ESRI launch: Preventing Work-Related Stress

Patricia Murray
Senior Organisational Psychologist/Inspector
HSA

HEALTH AND SAFETY
AUTHORITY

Work-related stress in context

- Health and Safety remit - legislation
- Personal (Mental Health) injury – stress
- Duty holders – standards to meet ('reasonable')
- Org Psychologist/inspector:

  - Assist – expertise re evidence available
  - Support – seminars/presentations/tools (Work PositiveCI)
  - Regulate – Advice/IN/DPP

HEALTH AND SAFETY
AUTHORITY

Four Stage Process

Prepare

Build a business case, secure commitment and establish your steering group

1

Measure

Identify risk and opportunity within your workplace using our free survey tools

2

Action Plan

Explore and prioritise the key actions, develop your action plan

3

Review

Review progress and revitalise your Action Plan

4

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

Debate around Stress as construct

- Not an illness or a disorder
- *Can* lead to an (Diagnostic Statistical Manual) illness - anxiety or depressive disorder
- A state of transient discomfort with varying degrees of dysfunction
- Being stressed interferes with reliability as a witness
- Highly subjective area –
  - Subjectively experienced
  - Subjectively described/labelled
  - Causes differently attributed

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY

Difficulties assessing the issues

- National, sociological datasets scarce
- Coverage of psychosocial/mental health issues scant
- Quality of data varies

  - Lack of understanding
  - Lack of agreement
  - Complexity of constructs
  - Associated variables random and minimal
  - Appropriateness of statistical models?

H S & A
HEALTH AND SAFETY
AUTHORITY

HSA-ESRI work

- Reliable international data source s

- ESRI competent expertise

- HSA – commitment to improve existing infrastructures to assist in the development of better systems nationally

- Goal ->reduce work related stress

- How? -> identify causal features within organisations

- Why?-> inform reduction actions/strategies

- 'Evidence for Policy'

HEALTH AND SAFETY
AUTHORITY

Challenges of the report

- Stress

  - Not confined to 'work'

  - Not a discreet category

  - Over representation

- Data issues

  - Single source

  - Not enough variables

  - Limited scope for granularity

  - No qualitative features

HEALTH AND SAFETY
AUTHORITY

Preventing Work related Stress

- Bring research findings to enterprise level
- Ensure risks are understood to be assessed for various groups/roles
- Accept that individuals vary; vulnerable individuals, situations, contexts
- Limited responsibility of employer/employment - Role for individuals, families, communities
- Linking HR, H & S, Management, Wellbeing committees
- Linking NGOs, state bodies, charities, medical, psychological, social - formal and informal groups

HEALTH AND SAFETY
AUTHORITY

Recommendations

- Use what we know

- Identify health promoting (carriers) elements of work life AND those which are potential threats -> analyse data re illness absence

- Influence and extend capacities of data capturers ->get more usable, reliable and accessible data and fine tune it for usable insights

- Less reliance on averages and surveys in order to better capture subtleties behind the statistics – ID facilitators, barriers and mediators for increased performance, wellbeing and employment success

- Develop state structures to engage in unified approach across institutions

- Use all the expertise across industry -private and public, policy and applied

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUTHORITY