Stress Management Competencies Workshops
Brief Summary Report

This report provides a brief summary of three Stress Management Competencies workshops. The first workshop, attended by Health and Safety and Occupational Health professionals, was held on the 15th June at the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), central London. The second and third, attended by HR professionals, were held on the 22nd June at the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD), Wimbledon.

The main purpose of the workshops was to provide delegates with information about and arising from the Stress Management Competence research project and get their input into the research. The workshops were also an opportunity to discuss the HSE Stress Management Standards and, particularly, the key roles played by line managers (as well as by Health and Safety, Occupational Health and HR professionals) and how to get manager buy-in.

About the Stress Management Competencies Research

The Stress Management Competence research project aims to support the HSE’s Management Standards programme and help employers improve workplace stress management. Whilst the Management Standards initiative is driven by Health and Safety, much of the responsibility for its implementation will fall on Human Resources (HR) professionals and line managers. This necessitates not only that HR professionals and managers have an informed understanding of what stress is, but also that they understand the skills, abilities and behaviours needed to implement the Management Standards and manage their staff in a way that minimises work-related stress.

In order to support line managers with this, we are conducting research to identify the skills and competencies that they will need to manage stress effectively in their teams. This will allow managers to implement the HSE stress management approach successfully at a local level. The research is designed to clarify the specific behaviours required by managers to prevent, tackle and identify stress effectively, thereby producing a set of stress management competencies. The identification of these competencies will enable the integration of stress management into existing management competency frameworks. It will also inform the development of specific management training programmes and other HR practices to embed ‘healthy management’ in the workplace.

Fund by the HSE and supported by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD), the data-collection for this research is focussed on the HSE’s five priority sectors: Healthcare, Education, Central Government, Local...
Government and Finance. The initial phase of the research is a qualitative piece of work, using interviews with over 160 managers and 210 employees to establish what manager behaviours are relevant to the effective and ineffective management of subordinate well-being/stress. The output will be a competency framework providing behavioural indicators of what constitutes ‘healthy’ management. The results of this part of the research programme will be available from the HSE and CIPD in early 2007.

Workshop delegates were asked to provide their perspective on behaviours by managers that cause, prevent or alleviating stress. They were also provided with an initial ‘stress management competency framework’ emerging from the research and asked for feedback. The data resulting from these exercises and discussions will be fed into the research project and will inform the research outputs.

**How do we gain buy-in and engage managers?**

Workshop delegates were also asked for their views on how to gain manager buy-in. Below is a summary of the suggestions from all three workshops. The workshop from which the suggestion originated is in brackets after each point.

**Training:**
- Giving managers coaching – the supportive approach works (H&S/OH)
- Teaching managers to look at their own stress – the idea being that if they are able to identify and then minimise their own stress, they will start to be able to see the benefit of stress management and pass it down to their team (HR and H&S/OH)
- Individual coaching and training (H&S/OH)
- Making it a mandatory training requirement (HR and H&S/OH)
- Tapping into existing training (HR and H&S/OH)
- Training line managers how to talk to their subordinates (H&S/OH)
- Training line managers in key skills to manage stress (H&S/OH)
- Using stress awareness in induction programmes (H&S/OH)
- Holding sickness absence seminars (H)

**Accountability:**
- Building accountability into the reporting system (HR and OH/H&S)
- Having an accountability mechanism built into responses to the employee opinion survey (HR and H&S/OH)
- Integrating stress management into performance criteria e.g. balanced scorecards (H&S/OH)
- Building it into structures imposed on certain people – prosecute now and again (HR and H&S/OH)

**Communication:**
- Understanding who the managers are and what they need – speaking to them in their language e.g. using lots of research data to prove the importance of stress management to scientists (H&S/OH)
- Setting it up as an employee experience – a two way process where the employee is responsible for their wellbeing too. Personal responsibility as well as responsibility for others. (H&S/OH)
- Getting managers to realise what they should fear is not litigation but absence. Litigation costs between £10 and £100K whereas being absent costs 5xsalary. (HR and OH/H&S)
- Thinking about the insurance costs and the impact of not doing anything about stress and wellbeing on premiums (H&S/OH)
- Instilling the positive side: stressing that the way to have high productivity is to create a happy and healthy workforce (HR & OH/H&S)
- Holding locality health and safety forums in which the managers are asked how they got on and what helps (HR and H&S/OH)
- Informal consultation – supporting the line manager with individuals (HR)
- Using a staff survey (HR)
- Providing a safe environment where managers can have ongoing support and consultancy (HR)

Other:
- Using both a reactive (individual stress risk assessment) and a proactive approach (communicating stress management is about good management) (H&S/OH)
- Embedding stress management/people management in job descriptions (H&S/OH)
- Getting senior managers to support the process/role modelling (HR and H&S/OH)
- Tasking Occupational Health advisors to be on-site regularly and to engage line managers (HR)
- Mini-crises, which need employee involvement, help engage managers as they reduce the fear around stress management (HR)
- Getting help from unions (HR)
- Not making the assumption that all managers are capable of people management (HR)

Further details

If you would like a copy of the full workshops report or further details about the Stress Management Competencies research project, please contact Rachel Lewis, email: Rachel@m-bar-go.com or tel: 07957 296343.
Research Team
The project is led by Emma Donaldson-Feilder, Affinity Health @ Work, and Dr Joanna Pryce, of Goldsmiths College, University of London, and is supported by two research associates, Rachel Lewis and Paul Flaxman.

Emma Donaldson-Feilder is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist who specialises in helping organisations achieve sustainable business performance through improvements in the well-being, morale, productivity and engagement of staff. With particular expertise in assessing and managing work-related stress, Emma has worked with a wide range of clients in the public and private sectors, providing training and consultancy to help employers, managers and individuals minimise stress risks. Emma is the author of numerous publications and conference papers in her field of expertise and is a visiting lecturer at City University and Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Joanna Pryce is Chartered Occupational Psychologist specialising health at work. She has worked with a range of public and private sector organisations including PricewaterhouseCoopers, Redbridge County Council, CancerBACUP, AstraZeneca, RCN, Shell, Corrs Brewers, Ford, Royal Bank of Scotland and Royal Scottish Assurance among others. She holds a PhD in Applied Psychology and lectures at the University of London in the areas of selection, occupational health psychology and work design. Working within both academic and practitioner fields enables her to apply current research and innovative approaches to her work, while maintaining awareness of the rapidly changing needs of business. She also takes a keen interest in professional activities (Chair of the British Psychological Society's Occupational Psychology Annual Conference) and publishes her work in practitioner and academic journals.

Rachel Lewis specialises in Organisational Research and Consultancy and through her work in this field has been responsible for the design, implementation and interpretation of many employee and customer research and 360° Feedback programmes. She has worked in a wide range of private sector organisations, particularly focused within the Finance sector, examples including Allianz Cornhill, Bradford & Bingley, HBOS and Royal London. She also has a keen interest in occupational well-being and has conducted independent research in this area. She is a practitioner member of the Division of Occupational Psychology and The Association of Business Psychologists.

Paul Flaxman is an occupational health researcher who specialises in the design, implementation, and evaluation of worksite interventions that are designed to improve employees’ well-being and performance. In recent years, Paul has successfully implemented a work-redesign programme for Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS), and has provided stress management training to over 500 employees across two London Boroughs. He has also helped to review the “business case” for the Health and Safety Executive’s Management Standards for work-related stress. Paul has published a number of academic articles and book chapters that relate to this work, and has presented at numerous conferences across Europe. Paul is a member of the Executive Committee for the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology (EA-OHP), and Chief Editor of the Occupational Health Psychologist (a quarterly publication of the EA-OHP).