



November 2012

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Closing remarks

Stress the un-hidden killer in a culture of enforced hostility towards workers' rights

- Work should be enjoyable, health and well-being enhancing
- So-called Bureaucracy and red-tape burdens are flawed *only where they are wrongly applied*
- There should still be dignity in the workplace for all in the context of a caring supportive culture
- NOT the one size fits all attitude that breaks down the many protections that we have fought for and achieved

How is your work affecting you?



Work should not damage your health and well-being

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Stress and Mental Health: the scale of the problem

- 11 million working age people are affected by mental health problems
- The cost GB economy > £40 million year
- In England, these cost:
 - £15.1 billion due to **presenteeism**
 - £8.4 billion due to **absenteeism**
- Compared with other disorders, mental health problems account for more:
 - claimants of incapacity benefit (41% of the total - up from 26% 10 years ago)
 - new claimants of DLA (23% of the total) (Royal Coll of Psych 2009)



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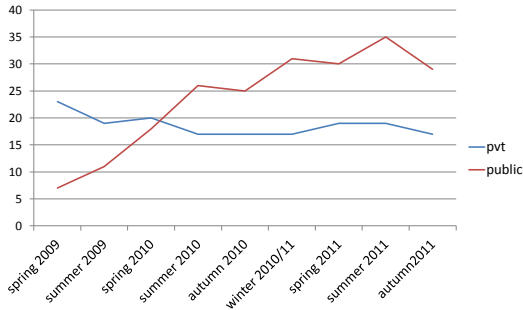
What are we facing?

- A continuing recession with no real progress back to normality
- The concept of a continuing period when our economy is virtually at rock bottom
- Millionaires on the Government Front Bench who are oblivious to the needs of the many and who insist on further drastic cuts
- An incessant attack on necessary long-standing regulations which will largely hit the vulnerable
- Attempts to emasculate Trade Unions and their lay activists
- Slash and burn tactics on the Public Sector, specifically on the HSE which is virtually unable to fulfil its basic functions

What are we facing?

- Restrictions on compensation routes and processes
- Total lack of compassion for the victims of work-related injury, illness and fatalities
- A growing culture of bullying and harassment throughout many aspects of work
- So-called 'back-office only cuts' are a sham and front-line services are damaged beyond recognition
- A greater emphasis on part-time working with in many cases longer distances to be travelled, making the take-home pay less and the overall work-day longer
- Fat-cat manufacturers and businesses continuing to evade taxation
- Increase in stress-related benefit recipient cases
- Fear for job retention
- Presenteeism for fear of sickness dismissal

Percentage of employees who think they are likely to lose their job as a result of the current economic climate

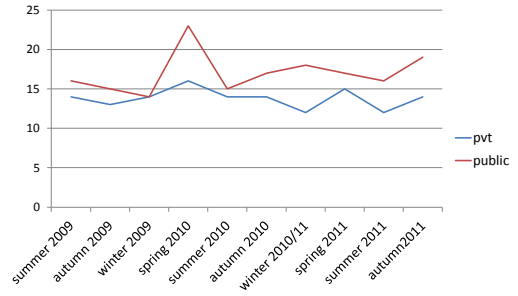


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Percentage of employees feeling they are under pressure at work everyday

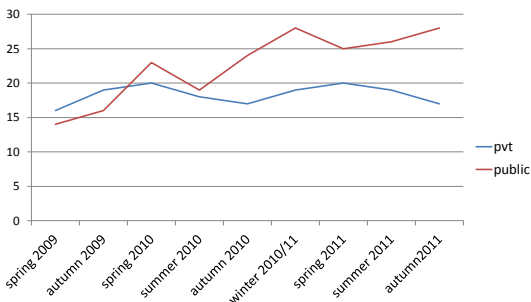


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Percentage of employees who have noticed increased conflict at work between colleagues

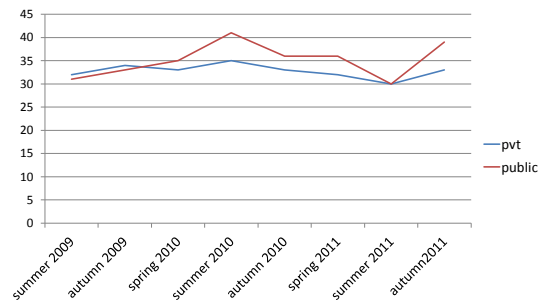


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Percentage of employees disagreeing their organisation provides support to manage their work-life balance



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Key Messages on Stress

- Increase in incidences of stress since 1992, especially in women
- Steep incline in cases since the 2008-09 recession
- High public sector stress levels caused by cuts in spending
- Higher levels of depressive illness, suicides and increased sickness absence rates
- Some decreases in sickness absence since 2008 leading to “presenteeism”
- Economic costs of stress lie between 0.5% and 1.2% of GDP
- New Fit-notes may help in the legal pursuit of redress?

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work suicide

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Trends in male “job insecurity” and male suicide rate aged 15–44



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Work-related suicides

A Hampshire firefighter who took his own life had taken on too much work, an inquest has heard. Father-of-three Martin Coles was found hanged in a wooded area in Wickham - August 2011

Feb 2012 – Harrogate teacher died from burns, having set himself alight because of worries that his students' coursework marks weren't good enough. After several spells of depression-related absence, this father of two, 'felt enormous pressures and could not see a way forward'.

A digger driver from Hull hanged himself after losing his job, an inquest has heard. Patrick McLaughlin, 52, been made redundant when the company he was working for went into liquidation in August 2010

The government's austerity measures could lead to an increase in suicides, Unite has said. In response to an official consultation, 'Preventing suicide in England: a cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives' 2010

A council lawyer hanged himself because he was 'unable to cope' with his increasing workload and implementing a contentious cuts programme, an inquest has heard. David White, who had worked for the authority for more than 20 years, was found dead in woods near Woodbridge, Suffolk, on 4 April 2011

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Stress Enquirers Case Studies

- **Filling Station Worker[s]** investigated for serious thefts of cash
- Inside job and failures in security
- Management refusing to update and improve CCTV systems
- Staff highly stressed because of fear of arrest and dismissals
- Grievances taken and promises extracted from manager
- **Office Worker** in complaints department of large business suffering panic attacks, chest pains etc – company has failed to train department of 60 in new IT systems
- Management have allegedly carried out risk assessment, but have failed to disclose findings claiming them to be private and confidential
- Occ. Health recommendations largely ignored

Stress Enquirers Case Studies

- **NI Prison Officer** working hours affected by new shift plans being imposed
- Previous work patterns allowed car sharing with colleague
- New system cuts across this and means that car share now impossible for 15 shifts adding £375 to monthly travel to work costs
- Shared travel also allowed for relaxation after shifts, reducing fatigue
- New shift pattern includes 1 x 4.5hrs for which 3 hours travel is required
- Family pressures making matters worse as wife is clinically depressed with history of mental health issues and daughter in Higher Education
- **Civil Servant bullied at work** despite alleged commitment to risk assessments for stress cases
- Policies in place regarding bullying but largely ignored and not implemented
- Went to ET but lost and ended up with £34k costs
- Had been let down by Union and was clearly in a bad place
- Was totally unresponsive to any suggestions or guidance.

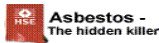
Key challenges

- Recognition and acceptance that Stress is a key factor in many workplaces
- Understanding and acknowledging the legal, moral and business cases for action
- Supporting the case for comprehensive generic and specific stress risk assessments
- Getting employers to use and follow the HSE Management Standards approach
- Acknowledging and accepting the sources of appropriate data
- Maintaining Stress as a regular H&S Agenda item

Trade Union Action

- Constant pressure through Stewards and Safety Reps
- Regular discussion in Safety Committees and Stewards' Committees
- Listening to Members
- Pushing the need for effective Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace policy
- Pressures for relevant Risk Assessments
- Emphasis of the need for Stress and Bullying Policies, their monitoring, implementation and impact
- Absence Monitoring support for members
- Return to work meetings
- Disability and Equality awareness as required
- Pushing for proper effective management training
- Creating a caring supportive culture with dignity in the workplace for all

Regular sources of information



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- We continue to campaign for better recognition of stress in the workplace
- We welcome and thank you for your support and your participation this weekend
- We thank all of the contributors, speakers, facilitators and especially our Conference Secretary Les Roberts
- We thank Hillscourt Conference Centre and staff for their warm hospitality



- Dates for your Diary:-
 - Hazards Conference 19th-21st July 2013, Keele University
 - EWHN Conference, Bologna Italy October 4th-6th www.ewhn.eu
 - Stress Conference Hillscourt Centre, 22nd-24th November 2013
- Safe Journey Home!

