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# **HEALTHY WORKING: A PRESCRIPTION**

## **Learning From Good Practice Cases**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

It is now explicit Government policy, both North and South of the Border, to seek to encourage an increasingly close, positive relationship between the individual experience of employment and the health of the individuals concerned. In essence there are two broad aims in these Government strategy documents:

1 To increase the extent and uptake of employment by reducing the numbers of registered unemployed or those claiming disability benefits.

and

2 To try and stimulate a more positive individual experience of the employment relationship in physical and mental health terms.

### **The Context**

Such strategy documents need to be located in the current context of the labour market, which points to a rather uneven pattern involving a mixture of 'bad' news and 'good' news. We firstly turn to some of the bad news, which has undoubtedly been an important trigger for the production of such Government strategy documents.

There are numerous individual statistics, which are frequently cited in support of the case for trying to establish a more positive relationship between employment and health. For example, the November 2005 issue of Health at Work cited the following (p2):

Each week more than one million workers take time off because of sickness. Most return to work within days, however around 17,000 people are off work for longer. Almost one in five people who are off longer than 6 weeks leave work permanently.

The adverse implications for individual health as a result of prolonged unemployment and limited participation in the labour market have long been recognised. Moreover, such adverse effects are held to be inequitably distributed throughout the population, given that the experience of such unemployment is frequently concentrated in particular geographical areas and among lower socio-economic groups. Such adverse health effects were held to provide an increasing part of the contemporary case for seeking to increase the level of employment or 'employability' among those concerned.

More recently, increased attention has been given to the quality of the in-employment experience. This particular theme has been picked up by increased discussion of the inter-related issues of long hours of work and employee perceptions of 'work intensification' and stress. As one recent book put it (Bunting, 2005, p177):

Human beings have finite resources, physical and emotional, and the over work culture eats into them. For many, the result is illness: either debilitating mental conditions such as work - related stress and depression, or life threatening conditions such as heart disease. The health of the overworked employee is hit twice – first by working too hard, and second by not having the time to develop relationships, take exercise and pursue outside interests, all of which strengthens resilience to pressure. The cost to an increasing number of individuals is evident in the spectacular explosion in the number of days at work lost to stress, not to mention all those workers below the statistical radar, who resort to anti-depressants to keep going and whose lives are a frantic effort to cope.

Some relevant headline statistics from the 2005 CIPD Absence Management Survey were as follows:

- 1 The average level of sickness absence among respondent organisations was 3.7% or 8.4 days per employee per year, a figure that rose to 10.3 days per employee in the case of the public sector.
- 2 In all, 39% of employers reported an increase in stress-related absence compared to the previous year.
- 3 Only 62% of organisations used occupational health professionals to manage longer term absence, and only 30 % used rehabilitation programmes to a similar end.

In one organisation we are aware of an examination of their internal records for the period April 2001 to March 2002 revealed some 7000 recorded absence days where the given reason was 'stress/anxiety' (some 8% of total sickness absence). Using a notional wage figure of £50 per day this involved an indicative cost (excluding any indirect costs) of more than £350,000 to the organisation.

### **Seeking to Spread the Message**

These sorts of findings obviously raise questions about whether organisations recognise and acknowledge the importance of employee health, and, if so, how are they seeking to assist and support them in this regard. A recent newspaper article suggested that this would be a good investment for many organisations: "Vielife, a health consultancy I featured in this column nearly two years ago, has been carrying out long running research drawing health-related productivity comparisons. Its most recent findings suggest that spending on employee health programmes can produce almost a four-fold return on the investment." (R Donkin, Financial Times, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2005, p.2)

There are certainly individual employer initiatives that have received considerable attention and positive publicity; this is the 'good news' referred to earlier. The article referred to above, for instance, highlighted BT's 16-week web-based programme (involving pedometers, diet and exercise regimes), which more than 15% of the workforce have already signed up for. Again at Microsoft UK Headquarters there is an on-site well being centre staffed by qualified nurses (Bunting, 2005, p.9). Such initiatives are admirable, but are they replicable elsewhere? More specifically, are many other employers aware of the existence of such programmes, know their details and have a similar **incentive** and **ability** to introduce initiatives along similar lines?

The answer may be a cautious 'yes' to such questions if the organisation is relatively similar in nature to BT or Microsoft: that is, it is large sized, is embedded in essentially similar employer networks for the purposes of sharing information, and has considerable resources of both a financial and specialist in-house expertise nature. The further one moves away from sharing such characteristics, however, the more it is likely that there would be a 'no' answer to the questions posed above. The rationale for the exercise undertaken here is our belief that currently many (perhaps the majority of) organisations would answer 'no' to such questions.

Accordingly, the purpose of this exercise was to produce a series of organisational case studies whose **common theme** is that they have recognised the need to assist and support their employees in seeking to have a healthier working life. However, the details concerning the way they have chosen to assist and support them in this regard does vary somewhat. Moreover, we consciously sought **not** to produce a set of case studies that consisted almost entirely of high profile, well known and well resourced organisations. In choosing our case studies for interview purposes we essentially followed the guidelines or criteria listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Criteria for Case Study Selection**

- A cross-section of organisations involving a mixture of sectors and size.
- A ready willingness to be interviewed (and ideally to allow their name to be used).
- A wide range of healthy working lives issues and measures was involved (staff retention, sickness absence, health promotion, etc).
- Had introduced new or reformed arrangements/practices in response to a perceived problem, with some attempt being made to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the new arrangements.
- The initiatives could be values driven ('it is the right thing to do') and/or be underpinned by a more explicit business case ('we need as an organisation to gain in performance terms from this investment').

The case studies presented here are not 'representative' of industry as a whole. This is because they are all **voluntary** employer initiatives, which were not driven by the need to comply with legal regulations backed up by possible sanctions\*. To try to both widen and deepen the extent of the voluntary adoption process concerning such initiatives we believe is essential to produce guidelines and examples of good practice in a form that is readily available, easy to read, and involved examples or cases that fellow practitioners can relate to and identify with. It is to these ends that this publication is orientated.

\*The cases were selected on the basis of either prior research contacts or involvement with the SHAW programme.

## 2 CASE STUDIES

### Case Study No. 1: North Ayrshire Council

#### A Multi-Pronged Approach to Health

North Ayrshire Council employs around 7,000 individuals at any point in time, which involves a mixture of permanent, temporary and seasonal workers. Education, Social Services and Property Services are the largest employment units. The Authority received a SHAW bronze award in 1998, and more recently (2004) reached the finals of a Scottish Award for Work-Life Balance.

#### Work-Life Balance: The Authority as a Whole

Some 4 years ago the authority applied for, and received, a DTI grant to assist the development of a Work-Life Balance initiative. Their application was motivated by a number of considerations, namely:

- A concern with the level of sickness absence.
- A desire to make itself a more 'attractive' employer in terms of its ability to recruit and retain labour.
- An enhanced ability to offer more effective services to customers and the community, most notably services beyond the traditional 9-5 working day in areas, such as, building and social services.
- An intention to assist women employees, who were in the majority in certain service areas, help balance out work and family responsibilities.

- To assist a larger movement in favour of a 'cultural shift' in the organisation which would involve a more flexible, empowered and engaged workforce.

Following receipt of the grant they engaged a firm of consultants to help them work with employees and managers right across the authority. The initial emphasis was on an extensive programme of management training. This was designed to assist managers to help respond appropriately to individual employee and team requests for more flexible working arrangements, and to highlight the issues and considerations that managers needed to take into account when making decisions about such requests. Alongside this extensive training initiative (which also involved an employee attitude survey) a number of 'pilot tests' were initiated; these were mainly concentrated in Social Services, Finance, IT and Building Services. There were four explicit criteria established for initiating a 'pilot test':

- 1 They had to be voluntarily initiated by an individual or team.
- 2 They were to be run on a trial (fixed term) basis to assess their overall impact and effectiveness.
- 3 They had to maintain or enhance the level of service delivery to customers.
- 4 They had to be 'transparent' in the sense that all three parties involved (the individual employee, the team and the manager) had to agree to them.

Such pilot tests have typically lasted around 2 years, with the positive outcomes of many of them having been used to help reform and change policies and procedures within the authority.

## **Pilot Tests in Work-Life Balance**

Various pilot tests were discussed with us, including the following:

- 1 An employee in the probation area of social services has moved on to a compressed hours arrangement, involving four longer days but one day off. This has meant saving on childcare for the individual concerned, and a saving on overtime working for the department.
  
- 2 In the payroll section within the Finance department, 3 employees work longer hours over 4 days, but on Friday they can leave at lunchtime (on a rotational basis). This has meant that departments can access the system beyond the traditional 9-5 hours, and there has been a marked reduction in the number of times the system is down as the 3 employees can undertake necessary system maintenance work outwith normal working hours.
  
- 3 Following periods of maternity leave a number of women employees responsible for pay roll in the education department have moved to term time only (39 weeks) working arrangements
  
- 4 In the IT department the individual responsible for software development for internet purposes has moved to an arrangement whereby she chooses which particular hours suit her for the 7 hours per week she works on the project.

In addition to these pilot tests (which are being currently monitored and reviewed by the personnel department) there is a combination of other initiatives:

- Service specific ones (e.g. The contact centre, which handles customer phone calls, operates a 'red' (no flexitime available), 'amber' (available depending on sickness absence and call volume levels) and 'green' (available) system).
- 'Informal' department based ones (e.g. in one department individuals can leave early to pick up children from school).
- Discretionary special leave entitlement for specified family emergencies (such requests have actually declined in departments such as Social Services where pilot tests have been most extensively adopted).

### **The Particular Case at Social Work**

This work-life balance programme exists right across North Ayrshire Council. However alongside this programme is one, which is specific to the Social Work Department. In the late 1990s, discussions were held in the Scottish Local Authority sector concerning the case for introducing a package of measures to support front line staff in Social Work. There was initially only limited and uneven progress across the sector as a whole, but a decision to fund a full time co-ordinator for the programme as a whole from 2003 has helped progress matters in that regard. An interactive website has been established in order that front line staff can share information, good practice and concerns. In addition, each Authority has identified a champion to take responsibility for sharing good practice, new initiatives and ideas.

North Ayrshire Social Work has been prominent in this regard. The reason for this, in the words of the Resource Manager interviewed, "it is the 'vicious circle' between stress, sickness absence, overtime payments, employee turnover and unfilled

vacancies". In late 2003, just under 1 in 5 qualified social worker posts were unfilled. At the same time, sickness absence averaged 7-7.5% in social work (compared to 5% for the authority as a whole), with the figure reaching as high as 13% in some areas (e.g. Residential Child Care).

From late 2003 the unfilled vacancy figure for qualified social workers in North Ayrshire fell from 1 in 5 to 1 in 10 (a year later), and since then has stabilised at around 7%. There has been no one single cause of this sizeable reduction. Rather a package of measures has been involved. As well as Social Work's heavy involvement in the Work Life Balance 'pilot tests' referred to earlier (the latest is a £50 subsidy for child care vouchers), there has been improved salaries and allowances, enhanced opportunities and support for accredited learning and development, and the introduction of the front line staff support initiative.

The front line staff support initiative got going in North Ayrshire's local authority through a series of front line staff focus groups. These identified the 5 key themes of absenteeism, tangible rewards, communication, learning and development and stress. Further meetings in late 2004 resulted in the gathering and development of more detail around these key themes with the relevant work groups putting forward proposals to the Workforce Planning Group in early 2005. Action plans were formulated by 4 working groups that took these forward at the Social Work department level, with other aspects of the themes also being addressed at the local authority wide level via the work-life balance initiative. For example, the Communication Working Group has proposed the wide distribution of employee suggestion boxes, whose suggestions can be analysed and then referred to the appropriate working groups for action. An on-line chat room has also been suggested. At the same time the Absence Working Group has proposed a review of the special leave policy provisions (benchmarking against other authorities) to ensure

that they remain 'progressive', the use of return to work interviews being stressed in procedural and training terms with appropriate support (where necessary) from Occupational Health and increased subsidised access to the local authorities own sport and leisure facilities.

## **Case Study No. 2: Scotia Chiropractic Limited\***

### **Small Things Add Up!**

This organisation, which was started in 1986, currently employs 17 staff spread over 2 sites. It is a primary health care provider, with its historical origins lying in a chiropractic clinic. The staff include 3 doctors, 2 therapists, 1 podiatrist, administrative staff etc. It is currently at the early stages of working with the NHS, with recent activities (branching out from the traditional chiropractic work) involving sports therapy and rehabilitation and ergonomic-based health & safety interventions in the corporate world. They are the recipients of an Investors in People award, a SHAW Bronze award both some 2/3 years ago. It is also ISO 9000 accredited.

### **The Values Orientation**

The following three quotes capture the essence of this organisation:

- “Health and well-being underpins everything we do here”
- “We don’t do sickness absence here”
- “ A lot of little things add up to one big thing”

These 3 quotes came from the Business Development Manager, who both talked to us extensively and provided a guided tour of one of the sites. He then went on to talk about the essential culture of the organisation. The following words were used for this purpose: “team (top to bottom), goodwill, equity, no hierarchy, all first names, a no blame culture.” Such words fit very comfortably alongside the core values set out in the organisation’s Statement of Purpose – reproduced in Box A below.

\*This case study was originally published in HR Network Scotland, Volume 1, Issue 3, January 2006, p41.

**Box A****Our Core Values**

- ✓ Chiropractic is integral to health and well being
- ✓ Patients deserve the best care possible
- ✓ All business must be open and honest
- ✓ Staff deserve a safe, healthy and happy environment in order to be productive

Two excellent illustrative examples of this culture with its core values in action were provided. The first one involved the cleaner going on holiday, the organisation sought no replacement cleaner, but rather all staff (including the Business Development Manager interviewed) shared all the cleaning duties during the holiday period; this has and remains the norm throughout the organisation. The second one involved a health scare for another member of staff – the individual's reward system had traditionally involved a substantial element of payment by results. He was transferred to a straight salary basis simply because the organisation took the view that "he should not be put under financial pressure simply because he was unwell".

**Small, Individual Initiatives**

Numerous small other examples were provided and shown to us to illustrate the organisation's view that positive employee health in the workplace essentially derives from a lot of small, complementary initiatives adding up to a really quite powerful package. For example, our walk around one of the sites revealed that relevant H&S information was distributed widely throughout staff facilities (including the toilets!) We saw material concerning SHAW, Jog Scotland, healthy eating, personal road safety. Regular one to one and group meetings throughout the organisation in which employee health and well-being was **THE** sole subject of discussion are the norm, with release time and fees being paid for attendance at courses (recent examples

included a sports first aid course and an individual qualifying as a Jogscot leader who is now offering lunchtime sessions for both staff and customers). Secondly, all staff make no payment for full access to all the services of the organisation, which are provided to customers (this strong staff –customer alignment is a particular feature of this organisation). Thirdly, personal alarms were provided for all staff, many of whom are women, because of concerns about leaving the office during winter hours. Fourthly, as well as the obvious non-smoking approach of the organisation, healthy eating by the staff has been strongly encouraged. A fresh water fountain available for customers has a counterpart for the staff, a juicer and full kitchen facilities are also available in both sites; there is strong encouragement to make full use of them as an alternative to snacking and convenience foods. Finally regular ongoing reminders and discussions occur (with relevant guidance literature) on “hot” topics, such as drugs, exercise, healthy eating, and stress. All of this culminated relatively recently in a comprehensive health audit of all staff carried out by an independent outside body.

### **The Gain**

Has it all been worthwhile? Has it been a win-win situation for both staff and the organisation? In the mind of the Business Development Manager the answer was a resounding yes to both questions: “profits are up, we have no retention problems, and most dramatically of all we do not have to advertise to recruit new staff. Our 2 most recent appointments had sent us letters well in advance of the openings, asking us to keep them in mind for employment purposes if relevant openings should occur. We are well known and well respected in the area among professionals. It’s all about our core values. We treat patients and staff the same, and carry out business in an open and honest manner.”

## **Case Study No. 3: HM Prison Barlinnie**

### **Staff Participation Equals Massive Success**

#### **Introduction**

Barlinnie Prison was built in the 1880's and is a large adult male prison located in the east of Glasgow. It currently has an average of 1,350 prisoners in residence and employs circa 630 staff members. Within the organisation there are two types of employees – uniform and non-uniform. Uniform employees can be broken down into different hierarchical levels. Non-uniform employees are made up of various professionals and clerical workers. Uniformed employees work on a three-shift programme because all areas must be covered twenty-four hours a day. The organisation is a recognised Investor in People and in 2005 it received a Gold SHAW award. This case looks at the difficulties of introducing change within a highly unionised public sector agency and considers the importance of looking after employee health and well-being within potentially stressful working environments.

#### **Approach to Health**

Approximately six years ago the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) decided to become more proactive about employee health. In Barlinnie this meant establishing a voluntary health forum comprising of six representatives from across the organisation. Shortly after their inception the forum decided to work towards the SHAW award programme, as they believed that it would provide them with the guidance to succeed. Nonetheless, when the establishment first started to look at employee health they met some resistance; the prison is a male dominated environment and employees were sceptical as they thought that it was just another management scheme. Furthermore, there was initial suspicion from the unions, who sought to ensure that there was no catch for employees and that it was not just empty promises. To overcome these issues the forum was established on a

voluntary basis and it was taken out of the management structure. In addition, it was ensured that there was union representation on the forum.

Despite initial resistance both the prison officers that I spoke to stated that the majority of employees now value and appreciate the forum's initiatives. The quotes below illustrate the organisations approach to employee health (PA is a Regime Instructor and is the Chair of the health forum while PB is a Physical Education Instructor and is Secretary to the forum):

- “We try to address issues that effect people in a prison environment” (PA)
- “Events have broken down barriers and improved socialisation” (PB)
- “Management as participants, not as organisers.” (PB)
- “Management are not running it, nonetheless they do buy into it!” (PA)
- “We aim to motivate employees, reduce stress levels and improve the working environment for everyone!” (PB)

### **Achieving a Healthier Working Environment**

Over recent years the Scottish Prison Service has realised that employees are a key resource: “machines cannot speak to prisoners” (PB), thus through policy and promotional activities they maintain their investment in employee health. The Scottish Prison Service produces policies relating to health - such as, health and safety; sickness absence; and smoking awareness - which are then rolled out nationally. At a local level the health forum endeavours to promote employee health issues while providing support for those attempting to improve their health. The forum meets regularly to review the organisation's progress and to set goals for the next period. They run a variety of poster campaigns and special events throughout the year. These are advertised through the organisation's internal email system and

in employees' payslips. PA believes that the SHAW programme has helped the forum to plan and carry out these activities.

Activities are run during the working day and the forum endeavours to target all employees, thus campaigns often cross over the shifts. Furthermore, the activities are open to both direct SPS employees and Barlinnie's contract employees. Poster campaigns have included: dental and oral health, no smoking, mental health, alcohol awareness and many more. These aim to give employees the opportunity to obtain access to information relating to health, yet are designed so that employees do not feel that they are being forced to take part. On occasion, to further raise awareness of a topic the organisation gives out "gift bags" that contain a small appropriate gift along with relevant information leaflets. For example, they recently had stress "gift bags", which contained a bottle of Radox and a 'how to reduce stress' leaflet. Similarly, they did one for dental health containing an advice leaflet, a toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste. These "gift bags" although relatively inexpensive for the organisation (all literature is free and they often receive discounts for buying in bulk) are a fun way to raise employee awareness of important issues.

Both PA and PB spoke extensively of the special events that they have held; one particularly popular event (receiving 95% attendance) was their Stress Awareness Day; the organisation brought in a number of alternative therapists who provided a range of complementary therapies to staff including: Reiki, Acupressure and Massage. Their Healthy Eating Day also received a good response from employees – for this the catering department prepared healthy meals and then distributed them to staff. A representative from slimming world also came into the organisation to perform a demonstration and offer advice. Furthermore, employees were given health surveys to fill out, these were linked to a prize draw in which the winner

received a hamper of fruit. The results of this survey were then used to guide upcoming events and campaigns.

The forum organises a number of events relating to major diseases and illnesses, for instance, they ran a breast cancer awareness day, this involved the Beatson Clinic coming onsite to tell employees relevant and useful information “They told us some really interesting statistics including the fact that in 2002 approximately 1% of those diagnosed with breast cancer were male” (PA). As well as this the organisation runs various activities that aim to encourage the socialisation, relaxation, and motivation of employees. Two examples include a ‘Fruity Friday’ (each employee brought in a piece of fruit and then swapped it with another employee) and a ‘Glasgow Street Games Day’ – employees participated in old street games and were required to work in teams. On top of promoting employee health and well-being the health forum aims to provide support and treatment for those who need and want it. Smoking is a contentious issue with many possible health effects, therefore each January the organisations offers their employees a smoking cessation course. The programme is run onsite during lunchtimes and aims to support employees through the quitting process.

In conjunction with the above campaigns and events the health forum strives to provide ongoing initiatives that target employee health and fitness all year long. To achieve this goal they have reviewed the organisation's existing resources and established ways in which they can be used to improve employee health. For instance, the existing canteen now provides numerous healthy eating options that staff can choose from. Likewise, in addition to looking after the prisoners both the medical staff and fitness instructors' onsite assist the programme by offering employees regular health checks that look at issues like: cholesterol level, blood pressure and general fitness. These provide a great opportunity for employees to get

feedback on their health and to set their own goals. Furthermore, all employees have access to the staff gym plus the fitness instructors provide exercise classes for employees (such as, yoga, tai chi and salsa dancing); these are very popular and are held in onsite facilities.

Although, when compared with external organisations prisons offer a unique working environment, the majority of prison environments are similar - they have the same hierarchy, the same external staff and the same services onsite. Thus, health related policies are produced centrally by SPS and then conveyed to the individual prisons. The Scottish Prison Service continually reviews and revises policies where necessary, to ensure that they are legally acceptable. For instance, they are currently considering the policy implications of the imminent legislation on smoking in public spaces. Similarly, one policy change that has provided major benefits for employee health is that employees can now choose where they live. Historically, employees were required to live close to the prison: “employees used to be put in local houses that the prison owned ... that is now gone” (PA). Subsequently, when employees go home they are now able to escape the stresses related with the prison environment.

### **Value They Achieved**

So the voluntary health forum has shown dedication and imagination in its quest to promote an environment where employee health and well-being is key. However, have they achieved their objectives? Do employees appreciate the health programme? Has it provided benefits for the employer? Both PA and PB answer a resounding YES to these questions, maintaining that the programme provides benefits for both employees and employer. Although, they both admit that it is difficult to quantify or to measure the actual effect of each of the activities. For instance, the organisation has seen a reduction in its sickness absence figures; however they have recently introduced a new sickness policy, which will have

affected the figures. Regardless of this the prison's Governor believes that the health programme has contributed to the reduction. Furthermore, PA believes that the programme has yielded softer positive outcomes. For example, Barlinnie's investment in employee health was recently recognised when the staff restaurant received a healthy eating award and then again when the organisation received the Gold SHAW award. PA believes this is beneficial as it improves employee morale and shows both external organisations and potential employees that the Barlinnie cares for its staff.

Despite initial hesitance from employees, each year the health forum has seen more and more employees taking part in the events: "More people are attending events, which is a big plus!" (PA); "I used to do about 30 health checks on a health check day now I do about 70+" (PB). Both PA and PB believe this increase in attendance has made the company's investment worthwhile as "staff are gaining a greater knowledge of health and fitness and seeking advice is no longer seen as a weakness"(PA). Furthermore, by bringing together uniformed and non-uniformed members of staff, the events have broken down functional barriers thus increasing socialisation which in itself encourages a healthier working environment: "Even just getting away from the desk for five minutes is a huge stress reliever" (PB).

There are also many personal benefits for employees. For instance, it was noticed at one employee's health check that they had a very high cholesterol level consequently the organisation advised the employee to visit his doctor. The doctor was shocked at the level and put him onto full-time medication. This employee is particularly grateful, as he believes that learning of the problem at an early stage may have saved his life. Likewise through the smoking cessation courses the company has managed to convert six people into total non-smokers. One remarkable case involved a member of staff who previously smoked sixty cigarettes a day nonetheless two years on from

the course he remains a complete non-smoker. For these six people the programme has provided both financial and health benefits. Furthermore, as employees are becoming healthier and fitter their life expectancy is improved. Thus, the programme benefits employees' long-term health, which in turn benefits the employer.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Barlinnie is a hierarchical public service and introducing the new health programme has not always been a smooth process; however with persistence and imagination the health forum has overcome the obstacles that they faced. The organisation's outlook has highlighted that targeting employee health and well-being is key within any working environment and especially when there is the potential for added stress. Moreover, this case has shown that if an organisation fully utilises their existing resources they can achieve maximum success at a reduced cost. Furthermore, it illustrated that if an organisation has a comprehensive health at work programme they can motivate employees, reduce stress levels and improve the environment for everyone!

## **Case Study No. 4: News International Newspapers (Scotland) Limited**

### **A Holistic Yet Targeted Approach!**

#### **Introduction**

News International Newspapers (Scotland) Ltd is a Scottish subsidiary of News Corporation, one of the world's largest media conglomerates. News International (Scotland) Ltd is a newspaper publisher that produces titles like: The Times; The Sunday Times; The Sun and The News of the World. It employs both editorial and production staff at the Glasgow site and currently has approximately 280 permanent employees and around 80 contract employees. This case illustrates how an organisation can promote good employee health while improving its bottom line figures by taking a holistic yet targeted approach to tackling health at work.

#### **Approach to Health**

Their occupational health manager portrays News International Newspapers (Scotland) Ltd as an organisation that promotes all aspects of employee health. This is illustrated by quotes like:

- “The underlying attitude to health and safety is absolutely fantastic!”
- “Managing health must be a holistic approach that takes each case as individual and looks at all aspects of employee well-being”
- “Our health Policy is great! It is not just about health, it is general welfare
- “Not only do we have the policies, we have the right managers in place!”

The organisation has an ‘honesty, integrity and fair play’ policy and aims to promote a healthy working environment for all its employees. All employees have access to private healthcare and have fully subsidised membership at a local gym.

Furthermore, the organisation encourages and supports various sporting events, such as golf tournaments, football matches etc. In 2002, with the introduction of a new occupational health manager the organisation started the Scotland Health at Work (SHAW) award programme. They decided to become much more upfront and proactive about health promotion. A voluntary health promotion group was set up, with representatives from all levels and areas of the organisation.

### **Achieving a Holistic Approach**

The health promotion group met regularly during their lunch hour; they looked at employee well-being in terms of fitness, health, stress and rehabilitation. As an employee's productivity is affected by their general health and because sickness absence is often due to general ill health, the organisation set to tackle not only work-related health but health in general. Therefore, alongside the private healthcare a 'keep healthy campaign' was initiated. On a regular basis a doctor, a physiotherapist and a chiropodist visit the site. If anybody has any issues, they can go to see the relevant professional and get treated through BUPA healthcare. Rehabilitation programmes were also introduced; this involves creating individual solutions for employees' problems. Their occupational health manager (OHM) gave two examples of how these programmes work in practice. The first involved an employee who had been off work for four months due to ill health. In an attempt to ensure that her return to work was smooth and stress-free, the organisation allowed her to come back to work part-time until she felt fully able. The second concerned a member of staff who approached the occupational health manager because he felt that he was getting stressed at work; to help him the company adjusted and modified certain aspects of his job, such as his duties and hours of work.

Each year, the occupational health manager works with her colleagues to prepare a specific action plan of health promotion campaigns. They aim to cover a range of

important topics throughout the year and attempt to vary the style of the campaigns, so as to ensure employee interest. Past campaigns have included: No Smoking, Alcohol Awareness, Skin Cancer and Holiday Health, Stress and Employee Well-Being, Know Your Numbers (Blood Pressure) and many more. In addition, they have introduced a number of ongoing programmes, for instance, they have Pilates classes during one lunch hour a week and have an alternative therapist that offers massages and other therapies at a reduced rate.

This organisation may differ from others, in that they want to endorse health issues that are specifically relevant to their employees. To do this they looked at their employees' demographics and found that 96% of those working within the organisation's production department were male. Thus, targeting men's health issues - such as: coronary risk, testicular cancer and prostate disease - was of particular importance. Their occupational health manager saw this as her biggest challenge as many of the men had been with the organisation for over 20 years and had formed a tight group culture. Nevertheless, through working with the men's health forum to produce a suitable programme and targeting them from the outset she has managed to build a good rapport with them and get their involvement in each of the schemes.

Their occupational health manager works with both the Charities Committee and the Sports and Social Committee to produce schemes that are light-hearted and worthwhile. For instance, to promote health issues surrounding the prostate, the company went to the prostate charity that produces a gimmicky 'pee-ball' that dissolves when it is peed on. Marketed as a game, the pee-ball is put in the urinal and then the man has to pee on it, if the man cannot dissolve the peeball, it may indicate that he has a potential prostate problem. The company paid a pound for each pee-ball and then gave them out free in the toilets. This proved to be very

popular and perhaps more importantly worthwhile - after the programme, a few employees spoke to the occupational health manager about concerns that they had. In the same way, the organisation did a testicular cancer campaign. Here, they got free literature from the Glasgow Resource Library including a great shower card that shows men how to check their testicles. Their occupational health manager admits that the men found them hilarious and that they were the subjects of a few jokes amongst the staff, but stresses that they did raise awareness of a serious topic.

Linked with men's health, the organisation also did a 'lifestyle' questionnaire. This was a series of questions regarding health, such as their: exercise levels, height, body mass index, blood pressure, cholesterol level, tobacco intake and alcohol consumption. Their occupational health manager then put all this information together and compared it to a coronary risk score chart that showed their risk level of having a stroke or heart attack. Following this the organisation decided to expand its promotion of employee fitness and healthy eating. They participated in an inter-organise event, which entailed News International Newspapers (Scotland) Ltd paying money to an independent company to organise ten sporting activities for the entire company. This event promoted different and unusual activities, such as, highland games and curling. Their occupational health manager feels that it gave employees the opportunity to try new and different sporting activities and this had a positive effect on their moral. To encourage healthy eating they organised a 'Fruity Friday', the company bought exotic and luxury fruit and then sold it in the staff canteen. The event served a dual purpose as the money raised was donated to world cancer research fund.

## **Value**

It is obvious that News International Newspapers (Scotland) Ltd see health promotion as a key part of their employee relations' strategy. However, have they actually

succeeded in improving employee health? Have they achieved bottom line benefits for the organisation? According to Their occupational health manager, yes, they have: “There are benefits for all involved, in some aspects each employee has benefited differently. You know; if we raise an individual’s awareness of an issue and consequently they seek further advice, then that is great!” As with any change, initially some members of staff were wary of the company’s health initiatives. However, in general, survey feedback from employees has shown them to be a happy and motivated workforce. Their occupational health manager feels that this is an advantage to both employees and the organisation because:

- (a) Employees are happy in their work, thus improving their own well-being.
- (b) Productivity of employees is improved, therefore the organisation benefits.

Another benefit that has come out of the health promotion strategies is that everyone in the organisation is treated as equal. All the campaigns and services are for everyone from the bottom to the top of the organisation. Their occupational health manager believes that this enhances the team spirit of the organisation. “I have got about 29 members of staff from all levels of the organisation who come on a regular basis to get weighed. Now I’m not saying they are all losing weight dramatically but some of them are! To have someone coming along and doing well is great; it shows the others that it can be done.”

A bottom-line benefit for the organisation is that they have a sickness absence rate of under 3%. Their occupational health manager believes that the health promotion and rehabilitation programmes have been contributing factors in achieving this. “People are responding to the health promotion techniques. Those who have been off sick are returning to work earlier, I believe, this is because they can come back for say one day a week until they feel better. Similarly people are coming to me when they

have problems with their work and we are able to workout a suitable plan that keeps them in work. We make it easier for them to stay in work; therefore they don't go off sick!" Likewise, the time and money saved by employees going to visit the doctor and other professionals onsite - rather than taking the entire morning off to see their GP – is seen as a key advantage of their approach.

News International Newspapers (Scotland) Ltd investment in employee health and well-being and this has been recently recognised with a Silver SHAW award and a Bronze RoSPA award. Their occupational health manager admits that the recognition is nice, however she believes that promoting employee health must be an ongoing process stating: "You have to continue what you are doing, you cant just say well I did this that year and this the next. You have to continue to work on what you have started. And there are still many issues that will have to be addressed but we are getting there!"

### **Summary and Conclusions**

It is apparent that as a subsidiary of a large multinational organisation 'News International Newspapers (Scotland) Ltd' has access to significantly more money and resources than many small-medium enterprises. However, while they have spent significant amounts of money on certain campaigns like the inter-corporate event. They have spent much less on other programmes, for instance the testicular cancer campaign simply cost the company the time needed for employees to collect the information as the leaflets and posters were acquired at no cost. Furthermore, the organisation's investment in employee health has proved to be worthwhile. They now have reduced sickness and paid absence rates, which their occupational health manager believes is partially due to their health promotion initiatives. Equally their targeted approach has meant significant benefits for employees. Individual

employees are recognising health and fitness problems before they become serious, thus improving the likelihood of recovery.

## **Case Study No. 5: OKI Printing Solutions**

### **Gradual Evolution ... Great Results!**

#### **Introduction**

Kibataro Oki (a Japanese silversmith) established OKI in 1881. Over a century later, in October 1987, the company opened its UK manufacturing facility OKI (UK) Ltd in Cumbernauld. The organisation currently employs around 650 people including about 170 temporary employees. Onsite, as well as Production there are a number of departments including: Human Resources, Finance and Supply Chain. Following a restructuring process in 2000 the Cumbernauld site now configures product for the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) market and produces consumable products i.e. toner and ribbons for the global market. OKI in Cumbernauld has a long history of externally benchmarking to drive first class performance. For example, the Cumbernauld facility was the first manufacturing company in Scotland to receive Investors in People accreditation and in terms of a proactive approach to health at work it has also achieved a Bronze SHAW award. Although, both of these were received in the 1990's the company continues to maintain them and hopes to achieve the Silver SHAW award in 2006. The Cumbernauld facility recently moved into a new, bright and modern building. This together with the company's existing culture – one that recognises the need for good calibre, motivated, and healthy people - provoked the company to expand its existing employee health and well-being strategy. This case evaluates their approach and considers the benefits for both the company and its employees.

#### **OKI: A Health Working Environment**

At the core of OKI is a belief that the health and well-being of staff is paramount to organisational success. Hence, over the last twenty years OKI has gradually developed an extensive approach to employee health and well-being. Moving to a

new site has stimulated a new aspiration to create a genuine centre of excellence. Both OKI's General Manager - HR (GMHR) and Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) spoke at length of the organisation's culture, its approach to health and the advantages of the new building. The quotes below give an insight in to OKI's culture:

- "We genuinely do value our people" (GMHR)
- "Our aim is to be an employer of choice and recruit the best people" (GMHR)
- "Improving the health and well-being of our people onsite" (OHN)
- "Encouraging an open culture ... a community spirit" (OHN)

Using words like: consultation; flexibility; friendly; positive; proactive; and supportive, the organisation's General Manager - HR continued to describe OKI's approach to employee health and well-being. He also provided a guided tour of the new facility - the building is bright, open and airy and all departments are based within the building. Production is on one floor while the remaining functional departments share a large, open-plan office on another. There is also a staff gym, a large canteen and two occupational health rooms providing a layout that GMHR believes generates a pleasant and productive working environment.

### **Achieving a Healthy Working Environment**

Within OKI promoting a Healthy Working Environment starts at the recruitment stage, all new recruits are given pre-employment medicals to ensure that they are fit and able to do the job. The organisation has a full-time Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) and an Occupational Physician visits the site every two weeks. They both work with the HR department to provide a variety of occupational health services. Each year employees are given the opportunity, should they wish, to attend a full health assessment with the Occupation Health Nurse. These look at health issues

like sight, hearing, cholesterol level and blood pressure. These are voluntary; nonetheless, attendance is usually high with 50-80% of employees signing up. Within OKI, promoting health is not just an occupational health objective it is a workplace objective, subsequently a cross-functional project team drives forward the health programme through numerous poster campaigns and events.

The new facility provided OKI with the opportunity to expand its health service. For example, the location of the staff restaurant was enhanced and OKI worked with Sodexo to provide healthier meal options. Another key addition to OKI's health programme is its new gym and fitness centre. This required significant outlay from the company and is a managed gym facility; these costs are offset to some extent by membership fees. The gym is open in the evenings as well as on a Saturday and employees pay a reduced rate when compared with commercial organisations. It has proved to be popular with staff: "Sixty employees joined the gym in the first two months which is really quite positive" (GMHR). In addition, staff at the gym run exercise classes in the evening - such as, spin and 'legs, bums and tums' classes; the company is hoping that these will attract new members. Furthermore, the company is currently looking into increasing flexibility over lunchtime where possible and without detrimental impact on the business; this is not only about the gym it is also about creating work-life balance. "Ideally we would like to reach a position where as many employees as possible have the flexibility to look after their health and well-being whilst they are at work. In our production environment this could be difficult to achieve; however we will strive to achieve as much flexibility as possible" (GMHR)

OKI' managers continually revise the company's health policies; consequently, in the lead up to the move they decided that that they would ban smoking onsite. It was felt that with the imminent 'no smoking in public spaces' legislation and the potential risks

of passive smoking that this was something that the organisation had to take a positive stand on. A significant proportion of OKI's employees smoked, therefore the organisation consulted with its staff to alleviate concerns and identify specific issues. Following these discussions it was decided that the ban would commence on 'NO SMOKING' day (prior to the move). This provided employees with the time to adjust and benefited from the mass of the national NO SMOKING publicity. Several employees were motivated to quit following the ban; yet many needed support to achieve cessation. Hence, OKI offered employees after-work smoking cessation support and relaxation classes on Friday afternoons. The smoking cessation officer for Cumbernauld facilitated the smoking cessation groups and an alternative therapist was employed to provide the relaxation classes. Individual support and free nicotine patches were also provided to those who had signed up for the programme.

Almost a year on, many of the programme's participants remain complete non-smokers. Feedback from these employees has shown that they are happy and grateful that they have quit smoking. However, weight related issues have emerged from some of those who stopped smoking; consequently, following consultation with its staff OKI has introduced a company wide 'Biggest Loser' campaign. This campaign is inspired by the popular television series and is a three-month team-based fitness and diet competition. Teams consist of six people and each team works together to loose weight. At the end of the programme the team with the greatest total percentage weight-loss will receive a prize. Originally, the company hoped to attract six groups of 6, that is, 36 employees; however, turnout was much better than expected with 120 employees enrolling, that is, twenty groups of six (approximately 18.5% of employees). Each group chose their own name and designed badges to wear around factory. This was a motivational exercise and several names were quite humorous, such as: "Twi and Get Light", "Chewin the Fat" "Huge Rears" and "Over Eaters" (OHN).

At the outset of the Biggest Losers programme, each participant's weight and body fat were measured and put on a personal progress card. These measurements are then taken throughout the programme. To reduce personal pressure, individual statistics are confidential; the total percentage weight-loss for each team is compared on a weekly chart displayed in the canteen. Alongside a member of the voluntary health group the Occupational Health Nurse regulates the programme. Each team nominates a team coach to motivate them and the team members' work together to develop the team's weight-loss strategy (for example, one team is playing five-a-side football while another is doing lunch-time walks) and nominates a team coach to stimulate the team. A weekly newsletter provides teams with the opportunity to share exercise and recipes ideas. The Occupational Health Nurse encourages participants to report on each other's unhealthy activities, that is, if a participant say uses the lift or eats a bar of chocolate then this will be printed in the newsletter: "it is a friendly, motivational tool as participants don't want to disappointment their team" (OHN). Even with a couple of weeks until completion, the programme has already shown positive outcomes, for example, there has been a collective weight loss of over 50 stones!

Bringing these campaigns together is the aspiration within OKI to establish a healthy working environment while building community ties. Therefore, the organisation also organises a number of supplementary activities to unite its workforce. For instance, to motivate employees they have a peer nominated 'Team of the Month' or 'Employee of the Month' competition. "Last year there was a successful nomination of OKI's production teams containing about 130 people and they all got a £25 gift voucher. This was quite expensive but it is important to show that we genuinely do value our people" (GMHR). Likewise, the organisation wants to give something back to the local community, hence each year they run a number of local charity events. For instance, they have planned a charitable family cycle in May, which will depart

from the Cumbernauld site and arrive at the Falkirk Wheel. The money raised will be given to the Cumbernauld MS group. OKI's Occupational Health Nurse believes that events like this help foster community spirit and promote healthier working.

## **Value**

OKI's General Manager - HR asserts that OKI appreciates that promoting employee health is an investment rather than a cost. Nonetheless, I was interested in what both he and the organisation's Occupational Health Nurse perceive as the key benefits attained from their approach. They both agreed that promoting a healthier working environment reaps rewards in terms of motivation, team spirit and productivity. In terms of employee benefits the GMHR suggested that the awareness employees' gain of important health issues is a key benefit of the poster campaigns. Likewise the Occupational Health Nurse stresses that projects like the smoking cessation and the 'Biggest Loser' campaign are particularly important because employees can see that OKI cares for its employees. Moreover, OKI has received positive employee feedback with regard to the health assessments. If a health issue is discovered employees' know that they will be provided with the relevant, confidential support and advice. Consequently employees appreciate the service in two respects: "Firstly, the service provides them with the opportunity to really look at their health and secondly they know if anything does transpire they will be fully supported" (OHN). The gym represented a significant investment for the organisation therefore the Human Resource department undertook a company-wide survey to evaluate whether people would use and pay for the service. The results of this survey along with the early membership of the gym, suggest that the service is popular with employees and almost certainly improve the future fitness of employees.

In terms of bottom line business benefits OKI's GMHR believes that improving the organisations health facilities puts OKI in a more positive light with regard to

recruitment. “These are all quite big positives in terms of our employment package and when you are aiming to be an employer of choice and to recruit good people this is very important” (GMHR). Recruiting the best people is imperative to OKI; and OKI managers’ realise that recruiting the best people it is not just about how much you pay them but is also about the softer benefits you can offer. In addition, the organisation maintains a relatively low sickness absence rate, in December it was 3.5% for short and long-term sickness; this is benchmarked against the industry average of 3.9%. OKI’s GMHR confesses that it is difficult to establish a direct link between the rate and the health programme yet he believes that it definitely has been a contributory factor.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The company has gradually developed a multi-faceted approach to employee health and well-being; moreover moving into a new building has encouraged OKI’s managers’ to take a real, positive stance on healthy eating, beneficial exercise and smoking cessation. Although certain aspects of OKI’s health programme have required substantial investment (such as the gym) prior to investing the organisation has consulted with employees to ensure that the initiatives will be welcomed. Moreover, this case has illustrated that on a budget organisations can creatively improve the health and fitness of their workforce. For instance, their ‘Biggest Loser’ programme has successfully attracted employees yet it merely cost the organisation the time involved. Finally, the organisation continues to evaluate its approach to ensure that employees appreciate their initiatives. It does not complete in-depth financial analysis because the bottom-line benefit for OKI is related to being an employer of choice.

## **Case Study No. 6: Partick Housing Association**

### **Developing a Positive Healthy Attitude!**

#### **Introduction: A Small But Complex Business**

Partick Housing Association is a charitable organisation, which was formed in 1975. It consists of three interdependent companies: Partick Housing Association Ltd, Partick Homes Ltd and Partick Development Ltd. Combined, they employ 38 staff members spread over two offices. Partick Housing Association is a social landlord that currently owns approximately 1700 properties. Partick Homes Ltd provides the Association's landlord and property management services to a customer base of over 3000. Lastly, Partick Development Ltd builds new houses and renovates older ones; these are then sold or rented through the Association. Partick Development also owns and manages a number of workspaces, which help to promote employment in the area. The Association as a whole is currently working on a wider action programme involving the renovation of a local park, a youth development project and an adult literacy and numeracy initiative. The case evaluates the introduction of a health and well-being strategy within the Association and considers the impact of external advisors on the organisations success.

#### **Approach to Health**

The association aims to not only provide houses but also to promote vibrant and sustainable communities within Partick, where people are encouraged to achieve their potential. The organisation's Director believes that the term 'achieving potential' applies first and foremost to its employees saying: "If we want to improve the external circumstances of the people who use the service, then we need to make sure that the staff reach their potential in order to deliver that service". This aim inspired the company to establish an extensive employee health and well-being

strategy involving significant investments both in staff time and money. The essence of this strategy is illustrated by the quotes below:

- “We are an investor in people so we do look after our people.”
- “Employees are the biggest resource our organisation has”
- “Small but significant steps to a healthy lifestyle”
- “Serious health issues but also fun along the way”

### **Achieving a Healthier Environment**

As a modern employer the association considers healthy employees to be essential to their future success. Within the organisation there is a voluntary Well-Being @ Work group, which focuses on improving the well-being of everyone working in the Association. In 2003 the voluntary health group decided to introduce a stress management policy, this policy required the Association to carry out a stress audit. However, the Associations director decided that the focus of this audit should be widened to well-being rather than just stress. External consultants were employed to perform the well-being audit, which evaluated all aspects of employee well-being at work. Using the results of this audit as a base the management committee together with their staff developed an action plan designed to address in-house issues while also working within the SHAW framework. Employees were encouraged to get involved from the outset by way of a competition to decide the name and logo of the initiative. The selected name was Positive Healthy Attitude as it clearly illustrated the strategy’s purpose and played on the initials of the company (PHA).

External consultants were employed by the company to arrange a number of activities focusing on the key issues set out in the action plan. They developed a

programme of six workshops, each with a theme relating to employee well-being including:

- (1) Work Life balance
- (2) Stress Busters and Relaxation
- (3) Communication and Conflict
- (4) Time Management and Time Thieves
- (5) Smarter working not harder
- (6) Personal Effectiveness and Energy Drains (including Personal Health Plan)

These workshops provided employees with key knowledge of issues relating to well-being. Furthermore, they offered employees different solutions and techniques to reduce stress and anxiety. The workshops were completed during the working day and were attended on a voluntary basis; there was high attendance at all of the events with an average of 79% going to each workshop.

In parallel, a group of five voluntary champions - from across the organisation - formed the Positive Healthy Attitude (PHA) group. This group uses a plethora of activities to encourage a healthy working environment. For instance, to encourage improved employee fitness they organise various exercise initiatives, such as local lunchtime walks. In addition, yoga classes are run during lunchtime, to attract interest the association subsidised the first six classes but thereafter employees paid for the classes themselves. The classes have now been running for over a year and continue to be popular with just under a third of employees participating. The PHA group also encouraged employees to take part in the local Women's' 10K race. Turnout was relatively high with 25% of employees taking part. The association paid the entry fees of all the participants and a member of the PHA group gave participants' training guidance.

Another key area is 'Health Eating'; the Positive Healthy Attitude group promoted this throughout the year through various diet related poster and leaflet campaigns. Regular 'Healthy Eating' days' were also organised throughout the year; these involved each employee preparing a healthy meal and then sharing them with colleagues at lunchtime. These events are very popular with staff, achieving 79% attendance, therefore not only do they promote healthy eating but also are good social events. Each year the company gets involved in the Westend Festival and last year the PHA group organised a healthy eating participatory event. Members of staff dressed up in banana costumes in order to raise awareness of the benefits of healthy eating to both employees and the surrounding community.

The Association also promotes specific health issues like dealing with addiction, illness and poor health. Hence, all its employees are offered free and confidential BUPA well-being checks and the PHA group runs frequent in-depth campaigns on key health topics. Past themes have included:

- Alcohol and Sensible Drinking
- Diabetes Awareness
- Stopping Smoking
- Bowel Cancer
- Breast Cancer
- Back and RSI Problems
- Drug Awareness

The Association's Director states that these themes were chosen as they reflected the diversity of workforce and were relevant to modern lifestyles. Campaigns are met with appreciation and interest from employees - information relating to each health issue is circulated to all staff members via emails, leaflets and displays on the staff

notice boards. It has been the enthusiasm and commitment of the five champions in the Positive Healthy Attitude group that has driven forward the strategy. The group continues to meet on a regular basis and produces a monthly newsletter to publicise activities and recognise employees' achievements.

### **Outcomes of PHA's Well-Being Strategy**

With consultant costs of over £20,000 (plus the associated costs of staff taking part) this programme has certainly represented a significant investment from the employer. In spite of this has the money been spent wisely? Has PHA succeeded in promoting a 'Positive Healthy attitude within the workplace? Has the programme delivered benefits for the employer? Do employees appreciate the initiatives? To answer some of these questions the company employed external consultants to perform a well-being evaluation. This took the form of a questionnaire that asked employees what they thought of the company, its health programme and the benefits they felt had come from the programme. Twenty-eight individuals completed the Well Being at Work evaluation (a 78% response rate). The Association's Director believes that holidays, sick leave and operational demands can account for those who did not complete it.

The Associations Director provided a copy of the result report from the evaluation. It showed that the majority of employees appreciate the Associations health programme with 89% saying that they would rate the 'Well-Being @ Work' initiative as a very good to an excellent programme. It was also established that 79 % of employees now believe that 'Partick Housing Association cares a great deal about the well-being of its employees. Plus 61% believed that they have become more aware of their health as a result of the programme. In the evaluation employees were asked what they saw as the benefits of the scheme, popular responses included: "Information provided made me think more about my life/health"; "getting to

know people”; “participating in a relaxed environment” and “becoming aware of my own needs and those of colleagues”. The organisation’s Director believes that the figures and statements suggest benefits for both the employer and employees. If employees feel that they are valued and cared for they will become a happier and motivated workforce, which is obviously advantageous to the employer. Similarly, “The impact of simple steps like ‘saying good morning’ or ‘laughing more should not be under estimated; small gestures like ‘praising people’ and saying ‘thank you’ can have a large and long-term impact” (Director).

In terms of the management of attendance, during the first year of the programme the company saw a reduction in overall absenteeism; however, in the second year the company had an increase in overall absenteeism. As a couple of employees have been unavoidably absent on long-term sick the Association’s director maintains that this increase is not a reflection of the programme: “These have been unavoidable cases, where employees have had to have operations or treatment; they have not just been odd days off.” Furthermore, the Director believes that the management of attendance is not necessarily the most important factor. She concludes that there are a number of softer benefits that come from the process. “One important benefit is the ‘feel good’ factor, especially putting a little bit of fun into the workplace I know that is a bit impressionable but it really is key.”

The attendance rates and feedback from employees has shown additional benefits from the programme including an increased awareness about diet, exercise and health and well-being. Equally, the BUPA health checks highlight personal health issues for a couple of employees. These individuals particularly appreciate the programme as their health issues were recognised and treated earlier, perhaps providing long-term personal benefits. Moreover, there are indirect benefits of the scheme; for instance, employees working within the Positive Healthy Attitude Group’

are in a cross functional group thus are establishing atypical relationships which is good for the Association as it improves the continuity of the business. Similarly, some employees have seen it as an opportunity for self-development. In October 2005 the company received the Bronze SHAW award; this was a benefit to both the employer and the employees. It raised the profile of the Associations well-being programme plus it recognised the work of the employees involved in driving forward the strategy. With regard to the future, the Association hopes to sustain and expand their current health programme. They hope to achieve this by using the SHAW programme as a guide and by continuing to support and encourage the Positive Healthy Attitude group. Ultimately, the Association's Director wants to take the programme out to the wider community.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Partick Housing Association cares for its employees and has invested heavily to produce an extensive employee health and well-being strategy. It is a small organisation and at the outset needed external advice; however the Positive Health Attitude group has successfully established an approach that matches the ethos of the organisation. Their 'Well-being @ Work' programme represented a significant investment for the Association; therefore they completed an extensive evaluation that considered event attendance rates and employees' assessments of the programme. The evaluation was done in a questionnaire format and established that employees appreciate the programme and felt that the Association cared for its employees. The Associations director believes that the programme has accomplished its aim and was worthwhile investment: "the programme has allowed us all to focus on health related issues; it has gained staff ownership and has provided opportunities for individual staff development" (Director).

## **Case Study No. 7: Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre (SECC)**

### **External Resources Inspiring Internal Change**

#### **Introduction**

The Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre (SECC), which opened in 1985, is Scotland's largest venue for public events, hosting conferences, exhibitions, concerts and special events. Staging these events requires a variety of skills therefore onsite there are: event planners, electricians, plumbers, manual labourers, IT staff, administration staff, caterers, cleaners and security workers. The SECC currently has 132 permanent staff members and uses up to 400 contractors at any one time. Since 1996 the company has followed *Scotland's Health at Work* (SHAW) award programme achieving Bronze and Silver awards and in 2005, the Gold award. This case will consider the benefits to both the company and its employees of their comprehensive approach to health and safety. Furthermore, it will examine how access to external resources like SHAW can act as a catalyst in enhancing an organisation's employee policy and procedures.

#### **SHAW: The Process of Change**

Health and Safety has always been a priority for the SECC and when approached by Scotland's Health at Work (SHAW) to take part in their health award programme, the company decided to significantly extend its employee health and safety strategy. Both the SECC's Human Resource Manager (HSM) and Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) believe that they have succeeded in developing a comprehensive approach to employee health because they had:

- (a) A team of 6 to 8 individuals from all levels and areas of the organisation who were determined to succeed;
- (b) The support of senior management;

and

(c) A mentor in the form of their SHAW representative.

The organisation's HSM and OHN concur that having (a) and (b) fostered the support and commitment of the SECC employees, while the encouragement and guidance that they received from SHAW assisted them in the practicalities involved in transforming the SECC's health and safety programme: "SHAW has such a firm structure, you really can adapt it to your own needs ... it gives you a structure to follow and inspiration, as well as the chance to look at areas that you had not thought of before" (OHN).

### **SECC's New Approach to Health**

The SECC's approach sets to deal with the promotion, the prevention and the treatment of all aspects of employee health, fitness and well-being: "health and safety is at the core of the organisation" (OHN). Furthermore, it aims to reach all members of staff from the top to the bottom of the organisation "one person's health is just as important as another's ... and we try to include as many of the contractors as possible" (OHN). Underlying this health programme are a number of new policies and procedures. The organisation has introduced 'back to work' interviews for absentees. These ensure that the employee is fit and able to come back to work, while providing the company with an understanding of why the employee was absent and what support that they will need to return to work. Likewise, they have developed smoking, alcohol, exercise and food policies to reinforce their ongoing health programme. Two initiatives that are central to the company's health programme are its intranet site and monthly 'health at work' magazine. Employees can access health, diet and fitness information and advice on the intranet site and each month the free magazine highlights key issues concerning employee's health and well-being.

The SECC's medical centre provides medical assistance to visitors at the venue. This on-site facility has proved invaluable to the organisation's health strategy, as health checks, medicals and health advice can be offered there, providing benefits for both the employer and employees. Employees can get assistance quickly and conveniently, equally the reduced time away from work is a major benefit for the organisation. After observing the benefits of this resource the company decided to expand it, offering the services of an external chiropodist and physiotherapist who visit regularly, providing consultations at a reduced rate. In addition, all staff members have access to an independent, professional counselling service and all employees take part in a stress awareness course. The company is particularly keen to promote employee fitness and organise daily 2K walks and fitness classes such as aerobics, badminton, belly dancing, kickboxing, and yoga. They make use of the venue's facilities, bringing in instructors at a discounted rate and varying activities according to employee feedback.

Each year the organisation runs regular health awareness campaigns on topics such as exercise and healthy eating, attempting to cover topics that are of particular relevance to SECC employees. Occasionally, the HSM endeavours to target specific groups of employees, for example, providing posture training and vision screening for employees whose work involves frequent computer use, or training on lifting and handling techniques for employees who frequently undertake load bearing activities. The company is currently producing a muscular-skeleton conservation programme to help prevent back problems and maintain healthy working practices.

The organisation also does a variety of health promotions known as 'special days', where they aim to raise awareness and motivate employees. Both the OHN and HSM described various days they have held; however, two particularly successful days were the ones for breast cancer awareness and dental hygiene. For the first

they teamed up with a cancer charity to run a 'pink day'; everyone from the top to the bottom of the organisation came into work wearing something pink. There were information leaflets circulated and different events run to raise money for the charity. For the dental health hygiene day the company made use of contacts to cadge free toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste to give employees along with information leaflets that enhance employees' understanding of the topic. These were both light-hearted ways that raised employees' awareness of important subjects. Furthermore, the company encourages employees to socialise and exercise through annual sports tournaments.

## **Evaluation**

It is clear that the SECC has developed a wide-ranging approach to employee health and safety. However, has their investment proved worthwhile? Both the HSM and OHN are convinced that yes it has, asserting that the programme has provided benefits for both employer and employees. Initially, a small minority of employees were reluctant to take part in the programme but as the HSM explained: "Sometimes you have to chip away to reassure staff that there is no hidden agenda...and that the health programmes are for their benefit. I think when staff see the initiatives in action; they warm to the idea and become more relaxed about them. On the whole, those who participate seem to enjoy it".

The OHN went on to say that over the years employees have become more appreciative of the initiatives, "People are interested in different things but we tend to get a really good response from employees and it is across the board". Similarly, the HSM states that: "By far the biggest improvement I have seen is that more and more people are coming along to the medical and mini health checks ... they now realise that they are not scary and they will not be penalised if they are found to be a bit unfit or ill". Every 2 years the company surveys its employees to ensure the

strategy is meeting its goals and is appreciated by employees. Responses from these surveys have shown that a fundamental benefit that employees gain from the different health promotions is awareness of important health issues. This is a major benefit as it gives opportunity to focus in on their health and perhaps change their mindset, For instance, if an employee starts to consider ways to make their lifestyle healthier or if they notice an area of their health that needs addressing then they can seek help through the company and that can provide long-term health benefits to the employee. Equally, there are action plans in place if an employee is found to have a health issue during their health check. These ensure that employee's receive the support and assistance that they need both through the internal service and from their GP.

Likewise, the majority of the SECC's employees have great appreciation of the medical centre and its associated services. "We have a large percentage of staff dropping in on a regular basis ... it is open to everybody, there is always someone who will listen to them regardless of how big or small the issue is, it is confidential." If an employee is concerned about time or is having trouble getting an appointment they can go to the health centre instead of going to their doctor or another professional. Staff at the health centre can give them guidance and if necessary refer them to a relevant professional or service. Furthermore, the reduced time those employees are away from work represents a bottom-line benefit for the company. Similarly, the OHN believes that allowing people to get treated at the health centre has contributed to a reduction in the company's sickness absence rate. With regard to the SHAW award scheme both the HSM and OCN stress that the award is incidental to the overall result of a healthier workforce, however, both admit that the award is good as the employees involved in the health programme appreciate the recognition that it gives.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

This case has illustrated that an external organisation, like SHAW can stimulate a company to reform its practices and policies. The SECC has invested a significant amount of time and resources to develop a comprehensive approach to employee health at work. Employees have appreciated this investment; this has been shown both through the high uptake figures and the responses of the employee survey. Equally, by making use of existing resources and using a bit of imagination the SECC has managed to keep costs to a minimum and achieve financial benefits through a reduction in absence, whilst providing a healthy, happy environment for staff.

## **Case Study No. 8: Terasaki (Europe) Ltd**

### **Work-Life Balance Promoting Health**

#### **Introduction**

Terasaki (Europe) Ltd was formed in 1972. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Terasaki Electric - a Japanese organisation that specialises in the manufacturer of electrical protection equipment. Terasaki (Europe) Ltd is a distribution centre for all European markets and currently employs approximately 130 people. Onsite, Terasaki employs both direct production workers and indirect workers – representing a multitude of professions including: admin, finance, sales, et cetera. This case examines the introduction of flexible hours and changes in shift patterns within the organisation. It considers the positive impact on employee health and well-being along with the financial benefits for the organisation.

#### **Work-Life Balance and Sickness Absence**

Historically, all of Terasaki's employees worked standardised hours - Monday to Friday, 8am till 5pm. However, due to a high absenteeism rate, they decided to explore alternative options. By analysing past absence data and conversing with their employees they found that the majority of their employees were genuine and honest people; however sometimes events occurred that caused them to be late or absent. Moreover, these investigations showed that absenteeism and punctuality were not solely bottom-line concerns; they also affect employees' mental well-being. Their Personnel Manager explains when she says: "Employees have their own sense of responsibility about not meeting the demands of their job. Being late or absent on a regular basis can really stress them out".

As a result of further research, Terasaki discovered that introducing alternative working patterns would both benefit their employees in terms of their work-life

balance and reduce the company's sickness absence rate. Consequently, in 2004 they introduced two major changes, namely:

- Flexible working
- and
- Different shift patterns

Despite Terasaki being unable to offer its employees monetary benefits like private medical insurance, their Personnel Manager maintains that they continually look at ways to support and motivate their staff. "As an employer we are responsible for our employees and if we can make them aware of any health issue or anything that might improve their health then we should be doing that, we should be promoting health". In addition, the organisation runs monthly campaigns to raise employee awareness of various health related topics.

### **The Process**

At the outset of this programme of change, the organisation offered all of their production employees the opportunity to work three days on 12-hour shifts either *Sunday to Tuesday* or *Wednesday to Friday* instead of five days on 8-hour shifts. It was a voluntary changeover and those who wanted to remain on the 9-5 shifts could do so. The organisation was initially concerned as to the effect of employees working a twelve-hour day in comparison to the conventional eight hours. Consequently, they introduced the shifts on a trial basis and gave employees additional breaks to ensure that they did not overexert themselves and become fatigued. At the end of the trial period the organisation surveyed their employees to find out what they thought about the scheme. The results of this survey showed that the majority of employees were very enthusiastic about the shifts. Some admitted

that in the beginning working twelve hours had been a struggle, but stated that they had seen major benefits once they became accustomed to them.

Before embarking on the programme Terasaki had a few practical concerns. Firstly they worried that the shifts would mean an increase in overheads, like the lighting and heating. Yet, when the organisation monitored their utility bills, they found that there had been no increase in either their electricity or heating consumption. Secondly, they had concerns relating to the practicalities, specifically how they would open and close the building and how they could ensure that the health and safety requirements were being met. Consequently, they decided to train a number of people to be what they term 'responsible people'. Responsible people open and close the factory and ensure that everyone works correctly and safely. This is an additional cost for the organisation; however it motivates the responsible people and ensures that the system runs smoothly.

Introducing shift work to the organisation's indirect workers is complex since each individual department (such as finance, human resources, administration etc) employs less people than the production department. Therefore, Terasaki offered flexible working to their remaining employees. Employees have core hours when they must be at work (9.30am to 3.30pm) while the rest of their day is open. They still do the same number of hours but are able to distribute them differently. Flexible working has proved to be very popular amongst the company's indirect workers. Moreover, a small percentage of their direct workers also work on flexitime. The organisation's personnel manager stresses that the organisation attempts to accommodate everyone: "If someone just wants to go home early for a game of golf or to go fishing, the fact that they are putting in the hours should be enough". Furthermore, she believes that introducing flexitime has proved to be effective and

worthwhile, “Within each department people set up their own timetables and work around each other”.

### **Health Promotion**

On top of the above programme the organisation has set up a voluntary health and safety committee that consists of a cross-section of employees. This committee runs a number of campaigns throughout the year to raise employee health awareness. A few years ago they received a bronze SHAW award, which they maintain annually. Each year they cover a number of key health areas at employee information and awareness sessions. Often getting the relevant leaflets and posters at no cost from various charities and health organisations, thus the only cost to the company is that of employee time to collect the information. Two recent campaigns that Terasaki's Personnel Manager believes were particularly successful were their 'No Smoking' day and 'Drug Awareness' session.

On No Smoking Day they encouraged employees to quit by asking them to hand in their cigarettes for a day and in return they were given a packet of chewing gum. The Personnel Manager states that this together with the corresponding literature demonstrated the alternatives to employees, but did not force them to get involved. The drug awareness session entailed members of the police service coming onsite to give a drug related tutorial. It gave employees an insight to the jargon associated with drugs, the effects of drugs and the signs of someone who may have taken drugs. Their Personnel Manager considers the main benefit of these campaigns to be the knowledge that employees' gain of important health related topics saying: “Even if we only reach one or two employees and give them new information that results in their improved health then that is a success”. She goes on to say that they also benefit the company in the long-term; they encourage socialising amongst staff from different department thus uniting the company. Complementing these

campaigns is a free and confidential counselling service. Terasaki pays an annual subscription to a Glasgow counselling service; this allows employees to contact them regarding any issue they may have. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a place, where employees can go for support and guidance if they feel uncomfortable talking to management. It is a completely confidential service and the organisation does not receive feedback.

### **Value**

So has the introduction of flexible working and shift patterns benefited the company and its employees? Well, information to date has shown bottom line benefits for the organisation. Terasaki's Personnel Manager reveals that the programme has contributed to a reduction in both their paid absence and overtime bills: "employees no longer take time off to go to the doctors/dentist, they arrange them in their own time, or take time out of the working week but then make that time up ... so with them doing all that in their own time has meant massive reductions in our sickness absence and paid absence figures". Similarly, in the past when employees worked on a Saturday or Sunday they would be paid at a higher rate (double-time), whereas under the new shift system these are normal shifts.

Furthermore, their Personnel Manager proposes that introducing flexible working and shift patterns has enhanced employees' health and welfare: "Employees have more control over their working environment; therefore they are more relaxed and happier at work". This is reinforced by the feedback gained from the employee survey, which suggests both employees' physical and mental health has improved, "Employees' stress levels are reduced - they no longer worry about being late or needing time off work ... employees can plan their time more effectively instead of rushing from one thing to the next, risking their physical health".

A key benefit of the flexitime for employees is that they have the ability to organise their work around their personal life. “For instance, if an employee has a problem at home say a burst pipe, they no longer have to rush in for eight o’clock; they can relax and get it out their system before coming into work. This reduces their stress levels and is a benefit to the organisation as they are happier and thus more productive” (Personnel Manager). Conversely, the organisation also observed that many of their employees came into work early. Flexitime benefits them since they can now save up that time and use it productively. “If their starting time is eight, a lot of employees come in at half past seven, quarter to eight and start working; in the new program they are still doing this; however now this time is being recognised by the company”(Personnel Manager).

The shift patterns benefit employees in a number of ways; in some ways they benefit each individual differently. Nevertheless, the overriding theme from talking to Terasaki’s Personnel Manager is the balance employees have established between their work life and their personal life. “Many female employees like the shifts as they save on childcare costs; similarly others find it useful as they can spend more time with their children. Equally, male employees find them useful in a variety of ways. Some enjoy the family aspects while others like that they have time to spend on hobbies. One man in particular appreciates the shifts, as he is able to take on a part-time job lecturing at a local college, giving him great personal satisfaction” (Personnel Manager). As a result of these benefits to employees’ quality of life the company did not face major problems when introducing the new shift patterns. However, not all the employee feedback was good; some employees resisted the change, as they were concerned as to the effect on their terms and conditions. Nevertheless by recognising that everyone is different and by offering all existing employees the choice they ensured that there was no resentment. Indeed a number of employees waited and joined the shift work or flexitime after it had proved to be a success.

This programme of change relates to Terasaki's mission statement, part of which says that they want to be an *Employer of Choice*. "We want employees to choose to work here and I don't think we should ever move away from the fact that employees do have a choice ... I am not saying that everyone comes into Terasaki singing and dancing, saying that they cannot wait to get to work. However, once they get here they have a bit of control over their working environment, thus they are content to be here and above all they choose to work here" (Personnel Manager). The organisation aims to promote an environment where employees can be happy and they encourage employees to tell them if they are having problems in either their work or personal life.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

It is evident that the introduction of shift patterns and flexible working at Terasaki has promoted a culture where words like: 'work-life balance'; 'well-being'; 'teamwork'; 'autonomous working' are at its centre. Employees can now create a balance between their work and personal lives, which has led to an improvement in both their mental and physical health. Equally the programme has provided bottom-line financial improvements for the company with the organisation seeing reductions in both its sickness absence and overtime bills.

## **Case Study No. 9: Morrison Bowmore Distillers Limited**

### **Prevention Rather Than Cure!**

#### **Introduction**

Morrison Bowmore Distillers Limited, established in 1951 by Stanley P Morrison and James Howatt, is a major name in Scotch whisky. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Suntory Limited - a Japanese company - and currently employs 163 staff members spread over five Scottish locations. Employees work in various departments, such as: Operations, Sales, Marketing, Business Development, Customer Services, Finance, Information Services and Human Resources. Nonetheless, the operations team consists of almost 50% of the total workforce. This case demonstrates that with clear planning and a collective approach a company can successfully enhance its employee health and safety strategy; providing massive benefits with regard to employee happiness and motivation.

#### **Approach to Health**

Over the last two years Morrison Bowmore has introduced a robust occupational health service that goes well beyond the mandatory aspects of health and safety. Their HR Officer spoke to me at length regarding the strategy's development; the statements below illustrate the principals behind the company's health approach:

- “Offering a service to our employees”
- “Prevention rather than cure”
- “People are central to everything that we do”
- “Occupational health and health promotion is at the forefront”

The health programme builds on the paternalistic culture of Morison Bowmore: “The Company was once a family business and while there has been change and modernisation there remains an expectation that the company should be a caring employer” (HR Officer). Initially, the company’s HR Officer drove the expansion strategy with the aim of improving employee relations and absent management; however as it has progressed the strategy has gained employee ownership.

### **Extending Occupational Health: The Process**

Approximately three years ago, Morrison Bowmore’s HR Director and HR Officer undertook an evaluation of the company’s existing Human Resource strategy. Following this, they gave a detailed presentation, to the company’s executive team, outlining future HR objectives and their expected business benefits. One area that the HR Officer felt required attention was occupational health. Therefore, she sourced an external occupational health provider to conduct mandatory (e.g. sickness absence management) and legal (e.g. producing relevant policy) health and safety activities for the business. Once this was underway, the company worked together with the Occupational Health Provider to expand its health strategy to incorporate general health promotions in addition to the work related health activities. Soon after, the business decided to work towards the Bronze SHAW award – which it received in 2005 - as a result it considered ways in which it could bring employees into the programme’s development. It was decided that this would be best done through a partnership between the company’s existing Health & Safety Committee and Sports & Social Committee.

At its Springburn site the company revamped its first aid room to provide a relaxing place for the Occupational Health Nurse (employed via the Occupational Health Provider) to provide employees with various health checks including: hearing tests, vision screening, general health medicals and lifestyle assessments. Employees

from all of the company's sites can self refer for advice or health checks by calling the Occupational Health Nurse to arrange an appointment. In addition, she provides a voluntary stress management programme together with smoking cessation support for interested employees. Furthermore, every two months the Health and Safety Committee works with the Occupational Health Nurse to produce health campaigns that increase employees' awareness of key health issues. Topics for campaigns are chosen on account of their relevance to Morrison Bowmore's workforce. Past topics have included: cancer awareness, sun safe, healthy eating, mental health awareness and smoking awareness (the latter being reiterated by a detailed smoking policy). Information materials are sourced from the organisation's Occupational Health Provider and the Greater Glasgow NHS Board Library. The Occupational Health Nurse sends the complete campaigns to a designated person at each of the company's sites. Posters and Leaflets are displayed clearly and visibly in the staff break areas of each site and the company publicises campaigns through the staff email system.

In addition, to these campaigns, the Health And Safety Committee works with the Occupational Health Nurse to organise a number of larger health events. The organisation's HR Officer described a number of past successful events. The first event that the company embarked on was titled 'Healthy Heart'. The purpose of this event was one of assessment and health promotion towards the prevention of heart disease; it combined the typical poster campaign with cholesterol screening appointments from the Occupational Health Nurse. Appointments were confidential and took place during working hours. Although it was a voluntary event attendance was relatively high; 83 employees took part, which is 50.6% the workforce. There was roughly equal numbers of male and female participants and participants were aged between 23 and 62. A supplementary outcome of this event was the discovery that 30% of participants consumed more than the recommended alcohol limit.

Consequently, the committee developed an additional Alcohol Awareness Quiz Event that promoted the current recommended consumption levels and the highlighted the long-term potential health effects.

The Diabetes Awareness event was another interesting project that aimed to increase the awareness of Diabetes amongst the workforce, while identifying potential new cases. Once more employees were given twenty-minute confidential appointments with the nurse, where they filled in yes/no questionnaires relating to a range of symptoms, which people may experience with Diabetes Mellitus. Moreover, employees were requested to provide a urine sample and test strips were used to determine the presence of glucose in the urine. The nurse then discussed the results of the questionnaire and test with each employee. Each employee was given appropriate advice and current information to allow them to make informed choices and changes to their lifestyle in order to reduce their risk of developing Diabetes. The campaign specifically targeted those who do not visit their G.P. regularly and was promoted via the staff email system and staff notice boards. 32 employees attended the event and out of those one person was positively diagnosed and another three were referred to their GP for further investigation.

In parallel, with the above initiatives, the sports and social committee targets employee exercise and fitness. This is done through a variety of activities that encourage both socialisation and physical activity. Events are promoted through the company's newsletter and are inspired by employee suggestions. Past activities have included various sporting events including; the Bowmore Run; the Women's 10K race; Lawn Bowling and Golf Outings. Employees from all sites were invited to participate in each of the activities. Moreover, to induce participation the company paid all costs connected with the events including, where necessary, travel and accommodation costs. Two particularly popular events were the Bowmore Run and

a Golf Outing. For the first, employees from all locations were invited to participate in the annual Bowmore Half Marathon. Employees had the option to run, walk or cycle the course thus participation was high and those who took part reported that it not only encouraged exercise but was also a fun day out. For the second, the committee organised a golf outing for employees. Morrison Bowmore paid for the event and employees were allowed time off work to participate. As this event was exceptionally popular with staff the company has decided to make it an annual event.

Moreover, the committee aspires to provide events that combine light exercise with fun. The aim of these events is to promote both the physical and mental well-being of their workforce. For instance, in the past they have held an It's a Knockout Competition and a School Sports Day Event. Both of these events incorporated team-building games with a light hearted approach to exercise. These events were appreciated by staff and provided motivational benefits for the company. Consequently, the company also decided to take part in a Corporate Decathlon provided by an external organisation. Here Morrison Bowmore along with other organisations competed in ten sporting activities: curling, football, golf, volleyball, highland games, touch rugby, orienteering, ballroom dancing and personal health challenges. The programme gave employees the opportunity to try new sports and enhanced their team skills. Furthermore, at the company's Bowmore site, employees receive preferential rates at a local leisure centre. This arrangement is in place because the leisure centre is heated by power from the distillery.

Bringing together the above activities is the company's Quality, Environmental, Health and Safety Policy. The Health and Safety section states that: "Morrison Bowmore Distillers Ltd will promote the health, safety and welfare of its employees and others who may be affected by our operations. [It will] maintain safe working conditions, equipment and systems of work". To ensure that the company is meeting

these objectives and to discover what topics employees would like to learn more about, the company carried out a questionnaire asking employees what they thought of past events and what they would like to see in the future. Although, the response rate was relatively low (10%), the results showed that generally employees were appreciative of the events and campaigns. The three most popular topics that employees wanted more information on were: Healthy Eating and Nutrition; Physical Activity; and Healthy Heart. It was decided that all these areas could fall under the banner of a 'Well Woman/ Well Man clinic. As a result, the nurse is currently providing confidential appointments to employees wherein they can discuss issues that concern them.

### **Evaluation of Health Strategy**

It is apparent that by taking a collective and targeted approach the company has developed a comprehensive employee health, fitness and safety programme. However, has the strategy been worthwhile? Does it provide bottom-line benefits for the company? Do employees appreciate it? Morrison Bowmore's HR Officer maintains that the occupational health strategy has proved to be both useful and appreciated. She admits that it is perhaps too early in the programme to fully appreciate the long-term benefits for the company; however she states that the popularity of events, like the sports activities, together with the high uptake levels for health promotions, like the 'Healthy Heart' appointments, illustrate that the strategy is valued by employees: "Employees feel good about it, they can see that their employer is taking a genuine interest in them and their welfare!" The company's HR Officer believes that this benefits both the employees and the employer: "It is a softer element but in the satisfaction survey we had a couple of comments that said things like 'I believe my employer cares'. Now, it is quite difficult to evaluate the benefits but obviously the happier and more motivated our employees are the better!"

At the outset, the company had some negative feedback from a few employees regarding the compulsory health surveillance component. Employees were concerned as to its reasoning; however by explaining that it was for their benefit and that it was not an appraisal tool, the organisation was able to help employees to become accustomed to the new strategy. Moreover, the health promotion activities were all voluntary, thus there was no pressure on anyone to participate. Even so all activities received good attendance rates; hence, the strategy has increased employees' awareness of key health issues. In some cases it has also influenced employees to positively change their lifestyle. For instance, during the 'Healthy Heart' campaign it was discovered that 57.8% of employees checked were overweight and 44.6% had medium or high cholesterol risk. Consequently, these employees were offered further assistance in the form of lifestyle advice and follow up appointments with the nurse. They were encouraged to participate in the various physical activities that the Sports & Social Committee was undertaking. Likewise, although the Diabetes Awareness Event had a smaller uptake level it did attract several susceptible employees - the average age of male participants was 45 years old and the average age of female participants was 39. As a result of this programme, one employee was referred to their GP and was subsequently found to have diabetes. Morrison Bowmore's HR Officer states that this illustrates the possible long-term benefits for both employees and the employer. "This programme highlighted an issue that might have gone undetected for some time causing the employee additional problems. Conversely, for the employer this is potentially an employee who perhaps may have had sickness absence issues due to an undetected problem, whereas now the problem will be managed through his GP"

In terms of bottom line benefits the HR Manager says that as of yet the company has not undertaken a total evaluation of the programme. The company has gathered statistical information and employee feedback for each of the events to ensure that

they are going in the right direction and to establish areas that need attention. However, they have not attempted to link this to financial benefits for the organisation. The HR Manager explains that at the moment they are concerned with the softer employee benefits of the programme – ones that promote a happy, healthy and productive working environment. “These show Morrison Bowmore as a good employer and are important with regard to employee relations.” In the long-term; however, she expects that the strategy will provide bottom-line benefits for the company in terms of sickness absence and productivity.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Morrison Bowmore has achieved a comprehensive health and safety strategy by taking a collective approach involving its Human Resource Department, Occupational Health Provider, Health & Safety Committee and Sports & Social Committee. The extension of the company’s occupational health strategy was driven by an employee change; the new HR Officer with the assistance of an external Occupational Health Provider decided that the company could take forward a programme that concentrated on prevention rather than cure. This tactic has proven to be successful as employees now feel that their employer cares, thus they are a happier workforce. Moreover, certain individual employees have seen massive benefits with regard to their long-term health. The organisation’s HR Officer states that linking the strategy to bottom line financial benefits is a long-term objective for the company but reiterates that the business benefits from the softer employee welfare element should not be undervalued. The HR Officer also considers that to achieve long-term benefits, regarding employee health and sickness absence rates, the company will have to continue what it has started.

## **Case Study No. 10: ScottishPower UK Generation Limited**

### **Sickness Absence Triggering Healthy Working**

#### **Introduction**

ScottishPower is an international energy company that provides electricity generation, transmission, distribution and supply services as well as the supply of gas to their customers. The company is made up of four key businesses: Energy Retail; Energy Wholesale; Energy Networks and PPM Energy. These can be broken down into various other business functions and this case study will focus on Generation operations, the majority function within Energy Wholesale. ScottishPower Energy Wholesale owns and operates ScottishPower's power stations and other generation assets in the UK. Since 1997, the UK organisation has been developing a holistic strategy that promotes a safe and healthy working environment for all its employees. This case evaluates the programme and discusses the benefits it supplies to both the employer and its employees.

#### **ScottishPower's Health Strategy**

In 1997, ScottishPower's UK Division discovered that sickness absence was estimated to be costing its businesses nearly £15 million per annum. This represented a substantial cost for the company, which at that time employed circa 9,500 people. Consequently, both central and departmental management developed various strategies to combat sickness absence and to promote employee health and well-being. Today, ScottishPower continues to have high aspirations with regard to producing a healthy, fit and productive workforce. This is highlighted in the company's Health and Safety Policy, wherein the Chief Executive asserts in his statement of intent that: "It is my task to ensure that our working environment, our objectives and how we conduct our business generally reflect our determination to achieve our goal of no harm to our employees, customers or the general public.

It is my ambition to achieve world-class health and safety performance in all of our Businesses". The Health and Safety Manager (HSM) at ScottishPower Generation spoke to me at length regarding the company's culture together with its multifaceted approach to health and safety. The quotes below capture the ideology behind its approach:

- "We don't want to achieve the minimum legal standard; we want to start from there!"
- "Supportive health provision backed by a supportive policy"
- "Employees drive what we do!"
- "Sickness absence management, in this way, is directly in line with our strategy of world class health and safety and promotes the organisation as a good employer!"

During the last decade ScottishPower has gradually increased the emphasis of health and safety within its businesses. Each year, its Occupational Health Team carries out a variety of national poster campaigns on key health topics. These are designed to be both informative and interesting. Topics are chosen because of their relevance to ScottishPower's employees and past campaigns have included: Breast Cancer Awareness, Stress Management and No Smoking. In the same way, the centre produces a variety of health related leaflets, which employees can pick up if they want to learn more about a particular issue. In addition, the Occupational Health Centre frequently reviews and extends its health related policies and procedures to ensure that they are up to date, meet legal requirements and align with ScottishPower's overall objectives and strategy. For instance, ScottishPower set up a confidential stress help line for its employees after it recognised that stress related illness is becoming a greater issue within business.

## **Combating Sickness Absence**

The company's absence management policy has been significantly improved to incorporate many supportive elements including a return to work programme. This programme requires those who have been absent due to injury or illness to attend 'return to work' interviews with their line manager. Through these interviews the company can ensure that: (a) the employee is fit and able to come back to work; and (b) the employee has access to any support and assistance that they require. ScottishPower recognises that the longer a person is off work through illness or injury, the less likely they are of returning to their previous role. Thus, if an individual requires external assistance from, for instance, a physiotherapist, the company will pay for the necessary resource in order to speed up the individual's recovery and subsequent return to work. Likewise, they attempt to provide employees with return options so that they can return to work earlier. For instance, if an individual has a knee injury they may not be able to work as a mechanical fitter; however, they may fill a worthwhile and valued function elsewhere in the organisation: It isn't a cost thing, it is a welfare thing ... there is no point in someone being off for six months when they only need to be off for two months" (HSM). The Energy Wholesale's Health and Safety Manager provided a clear example of this policy in action: "A few years ago a contractor lost his foot as a result of accident at one of our Power Stations ... very traumatic both physically and mentally for him ... we ensured in the first instance his employer cared for and looked after his welfare in line with our expectations and in the second instance that he was included back into the workforce as soon as he felt he was ready" (HSM).

At a local level the Generation Business has introduced a variety of initiatives to develop its individual health and safety strategy. At the heart of the strategy is its health and fitness programme 'POWERCLUB', which the company has taken right across the business in varying degrees. In some locations it involved significant

investment with the provision of in-house gyms while in others the company organised outside outlets on a corporate rate so that employees can visit a gym at a reduced subscription. One of POWERCLUB's managers gave me a guided tour of the POWERCLUB facility at the Cathcart site. The facility was well equipped and there were adverts for various exercise classes for all levels of fitness and ability on the notice boards. Moreover, there were a number of employees using the service, which is always a positive sign. Although, the service varies across each site (depending on size and location) the underlying concept remains the same, that is, to promote employee fitness by providing inexpensive and accessible fitness facilities to employees. Furthermore, the team within the Powerclub also offer an email advice service and can provide health and fitness programmes to all staff via email. "The healthier our staff are and the fitter they are, the more productive they are and there is less chance of any of them succumbing to any stress related illness" (HSM).

In 2001, to encourage staff ownership of the company's health programme, the Generation staff decided to work towards the Scotland Health at Work awards. A voluntary SHAW group was established consisting of ten to twelve employees with each of company's major sites (including its sites in England) having a representative on the group. The group meets regularly to discuss current initiatives and plan future campaigns and events. They cover a variety of health topics throughout the year, at times falling in with the national campaigns (such as, no smoking day) and at other times embracing new topics that they believe will appeal and benefit the company's employees. The company's Health and Safety Manager provided numerous examples of past campaigns; however two successful ones were for meningitis awareness and dental hygiene. For the first, the group produced an extensive poster campaign highlighting the key issues surrounding meningitis and a spokesperson from the meningitis trust spoke to employees' onsite to raise their awareness and answer any of their questions. Likewise, to raise the profile of dental awareness

week the company bought in 800-900 gift packs containing: mouthwash, toothpaste, a toothbrush and a dental hygiene leaflet, these packs were then circulated to employees. This initiative was on the whole, well received, despite a little negative feedback, with the majority of staff being very appreciative of the packs. Any unused packs were forwarded to local schools so that they could promote good dental hygiene to their pupils.

Furthermore, throughout the year, the company runs a variety of additional activities including annual 'well-woman' and 'well-man' clinics, where employees can have a full health and fitness check. Similarly, the company has a Monday slimming club where people can get weighed and can access advice from a Scottish Slimming World representative. The company attempts to provide all its employees with comparable facilities; however, some of the stations need to vary their provision to take account of the size and location of their site. For instance, within the Cathcart site there is a high office population, therefore the company occasionally provides complementary therapists to provide massages and other relaxing treatments to employees. At the two largest generation sites a number of employees have requested the services of a chiropodist to come onsite once a month. Likewise, each year the company offers staff preventative medication, such as, free flu jabs in an attempt to reduce their risk of becoming ill.

The company also does dual-purpose initiatives that highlight health issues while bringing the workforce together. "It is like years ago when we had in-house social clubs ... we are trying to get back to that group ethos whereby employees should socialise and relax together." For example, they organised a sponsored walk event at their Cruachan power station for the ABCD (Argyle Beats Cardiovascular Disease) trust. This business wide initiative went out to all Generation employees and their families. They were encouraged to participate in one of two walks based on their

ability. The company made in excess of £1,900 for the charity and the event proved to be a great motivator. With a similar purpose the company took part in a corporate fitness challenge provided by an external company. This highlighted employee fitness plus gave employees the opportunity to try new activities, such as, ballroom dancing and curling. The scheme was popular with staff; therefore this year the organisation - in conjunction with the POWERCLUB staff - plans to organise similar activities internally with the hope of reaching more staff.

### **Value of the Programme**

Throughout our discussion ScottishPower Generation's Health and Safety Manger consistently stated that the company has come to see promoting employee health as an investment rather than a cost. Nevertheless, I was interested to discover if this investment has proven worthwhile, that is, has it positively influenced the company's sickness absence rate? Has it produced a safe and healthy working environment for employees? The organisation's Health and Safety Manger answered this with a resounding YES! "We seem to be hitting the objectives and getting the right results". With reference to sickness absence, ScottishPower's (UK Businesses) sickness absence cost for the period between 2004 and 2005 was estimated at £4.5 million, less than a third of the shocking figures in 1997. Across the organisation the actual sickness absence rate varies; however within the Generation section the sickness absence rate is about 2.4%. The Health and Safety manager considers this to be very low saying "we would normally expect to see 7%, 8% or 9%". The Health and Safety Manager believes that this is a key benefit for the business; however admits that it is difficult to attribute how much of a reduction in sickness absence is specifically due to the programme not to mention the contribution of individual activities.

Nonetheless, the Health and Safety manager continues to describe additional bottom-line benefits that the programme has provided. For instance, the company has found that their health programme is now a fundamental aspect of their recruitment strategy: "In today's society, the best people want more than just a good wage they want a good working environment. Potential employees are impressed by the services we have, the general response is 'wow, that's good!' (HSM). Another benefit for the company is the reduced time that employees spend away from work on account of onsite treatment and the return to work programme.

On the subject of employee benefits, the Health and Safety Manager maintains that there are many. The company completes regular surveys to gather employee views regarding past initiatives. As a result of this feedback it is apparent that providing treatment onsite also benefits employees: the company pays for it, it is more convenient than going off site and it positively affects employee well-being. "For the cost of us paying half a day for a chiropractor to come in once a month, I mean that is only six days a year, that is not a huge amount of money to this organisation and yet the benefits that employees gain is a huge benefit to us, and it is all at their place of work!" (HSM) Equally, having access to affordable fitness facilities (either onsite or locally) is of major value to employees. It encourages them to really look at their fitness levels and lets them make informed lifestyle changes, which may benefit the rest of their lives. Comparable benefits are obtained through the regular health campaigns, which raise employees' awareness of key health issues. The Health and Safety Manager believes that when taken as a whole, the strategy is appreciated by employees because they feel that they are being cared for by their employer. "Employees know that they are valued and that in turn makes them more productive. In the long-term we hope that employees will be a lot happier and a lot healthier in their workplace."

## **Summary and Conclusions**

ScottishPower Generation Ltd has taken a multi-faceted approach to employee health and safety; one that incorporates promotion, prevention and treatment activities stimulated by a comprehensive health and safety policy. Its extensive strategy has been internally driven by past absence costs and has developed in two-tiers; firstly through its parent company's (ScottishPower) strategy and secondly through its voluntary health groups. Satisfaction Surveys have shown that employees are appreciative of the initiatives and believe them to be worthwhile. Moreover, the HR manager believes that the programme has contributed to numerous bottom-line benefits for the company in terms of its recruitment strategy, its low attrition rate, its reduced sickness absence costs and the productivity of its employees.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

In this brief concluding chapter we do two things. Firstly, we reflect on our overall set of case studies with a view to highlighting some differences and similarities between them. Secondly, we draw on some additional information obtained from interviews in other organisations (see Box A below), which, combined with the above, point to some initial conclusions and future issues for further examination.

#### **Box A**

##### **Healthy Working Lives in a Trade Union**

At the 2004 Annual Conference of Unison in Scotland, the Health and Safety Group proposed a Healthy Working Lives Initiative for its staff, which involved the 4 area based offices in Scotland taking this forward utilising the SHAW framework. In Spring 2005 the Edinburgh branch office, which has some 25 staff, established a working party consisting of 4 volunteers (representing all categories of staff), which began to plan a programme of activities, drawing on the advice and assistance of a local SHAW representative. The working group meets on a bi-monthly basis, speaks to the local SHAW representative every couple of months, and has established a staff suggestion box scheme. Their central theme has been that of raising staff awareness in relation to healthy working lives, via talks, demonstrations and activities concerning exercise (a walking group typically goes out at lunchtime every Thursday), healthy eating and life style activities. Each month sees information or demonstrations concerning selected issues (e.g. salt awareness), one member of staff is receiving counselling support to help give up smoking, the kitchen facilities have been extensively upgraded to avoid the need for 'junk food snacks', fresh fruit is 'now mandatory' in meetings and water coolers have been purchased. A bronze award has been achieved, with the silver award being the target for this year. The Inverness area office in Unison is even smaller sized (6 staff), but has also achieved

a SHAW Bronze award, and is currently preparing its plans to aim for a Silver one. Like the Edinburgh office, it has built out from Unison-side policies (e.g. occupation health programme, no-smoking policy and concentrated on employee awareness raising in relation to healthy eating and exercise via demonstrations, talks and literature/posters.

### **An Overview of the Case Studies**

When reflecting on the full set of case studies reported here it is clear that organisations who have centred their health improvement efforts around '1 big idea or theme' with substantial upfront costs, were very much in the minority (this minority included the cases of Patrick Housing Association and Scottish Power). Rather the approach of the majority involved a relatively large number of individually small initiatives, which did not require sizeable associated costs, nor a great deal of specialised, internal expertise. This is very much a positive message in pointing to the fact that health improvement efforts are not inherently limited or restricted to a small group of relatively well-resourced organisations. In some cases a new staff appointment, or an existing staff resource, acted as the 'leader' of the initiative, but many of them drew on 'external expertise', notably the SHAW framework of reference, literature and local representatives to help provide targets and a framework of reference to structure and organise their package of individual initiatives.

Obviously one does not change for the sake of change itself, so that there was generally a perceived, or actual, set of 'issues and problems' that they responded to in launching these initiatives. This being said, this set of issues and problems often varied between the cases. For example, in the case of Barlinnie it was part of a whole restructuring process; in the cases of Scottish Power and Terasaki it was sickness absence costs, in the cases of News International and Morison Bowmore it

was taking a new perspective on occupational health; in the cases of the SECC and Partick Housing association it was improving employees working environment whereas in OKI it was seeing an opportunity to take a positive stance on employee health. Similarly, the gains they anticipated (or hoped for) from the initiatives also tended to vary between the cases. For example, in the Terasaki case it was reduced absence, in the OKI case it was recruitment benefits, whereas in the case of Partick Housing Association it was for employees to be more healthy and motivated and thus provide a better service to the Associations clients.

This variation in anticipated gains, and in the essential absence (with the notable exceptions of the Partick Housing Association case and the Scottish Power case) of systematic reviews of the outcomes of the initiatives across the cases, is particularly interesting. This fact sits, at least at first glance, rather 'oddly' with the strong current emphasis in policy-making circles on the need to make a business case for encouraging such initiatives. For example, literature concerning stress management typically advocates a 3 step approach:

- Assess the status quo (is there evidence that staff are stressed?)
- Calculate the potential cost (how does stress effect your bottom line?)
- Develop a sustainable plan (consult with employees on a system that will work for you and set targets for improvement).

The bottom line emphasis (stage 2) invariably highlights the sizeable extent of the direct and indirect costs of absence, and legal obligations. However, our case studies (and additional interview material) all pointed to sizeable differences in exactly what individual organisations meant by the notion of the 'bottom line'. The contents of Box B highlight two such differences. In general, if there was a notion of

the 'bottom line' it was viewed in a soft, reputational sense, although some even consciously rejected the bottom line notion; the extreme position in one additional interview was as follows: "There has been no obvious observable change in workplace behaviour, but it is still worthwhile for us as it is good for us all to be aware of what is good for our health."

## **Box B**

### **Differing Views of the 'Bottom Line'**

- 1 This organisation is the oldest building and civil engineering company in Scotland. It is a family owned firm, currently with some 60 employees. The current generation of family owners have, in the last 15-18 years, strongly emphasised extensive health and safety training for all staff (in 2005 every member of staff went through at least 5 such courses), continuous improvement and the attainment of external quality, environmental and health and safety standards. To them the bottom line pay off has been that 'we now take the responsibility for risk on behalf of our clients' which means that some 60% of our business is currently 'high end of the market stuff' (compared to 95% high volume, low end 15 years ago), with us now being able to 'tender in an area of the market that is not solely price driven'.
  
- 2 The MD of this textile company has, since his appointment 10 years ago, emphasised the importance of having an 'empowered workforce' as the central plank of a continuous quality improvement programme. The organisation currently employs some 120 staff, with profits, wages and employment all having increased during the last 10 years. Training, an improved working environment, communication and employee health and safety have all been key priorities in the context of a programme of regular, on-going change orientated towards Total Quality Management. The health and safety initiatives have not centred around individual big themes ('which invariably lose their impact as they come to be taken for granted'), but here have involved a lot of little things. To the MD the bottom line pay off from them has been an internal driven PR effect. 'The

positive stories that members of our current workforce tell in the local pubs mean that, via word of mouth, we are the local employer of choice'.

Obviously the relative absence of systematic reviews by the organisations of their experience has draw-backs. For instance, it means that we have little idea of the overall proportion of the workforce concerned who have utilised the various opportunities on offer, we do not know if those who did utilise them were relatively typical of the workforce as a whole, and we do not know which individual parts of the overall programme were most effective.

What evaluation information that was available did, however, provide some positive pointers. For example, in the case of Partick Housing Association it was apparent that the initiatives were very much appreciated by employees, which may lead to long-term benefits for the company. At the same time we encountered some 'oddities' in the data. For example, a representative of one hotel told us that their annual staff attitude survey always yielded complaints about the quality of staff meals. But, when management offered healthy eating options in response to such complaints, the staff still tended to, overwhelmingly, stay with the 'pie, beans and chips' option.

The relative absence of a strong business case being made initially for the initiatives, and then little subsequent evaluation of these to see whether they were 'cost effective' strongly suggests that our case study organisations were, in the terms of the diffusion literature (Rogers, 1995), very much 'innovators' or 'early adopters'; such organisations are not strongly bottom line orientated in their decision-making, nor particularly influenced in such decisions by peer group considerations.

## **The Big Challenge**

The big question for the future is how, in the absence of external legislation and regulation, policy makers can seek to actively and successfully encourage and facilitate a reasonably widespread voluntary adoption process which reaches beyond the relatively small set of self selected ('innovators' and 'early adopters') organisations represented in our Case Studies. A recent focus group exercise we were involved in with individuals from one particular sector or industry yielded the following insights:

- Work-related stress was an increasing cause of sickness absence.
- A high level of both absence and turnover of staff was the norm in the industry so senior management saw little point in initiatives designed to help improve the position of individual employees.
- Voluntary health improvement initiatives were limited across the sector, involving little more than counselling support in even the most progressive individual organisations.
- Senior management would only do something if there was clear evidence of financial benefits exceeding financial costs.
- This evidence would only be convincing if it came from within the sector concerned.

These sorts of findings can be viewed in the light of the contents of Box C; the contents come from an experienced senior HR consultant who has been closely

involved in the processes of seeking to encourage the voluntary take up of many HR initiatives in small, medium and large firms. Our interviewer asked him to draw on his experience and this is reflected in our results.

<b>Box C</b>	
<b>Characteristics of Early Volunteers and Reluctant Converts</b>	
<b>Early Volunteers</b>	<b>Reluctant Converts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not interested in the bottom line numbers.</li> <li>• Evaluate it in terms of 'feel good' factors.</li> <li>• Mainly motivated by view that employees will value it (which is not necessarily the same as will benefit from it).</li> <li>• Will ensure that underlying budget is tightly controlled.</li> <li>• Big debate often which particular items will be most valued by employees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will do the numbers (giving to employees means giving less to customers).</li> <li>• Believe that not of high interest to employee relative to traditional terms and conditions of employment.</li> <li>• Believe that any initial positive valuation by employees will fade over time quite quickly.</li> <li>• Any gains to the organisation will come about via an enhanced general commitment to work, which is similar to effect from the staff Christmas party and social events.</li> <li>• Younger aged, non-smoking senior members may provide some pre-disposition advantage here.</li> </ul>

This is clearly a sector of employment characterised, at least at the moment, by the relative absence of 'innovators' and 'early adopters', in terms of Box C it is 'Reluctant Converts' dominated. This raises a number of important questions and options\*:

- Will 'innovators' and 'early adopters' naturally arise in this industry over time?

\*Helpful discussions with Marc Weinstein at the Labor Education and Research Center, University of Oregon are gratefully acknowledged.

- In the absence of such a natural process, can policy makers positively seek to identify and encourage them via the use of something like demonstration projects?
- Can policy makers seek to circumvent the normal diffusion process by trying to reach what are called the 'early majority' and 'late majority' directly (without having 'innovators' and 'early adopters') the former are influenced by peer networks and the demonstrated effectiveness of innovations, while the latter are also influenced by peer pressure and the desire to remain competitive. (Rogers, 1995).

These sorts of questions can only be answered by a programme of future action research and pilot testing which has the following strands:

- 1 Survey work that documents the extent of voluntary healthy working lives initiatives across industry as a whole, and the extent of inter-sectoral variation in this regard.
- 2 Assuming the existence of considerable inter-industry variation in the extent of voluntary adoption (because of differences in the extent of SMEs,

differences in industry arrangements for learning and communication, etc) of healthy working lives programmes, policy makers need to:

- (a) help facilitate 'demonstration projects' (on a pilot basis) to encourage the emergence of 'innovators' and 'early adopters' in industries where there is little evidence of any real voluntary adoption.
  - (b) help facilitate peer group communication arrangements, and evidence of a positive business case based on industry specific evidence, to reach 'early majority' and 'late majority' adopters in industries where 'innovators' and 'early adopters' have already emerged.
- 3 Policy makers will also need to work in partnership with industry participants to help produce a more focussed and homogeneous programme of healthy working lives initiatives within individual industries. This is because the less complex, the more transparent and the more the opportunity for pilot testing of industry based programmes, the greater the potential for widespread adoption within industries.

### **Books Cited in the Text**

Bunting, M. (2005) *Willing Slaves*, Harper Perennial, London.

Rogers, E.M. (1995) *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Free Press, New York.