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Out to UNISON safety reps and officers every two months – inside this issue:

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Bullying	Safety Reps Rights
FACK	Temperature
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Higher Ed.	Young Workers
Occ. Therapy	

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Issue 45



Respect! A Health and Safety Issue

As Health and Safety Week approaches, UNISON national, regions and branches are gearing up to take part and organise.

Young Workers at Greater Risk!

Dedicated this year to young people, the 2006 European Health and Safety Week will highlight the need to ensure that young workers have a safe and healthy start to their working lives; and promote risk awareness and risk prevention in enterprises, schools and colleges, and the wider education community. *Safe Start!* is the slogan for the Week which takes place from 23 October.

Did you know that young workers run a 50% higher risk of work accidents than more experienced workers? Did you know that young people may be more susceptible than older workers if exposed to health hazards? Did you know that many work-related ill-health problems are cumulative in nature, so they may not show at a high rate in young workers but the exposure may make them ill in later life? Did you know that young workers may be subject to harassment and bullying because of their low status or because they are new?

The reasons why young workers may be at greater risk include: a lack of awareness of risks, of their rights and of their employers responsibilities; a lack of instruction, supervision, or health and safety training; inexperience

and unfamiliarity with the job (or surroundings) or a lack of skill or training; being physically or mentally less able to carry out certain tasks or work; and the fact that young workers are often more likely to be employed in work which is: temporary, part-time, unskilled, lacking job security (making complaining more risky), low-paid (often where no or limited training is given), less likely to be unionised, and in areas more prone to a poorer safety culture (such as SME's and particular sectors).

UNISON's Young Members

Discussions with Gary Williams, UNISON's Young Members Officer (young.members@unison.co.uk) and UNISON's National Health and Safety Committee assisted the development of our campaign strategy for the Week. A high level of interest on the subject of bullying and harassment was expressed at the 2006 Young Members Weekend, so we'll use the Week to organise and campaign around this very damaging issue. Our slogan, *Respect! A Health and Safety Issue*.

We'd like to hear from any young members (or their reps) who have suffered bullying or harassment at work? What did you do to deal with the problem? How did the UNISON branch/safety rep/activist and employer handle the matter? We're looking for good and bad practice examples, and any other comments you may wish to make. We're keep them anonymous (unless you say otherwise) and hope to use them in the next issue of this newsletter, and if you respond ASAP, in the production of a pamphlet on bullying and harassment specifically for young members and workers. See contact details above.

On page three there is the sad tale of one young UNISON member who's employer allowed her to remain at risk from a violent pupil for far too long, eventually made half-hearted attempts to deal with the matter. A "solution" has now been found, which she fears puts her job security at risk.

Why Get Involved?

This is a list of benefits experienced by UNISON branches in previous years:

- making work safer and healthier,
- recruiting new members,
- getting current members active,
- members volunteering to be safety reps,
- organising the workplace, and
- showing that the branch and UNISON are active and achieve on health and safety. After all it is one of the main reasons why workers join unions.

A Recruitment Opportunity

Some branches might ask what if they don't have any young members or a problem with bullying?

First ensure that bullying and harassment really are not an issue for young members or workers, rather than simply one the branch is unaware of. Secondly, consider if the reason your branch may not have any/many young members is because there are few young workers, rather than that they've never been asked to join. Otherwise this initiative could offer a recruitment drive. Once recruited, young workers add to the strength of UNISON's voice and may become tomorrow's activists, safety reps, or branch safety officers. For more on this, see "Challenge X" on page four.

Other Members also Bullied

If the theme for Health and Safety Week is not relevant to your branch, the theme can be adapted. For example, what about the bullying and harassment of other members? UNISON member Richard Pocock was driven to suicide by a bullying management. After many years of service, UNISON members Janet Ballantyne and Cath Noon were both forced out of their jobs because of bullying. Alternatively, a completely different topic may be focused on, either in tandem with or in place of the main theme.

What can you do?

Check with your branch - most do plan to take part. Put the Week on the branch committee or joint health and safety committee agenda. Contact: the employer; other local UNISON or other union branches; your regional UNISON, TUC, or HSE office; and/or the local hazards campaign group; and jointly plan or take part in their event. See what UNISON branches have organised in the past at: <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/B1127.pdf>

The list below is not exhaustive, but activities your branch may consider include:

- a health and safety newsletter;
- a 'spot the hazards' competition, maybe with a prize sponsored by the employer;
- a meeting for members and potential members to raise awareness (maybe during lunch to improve attendance);
- a survey to identify health and safety concerns or to establish the extent of bullying and harassment at work;
- an exhibition stall to publicise the Week, workplace hazards, and branch activity;
- a training day for safety reps;
- a special union meeting to organise around a hazard, such as bullying;
- jointly developing and implementing with the employer a new health and safety policy or procedure; and/or
- signing the *European Safe Start Charter* to show your commitment to safe and healthy work (<http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/sign>).

UNISON will continue to promote its National Inspection Day which has now been adopted by the TUC and other unions. And if it's good for them, why not make sure that you, your branch, or your safety reps take part. This year the Day falls on Wednesday 25 October and safety reps around the country will be carrying out inspections to improve workplace health and safety. Consider doing a general inspection, or perhaps focus on a hazard of particular concern in your branch.

Start planning and Let us know!

If not already, start planning now and order your materials ASAP. Talk to other safety reps, stewards, your branch, and your employer. You don't have to be too ambitious. Small-scale activities that go well are far more effective than big plans that fail. And let us know what you, your branch, or region plans to do and we'll publicise it (contact details on page one).

Further Resources



Bullying at Work (1281) - activists guide.

Does your work make you Sick (0722) - leaflet for members and potential members.

Health and Safety Inspections at Work (1939) - safety reps guide.

H&S Rep Recruitment Poster (1681) and ***Leaflet*** (1682).

Health and Safety Week 2006 Poster - in the October issue of Focus (out Sept. 06).

Lone Working (1750) - activists guide.

Respect! A Health and Safety Issue - new leaflet for young members and workers on bullying and harassment (under production - watch this space).

Stress at Work (1725) - activists guide.

Stress at Work (0848) - leaflet for members and potential members.

Violence at Work (1346) - activists guide.

Download these from our website or order by email (communications@unison.co.uk), tel. (020 7551 1455), or your normal method, but don't forget to quote the stock no. (above in brackets).

Draft Bullying Survey - for branches.

Draft Joint Agreement on Bullying.

Health and Safety Inspection Report - A4 draft form (also in the *Inspections Guide*).

Inspection Poster - notifying members that you'll be inspecting.

Inspection Letter - to the employer.

Workplace Safety Inspection Video - every branch should have a copy, but we still have a few to give away or lend out.

These are also on the UNISON website (except for the video) or direct from the Health and Safety Unit.

Next Generation newsletter for young member activists - summer 2006 (<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/B2586.pdf>).

Health and Safety Week website (<http://www.unison.org.uk/safety/healthandsafetyweek.asp>).

Young Members website (<http://www.unison.org.uk/young/index.asp>) - with loads of relevant materials for young members and workers.

External



HSE webpages (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek/index.htm>) - activities, links, an action pack to download or order, and much more.



European Agency for Safety and Health webpages (OSHA - <http://ew2006.osha.eu.int>) - case studies, suggestions, an amusing video, powerpoint presentations, mainstreaming health and safety, and much more.



RISQ webpages (http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/risq/why_risq_it/) - aimed at a younger audience including children with targeted information, questions to ask the boss, amusing animations, e-cards, quizzes, and fun ideas to encourage young workers and the workers of tomorrow to get involved.



Young People Basics webpages (http://europe.osha.eu.int/priority_groups/young_people) - information for young workers and all those interested in their health and safety.



IOSH's wiseup2work website (<http://www.wiseup2work.co.uk/>) - youth friendly, with information, animations, and competitions.



ROSPA's website (<http://www.youngworker.co.uk/>)



TUC's Young Workers and Health and Safety Week webpages (http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm?mins=345 and http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/index.cfm?mins=297).

hazards Hazards Magazine website (<http://www.hazards.org/2young2die/index.htm>) - see the summary on page three of this newsletter.



UK National Work-Stress Network (<http://www.workstress.net>) - plenty of useful information.

The **HSE, TUC, and Hazards Magazine websites** also have useful pages on bullying, stress, and harassment.

Special Feature

Young Workers at Risk

“My name is Jess”

My name is Jess and I've spent the last three years being physically attacked. I worked with a child with Autism in a mainstream school and have been his support assistant since he started in reception. His behaviour was always of an aggressive nature and I received the brunt of it. More recently though, his behaviour got so out of control that I could no longer deal with him on my own.

It began to get worse around Xmas 2005. He screamed, shouted, spat, pinched, hit, punched, bit, kicked, and head-butted me. His behaviour was now taking its toll on me mentally and physically. I frequently had to restrain him. Outside agencies were called in to assist.



I spoke to the school educational psychologist and told her of my situation - made worse by isolation from colleagues. I got a 15 minute break in the morning and for three years I spent my 30 minute lunch by myself. Job rotation and rearranging my lunch time was suggested. I went to the head to discuss this but just broke down, saying that I couldn't cope anymore. The joint arrangement only for four weeks. They could not cope and went off sick with depression. There was no further mention of anyone else assisting.

I fully expect that when working with children with special educational needs that there may be some inappropriate behaviour, but this child took it to the extreme and eventually began targeting me. For example, he would attack me in response to another staff member disciplining him. His behaviour became so dangerous that he was excluded from school on many occasions. His parents are now sending him to a special school.

Now I face the prospect of losing my job in March or April 2007. Without the child the school will lose the funding which pays for me. Because of this, the school is yet to tell me what I will be doing from September 2006, when all of the other support assistants have received their timetables. If no extra money can be found, I stand to lose my job.

I can't help but feel that I've been cast aside like a spare part to be dealt with when the time comes. This feels quite harsh after three years of service, during which I've struggled on to do my job, and after many broken promises of "it will be sorted." Eventually you hit rock bottom. I don't think that I would cope very well if child returning in September.

At work I am not allowed to stand on tables when putting up displays because of health and safety, and yet for the last three years I have been subjected to physical attacks without an adequate response from my employer. Don't misunderstand me, I am all for inclusion, but nobody should have to put up with being attacked.

This is the sad tale, mostly in her own words, of one young UNISON member. Jess is not her real name.

Often employers will promote health and safety it only requires employees to do or not do something at no cost to the employer, or just requires an instruction being issued to the workers. If a problem requires the employer to take positive action, suddenly it can go very quiet.

Employers need to assess the risks so that employees can work safely with individuals who perhaps can't be held fully responsible for their behaviour; or indeed if the job involves working with people known to be violent but who can't be avoided. Appropriate steps might include prohibiting lone working, and/or establishing a system to rotate staff as frequently as required so that no-one is left to burn-out. For adults who have no learning disabilities, no mental health, nor any other problems; a zero tolerance approach might be more appropriate.

Jess was advised to contact a local UNISON rep to discuss her employment situation, and that if necessary, her local rep could seek further advice from the local UNISON regional office. Jess was also referred to UNISON Direct.

Too Young to Die

Hannah Kirkham, 18, was bullied by fellow workers. An inquest was told of how she was attacked and humiliated. It found that Hannah took her own life, in 2003, after a sustained period of clinically diagnosed severe depressive illness which was significantly influenced by bullying and harassment at work.

Nearly 4,500 young people were seriously injured or killed at work last year, over 20% more than five years ago and a 10-year high. One person under 25 dies every month in a workplace accident, one is seriously injured every 40 minutes, and thousands more (one every 12 minutes) are forced to take at least three days off after being hurt or injured. For young people, work is becoming more hazardous.

Too Young to Die is a new TUC report published in the latest issue of the UNISON backed *Hazards Magazine* (see "resources" on page two). The report says that despite stricter health and safety rules for the youngest workers, they are at risk because employers fail to take account of their lack of experience and training. Young workers are not killed or injured because they goof around or are immature. The accident statistics are mostly explained by inexperience. The newer you are to the job, the more likely you are to be injured.

Despite this, the TUC's *Play Safe at Work* survey found that employers do far too little to protect young workers. Despite a clear legal duty, 37% of young workers had not received health and safety training.

The Local Government Association is backing the TUC's *Don't make this your last summer - work safe* message. Councils will carry out spot-checks and awareness campaigns, etc. to ensure that young people are employed safely.

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to risk assess prior to recruiting a young worker, taking into account specific considerations; and prohibits young persons from certain hazardous work. The Working Time (Amendment) Regulations 2002 limit the hours under 18's can work and specify minimum rest periods. With some exceptions, there is also a ban on nightwork.

European Good Practice Awards

The European Good Practice Awards will this year recognise organisations, including schools and union branches, that have made an outstanding and innovative contribution: to ensure that young people make a safe start in their working lives; and to promoting risk awareness, management, and prevention. The deadline for UK entries is 15 September. For more information go to: <http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/goodpracticeawards> , email: .focalpoint@hse.gsi.gov.uk , or tel: 0845 345 0055

Tackling Bullying in Higher Ed.

Work is ongoing on the project set up by the Equality Challenge Unit in partnership with UNISON and others. This followed a UNISON survey which received extensive media coverage. The projects objectives include: mapping out current trends in H.E institutions, identifying and circulating guidance and examples of good practice, and running pilot schemes to improve current practice. For more information go to: <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/resources/daw/>

Tackling Bullying in Occ. Therapy

Following a growing number of queries from UNISON member therapists and managers working in occupational therapy, UNISON Health Care is to draft some OT-specific guidance on bullying and harassment. The guidance, planned for autumn 2006, will look at dealing with the problem both from the perspective of those bullied, and from the perspective of the managers who need to deal with the matter. Watch this space.

Topical Dates

If having read this newsletter we've convinced you that action on bullying and harassment is what your workplace needs, then why not also plan to take part in the National Stress Awareness Day on Wednesday 1 November and the Ban Bullying Day on Tuesday 7 November. For more on these Days see the links on page two, including UNISON's website.

Managing Sickness Absence with Care

Managing Sickness Absence with Care, is the theme for this years National Stress Network Conference on 18 November. Speakers include: the HSE, UNISON, and the Stress Network. Workshops will cover: the stress management standards, managing returns, absence procedures, disability issues, and more. Go to: http://www.workstress.net/downloads/Conference_2006_flier.pdf , email: lesvroberts@hotmail.com , or write to: Les Roberts, 33 Old Street, Upton, Upon Severn, WORCS, WR8 0HN.



At yet another highly successful National Hazards Conference, relatives of people killed at work launched FACK or Families Against Corporate Killers. FACK members believe that safe work is a human right not a privilege. They are angry and frustrated, and feel like they've been robbed twice: once of their loved ones in incidents that should have been prevented, and secondly of their right to justice. FACK will campaign against the hundreds of people killed by work every year, in incidents the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) say should have been prevented.

Hilda Palmer of the Hazards Campaign which is supporting the group said "FACK has grown out of the pioneering work of individual families like Ann Elvin and the Simon Jones Memorial Campaign, and... [will] create a united voice..." It's demands include: the urgent implementation of a law of corporate manslaughter which as an appropriate, proportionate penalty and an effective deterrent, will send to jail employers who kill by gross negligence; plus more rights to workers and safety reps to protect themselves against exposure to unacceptable risks to their lives and health.

Families bereaved by work and organisations wanting to support or work with FACK should contact: FACK, c/o Hazards Campaign, Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Road, Manchester, M16 7WD; tel: 0161 636 7557; or email: mail@gmhazards.org.uk . For more information go to: <http://www.fack.org.uk>



Better Safety Rep Rights?

If you've not done so already, there is still just over two weeks for you to respond to the consultation on *Improving Worker Safety*. The deadline is 8 September.

UNISON is urging as wide a response as possible on what would encourage workers and safety reps to become more involved in the management of health and safety. If you have good worker involvement or have negotiated additional rights for safety reps then try to send a joint response with your employer. This will demonstrate that many employers value the safety reps role.

When responding do not allow the set questions to pre-determine the scope of your suggestions. The current proposals do not go far enough, plus there are some assumptions which need to be challenged.

For your assistance both UNISON (see the last issue of this newsletter on the web at: <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/B2539.pdf>) and the TUC (<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/HSC.pdf>) have produced guidance to assist safety reps in responding. The HSE proposals are on the web at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/consult/condocs/cd207.htm>



Are you ready to take *Challenge X*? UNISON's ability to win agreements and defend its members, even on health and safety, depends on its membership density – that is, what proportion of a workforce who are members of the union.

In some workplaces density is far too low. "Nobody asked me!" That's the single biggest reason people give for not having joined a trade union. Part of UNISON's response is to set itself a target of 1.5million members by the end of 2007: *Challenge X*. All activists and other members who'd like to help are encouraged to sign up and recruit at least 10 new members each by the end of 2007. Why not use the 2006 Health and Safety Week to assist in recruiting new members?

Want to know more? Go to: <http://www.unison.org.uk/challengex> or call UNISON Direct on: 0845 355 0845.

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