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Examples of projects

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Risk assessment audit and review

The aim of this project was to improve the standard of and engagement with risk assessment. I worked along with my Health and safety Adviser on this project. We audited the quality of risk assessment, by first setting out standards of "what good looks like", then reviewing a sample of risk assessments against it. We also observed activities we'd received assessments on and identified that a lot of information wasn't being captured. Following the audit, a new standard risk assessment template and matrix was developed, and extensive training carried out. KPIs were used to ensure risk assessments across the organisation were reviewed and moved to the new template. Key messages were:

- use of risk assessment as a planning tool,
- how risk assessment can help managers know their subject and what their workers are doing (and engage with them); and
- using risk assessment as part of a business case for improvements.

This project was important in moving from a culture of viewing risk assessment as "back covering" to one where it is seen as an important management tool.

What's Your Story" promotion

The purpose of this promotion, which I led, was to raise awareness of the importance of health and safety, in particular by showing that:

- Health and safety is not just common sense
- Accidents don't happen to "others", they happen to us, our families, friends and colleagues.

Members of the University were encouraged to submit:

- Stories about themselves or someone they know who had been involved in an accident or near miss; or
- a piece of micro-fiction (a story in 10 words or less) on the theme of health, safety and wellbeing.

The promotion was designed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) and 50th Anniversary of the University, which fell in the same year.

Promotion was primarily by internal communications and the H&S team and Unions visiting teams and meetings throughout the University. H&S advisers also published their own stories. Postcards showing archive photos of the University illustrating poor health and safety standards in the past were used as entry forms. Over 100 entries were received.

The best entries were displayed at a special event a few months later, along with photographs illustrating past and present health and safety standards at the University. The senior management team, key managers, Union representatives and those who had entered stories attended the event. The best entries were also displayed on a special website and put into a PowerPoint that was shown to Council. An internal conference on the theme of learning lessons was also held on the same day.

The promotion succeeded in raising awareness of health and safety throughout the university community in a positive way. The stories also continued to be used in training, events and promotional materials to illustrate the importance of health, safety and wellbeing, creating a lasting legacy for future staff and students to learn from.

Stress Policy

Work had been identified due to increasing concern about stress in the academic community.

A working group consisting of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Director of Human Resources, representatives of Trades Unions and myself was set up. I drafted a new Stress Policy, which, following consultation, was adopted by the University. I also developed a supporting website with information aimed at managers and employees and a leaflet entitled "Under Pressure?" giving tips on managing stress and signposting to further support.

I also collaborated with the Director of HR with carrying out an employee survey, which was designed to capture information on stress (based on HSE Management Standards) as well as employee engagement. I worked with the University's Communications team and Unions to promote the survey, achieving over 50% response. An action plan was then developed for addressing areas for improvement.

I also promoted the Stress Policy and support in place through activities based around Stress Awareness Day. This included a variety of activities, such as laughter yoga, simulated tropical beach relaxation sessions and collaborative work with the Chaplaincy on spiritual wellbeing.

Policy and Planning for a large organisation

I reviewed the Council's Health and Safety Policy and planning process. Simplified Policy framework and language. I also recommended new health and safety priorities that were linked to the Corporate priorities of "A Healthier Essex" and "Cutting bureaucracy and costs." These were agreed by the Senior Management Team. To implement the priorities, I developed a health and safety planning and reporting system, to give the senior management team and Members oversight of health and safety activities in the Directorates.

Managing Violence at Work

I identified the need for a strategy and policy on dealing with violence at work as part of health and safety audit of the Council. I set up and chaired a working group consisting of managers from the main services affected and Union representatives. A staff survey was also carried out. I led development of:

- A Code of Practice and risk assessment guidance for managers (with introduction by the Chief Executive)
- A Means of sharing information about potentially violent persons across the service - developed in consultation with the Information Commissioner
- Support systems for lone workers
- Formal systems for reporting, investigating and supporting affected employees
- An Employee handbook and pocket-card.
- Personal safety training, for which I became a certificated Suzy Lamplugh Trust trainer.

I also organised a high-profile seminar to launch the code of practice. which included guest speakers. Over 100 managers attended.

I also carried out a post implementation survey, which demonstrated that new Policy had been positively received.