WORKLOAD CAMPAIGN FACTSHEET

UCU University and College Union

IT'S YOUR TIME

Workload inspections: a systematic approach

A KEY ELEMENT OF THE WORKLOAD CAMPAIGN

Inspections of the workplace to investigate (and gather evidence) of workload and work-related stress hazards, carried out by health and safety (H&S) reps are at the heart of the campaign. Unlike general workplace inspections, which often focus on physical conditions, workload inspections focus on the organisation, management and allocation of work to staff at departmental level. Workload inspections utilise the HSE Stress Management Standards approach, and focus, primarily but not excusively on the 'Demands' and 'Change' management standards.
https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/ les/tacking-workplace-stress-guide.pdf

Workload inspections seek to identify workload and work-related stress hazards through face-to-face discussions with small groups of staff and/or individuals in workplace departments. During the process seeks to involve all staff in our bargaining group, whether members or not. Prior to the inspection, a key task is to identify three or four key themes and/or issues which will then be used as talking points during the inspection. The inspection might build upon a previous survey; it might support a planned data collection exercise; it might also follow up on issues raised with

Workload inspections have a number of useful functions. These include:

- evidence gathering and qualitative data collection
- information sharing with the employer via formal inspection reports, informing the employer of their legal duty to manage and control the risk of work-related stress following an organisational risk assessment process
- 'road testing' workload issues with staff groups, supporting workload campaign development (and the development of local workload claims)
- increasing the visibility and awareness of activity on workload issues
- building collective support for campaigning, local claims, identifying new activists and workload reps

PLANNING AND ORGANISING INSPECTIONS

Before conducting a workload inspection, please see the campaign checklist at: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/9462/Its-your-time-checklist-1---the-branch-workload-team/pdf/ucu_its_your_time_checklist_1.pdf - it sets out the preparatory work which is necessary in order to conduct an effective inspection.

Workload inspections should be planned and organised systematically within the union. The branch should co-ordinate the activities of the workload reps and other H&S reps, and the branch should plan a rolling schedule of inspections to cover the key departments in the workplace where workload issues are reported or suspected. Workload reps and other H&S reps should book time off well in advance.

The branch workload team will need to arrange for a combination of new and experienced reps to do the first round of inspections. Don't reduce the status of an inspection by calling it a stroll around. Emphasise to staff the importance of the inspection process. It will be used to identify issues, raise them with the employer, then to develop and implement a workload campaign.

DO THE INSPECTION!

The hardest part of the inspection is the planning and preparation. Doing it is easy and rewarding. After all, you are simply speaking to colleagues about workload and stress: however you are doing so in the exercise of your statutory functions as a H&S rep. Here's how you do it.

1 Draw up an inspection plan

Think about:

- the time and date of the inspection
- notifying the employer and organising time-off
- letting members know it's going to happen
- what route you will use round the workplace
- who you will talk to, and whether you need meeting rooms for drop ins
- how much time you will need to prepare, do the inspection and write your report.

2 Get hold of relevant information

- floor plans and workplace layout
- relevant general and specific risk assessments
- legal and other standards
- information from the Health & Safety Executive
- information provided by [illegible]
- workplace mapping showing locations of members and non-members
- [illegible]nd employer workload/stress survey reports

3 Involve your members

- notify your members in advance
- emphasise the importance of the inspection, and their role in it
- find out if there is anything particular you should examine
- discuss problems with members before and during the inspection
- find out what they think should be done

4 During the inspection

- be positive and business-like in your approach
- don't waste time unnecessarily, but don't rush either
- go back and check things if you need to
- keep notes and reassure colleagues that all responses are confidential

- explain the ‘bigger picture’ and why doing the inspection
- inform all staff that seeking to assist both members and non-members for the purposes of identifying workload hazards and representing staff concerns to the employer
- contextualise the discussion around the key themes and issues.
- discuss problems as you go
- take two pens, in case one runs out.

5 After the inspection

- review your notes
- anonymise the comments from respondents, edit and group by issue/theme
- prepare for, and give a report-back to your members
- copy the report for your records and anyone else who needs one.

Reporting and recording your inspection is essential. There are copies of a workload inspection report template here: https://www.ucu.org.uk/workloadcampaign

The report form is to enable you to record the problems and hazards you have identi ed. The report form is available in a generic version to capture any of the six stress management standards (SMS) that can lead to work-related stress. There are also separate templates that focus on one SMS if this is a focus of your investigation. Ensure that responses are grouped by issue/theme and the applicable SMS. Some responses will sit under more than one SMS.

Keep copies of your reports in your ling system, and make sure you copy them to anyone else who might need one.

It is good practice to think through and discuss potential solutions and forms of action that will control the causes of workload pressure at source. Work with your members to capture a range of possible solutions and improvements; members are good at suggesting what should be done to improve things.

The management standards classify the principal causes of work-related stress into six key areas:

Demands – Includes issues like workload, work patterns and the work environment

Control – How much say the person has in the way they do their work

Support – Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

Relationships – Includes promoting positive working to avoid con ict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

Role – Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have con icting roles

Change – How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation