

# ENA Occupational Health Committee



## **Stress - Initiatives**

*These case studies are designed to outline the overall management of stress programmes within ENA member companies, and so identify different approaches to the management of this issue and examples of good practice.*

**Company Name: National Grid**

### **What did the Company do:**

National Grid looked to implement the Health and Safety Executives Management Standards survey tool as a process to enable business groups to review their operations and engage the workforce in finding better ways of working.

The process also aimed to embed a common language and understanding to help employees and managers discuss and resolve issues that could lead to increased work pressure and possibly absence or ill health due to stress.

A procedure was developed and approved by the company in December 2005 outlining the roles and responsibilities of Line managers, Human Resources, Occupational Health, and Employees.

At the heart of this procedure was a requirement to carry out stress risk assessments in line with guidance based on HSE Management Standards and stress survey tool, and a process to undertake one to one stress risk assessments where managers (or others) identified that employees were exhibiting stress related problems.

Before the procedure was approved two teams of between 100 and 200 employees underwent a pilot survey to test the system and develop detailed guidance on how to carry out the process. One group completed the paper version of the questionnaire; the second group completed an online version. Both questionnaires that mirrored the HSE survey tool.

National Grid's Health Standards Team then facilitated a series of focus groups with representatives of the business teams to review the results of the survey and identify improvements to the way that team worked.

Much learning was taken from these pilot surveys and detailed guidance developed to inform future users of the process on how to progress and get best value.

Several levels of training were developed including a Stress Master Class for SHES and HR Business Partners and line management training. This provided the increased level of understanding about how to identify and manage stress, and an understanding of how to roll out the risk assessment process.

Over the last 18 months there is a growing commitment within the UK Business to use the management standards survey tool to undertake stress management risk assessments.

The process for individual risk assessment is being updated and supported by management competency training which endeavours to enhance line manager's interpersonal skills to successfully manage difficult employee / management discussions.

Occupational Health are looking to categorise work related referrals for mental health conditions under the six management standard categories so that managers, employees and others can start to discuss problems using this new "Language".

#### **Health and safety benefits:**

- Enables proactive management of pressure in working groups and for individuals
- Leads to targeted team based, bottom up solutions as opposed to generic.
- Complies with the HSE Stress Management Standards
- Increases the capability of managers to secure an earlier return to work for his/her employees
- Reduces absence through stress related illness
- Develops a language to help discuss issues related to stress

#### **Business / Cost Benefits:**

- Demonstrable system
- Reduced likelihood of claim
- Financial benefits from reducing absence
- Improved employee wellbeing, engagement, and performance

#### **Employee involvement:**

- TU and the business were consulted during the development of the procedure and process
- Two extensive pilot we undertaken prior to launch to ensure that the process was effective

#### **Management View:**

- Many parts of National Grid are now adopting the process although there remains some scepticism
- Where it has been truly embraced both management and employees have found better ways of working and improved communications / involvement process