



South Cumbria &
North Lancashire Branch

Joint Zoom meeting 21 Oct 2021



South Cumbria Occupational
Health & Safety Group

Topic: *Managing psychosocial risk in the workplace to comply with the new ISO 45003 Standard – Psychological Health and Safety at Work: Managing psychosocial risks.*

Speakers: Joanne Chambers, Psychologist, Lakeland Capabilities
Elsa Mason, Director & Health and Safety Practitioner, DMA Safety Management

Gary McAteer, Chairman, *South Cumbria and North Lancashire IOSH Branch* welcomed members to the joint meeting with *South Cumbria Occupational Health & Safety Group*. He then welcomed and introduced our speakers, Joanne Chambers, Psychologist, *Lakeland Capabilities* and Elsa Mason, Director & Health and Safety Practitioner, *DMA Safety Management*. He said that Elsa had recently contracted Covid-19 so that Joanne had agreed to be the lead presenter.

Joanne started her presentation by explaining that a significant number of employees, particularly Millennials, were re-evaluating their work/life balance and their workplace expectations which could lead to a high turnover of staff and a shrinking workplace talent pool. She said that a recent survey had identified the following common reasons for resignations:

- Worsening work/life balance.
- Pay freeze or cut.
- A toxic workplace culture.
- Reduction in benefit.
- Being on furlough.

She went on to say that other published data also reveals that a number of employees considering a job change:

- Would choose a company that cared about their employees' wellbeing rather than a company that offered a salary of up to 10% more.
- Would take a pay cut to work for a company whose mission aligned with their personal values.
- Would consider leaving their job post-Covid-19 pandemic if they were not allowed to work flexibly – with some choice about when and where they worked.

Joanne explained that some employees' perception of working has changed they have been forced into different work patterns led to an increase in the number of people reporting work related stress, anxiety, and depression. The main causes of work-related stress are:

- Workload: tight deadlines, too much work, too much pressure, or too little or too much responsibility.
- Changes in workplace routines such as home working and inflexible Covid-19 work protocols.
- Problems with interpersonal relationships: at home or in the workplace.
- Traumatic events: family deaths, serious illness, job loss.

She went on to emphasise that the leadership style of line managers had a major impact on employees' workplace wellbeing and suggested that workplaces with a standalone wellbeing strategy that included wellbeing training for line managers were likely to see an improvement in their workplace culture as well as in employee wellbeing.

Joanne then explained that the UK's ISO 45003 Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks:

- Provide practical guidance to help employers manage workplace psychological health by using a systematic approach to managing psychosocial risk
- Explain how they are linked to the ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety Standard.
- Defines psychosocial risk as intangible hazards in a workplace that have the potential to cause mental, emotional, or psychological harm

Joanne explained that she and Elsa have been collaborating to develop a tool kit that will help employers manage psychosocial risk effectively and enable them to achieve the standards required by ISO 45003.

She explained how everyone's mental health continuum was likely to be somewhere between optimal wellbeing and minimal wellbeing and that everyone's state of workplace wellbeing was affected by a range of psychosocial hazards that fell into three main categories:

- How work is organised: workload, job control, role clarity, line management organisation.
- Workplace social factors: line management leadership quality, workplace relationships, career development opportunities, support, supervision etc...
- The work environment: right equipment for the job, safe systems of work for hazardous activities, lone working, remote working, home working and return to the workplace etc...

Joanne said that assessing workplace psychosocial risk should follow the same process as all workplace risk assessments namely:

- Identify potential workplace psychological hazards and primary risk factors.
- Assess the risks identified.
- Determine what changes can be made to reduce the risk.
- Implement controls that will mitigate the risks.
- Review control measures regularly or in response to a workplace incident.

Joanne recommended that employers should undertake employee psychosocial risk assessment surveys using a bespoke modular risk assessment survey including hazard identification tailored to their business as well as covering the psychosocial risks outlined in ISO 45003. She said that the results of such surveys could then be analysed to assess organisational culture and to identify whether targeted workplace changes are necessary.

Joanne then explained that she and Elsa were developing a prototype system to help employers achieve ISO 45003 that includes a psychosocial risk assessment survey that they have registered as PsychSafe™ Survey. She showed members some example questions from their survey and said that it includes sections on: job demands, roles and expectations, burnout, the work environment, the workplace psychological health and safety culture and diversity and inclusion.

She explained that she and Elsa were piloting their system with a few volunteer organisations by using their survey, analysing the survey data, and then providing the volunteer organisations with a complimentary report detailing their findings, with suggested interventions and a map of their workplace mental health continuum.

She offered members the opportunity for their organisations to join in their pilot study before responding to questions that included searching queries about the potential confusion about who should be responsible for overseeing workplace wellbeing policies: Human Resource managers or Health & Safety professionals? Plus the problem that ISO 45003 might become just another 'certificate on the wall', and another way for certification bodies to make more money.

Gary then thanked Joanne for her informative presentation and expressed the hope that Elsa would soon recover from her Covid-19 infection.

He also reminded members that our Branch's next joint *Zoom* meeting with *SCOHSG* on 18 November 2021 would be given by Phil Roberts, HSE Specialist Inspector, Occupational Hygiene and NW Regional Organiser, BOHS on the topic of *Occupational Hygienists and Workplace Risks*

Related HSE information:

Stress and mental health at work: [Stress at work - HSE](#)

Mental health conditions, work and the workplace: [Stress at work - Mental health conditions, work and the workplace - HSE](#)

Sources of other relevant information:

Guidance published by ISO: [ISO - ISO 45003:2021 - Occupational health and safety management — Psychological health and safety at work — Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks](#)

Guidance published by the BSI Group [ISO 45003 | BSI \(bsigroup.com\)](#)