications, and photocopying facilities, to help the course work
- giving advice and support
- leading some discussions and summarising key points
- giving guidance on the preparation of work for accreditation

Record of achievement

If you have previously attended a TUC Course, you will be familiar with accreditation of your learning by the National Open College Network. If you have not, your tutor will explain the basic principles.

An Achievement Record for the TUC tackling work-related stress course is provided below. Your course file will normally contain the evidence of your learning.

Action at work

As the course is a practical one, there will be a number of matters that arise where you will need to take some action at work and in your union. It is useful to keep a record of what needs to be done, and when you need to do it.

Progression

As a trained and experienced safety rep you will be skilled and valued by your members. Good employers will appreciate a safety rep who knows what they are doing and can represent members effectively. But your training and development needs won't stop at the end of this short course. And so as a part of your action planning at the end of the course, you will have the opportunity to think about what you need to do after the course has finished. Your tutor will give you details of other TUC core and short courses.

NAME _____

UNIT TITLE Conditions At Work (3 (10 hour) credits)

| LEARNING OUTCOMES The learner should be able to | LEVEL 2 The learner has achieved the outcome because s/he can | LEVEL 3 The learner has achieved the outcome because s/he can | EVIDENCE | LOCATION |
|---|---|---|----------|----------|
| 1. Recognise hazards and risks associated with specific conditions at work | 1.1 Identify symptoms and causes of specific conditions in the workplace 1.2 Identify hazards associated with specific conditions at work e.g. dust, noise, stress 1.3 Explain the risks from specific hazards | 1.1 Describe the hazards and evaluate the risks associated with specific conditions at work e.g. dust, noise, stress 1.2 Identify and compare workplace health and safety assessment records associated with specific conditions at work | | |
| 2. Understand how legislation, company policy or other requirements relate to specific conditions at work | 2.1 Identify a range of sources and types of relevant information 2.2 Identify the relevant legal standards or policies 2.3 Describe how the identified information relates to specific conditions at work | 2.1 Describe a range of relevant sources and types of information, including the appropriate legal standards 2.2 Assess their usefulness in relation to taking up concerns about specific conditions at work | | |
| 3. Understand prevention, control and action measures for specific conditions at work | 3.1 Identify the main forms of prevention and control measures for specific conditions at work 3.2 For a specific condition: 3.3 Select appropriate information 3.4 Produce a plan for dealing with specific conditions in the workplace, which includes actions | 3.1 Assess the effectiveness of workplace prevention and control measures for specific conditions at work 3.2 Develop a detailed plan for dealing with a specific condition, which includes aims, actions, arguments and timescale | | |

KEY: WS=Work Sheet TO/PO=Tutor/Peer Observation SS=Summary Sheet

Level achieved _____

Signed: Tutor _____

OCN CODES: L2 AJ3/2/QQ/092; L3 AJ3/3/QQ/086

P=Plan

O=Other

Date _____

Learner _____

Activity

Causes and effects of work-related stress

Aims

To help us to:

- define stress
- identify causes and symptoms of stress
- establish members' awareness of policies & procedures

Task

In your small group:

- 1 Discuss and agree a definition of stress
- 2 Discuss your own and your members' views from the pre-course activity. Make a comparison chart using information from all the workplaces in the group and the Worksheet below
 - What causes stress at work?
 - What are the symptoms of work-related stress?
 - Are there any policies or procedures at work to tackle work-related stress, and are members aware of them?

Report back

Elect a spokesperson to report back.

Resources

Pre-course Activity
Worksheet below
Fact Sheet 1 below

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 1.1; 1.2

Level 3: 1.1

| Work-related stress | Workplace 1 | Workplace 2 | Workplace 3 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Causes of work-related stress | | | |
| Symptoms of work-related stress | | | |
| Any policies and procedures and members' awareness? | | | |

Activity

Attitudes to stress

Aims

To help us to:

- discuss different attitudes to work-related stress
- develop a trade union approach to work-related stress

Task

In your small group, discuss the statements below, say whether you agree or disagree and list the arguments for and against:

- 1 “There is a difference between pressure and stress”
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/before.htm
- 2 “Stress is not a sign of weakness”
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/step5/index.htm
- 3 The problem of stress has been exaggerated. “People are now describing working a normal day's period of time in the office as being stressful.”
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3516041.stm>
- 4 “There are practical things organisations can do to prevent and control work related stress.” www.hse.gov.uk/stress
- 5 “Although work forms an important part of modern life, companies are now being expected to shoulder a disproportionately high responsibility for stress caused.”
www.eef.org.uk/sheffield/
- 6 “Unless bosses start to seriously tackle stress and the causes of stress then they will continue to lose many days every year to workers off sick and many hours of productivity from their demoralised workforce.”
www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-8937-fo.cfm

Report back

Elect a spokesperson to report back.

Resources

Pre-course Activity
Fact Sheet 1 below
Web pages referred to above

| |
|---|
| <p><i>Assessment criteria - Conditions at work</i> <i>Level 2: 1.1; 1.2</i> <i>Level 3: 1.1</i></p> |
|---|

FACT SHEET 1

Basic facts about stress

What is stress?

According to the HSE, stress is “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.” The HSE explains that “Pressure is part and parcel of all work and helps to keep us motivated. But excessive pressure can lead to stress which undermines performance, is costly to employers and can make people ill.”

(See the HSE work-related stress web page at www.hse.gov.uk/stress)

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work explains that “stress can be said to be experienced when the demands from the work environment exceed the employee’s ability to cope with (or control) them.” See their Factsheet 31 at

<http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/factsheets/31/en/FACTSHEETSN31-EN.PDF>

The TUC endorses these definitions and safety representatives can use the HSE version as a working definition.

Incidence of work-related stress

Both survey data and surveillance data suggest that work-related stress and related disorders are increasing in the British population. The 2001/2002 survey of Self-reported Work-related Illness (SWI01/02) indicated that:

- more than half a million individuals in Britain believed in 2001/2002 that they were experiencing work-related stress at a level that was making them ill
- there is an estimated average of 29 working days lost per year per affected case which makes stress, depression or anxiety the largest contributor to the overall estimated annual days lost from work-related ill health
- an estimated 265,000 people first became aware of work-related stress, depression or anxiety in the previous 12 months
- self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety account for an estimated thirteen and a half million reported lost working days per year in Britain

In all TUC biennial surveys since 1996, by far the most common concern for safety representatives is overwork or stress. In 2004, more than one out of two safety representatives (58%) cited stress as a main hazard of concern to workers. Eight out of ten safety representatives reporting that stress was a problem at their workplace said that workload was a major cause. One in two safety representatives cite change and staff cuts as factors.

Effects of stress

Stress is a natural reaction to excessive demand or pressure. When we feel pressured, hormonal and chemical defence mechanisms are triggered in the body. This is often called the 'fight or flight' reaction. It evolved so that we are better prepared to deal with dangerous or life-threatening situations. Mobilised for action we begin to perspire, blood vessels to the skin constrict, muscle blood vessels swell, the stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol are released. If we cannot 'release' that tension, the hormonal/chemical mechanisms can have serious long term effects.

Physiological changes appear such as: dry mouth and throat; butterflies in the stomach; moist palms; flushed face; pounding heart and muscle cramps

If pressure is prolonged, too frequent or out of control, physical ill health problems may develop, such as: appetite loss; comfort eating; weight gain or loss; indigestion or heartburn; constipation or diarrhoea; sleeplessness; sweat bouts; headaches; backpain; nausea; breathlessness; fainting spells; impotence/frigidity and eczema.

Stress can also cause emotional and mental health problems. Society's attitudes to mental ill health are very different from those to physical ill health and add to the pressures on stressed individuals. When this is the case, people may try to hide their emotional and mental symptoms, not asking for help until their problems are seriously out of control.

Psychological conditions triggered by prolonged stress include: fatigue; anxiety; depression; hostility and aggression; psychosomatic complaints and neuroses.

The symptoms can be: irritability; indecision; suppressed anger; loss of concentration; inability to complete one task before starting another; feelings of paranoia; feelings of inadequacy; tearfulness at minor problems; lack of interest in people and things outside work and constant tiredness and a feeling that sleep does no good.

Short-term symptoms can develop into much more serious long-term ill-health conditions. Stress can play a role in:

- Heart and circulation – hypertension (high blood pressure); coronary thrombosis (heart attack); heart disease and strokes
- Digestion – peptic ulcers; colitis (inflammation of the bowels); vomiting and diarrhoea
- Immune system – lowered resistance to infections; chronic asthma; chronic dermatitis and possible increased risk of cancer
- Mental health – depression; chronic anxiety; mental breakdown; suicide and social isolation

Stress is also linked with health-damaging habits, such as smoking, over-consumption of alcohol and escapist eating, all of which are associated with other diseases.

Causes of stress

Society, work or home life – together or separately – may generate stress. For example, people may suffer stresses from poor housing, restricted education opportunities and family break up. Members of minority groups may face discrimination or bullying in or out of work.

Some employees with job and family responsibilities may be in part-time, low-graded jobs which are also low-paid. Some may face harassment and restricted job opportunities. Because of downsizing, short-term contracting and job insecurity affects many who now work longer hours, carry heavier workloads and have less control over their own lives than ever before.

The particular demands placed upon women workers are often overlooked when stress is discussed. Most working women share the 'double burden' of juggling paid work with childcare and domestic responsibilities. They are also more likely to be working unsocial hours and providing caring support for elderly and disabled persons. Balancing these conflicting demands is difficult, tiring and stressful.

Work-related stress will result if employers demand more from individual employees than they are able or motivated to give. For example, stress will result if the workload is too large for the staff numbers and time available. In the same way, a boring or repetitive task ignoring an employee's potential skills and experience will cause stress. Lack of training or physical resources generate further stress problems. Yet many employers see stress as an individual rather than a collective problem.

The HSE and TUC state that the main factors which can lead to work-related stress include:

- the demands of the job, includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment
- control, includes how much say the person has in the way they do their work
- work-life balance and support at work, includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- work relationships, includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- roles, whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles
- change, how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

Sources of stress: checklist for safety representatives

(From Tackling stress at work: a TUC guide for safety reps)

Job design

- ✓ boring work
- ✓ too much/too little work
- ✓ pace and flow of work
- ✓ too much/too little supervision
- ✓ job isolation
- ✓ lack of direction and decision making
- ✓ lack of job control
- ✓ constant sitting
- ✓ lack of adequate rest breaks
- ✓ under-utilisation of skills
- ✓ working with badly designed equipment and machinery

Contractual

- ✓ low pay
- ✓ shift work
- ✓ unsocial hours
- ✓ excessive hours of overtime
- ✓ job insecurity, including temporary and short-term contracts, and redundancy
- ✓ absence of monitoring procedures

Environment

- ✓ noise
- ✓ poor lighting
- ✓ poor maintenance
- ✓ poor canteen facilities
- ✓ poor childcare facilities
- ✓ poor ventilation
- ✓ overcrowding
- ✓ vibration
- ✓ incorrect temperatures
- ✓ toxic fumes and chemicals

Relationships

- ✓ bad relations with supervisors and/or work colleagues
- ✓ bullying
- ✓ sexism, racism, ageism
- ✓ harassment and discrimination
- ✓ violence
- ✓ customer/client complaints
- ✓ impersonal treatment
- ✓ lack of communication

Employer's responsibility to tackle work-related stress

There are practical things that employers can do to prevent and control work related stress. Stress is a management issue which should be tackled and resolved in the same way as any other hazard. Employers, after consulting safety reps, need to take steps with policies and procedures that they should communicate to workers.

Activity

Planning and doing a stress survey

Aims

To help us to:

- conduct a basic stress survey of our members
- find out members' views on work-related stress

Task

Your tutor will introduce you to some of the key points from the TUC instructions and TUC stress survey in Fact Sheet 2 below.

We would like you to use these questions to practise using a survey with your members before the next session of the course.

In your pair:

1. Look at the instructions and survey questions and check that they are clear
2. Identify members that you will survey using these questions. Please ensure that you include a cross section of your members (women/men; young/old; black workers/white workers; permanent/temporary; different shift patterns and so on)
3. Identify how and when you will do the survey and the steps that you need to take beforehand
4. Do you envisage any problems and if so how will you overcome them.

Report back

Make some notes on your activity summary sheet and prepare a report back for the rest of the group.

Resources

Fact Sheet 2 below

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 1.1; 1.2

Level 3: 1.1

FACT SHEET 2 **TUC Stress Survey**

Instructions: Getting it filled in

Fill in the name of the part of your workplace which you are studying (at the start of the form), the date by which it should be returned and who to return it to (both at the end of the form) and then run off enough copies to give to everyone in the part of the workplace being surveyed. You may want to add your union logo etc.

Distribute copies to workers in whichever part of your workplace you want to study. Remember to give the survey to as many people as possible, including agency and temporary workers. Remind them about the deadline for returning the form, and who to return it to.

People may want to give the information completely anonymously so you may need to arrange a post box or similar system where members can drop off their survey sheets.

When the answers have come back, check what percentage of forms have been returned. A return rate of over 50% is very good, and should give you confidence in the results - the lower the rate of return, the less you can depend on the findings of the survey (and if hardly anyone returns the form, that may just mean there's not a big problem).

Make a workplace stress map

Draw a sketch of your workplace (it doesn't have to be to scale, or a work of art!) Write in each area surveyed the percentage of workers answering 'yes' to question 2.

Identify the main stressors

Count up the number of '5s' circled for each stressor. If more than a quarter of the people who responded have circled '5' for any stressor, that issue is a major problem which needs to be addressed.

For each part of the workplace where there are high levels of stress, work out what the main stressors are by listing the number of '5s' each stressor received. The more '5s', the more of a problem that stressor is.

Ask for more!

Once you have developed the stress map, and what the main causes of stress are, put them on a poster on notice boards, or produce a short report of the survey findings (including how many people showed the health symptoms of stress) and give everyone a copy.

Then set up a suggestion box for people to make their own suggestions about how their stress could be reduced - they might come up with ideas you haven't thought of, and their views may help you to persuade management.

Stress survey

Work area:

Q1 Do you feel you are stressed by your work? YES/NO

Yes: Please proceed to the next question. No: thanks for taking part.

Q2 Is the level of stress unacceptable/causing you harm? YES/NO

Yes: please carry on to the next section. No: thanks for taking part.

Section A: how are you?

Do you generally suffer from these symptoms (or have you suffered from them a lot recently)?

- Frequent headaches YES/NO
- Depression YES/NO
- Anxiety attacks YES/NO
- Sleeplessness YES/NO
- Indigestion YES/NO
- Continual tiredness YES/NO

If you know these are nothing to do with work or the product solely of events outside work, answer 'no' - but only if you are really sure - your work may be affecting you more than you know, and if your work is making these symptoms worse, please answer 'yes'.

Section B: what makes you stressed at work?

Below are some known causes of work-related stress (the Health and Safety Executive calls them 'stressors'). Please think about how much stress each one causes you. If a stressor causes you *high levels of stress*, circle the '5' - if it causes you low or no stress, circle the '1', and if it causes you moderate or occasional stress, circle the '3' (the '2' and the '4' are to give you options between 'high', 'medium' and 'low'). If you don't know or can't answer, don't circle any of them.

This survey only covers stressors at work. It's not meant to include stress caused outside the workplace, although that can add to your work-related stress.

A. Demands of the job

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 2 3 4 5 | A1. Long working hours |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | A2. Too much work |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | A3. Too little work |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | A4. Repetitive or monotonous work |
| 1 2 3 4 5 | A5. Insufficient time to do your job |

1 2 3 4 5 A6. Not enough rest breaks

B. Lack of control

1 2 3 4 5 B1. Lack of control over work

1 2 3 4 5 B2. Work monitoring by computer or video

1 2 3 4 5 B3. Pace of the work dictated by machines

1 2 3 4 5 B4. Deadlines which are regularly too tight

1 2 3 4 5 B5. Unremitting pressure to perform well

1 2 3 4 5 B6. Over-harsh discipline

1 2 3 4 5 B7. Too much supervision

1 2 3 4 5 B8. Too little supervision

1 2 3 4 5 B9. Too little job/task specific training

C. Work-life balance

1 2 3 4 5 C1. Inflexible working hours (causing child care/domestic problems)

1 2 3 4 5 C2. Unsympathetic management

1 2 3 4 5 C3. Unfair pay system

1 2 3 4 5 C4. Failure to recognise achievements

1 2 3 4 5 C5. Skills not being fully utilised

D. Relationships at work

1 2 3 4 5 D1. Bullying

1 2 3 4 5 D2. Sexual, racial or other harassment

1 2 3 4 5 D3. Discrimination or prejudice from colleagues or managers

1 2 3 4 5 D4. Risk of violence and abuse from customers or service users

1 2 3 4 5 D5. Working alone

1 2 3 4 5 D6. Lack of communication between colleagues

1 2 3 4 5 D7. Lack of communication between staff and management

E. Change

- 1 2 3 4 5 E1. Uncertainty about your future
- 1 2 3 4 5 E2. Lack of job security
- 1 2 3 4 5 E3. Introduction of new management techniques
- 1 2 3 4 5 E4. Restructuring
- 1 2 3 4 5 E5. Lack of consultation over changes

F. Conflicting roles

- 1 2 3 4 5 F1. Unclear job responsibilities
- 1 2 3 4 5 F2. Conflicting responsibilities
- 1 2 3 4 5 F3. Confused demands

G. Working environment

- 1 2 3 4 5 G1. Heat or cold in the workplace
- 1 2 3 4 5 G2. Poor lighting or lack of natural light
- 1 2 3 4 5 G3. Untidy or unclean working areas
- 1 2 3 4 5 G4. Overcrowding or cramped work areas
- 1 2 3 4 5 G5. Excessive noise, fumes or dust
- 1 2 3 4 5 G6. Poor eating and rest facilities
- 1 2 3 4 5 G7. Badly designed, unsuitable or uncomfortable equipment

Please complete this survey and return it by

to:.....

All information is anonymous and will be used to help identify workplace stressors so that your union in partnership with management can produce an action plan to reduce workplace stress levels.

Workplace activity

Conducting a stress survey

Aims

To help us to:

- identify stressors in our workplace
- consult our members
- practise using surveys

Task

Before the session of the course:

1. Use the plans and survey questions from the Planning and Doing a Stress Survey Activity that you did above
2. Conduct a survey of a cross section of your members
3. Bring their filled-in questionnaires to discuss them with the rest of the group

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 1.1; 1.2

Level 3: 1.1

Workplace Activity

Finding information on work-related stress

Aims

To help us to:

- prepare for the next session of the course
- find information that can be shared with others on the course

Task

In case you did not have an opportunity to do the Pre-Course Activity, try to find the following information from your workplace.

1. Union/other union safety reps

Speak to branch officers and other safety reps. Find out:

- has the branch/safety reps been involved with any work-related stress campaigns (how was it organised and what were the outcomes)
- have any risk assessments been carried out on jobs that involve work-related stress
- has your trade union produced any material on work-related stress

2. Employer

Speak to an appropriate manager. Ask:

- for a copy of the employers safety policy
- for any policies, procedures, or agreements related to stress, violence at work, harassment at work or bullying
- for copies of work-related stress risk assessments (names can be deleted to preserve confidentiality)

Assessment criteria- Conditions at work

Level 2: 2.1

Level 3: 2.1

Activity

Analysing a stress survey

Aims

To help us to:

- identify stressors in our workplace
- practise analysing the results of a survey

Task

In your pair, *using the Guidance in Fact Sheet 2* above:

1. Collate your members' responses to the questionnaire that you circulated
2. Draw a workplace stress map
3. Identify the main stressors

Report back

Make some notes on your activity summary sheet and prepare a report back for the rest of the group.

Resources

Fact Sheet 2 above
Your members' completed questionnaires

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 1.1; 1.2; 2.1

Level 3: 1.1; 2.1

Work-related stress - legislation & other standards

Introduction

The table on the next page demonstrates in a graphical form some of the laws and standards that apply to work-related stress. The detailed description of the laws and standards are contained in Fact Sheet 3 which follows the next activity.

Work-related stress – examples of legislation & other standards

Workplace
Preventing work-
related stress

Health and safety legislation

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Health & safety standards

Trade union advice/policies

Regulations

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended in 2003)

Health and Safety Executive

HSE Management standards for work-related stress
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm

Tackling Stress: The Management Standards Approach
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg406.pdf
HSE Five steps to risk assessment
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf

TUC

TUC safety reps' guide to HSE stress management standards
www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-10147-fo.cfm

Approved Code of Practice

Paragraph 18 (f) & Paragraph 80 of the Approved Code of Practice to the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
Regulations 1999

European Agency for Safety and Health At Work

Fact Sheet 31: Practical Advice for Workers on Tackling Work-Related Stress
<http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/factsheets/31/en/index.htm>

Your union

Check your union website at
www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/unions_main.cfm
For example:
NATFHE – tackling stress
www.natfhe.org.uk/?id=stresstk

Activity

Finding and using standards on stress

Aims

To help us to:

- describe legal and other standards relating to a stress problem at work
- assess the usefulness of the standards

Task

1. Choose one of the main factors that are causing work-related stress that was identified earlier in the course.
2. You will be allocated to a group which has chosen a similar issue.
3. Look at and discuss the standards that are covered in Fact Sheet 3 below. Using the worksheet on the next two pages, describe the legal and other standards that are relevant to this issue.
4. Assess any strengths and weaknesses with the legal and other standards on work-related stress that you have identified.

Report back

Photocopy your worksheet for other course members and elect a spokesperson to report back

Resources

Stress problems at work identified by you and your members
Results of your pre-course/workplace activity
Fact Sheet 3 below

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 2.1; 2.2; 2.3

Level 3: 2.1; 2.2

WORKSHEET: APPLYING LAW/STANDARDS TO WORK-RELATED STRESS PROBLEM

DESCRIBE THE CURRENT SITUATION IN YOUR WORKPLACE AND THE MAIN ISSUE THAT IS CAUSING STRESS

KEY REQUIREMENTS OF LAW/STANDARD

STRENGTHS OF LAW/STANDARD

WEAKNESSES OF LAW/STANDARD

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WORKSHEET (continued): APPLYING LAW/STANDARDS TO STRESS PROBLEM

| KEY REQUIREMENTS OF LAW/STANDARD | STRENGTHS OF LAW/STANDARD | WEAKNESSES OF LAW/STANDARD |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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FACT SHEET 3 **Work-related stress & the law**

There is no specific law dealing with stress. However, employers have a duty under both statutory and common law which are relevant to tackling stress at work. Common law principles have been determined by court decisions, rather than Acts of Parliament and provide employers with a general duty of care for their employees. Statutory duties are contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that employers' workplaces are safe and healthy.

There are a number of general laws that apply (see the relevant chapters of *TUC Hazards at Work* listed below):

- SRSC Regulations 1977 – *Chapter 3*, with reference to safety representatives' rights and consultation
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 – *Chapter 12*, dealing with the general duties of employers and employees under Sections 2-9. Generally, the employer has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees, and this includes mental as well as physical health
- Disability Discrimination Act – *Chapter 24*
- Working Time Regulations – *Chapter 44*
- Civil law which places a duty of care upon employers to their employees – *Chapter 52*.
Check for **recent compensation** cases for stress using the TUC *Risks* weekly newsletter at www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The main causes of stress must be treated in the same way as any other workplace hazard. Employers should conduct a risk assessment for work-related stress, by identifying the hazard, evaluating the risk, and implementing protective and preventive measures to comply with the law. Provisions in the 1999 Regulations that are important for tackling stress include:

Regulation 3: Risk assessment

- Making a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks
- Identifying measures needed to comply with legal requirements
- Reviewing the risk assessment
- Recording the assessment where there are five or more employees

Regulation 4 (and Schedule 1): Implementing preventive and protective measures

On the basis of:

- avoiding risks
- evaluating the risks which cannot be avoided
- combating the risks at source
- adapting the work to the individual, especially as regards the design of workplaces, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production methods, with a view, in particular, to alleviating monotonous work and work at a predetermined work-rate and to reducing their effect on health
- adapting to technical progress
- replacing the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous

- developing a coherent overall prevention policy which covers technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social relationships and the influence of factors relating to the working environment
- giving collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures
- giving appropriate instructions to employees

Regulation 5: Health and safety arrangements

Making arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures.

Regulation 6: Health surveillance

Ensuring that employees are provided with health surveillance having regard to the risks to their health and safety which are identified by the assessment.

Paragraph 18 (f): Approved Code of Practice

The risk assessment should take account of the way in which work is organised, and the effects this can have upon health.

Paragraph 80: Approved Code of Practice

When allocating work to employees, employers should ensure that the demands of the job do not exceed the employees' ability to carry out the work without risks to themselves or others.

HSE Management standards for work-related stress

(See www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm)

HSE's Management Standards for work-related stress were launched on 3 November 2004. The Management Standards are not new laws. The approach will help and encourage employers to meet their *existing legal obligation to tackle the causes of stress at work*. The HSE management standards for work-related stress are closely connected with the risk assessment process. The management standards recognise that the solution lies in removing the causes of stress.

The HSE expects every employer to conduct risk assessments for health and safety hazards, including work-related stress. The HSE recommends a five-step approach to risk assessment (see Fact Sheet 4 below for full details):

- Look for the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risk and decide what needs to be done
- Record your findings
- Monitor and review

The HSE Management Standards look at the six key aspects of work that, if not properly managed, can lead to work-related stress. They help employers identify hazards and measure their organisation's performance in managing work-related stress. Each Standard contains simple statements about good management practice in each of six areas:

1. Demands

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs

- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed

2. Control

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work
- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns

3. Support

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation has policies and procedures adequately to support employees
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it
- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback

4. Relationships

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying, at work
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness
- Employees share information relevant to their work
- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour

5. Role

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible
- The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear
- Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities

6. Change

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening/states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes
- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes

(The full HSE Management Standards for work-related stress can be found at:
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm)

Checklist: What is new about standards on stress?

- ✓ The Management Standards and accompanying guidance have been designed to assist employers in identifying causes of stress in the workplace and develop and implement solutions to minimise the effects on workers.
- ✓ The Standards give real support to employers wishing to tackle stress at work.
- ✓ The Standards give health and safety enforcement officers a means of assessing whether an employer is failing to manage stress.
- ✓ The Standards can be used to enforce the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 when employers fail to manage stress at work
- ✓ In the absence of specific legislation, the HSE's Stress Management Standards are the most effective way of dealing with stress. However it is important that trade unions are involved in the introduction of the standards at every stage. If employers simply try to introduce them without proper consultation they are unlikely to be effective.
- ✓ The Standards aim to simplify the risk assessment process and at the same time provide a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

Web pages

- HSE work-related stress web page at www.hse.gov.uk/stress
- HSE: Management Standards for work-related stress
- www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm

Activity

HSE Five Steps to Risk Assessment

Aims

To help us to:

- describe legal and other standards relating to stress
- apply the HSE 'Five Steps' to stress

Task

In your group/pair, you will be asked to cover **one** of the following 5 steps to risk assessments and stress. Prepare a brief report to explain the main features of the HSE Guidance:

Step 1: Identifying the hazard (See page 43, Fact Sheet 4)

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed (See page 44, Fact Sheet 4)

Step 3: Evaluate the risk and take action (See page 45, Fact Sheet 4)

Step 4: Record your findings (See page 47, Fact Sheet 4)

Step 5: Monitor and review (See page 48, Fact Sheet 4)

Report back

You will be asked to report back to a role play safety committee meeting.

Resources

Fact Sheet 4 below

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 2.1; 2.2

Level 3: 2.1

Activity

Practising stress risk assessments

Aims

To help us to:

- practise conducting a stress risk assessment so that we are clear about management's responsibility
- think about remedial steps that can be taken
- compare assessments

Task

1. Work in pairs to conduct a basic stress risk assessment for a workplace using the example risk assessment form on the next two pages. You will find **Fact Sheet 4** below particularly helpful for the risk assessment process.

2. As a pair complete the risk assessment form.

3. Pass on your stress risk assessment to another pair who will read through it and compare it with their own approach. At the same time, you should do the same with their risk assessment and compare it with your own approach. Make notes on your activity summary sheet.

Report back

Prepare a brief report covering the main points of your own assessment. Include any problems you experienced trying to complete it.

Resources

Fact Sheet 3 above
Fact Sheet 4 below
Chapter 39 TUC Hazards at Work – Organising for Safe and Healthy Workplaces
Resources in the trade union studies centre

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 1.3; 2.1; 2.2; 2.3

Level 3: 1.2; 2.1; 2.2

Risk Assessment for stress

| HSE Management standards What should be happening? | Hazards and who may be harmed | Existing control measures | Risk rating | Possible remedial action |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| <p>Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to agreed hours of work ◆people’s skills and abilities are matched to the job demands ◆jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees ◆employees’ concerns about work environment addressed <p>Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆employees have control over pace of work where possible ◆employees encouraged to use their skills and initiative ◆employees encouraged to develop new skills to undertake new and challenging pieces of work ◆organisation encourages employees to develop their skills ◆employees have a say over when breaks can be taken ◆employees are consulted over their work patterns | | | | |

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| <p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆organisation has policies and procedures adequately to support employees ◆systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff ◆systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues ◆employees know what support is available and how and when to access it ◆employees know how to access required resources to do job ◆employees receive regular and constructive feedback <p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness ◆employees share information relevant to their work ◆organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour ◆systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour ◆systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour <p>Role</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the | | | | |
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| <p>different requirements it places upon employees are compatible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their roles and responsibilities ◆organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear ◆systems enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties/conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities <p>Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆employees provided with timely information to understand reasons for proposed changes ◆adequate employee consultation on changes and opportunity to influence proposals ◆employees aware of impact of changes and given training ◆employees aware of timetable for changes ◆employees have access to relevant support during changes | | | | |
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Activity

Evaluating prevention and control measures

Aims

To help us to:

- further investigate a work-related stress problem
- evaluate prevention and control measures in detail

Task

In pairs, select a work-related stress problem from the previous activity.

Work in pairs and use the worksheet on the 'Principles of prevention' below to fully evaluate the prevention and control measures that are currently in place to reduce the risk.

Report back

Make some notes on your activity summary sheet and worksheet below. Elect a spokesperson to report back.

Resources

Notes from previous activities
Worksheet
Fact Sheet 4 below

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 3.1

Level 3: 3.1

Worksheet

Priority stress problem - prevention and control measures

Description of priority work-related stress problem

Investigating employer action on prevention and control mechanisms

- ✓ Has the priority hazard and consequent risk been identified?
- ✓ Are any preventive measures already being used working properly?
- ✓ Are the control measures followed and do control measures appear to work?
- ✓ Is information, instruction and training provision adequate?
- ✓ What preventive and protective measures have been identified under the hierarchy of principles laid down in Regulation 4 and Schedule 1 of MHSWR 1999 (see summary of the law above)?
- ✓ Can risks be avoided and have risks that cannot be avoided been evaluated?
- ✓ Are risks controlled at source?
- ✓ Is the work adapted to the individual, especially as regards the design of workplaces, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production measures?
- ✓ Are prevention measures adapted to technical progress?
- ✓ Is the dangerous replaced by the non or less dangerous?
- ✓ Has the employer developed a coherent overall prevention policy which covers technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social relationships and the influence of factors relating to the working environment?
- ✓ Are collective protective measures given priority over individual protective measures?
- ✓ Are appropriate instructions given to employees?
- ✓ Has a plan of action been drawn up for putting into practice the necessary measures identified by the risk assessment?
- ✓ Does the plan identify priorities and set an agreed timetable for action?
- ✓ Has the money been made available to implement control measures?
- ✓ Are there plans to monitor the success of new measures?
- ✓ Have protective and preventive measures been introduced?
- ✓ Has a plan of action been drawn up for putting into practice the necessary measures identified by the risk assessment?
- ✓ Does the plan identify priorities and set an agreed timetable for action?
- ✓ Has the money been made available to implement control measures?
- ✓ Are there plans to monitor the success of new measures?

Your evaluation of prevention and control measures for your priority

FACT SHEET 4

HSE Five steps to risk assessments & stress

Reproduced from www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/step1/index.htm

Step 1 - Identify the hazards

The starting point is the content of the six Management Standards themselves. It is important to become familiar with these and how they apply in, and translate to, the local context of your workplace. There will be organisational 'hot-spots' but these can only be identified by undertaking a systematic risk assessment. Remember also that each of the six factors does not always operate singly – often they combine or interact.

Find out what's causing stress in your workplace

The Management Standards look at the six key areas of work that, if properly managed, can help to reduce work-related stress:

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

The Standards help you to measure performance in managing work-related stress. Each standard provides simple statements about good management practice in each of the six areas. HSE does not expect every employer to meet all the Standards at their first attempt. The Standards are goals that employers should be working towards through an ongoing process of risk assessment and continuous improvement.

Once you are familiar with the Standards, you can start thinking about how you can apply them in your organisation. The next section of the advice will help you to do this.

Checkpoint 1: Getting started, look for the hazards

Before you begin the next stage, you should have done the following:

- Read and understood the Management Standards
- Secured senior management commitment to tackling stress
- Involved employees and employee representatives in taking the work forward
- Informed employees of latest developments and plans for next steps
- Recorded what you have done

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how

Your organisation may already collect information that can be used to obtain an initial broad indication of whether stress is a problem for your organisation. For example:

- High levels of sickness absence may indicate a potential problem area. Checking the reasons given for absence may help identify the cause.
- Being open and honest about stress helps to reduce the perceived stigma and improve the reliability of the reasons staff give for absence.
- Low productivity can be an indicator of problems. Talking to employees should help you explore the reasons behind this.
- High employee turnover could be an indication of high stress levels. Investigate why people are leaving – conducting exit interviews is one way of doing this.
- Performance appraisal could offer an opportunity to have a one-to-one discussion about work and to explore whether people in your team are experiencing excessive pressure.
- Team meetings and focus groups can help you assess current performance. They allow you to explore issues in considerable depth and are particularly useful if you want to find out what specific groups of people think about their work. Further information on how to run a focus group is available at the end of this section.

Conducting a survey: HSE Indicator Tool

HSE Management Standards includes an Indicator Tool at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortool.pdf that can be distributed to all employees. It is made up of 35 items that ask about “working conditions” that are known to be potentials for work-related stress. These working conditions correspond to the six stressors of the Management Standards. The employee answers according to how they feel these aspects of their work are for them.

All responses can then be compiled into HSE’s Analysis Tool at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/step2/index.htm. The Analysis Tool computes an average figure for each of the six Management Standards for your workforce, or particular part of your workforce.

The validity of self-report and questionnaire based surveys is often called into question because they are dependent on how people “feel” about issues. However, evidence suggests that individual perceptions play an important role in predicting stress-related ill health. Therefore, gathering the opinions of employees can be a useful indicator of the health of your organisation, and as a part of an overall strategy to identify and address potential sources of stress.

The HSE Analysis Tool gives an average result for each of the six stressor areas, and these are graphically displayed alongside a target figure. Your ultimate aim is to be in the top 20% of organisations in tackling work-related stress as currently assessed by HSE (in 2004). If an organisation is currently not achieving the benchmark figure, then an interim figure is also given as a stepping stone towards improvement. That is, HSE supports continuous improvement in stress management.

Using your own surveys

Using existing surveys could give you an idea of how the organisation measures up against the Standards.

- Can you put the questions into each of the six Management Standard areas (eg which questions are about Demands)?
- What do the data tell you about employee views?
- Does this indicate that there may be problems in one or more of the six areas or in certain parts of the organisation?
- If so, use this information together with other data you may have to judge how well you match up against the Standards
- Consult with employees and their representatives to confirm your assessment.
- Work together to develop solutions to tackle any problems.

“Toolbox talks”

In units with relatively few employees, it may be more appropriate to explore issues related to working conditions in small groups in the first instance. You may already have arrangements in place for encouraging participation and consulting with employees. For example, routine “toolbox talks” when work is planned, can be an opportunity to inquire about potentially stressful issues with workers. Similarly, managers planning meetings can be used to explore potential stressors for this group of staff.

Whatever means you use to assess the risk of stress, you should not rely on just one measure of information, but consider data they have from several sources. In particular, try to avoid using questionnaires in isolation. The next section of will help you to confirm any findings with staff, consult with them to further explore the broad problems, and work with them to develop solutions.

Checkpoint 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

Before you begin the next stage, you should have done the following:

- Acknowledged that stress has the potential to affect any member of staff
- Considered the data available to you to indicate any potential problem areas
- Measured your performance against the Management Standards
- Identified any stress “hot-spots” in your organisation
- Recorded what you have done

Step 3 - Evaluate the risk and take action

There are a variety of sources of information that can help contribute to a general picture of the current risk for work-related stress in an organisation, and identify where the biggest problems seem to be.

When you have collected initial information for your risk assessment (as described in step 2), you should confirm your findings, explore what this means locally, and discuss possible solutions using a representative sample of your work force.

Linking problems to solutions using focus groups

A good way to decide what needs to be done is to bring together groups of about 6 – 10 employees as a “focus group”. Talking to a selection of employees from a specific work group will allow issues from the findings of the risk assessment to be explored in more detail, and also take into account local challenges.

To begin to develop solutions, the focus group should consider the good practice outlined in the 'states to be achieved' of the Management Standards, and whether this good practice is happening. This approach can give structure to your focus group meeting, and help you make a local action plan to tackle stress.

See how to set up and run focus groups at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/focusgroups.pdf

What solutions are going to work for me?

Developing solutions is often the most difficult part of tackling the possible causes of work-related stress. Each workplace and each worker is different, meaning that it is not possible to describe one set of solutions for all circumstances. There are some good examples of what other organisations have done to successfully deal with problematic working conditions that could help you and your employees at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/information.htm

The overall aim of each focus group is to draw up recommendations in the form of an action plan (see step 4). It is reasonable that employers/senior management may have to prioritise solutions from the different action plans, but they should communicate back to staff the general results of the risk assessment and their plans for continuous improvement, with dates for review.

Communicating the results

Providing feedback

It is important that you communicate with management, employees and their representatives. You should keep them updated as you go through this process. For example, it is unrealistic to expect employees to participate in focus groups to discuss problems without a commitment to at least share the outcome with them soon after.

Individual concerns

The surveys and focus groups may identify that individuals are experiencing problems that the majority of employees are not. The solutions you develop for the majority of your employees may not address individual problems. However, you still have a duty of care to take steps to protect the health and well-being of these employees too.

It is essential that you develop ways for employees to raise their concerns. These could include the following:

- Create an environment where employees are encouraged to talk, both formally and informally, to their manager or another person in their management chain.
- Remind employees that they can speak to trade union representatives, health and safety representatives, human resources personnel.
- Encourage employees to talk to someone in the organisation or seek advice from occupational health advisors, or from their GP if they are concerned about their health.
- Introduce mentoring and other forms of co-worker support.
- Provide employee assistance (counselling) services.

Checkpoint 3 – Evaluate the risk and take action

Before you begin the next stage, you should have done the following:

- Consulted with employees to discuss problem areas in more detail.
- Worked in partnership with employees and their representatives to develop actions to take.
- Ensured that issues affecting individuals are addressed.
- Fed back results to employees, with a commitment to follow-up.
- Recorded what you have done

Step 4 - Record your findings

Make a plan and stick to it

It is important that you record the results of your risk assessment in an action plan. This section contains advice on how to do this effectively.

Developing an action plan

If your risk assessment has identified areas of concern and you have taken steps to develop some solutions, it is important that you record your findings.

The best method of achieving this is to write 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 action plan is a key part of your risk assessment and should at least include the following:

- what the problem is
- how the problem was identified;
- what you are going to do in response;
- how you arrived at this solution;
- some key milestones and dates for them to be reached;
- a commitment to provide feedback to employees on progress;
- a date for reviewing against the plan.

There is no prescribed method or format for an action plan. However, the HSE website includes a template and worked example you may want to use at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/actionplan.pdf. The action plan needs to be agreed with employees, senior management and employee representatives. The final plan should be shared with employees.

Checkpoint 4: Record your findings

Before you begin the next stage, you should have done the following:

- Created and agreed with senior management, employees and their representatives an action plan for the implementation of solutions.
- Shared your action plan with all employees, including dates for monitoring and review

Step 5 - Monitor and review

Measure and share your success

It is essential that you review any action you take to tackle stress. This section contains advice on how to ensure actions are taken forward and measure your success.

How to review your work

It is essential that you review any action you take to tackle stress. There are two elements to this:

- Monitor against your action plan to ensure the agreed actions are taking place.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions you implement.

Monitor against your action plan

Periodically check that agreed actions are being undertaken, eg that meetings are being held, or that there is evidence that certain activities have taken place.

Evaluate the effectiveness of solutions

How you do this will depend on what kind of solutions you have developed. It is important to ask those involved whether they feel the solutions are having the desired effect. You may decide you only need to speak to a sample of those involved. Alternatively, you may feel it is important to ensure that the intervention is working for everybody.

Another way to demonstrate the effectiveness of your plan is to collect data on employee turnover, sickness absence and productivity, and to measure progress against emerging trends or changes in this data.

The timing of your reviews will depend on how long it will take to implement each intervention and how long the focus group expects it will take to have any impact. This could be days for a simple intervention (eg an adjustment to the physical environment), or months for piloting a complicated long-term solution (such as a new rostering system).

Follow-up surveys

One way to measure progress is to use the surveys again after a period of time. You may want to consider an annual survey. This would be as well as any arrangements that have been established to talk about stress on a regular basis.

It is important to remember that the Standards are about making steady improvements in the way you manage stress. It is critical that you are committed to continuously working with employees to identify and address the problems in your workplace that could lead to stress-related ill health

Workplace Activity

Reporting back to members

Aims

To help us to:

- report back the results of the stress survey to members
- find information for the next session of the course

Task

1. Members

With the results from your stress survey, report back to members on the main causes of stress that have been identified. Use your stress map or produce a short report of the survey findings. Get your members views on priorities and suggestions for tackling the causes of work-related stress.

2. Employer

In case you did not have an opportunity to do the Pre-Course Activity, speak to an appropriate manager. Ask:

- for a copy of the employers safety policy
- for any policies, procedures, or agreements related to stress, violence at work, harassment at work or bullying

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 2.1

Level 3: 2.1

Activity

Work-related stress policies

Aims

To help us to:

- review policies on work-related stress
- agree what should be covered in a policy

Task

In your small group:

1. Look at:
 - the HSE example of a work-related stress policy in Fact Sheet 5 below and
 - any stress policies that have been brought in from your workplaces
2. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the policies
3. Agree a checklist of the general points that should be covered in a stress policy.

Report back

Elect a spokesperson to report back to the rest of the group

Resources

HSE example of a work-related stress policy in Fact Sheet 5
Work-related stress policies from your own workplaces

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 2.1; 2.2

Level 3: 2.1; 2.2

FACT SHEET 5

HSE Example of a Stress Policy

Reproduced from www.hse.gov.uk/stress/stresspolicy.pdf

Introduction

We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. This policy will apply to everyone in the company and managers are responsible for implementation and the company is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

Definition of stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

Policy

- The company will identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- The company will consult with Trade Union Safety Representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- The company will provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- The company will provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- The company will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the company’s agreed stress management strategy.

Responsibilities

Managers

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking. Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

Occupational Health and Safety Staff

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress.
- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work.
- Refer to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.
- Inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

Human Resources

- Give guidance to managers on the stress policy.
- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate.

Employees

- Raise issues of concern with your Safety Representative, line manager or occupational health.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

Function of Safety Reps

- Safety Representatives must be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress.
- Safety Representatives must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys.
- Safety Representatives must be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process.
- Safety Representatives should be allowed access to collective and anonymous data from HR.
- Safety Representatives should be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any Trade Union training relating to workplace stress.
- Safety Representatives should conduct joint inspections of the workplace at least every 3 months to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

Role of the Safety Committee

- The joint Safety Committee will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- The Safety Committee will oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measure to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

Signed: Managing Director _____ Date: _____

Signed: Employee Representative _____ Date: _____

Activity

Negotiating a stress policy

Aims

To help us to:

- negotiate stress policies
- practise presentation and negotiation skills

Task

The course will be divided into a number of management and union sides. Each negotiating team should appoint an observer to report back on the outcome of the negotiations.

The trade union side has requested a meeting to discuss the development of a stress policy (use the example of the stress policy in Fact Sheet 5 above). They are seeking to ensure that management adopt the stress policy for their workplace.

1. Each side should prepare a negotiating plan
2. Conduct a role play safety committee meeting to try and reach an agreement
3. The observer will report back summarising the outcome of the meeting and the arguments and techniques used.

Resources

Negotiating plan below
Fact Sheet 5 above

Report back

Observers from each small group will report back with the main points from the negotiation that they watched.

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 3.2-3.4

Level 3: 3.2

Worksheet: outline negotiating plan

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Main Facts | |
| Your Aims | Fallback |
| Main Arguments | Management/Opposing Arguments Your Response |
| Opening Position | |
| Other Factors | |

Activity

'Coping with stress'

Aims

To help us to:

- discuss procedures for 'coping with stress'
- assess potential benefits and problems

Task

In your small group:

1. Note down any examples from your workplaces where the following have been used to cope with the effects of stress:
 - stress counselling
 - 'healthy living techniques'
 - other 'coping with stress' techniques

If any of these measures were used, how successful were they? What are the potential benefits and problems of these mechanisms?

2. Your tutor will place up a chart for each measure around the room. You will be asked to write your ideas on each chart under the headings 'benefits' and 'problems'.

Report back

Your tutor will lead a discussion about the main points from the charts.

Resources

Your own experiences
Fact Sheet 6 below

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 3.1

Level 3: 3.1

FACT SHEET 6

'Coping with stress'

Healthy living

Some employers have tried to reduce the effects of stress by 'lifestyle' campaigns - promoting healthy eating and fitness. Some stress management techniques have been shown to have positive benefits on physiological systems (immune, cardio-vascular and endocrine) of employees. Physical exercise, deep muscle relaxation, guided imagery, breathing exercises and aromatherapy are all useful, especially when a battery of approaches is used.

But, although complementary medicine and lifestyle campaigns can help relieve the strains caused by stress, they do not and cannot remove the source of stress itself.

Counselling

Some organisations have set up counselling/employee assistance programmes. When - as in some workplaces - certain stressors have not been eliminated, these programmes may help workers cope. The issues of confidentiality and proper training for the counselling staff must be addressed. But employers who invest in these strategies may be beginning to take stress seriously.

Disadvantages

Some of the disadvantages of counselling are:

- it only deals with individual problems and not the sick workplace
- it does not deal with the root causes of stress
- it is not always confidential
- it may be used to target workers for redundancy
- counsellors may be from management or a peer group, and workers may be reluctant to use them

Advantages

Some of the potential advantages of counselling are:

- if it leads on from genuine attempts at prevention and control measures for stress, then it shows that the employer is taking stress seriously
- it may be independent, confidential and helpful in the short term
- it may benefit some workers who are suffering from stress

Rehabilitation

The TUC believes that better health and safety standards are vital to reduce the number of people who are injured and made ill by their work every year. However, rehabilitation is crucial for those people who do get injured or become ill because of their work. Rehabilitation can make a contribution of its own to improving health and safety standards especially when people return to work after ill health.

See the TUC rehabilitation web at www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm?mins=260

Activity

Trade union strategy – tackling stress

Aims

To help us to:

- decide what to do next
- implement plans for improvement

Task

In your small group:

1. Decide upon your action plan in relation to work-related stress based upon what we have done on this short course
2. Use the Worksheet below to:
 - Identify what needs to be done in relation to work-related stress
 - Devise a trade union action plan to make sure that the changes are made

Report back

Elect a spokesperson to report back to the rest of the course

Resources

Previous activities
Fact Sheets 7 & 8 below

Assessment criteria - Conditions at work

Level 2: 3.2-3.4

Level 3: 3.2

Worksheet: Action planning on tackling work-related stress

| Action you need to take in relation to: | Aims | What needs to be done? | When? |
|---|------|------------------------|-------|
| Employer | | | |
| Members | | | |
| Other union representatives | | | |
| Other | | | |

FACT SHEET 7

Action planning for work-related stress

Now that you have established what should be happening in relation to stress, you must work out what you want to achieve. This will depend on:

- the problem
- what you have found out
- short and long term aims
- members' support and union negotiating strength
- management's attitude to work-related stress

So, you need to think in advance about what the minimum is that you will accept.

Involving your members

It is important to involve trade union members, get them to discuss problems with each other, and to make them aware that work-related stress is a shared problem which can be tackled through the trade union. Discussing the issue of stress within the union will help, but also persuading management to accept that there is a problem, and implementing the solutions suggested, will give workers an immediate feeling of having regained some control of their working lives.

If members feel strongly, and are prepared to support you, this will be your main source of strength. So:

- keep them informed about what you are doing
- involve them in planning your approach and deciding what to accept
- discuss whether management plans and procedures are adequate
- provide an opportunity for workers to express/register their concerns – by holding meetings, conducting surveys and using body mapping and risk mapping techniques
- inspect the workplace regularly
- encourage workers to report stress problems to management and safety representatives
- win their support

Pro-active safety reps

Safety representatives can identify whether stress is a problem in their workplace.

Organisations that expose workers to excessive levels of stress will suffer such things as: high levels of sickness absence; high accident rates; high absenteeism; high staff turnover; industrial relations difficulties; low morale and apathy among the workforce and evidence of bullying.

Safety representatives can:

- do a special inspection and to check on all the potential sources of work-related stress
- survey their members using the TUC Stress MOT to identify which stressors are the biggest problem (see www.tuc.org.uk/stressmot). This will help to identify the areas of the workplace and the stressors which most need risk assessments
- use mapping techniques to identify problems. (See the *Hazards workers' guide to body mapping, risk mapping and interactive hazards detective* www.hazards.org/tools/)
- report their concerns and those of their members to management in writing

Risk management

You can urge your employer to prepare and implement a plan to manage the risks from work-related stress. You should:

- be consulted by management
- monitor how management is following their plan
- keep the workforce informed of progress

Ask for copies of the risk assessments that the employer has done to ensure that they are preventing and controlling the hazards, and make sure that their employer is fully consulting you and other safety representatives. Where control measures are in place you can check that they are being adhered to and maintained and also that they are effective in preventing injuries and ill health.

Finally, check that where there is any potential risk, your employer has given the workforce appropriate training and information.

Stress policy

Safety representatives can negotiate a work-related stress prevention policy with their employer, preferably as part of the overall health and safety policy. An effective policy on work-related stress should:

- recognise that stress is a health and safety issue
- recognise that stress is about the organisation of work
- be jointly developed and agreed with unions
- have commitment from the very top
- guarantee a blame-free approach
- apply to everyone

The objectives of a work-related stress policy should be to:

- prevent stress by identifying the causes of workplace stress and eliminating them
- recognise and deal with stress-related problems through consultation, participation and co-operative working
- ensure that managers, supervisors and employees are trained to deal with and prevent work-related stress
- rehabilitate employees suffering stress through the provision of independent confidential counselling

The policy should contain agreed arrangements for joint monitoring and review to assess its effectiveness. An example of a stress policy can be found on the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/examplepolicy.pdf.

Coping with stress

Trade unions should ensure that members suffering from stress are represented and cared for. Individual grievances must be dealt with effectively and special arrangements negotiated to protect their needs.

Some employers have:

- introduced Employee Assistance Programmes or counselling services. These can be useful but only as a part of an effective work-related stress prevention policy
- tried to reduce the effects of stress by lifestyle campaigns, promoting healthy eating and fitness. These campaigns can help workers relieve the immediate strains caused by stress, but they can never remove the source of stress

Taking up the issue with management

Sometimes, minor issues can be sorted out informally by direct contact with relevant managers. But if work-related stress is being tackled for the first time, it is likely that you will need to raise the matter formally. Obviously you know the best way of getting things done in your workplace, but you may need to consider such things as:

- raising the matter in writing
- encouraging other safety representatives to support you and back you up
- using special safety procedures or an agreed procedure for resolving problems, in which case you should always involve other relevant union representatives
- raising the problem directly with senior management if it is urgent
- using safety committees which can sometimes help to make plans for implementation

Union pressure and arguments

You will need a well-argued case and you should refer to your research on work-related stress. But the main source of negotiating strength is a well organised union with the support of your own members, and their determination to secure improvements.

Evaluating the outcomes

When you have carried out the appropriate action in the workplace, you should evaluate the outcomes. This is important because it allows you to reflect upon what has happened and determine what, if anything needs to be done next.

FACT SHEET 8 **Further information**

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

- Factsheet 31: Practical advice for workers on tackling work-related stress
<http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/factsheets/31/en/index.htm>

European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety

- Stress at work – special edition of TUTB newsletter September 2002 Issue No.19–20
<http://tutb.etuc.org/uk/newsletter/newsletterTheme.asp>

***Hazards* magazine website**

Excellent news and resources on the *Hazards* Worked to Death web resource page at www.hazards.org/workedtodeath/ and Get a Life web resource page at www.hazards.org/getalife/

***Hazards* magazine factsheets**

- No 83: Drop dead – overwork
- No 78: Get a life! Work–life balance
- No 77: Drugs and alcohol policies
- No 70: Bullying at work
- No 69: Not what we bargained for: changing workplaces
- No 65: Sickness absence policies
- No 59: DDA and work-related ill health
- No 49: Overwork: fatigue, long hours and pressure

£1.50 each for union subscribers, £6 for non-subscribers

HSE work-related stress website

The HSE have a specific web page which draws together HSE information on work-related stress in one place at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm

Recently developed management standards for stress can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm

HSE priced and free publications on work-related stress

- For all the latest documents containing general standards and guidance on stress, go to the HSE web page:
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/information.htm
- Alternatively, obtain a free copy of the latest HSE Books catalogue, CAT 34, by telephoning 01787 881165

International Labour Organisation

- Resources on stress
www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/stress/index.htm

Labour Research Department

- Tackling bullying and harassment. £4.95
- Tackling stress at work. £3.70

London Hazards Centre

- Stress at work
www.lhc.org.uk/members/pubs/factsht/53fact.htm
- Stress, ill health and hazardous employment practices
www.lhc.org.uk/members/pubs/books/hl/hl_toc.htm

Teacher Work-Stress

News, networking and resources from:

www.teacherstress.co.uk/

TUC

- TUC *Hazards at Work – Organising for Safe and Healthy Workplaces*
- The TUC stress web page www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm?mins=37
- The TUC Stress MOT
www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-5581-fo.cfm
- Tackling stress at work: a TUC Guide for safety reps
- Essential information for safety representatives. Keep up to date on health and safety by reading *Risks*, the TUC's weekly e-bulletin for safety representatives at www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm

Trade union information

- Many unions provide guidance on stress. The website addresses of all trade unions are on the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/unions_main.cfm. *Hazards* magazine has listed the health and safety pages of most trade unions at www.hazards.org/links/ukunionlinks.htm
- Contact your union or visit your union's website to find out if they produce any guidance on stress. For example, NUT have produced a document on tackling stress at www.data.teachers.org.uk/resources/pdf/tackling_stress.pdf

The UK National Work-Stress Network

- News, networking and resources from www.workstress.net

Activity

Learning opportunities

Aims

To help us to:

- identify future learning needs
- consider ways you will meet those learning needs

Task

In your pair:

1. Identify your other learning needs for health and safety
2. What learning opportunities are provided by the TUC or your union to meet your learning needs?
3. Identify the steps that you need to take to make use of the learning opportunities

Resources

Details of TUC core and short courses from your tutor
Details of your union courses from your union website

Report back

Prepare a short report for the rest of the group.

Course review and evaluation

We hope that you have enjoyed the course. To help us make future courses more effective we would like your feedback. Please:

- contribute to a collective feedback session that your tutor will organise
- fill in the evaluation form on the next two pages and return it to her/him

End of Course Evaluation

Please take time to complete the following. Considered and constructive feedback will help us to ensure that the course is relevant to your needs as union representatives.

1. What were your aims/expectations for the course?

2. To what extent have these been met?

3. What, if anything, do you feel you have gained/achieved that you did not expect at the outset?

4. How would you rate the support you have had?

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| Tutor support | <i>Very good</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| Group support | <i>Very good</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| Course materials | <i>Very good</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| Other resources | <i>Very good</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>Weak</i> |

Comment

5. How did you find the teaching and learning methods used on the course?

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Group Work | <i>too much</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>too little</i> |
|------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Individual Exercises | <i>too much</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>too little</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Written work | <i>too much</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>too little</i> |
|--------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Workplace Activities | <i>too much</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>too little</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|

Comment

6. How do you think what you have got out of this course will help you in your work/union?

7. Having successfully completed your course, what are your learning priorities now?

8. Any other comments?
