

## **Work Positive at Fermanagh College**

Fermanagh College has been providing quality vocational and academic education for the people of Fermanagh and beyond, for over 100 years. The College employs approximately 250 staff and each year, over 9,000 people enrol.

As well as having two satellite buildings, the college has a learning bus to reach some of the most rural members of the community. Fermanagh College has been chosen as one of only 8 case studies in the UK as representing the benefits of EU funding in 2006 and representatives from the College attended the launch of the EU's new Lifelong Learning and Youth in Action Programme in the Foreign Office Whitehall, London.

### **Getting started**

The Principal Designate of the College is committed to and fully supportive of implementing Work Positive and the management standards. This initiative was started in light of an imminent major restructuring of all Northern Ireland colleges and recent changes to the management structure within the college.

The process was co-ordinated by the Human Resource manager.

Awareness was raised by inviting all staff to sessions to learn more about the process. All staff were made aware that the organisation was taking work-related stress seriously and how they could participate in exploring issues.

Staff representatives were also informed about the process and later formed the steering group.

### **Look at the hazards**

The benchmark was conducted by the Human Resources department. In addition, sickness absence figures are recorded and analysed regularly.

### **Identify who might be harmed**

It was acknowledged that stress can affect all staff so full-time and part-time lecturing and support staff were included in the assessment.

### **Evaluate the risk**

All staff received a copy of the questionnaire and an accompanying letter detailing the categories of staff for analysis. An electronic link to the questionnaire was emailed to staff who were then able to anonymously input their own data. (A small number of support staff filled in paper copies, which were then electronically inputted by the HR department). A reminder was sent out to staff after two weeks. There was a 46% response rate. The questionnaires were analysed.

Results published on College Intranet with general feedback on results and action plan to all staff.

Staff were engaged in a series of focus groups to identify key pressures and they were also encouraged to suggest potential solutions. Despite some of the focus groups having a small attendance (3 staff) feedback from staff was good.

### **Taking action and developing solutions**

All of the information from the focus groups was collated and presented to the steering group. The steering group considered the issues raised and prioritised actions.

The main priority issues were:

- Communication
- Teamwork/relationships
- Training and development

- Job descriptions/job role
- Planning/Management/Resources

#### Proposed Actions

Management training courses are proposed in order to assist managers with communication and team building.

All College staff will receive opportunity to participate in Team Development Programme.

Training for all staff in how to use the College Intranet to improve communication.

Corporate Change Manager to carry out a review of SMT Job descriptions to ensure alignment with College Strategic direction.

Appraisal system to be embedded for all support staff.

Development of new Work Positive/Stress Policy

#### Lessons learned

A number of staff had to be reassured about the confidentiality aspect of using an electronic questionnaire.

Time commitment is needed to effectively facilitate the process

#### Results

We now wish to publish the results and Action Plan on the intranet. Linda Murphy from the Health and Safety Executive (HSENI) reports “ Fermanagh College results are average results in comparison to a national survey of organizations that we have carried out, particularly in relation to an organisation that has undergone a considerable amount of change in recent times.”

Our results highlight a number of staff who report that they are bullied. (16 members of staff) Studies indicate that at any one time a typical range of