

Arresting stress levels

When Thames Valley Police, the largest non-metropolitan police force in the country, wanted to get to grips with difficulties they were experiencing during a major restructure, they contacted ICAS for help.

The Situation

A major restructure within the Control Rooms and Enquiries department involved the closure of some existing control rooms and enquiry centres. Further disruption was caused by the relocation of some personnel into new premises, along with the introduction of new technology and working practices.

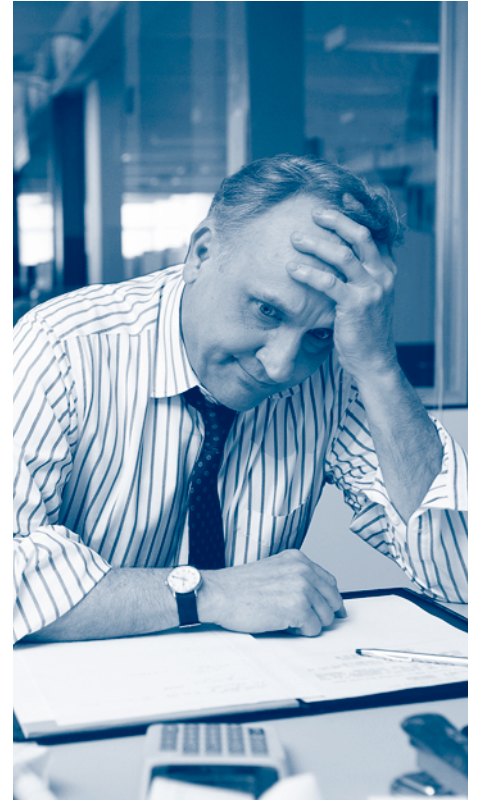
As can be expected during such a climate of change, a rise in employee turnover and sickness absence rates occurred.

ICAS was asked to identify the levels of stress within the department as a whole and, more importantly, which parts of the organisation were experiencing the greatest pressures. Alongside this they were keen to understand which factors within the organisation were contributing to these pressures and what could be done to alleviate them.

The Solution

ICAS organised focus groups across the department to gain qualitative information from employees on their perception of the main pressures. Using the information gathered from this, a tailor-made questionnaire was designed specifically to investigate the issues raised. To this, ICAS added the GHQ12 set of questions to gauge the stress levels across the organisation.

Continues overleaf



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Arresting stress levels *continued*

The response rates to the questionnaire were encouragingly high at 74%, making the data collected very reliable.

The data clearly showed those areas within the organisation where stress levels were above ICAS benchmarks and also highlighted factors that people considered to be the main causes of their work pressure.

Following the audit report and its recommendations, ICAS worked with the management of Thames Valley Police to develop practical action points that could be implemented across the organisation.

The Results

Approximately 18 months later, after Thames Valley Police had implemented these actions, ICAS carried out a follow-up audit to assess what effects these actions may have had.

The results speak for themselves:

- Stress levels had reduced significantly in many parts of the organisation
- In one work area they had dropped by as much as 24% from the previous survey
- Absenteeism had reduced by 3.5 days per annum
- Employee turnover had dropped from 26% to 16%

Shaun Morley, Chief Superintendent, Thames Valley Police said, "ICAS was intrinsic in helping us identify the key issues that needed to be resolved, allowing us to integrate the findings into our business planning process."

Thames Valley Police have continued to make changes to improve the working environment of their employees and ICAS has been commissioned to carry out a third audit in Autumn 2005.

Benefits of ICAS Stress Audits

ICAS Stress Audits have a number of key features to help organisations see how they measure up:

- Show performance against the current HSE Management Standards
- Fully scalable from individual departments to large multi-site organisations
- Multi-format delivery available for ease of use:
 - Interactive web-based
 - Email questionnaires
 - Traditional paper based
- Identify 'hot spots' of pressure and groups of employees most at risk
- Identify main causes of work pressure
- Help organisations comply with their legal Duty of Care
- Cost effective – high response rate averages 70%-80%
- Standard and bespoke audits

Each client is provided with a comprehensive report including recommendations for action. This is supported by the experience and expertise of one of the world's leading providers of employee support and behavioural risk services.

A stress audit can help you discover:

- Whether stress is an issue in your organisation
- The scale of the problem if it exists
- The areas within the business where the pressure is being felt most
- What factors are causing the most stress
- Where the greatest risks are to the business
- What can be done to eliminate or minimise the risks

If you require any further information on these services, please fill in the attached reply-paid card or contact us on 01908 285200

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