

## **CWU Mental Health Strategy – A Way Forward**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to set out a way forward on developing a comprehensive CWU Mental Health Strategy (CWU MHS), as required by Motion 69<sup>1</sup> carried at General Conference 2018.

The motion instructs the NEC to work with the Young Workers National Committee and appropriate departments including the Health and Safety and Equality departments, to assist in developing such a strategy. It states that the project should consider:

- Developing a working relationship with organisations/charities to develop and execute the strategy.
- A joined up training programme.
- The most effective methods of communicating with branches, reps and members on the issue.
- Support for reps who deal with members who have mental health issues.
- Support for reps affected by the increasing stress of the job.
- Measures to ensure the strategy is working effectively.

As highlighted in the motion, the CWU has done some excellent work at branch, regional and national level to raise awareness of mental health and its impact on individuals.

This paper provides a short overview of some of the recent work that the CWU has done on mental health. It also looks briefly at what other trade unions and organisations are doing on this issue. Finally, the paper makes some proposals on next steps for taking the CWU MHS strategy forward.

### **CWU Work on Mental Health**

#### **Working with charities and other organisations**

Over a number of years, the CWU has committed to work with an increasing number of charities and organisations to address the issue of mental health.

In 2012, the CWU carried a proposition (GC Motion 51) instructing the NEC to investigate ways to work with the **Samaritans** and **Sane** to support their work on depression and suicide that may be work related.

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<sup>1</sup> The full text of the motion is included in Annex 1

In 2016 (GC Motion 69) the union carried a proposition to work with the **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)** to raise awareness and support that exist for men contemplating suicide. As a result, the Health and Safety Department was in contact with CALM and continues to do a lot of work on the subject of mental health and the high rate of suicide amongst young men. The union promoted and raised awareness of World Suicide Day on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

In 2017 we committed to support the charity **Papyrus** (GC Motion 9), in working to prevent suicide in the under 35s and tackling the high rates of suicide amongst LGBT young adults. As a result, the union met with Papyrus to discuss how we could work together; a guest speaker from Papyrus was invited to address the LGBT Equality Conference; and fundraising initiatives have been organised. This included a sponsored walk in June 2018 along the West Highland Way by a team of 10 CWU young workers. They raised money for three charities that work directly with young people who are struggling with mental health issues: Papyrus UK, Centrepont and the Ron Todd Foundation.

#### Joint initiatives with employers

The CWU has a number of joint initiatives with employers to address the issue of mental health. Set out below is a brief overview of some of the initiatives we have developed with Royal Mail, British Telecom and Parcelforce.

**Royal Mail Group** launched a 5 year Mental Health Strategy in October 2017 entitled 'Healthy Minds Matter', with the full involvement and support of the CWU. The strategy's key aims are to raise awareness, reduce stigma, provide tools and support, and ensure all employees are clear on where to get support in a crisis. The strategy includes a programme to create a network of local mental health ambassadors.

**Parcelforce Worldwide** and the CWU agreed a joint statement in September 2017 concerning the introduction of the Royal Mail Group strategy. The statement expressed support for the strategy, noting that the business and the union had worked together on a brief in relation to depression which was delivered jointly in all depots from September.

A year earlier, in October 2016, Royal Mail launched a joint initiative with the CWU and Unite to support managers, frontline employees and members in talking about and managing stress and mental wellbeing in the workplace.<sup>2</sup>

**BT** has a 'Passport' scheme which was developed jointly with the CWU in 2007. The scheme documents the requirements of employees who have special needs that can sometimes impact on their working life. There are three types of passport available, including a 'Health and Wellbeing Passport' for employees with mental health conditions. The scheme means that any special needs that people have are documented along with their necessary reasonable adjustments. If a line manager or job role changes in the future, the information is readily available to ensure continuity of these arrangements.

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<sup>2</sup> World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2016, CWU website, accessed at: <https://www.cwu.org/news/world-mental-health-day/>

BT also launched a peer support network on World Mental Health Day in 2017. The network involves people volunteering to signpost employees who they believe are suffering from a mental health issue. There was initially some concern from the CWU that the network may impinge on industrial relations activity. However, reassurances have been received from the company that this should not be the case and the CWU is working with BT to ensure that the scheme operates as intended.

### Training

The CWU's Health and Safety Department has worked with a number of branches and charities in CWU regions to help organise and encourage CWU reps to attend the two day '**Mental Health First Aid**' training course.

Mental Health First Aid is an educational course that teaches people how to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing a mental health condition. The course was developed in Australia in 2000 and is now internationally recognised in 24 countries. Courses are organised regularly across the UK by Mental Health First Aid (England and Scotland) and by a number of mental health charities including MIND and Rethink.

The CWU's Education Department, in consultation with the Health and Safety Department, launched a **Mental Health Awareness Course** in 2016/17. This followed the carriage of General Conference Motion 37/2015, which instructed the NEC to raise awareness and combat the stigma of those who suffer from mental ill health/work place stress.

Motions 63 and 64 of General Conference 2018 instruct the NEC to make these courses as widely available as possible in future.

### Updates and information for branches and members

The CWU's Health and Safety Officer regularly circulates guidance and updates to branches about CWU initiatives on mental health, along with details of events, activities and reports from other organisations.

This includes the 'CWU Guide to Work and Suicide' booklet issued in January 2018, which provides details on who is most at risk of suicide, what are the warning signs, and what to do if someone is feeling suicidal.

Communications have also been issued to branches on Royal Mail's 5 year mental health strategy; Mental Health Awareness Week; the UK National Work Stress Network Handbook; The British Safety Council report on the impact of work on health and wellbeing; and the Stevenson/Farmer report on Mental Health and Employers, to name just a few.

However, there is currently little information for members specifically on mental health on the CWU's website (other than relevant LTBs). The members area has a four page leaflet titled 'Mental Health Problems' which contains some dated statistics (2006/2007), and a mental health poster providing some limited information on getting advice and support.

There are currently no resources on mental health on the CWU Reps web pages.

### **Activities of other trade unions and organisations on tackling mental ill health**

Employers are beginning to focus more on employee wellbeing, as they increasingly recognise the benefits of addressing mental ill health amongst their staff.

Mental ill health is the leading cause of sickness absence in the UK, costing an average of £1,035 per employee per year.<sup>3</sup> Recent Government figures show that employers lose up to £42bn each year due to staff suffering from mental health problems. Overall, poor mental health is reported to cost the UK economy £99 billion each year.<sup>4</sup>

Whilst trade unions have long campaigned for work-related stress to be taken seriously, the increased level of interest from employers and also government has created a better climate for union activity around this issue.

The following section looks at just some of the initiatives taken by other trade unions and charities in improving mental health at work.

### **Trade Union Activity on Mental Health**

The **Fire Brigades Union** has produced the guide, *Mental health at work – An initial guide for FBU reps*<sup>5</sup>, explaining the range of mental health challenges that can face firefighters, what employers should do and how FBU reps and officials can represent and support them.

It aims to tackle the stigma around mental health and includes guidance on negotiating:

- a workplace mental health policy;
- an absence management policy dealing with cases of mental health;
- comprehensive rehabilitation plans; and
- the use of a stress risk indicator as part of the return to work process.

**Prospect** is running a campaign called *Stress, stigma, solutions*, which focuses on the difficulties with talking openly about mental health. It starts from the position that successful stress management is only achieved when measures are in place to deal with stigma that deters disclosure. The campaign calls on members and reps to encourage their employer to sign up to an anti stigma campaign, such as *Time to Change*.

Prospect also provides a range of resources on stress including a members guide to stress and a reps' guide to organisational solutions for tackling stress.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Employer Pledge, Time to Change, accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at: <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/get-your-workplace-involved/employer-pledge>

<sup>4</sup> How communication can support better mental health at work, Personnel Today, 21 November 2017, accessed at: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/communication-can-support-better-mental-health-work/>

<sup>5</sup> Mental health at work, FBU, 2016, available at: <https://www.fbu.org.uk/mental-health-guide>

<sup>6</sup> Stress and mental health, Prospect website, accessed at: <https://www.prospect.org.uk/help-at-work/health-and-safety/stress-mental-health>

The **GMB** has called on employers to be proactive in showing that mental health is important by putting into practice workplace policies to tackle stigma, provide support and improve their workers' wellbeing. It has published a guide for reps which aims to be a one-stop resource for information on dealing with mental health issues in the workplace. The guide gives basic advice on tackling problems and providing solutions. It also outlines ways to organise around mental health as a workplace health and safety issue.<sup>7</sup>

**Unison** provides a range of resources for reps and members regarding stress.<sup>8</sup> This includes a guide for safety reps on stress at work, which seeks to explain to safety reps what they need to know to represent, negotiate, campaign and organise around stress. It explains the causes and symptoms of stress, what the law says, and what support should be provided for stressed workers.

Unison ran a survey on stress amongst public sector workers in 2017 which received nearly 10,000 responses. The survey found that 67% of respondents felt that 'excessive demands of the job' were the source of their stress, and 60% of employers had not spoken to their employees about stress. This is despite the fact that the Health and Safety Executive Stress Management Standards, which advises employers to communicate with staff about workloads and stress, have been in place for over ten years.<sup>9</sup>

**Unite** advocates negotiating a policy on stress, and advises that: "A stress policy can be a useful mechanism to reduce and prevent occupational stress. It is essential that such policies are developed and monitored jointly by management and Unite safety reps."

It says that the objectives of the policy should be:

- to prevent stress by identifying the causes and eliminating them, to deal with problems as they arise;
- to promote openness and guarantee a 'blame free' culture; and
- rehabilitation of employees suffering from stress, for example, through confidential independent counselling.<sup>10</sup>

**PCS's** policy is to deal with stress by removing, or controlling, the causes of stress at work. This means ensuring, for example, that targets are set with input from staff and are achievable and that clear and effective procedures exist to deal with bullying and harassment in the workplace.

The **UCU** university and college lecturers' union has produced guidance on making sure that risk assessments are "suitable and efficient", include stress factors and involve safety reps. UCU recommends that branches and local authorities insist that employers use the HSE management standards toolkit<sup>11</sup> as part of their risk assessment process and makes

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<sup>7</sup> A GMB Guide, Mental Health at Work, available at: <http://www.gmb.org.uk/gmbguide-mentalhealth.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Stress, UNISON, available at: <https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/health-and-safety/stress/>

<sup>9</sup> HSE Stress Management Standards, available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>

<sup>10</sup> Stress and mental health at work, a guide for trade union reps, Labour Research Department, October 2016

<sup>11</sup> HSE Stress Management Standards, available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>

clear that employers should not wait until someone has been affected by work-related stress.<sup>12</sup>

The **TUC** warns against a 'resilience' approach, where employers try to make workers more able to withstand stress rather than attacking the root of the problem and tackling the causes of stress, such as long hours and unsafe conditions.

The TUC has produced a guide to wellbeing in the workplace aimed at trade union reps. It emphasises that healthy work must lie in the prevention of injuries and illnesses, and changing the workplace through encouraging better working relationships, greater respect for workers, and improved involvement of unions.

The guide also seeks to ensure that employers are supporting initiatives by Public Health England, Public Health Wales and Scottish Healthy Working Lives which are aimed at improving the health and well-being of workers.

One of these initiatives is the Workplace Wellbeing Charter, which is operates across the UK. Over 1,000 organisations have so far been accredited by the Charter, making a commitment to the health and wellbeing of their employees.<sup>13</sup>

#### Charities and other organisations

There are numerous charities, groups and services that specialise in mental health issues or deal with mental health as part of their wider activities. Below is a brief note on some of the work of just a few of those organisations, with a focus on employment related activity.

**Mind** is a leading charity in England and Wales that provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. They provide guidance and training on mental health issues for staff and organisations, as well as e-learning courses. They have developed a Workplace Wellbeing Index, which is a benchmark of best policy and practice.<sup>14</sup> It helps employers to find out where they are doing well and where they could improve their approach to mental health at work.

**Time to change** is a campaign to change how we think and act about mental health. It aims to improve public attitudes and behaviour towards people with mental health problems, reduce discrimination and challenge stigma around mental health. It has created a pledge for employers to sign to demonstrate their commitment to tackle mental health conditions at work. This has so far been signed by over 700 employers, including Royal Mail, BT and Telefonica UK. They have also developed a series of workplace workshops on mental health, and various resources for employees and managers to understand their rights and responsibilities.

**ACAS** has recently developed a framework for positive mental health at work.<sup>15</sup> It seeks to encourage employers, managers and individuals to collectively achieve the shared

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<sup>12</sup> Stress and mental health at work, a guide for trade union reps, Labour Research Department, October 2016

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/workplace-wellbeing-index/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1900>

goal of positive wellbeing and productive workplaces. This means encouraging employers to be visibly committed to positive mental health, managers to be informed and open to conversations with their staff, and individuals to be self-aware and to ask for help when needed.

**Mindful employer** is a UK-wide, NHS initiative. It is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and providing support for businesses when recruiting and retaining staff.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.mindfulemployer.net/>

## **Proposals on next steps**

The following section sets out a number of proposals for taking the CWU Mental Health Strategy forward. This incorporates the list of considerations contained in Motion 69 2018.

### **Responsibility for the development of the strategy**

- Set up a CWU project team, under the direction of the General Secretary, to develop, implement and monitor the strategy.

Core members:

- Lead Officer: Dave Joyce + Policy Advisor (PA) as support
- Research
- NEC: 2 x T&FSE + 2 x PEC
- 'Departments' with a vested interest (Officer or PA): Equality; Training; Young Workers

The above Committee will be able to co-opt others as appropriate particularly where expertise or experience is required. As work progresses internally on any strategy, the output will be reported to the NEC by the General Secretary.

Any proposals that involve specific employers, must be reported back to the NEC prior to progressing. The responsibility for any contact or initiatives with the employers sits with the industrial officers and executives.

### **Developing a relationship with organisations/charities to develop the strategy**

- Develop stronger links with leading mental health charities and campaigns that have expertise in improving mental health in the workplace, including Mind and Time to Change. The aim of this is to form relationships in order to utilise experience and significant knowledge in developing and implementing a holistic strategy.
- Maintain and develop links with 'specialist' charities e.g. CALM and Papyrus. The aim of this is to provide assistance in defined areas such as suicide prevention.

### **A joined up training programme**

- Liaise with the Education, Training & Learning department to confirm the preferred training for representatives to be the CWU's Mental Health Awareness course and the Mental Health First Aid course.
- Create a central record of all reps that have completed the CWU's Mental Health Awareness course and the Mental Health First Aid training course.
- Develop a plan for encouraging branches and regions to enrol CWU representatives onto these courses.



- Set annual targets for CWU representatives to attend the courses.

### Communicating with branches, reps and members

- The project team will assess the most effective way of communicating relevant information to members, Reps and Branches and build this into the strategy.
- Provide more detailed mental health related guidance and information for representatives and members on the CWU's website.

### Support for CWU reps

It is becoming clear with greater awareness of mental health issues that we as a union must do everything practical to support and protect our Reps who are increasingly required to assist members with mental health conditions. It must be understood that Reps who have attended awareness courses and those with MHFA certificates are not experts and neither are they counsellors. This is of utmost importance in developing our strategy.

As the NEC is aware, the union is looking at developing an overall package of support for CWU Reps as part of the Redesign process. This is a separate and broader piece of work, but support on mental health issues will be part of the package. There will therefore need to be a joined up approach with the mental health project team feeding in to this initiative to help ensure its success.

The project team will investigate and seek appropriate advice to ensure we provide the most appropriate support. Consideration will be given to:

- Regions setting up networks e.g. WhatsApp groups in order for trained Reps to be able to share experiences and ensure they are not isolated. Any such initiative must ensure absolute confidentiality.
- Explore any requirement for further training and or briefings/forums for mental health representatives.

### Raising awareness and engaging CWU Reps with the strategy

- Hold a national event on mental health and the CWU's mental health strategy to raise awareness of the project, engage Reps and build support across the country.

### Initiatives with employers

This will be subject to the normal protocols of working through the industrial executives and should include:

- Continuation of work on mental health initiatives with our recognised employers.

- Continuing to encourage employers to communicate and educate constantly on mental health and wellbeing.
- Negotiate agreements with employers on mental health policies that prevent and reduce mental ill health. This should aim to:
  - Remove stigma and normalise conversations about mental health.
  - Provide a safe environment for workers to report mental health problems without fear for their job or employment prospects.
  - Ensure that incidents of mental health and work related stress are properly recorded and reported.
  - Support the rehabilitation of employees suffering from mental health conditions.
  - Establish a joint approach to monitoring the implementation of the policy.
- Continuing to encourage employers to support public health initiatives aimed at improving the health and well-being of workers, such as the Workplace Wellbeing Charter.

#### Initiatives in wider society

- We should develop a consistent and stronger CWU position on the contribution we can make to addressing the challenge of mental health/wellbeing in wider society
- We should also develop our wider trade union movement and political strategy as part of our support for mental health/wellbeing

#### Conclusion

With developments in the understanding of mental health and the rise in the number of people affected by mental ill health, as well as reviewing CWU policy over 17 years, it is evident that the policy contained in motion 69 carried at 2018 Conference is long overdue.

The CWU has offered excellent and detailed advice on mental health, developed a training course and agreed joint initiatives with employers. However, there is now a need for us to develop a comprehensive, coordinated national mental health strategy that brings all this work together, sets targets and monitors progress.

Central to our strategy must be the objective of creating an environment where conversations about mental health are normalised, stigma is removed and people can report mental health problems without fear of the consequences. It is also essential that we provide the necessary support for our representatives and protect them from the potential of suffering poor mental health as a result of the stress that comes with providing assistance to members.



## **ANNEX 1**

### **CWU Conference Policy on Mental Health**

#### **General Conference Motions Carried or Accepted between 1995 and 2017**

##### **Summary of CWU Policy on Mental Health, 1995 to 2018**

The CWU supports the improvement both of workers mental and physical health and particularly in relation to depression and suicide that maybe work related, and to work with the Samaritans and Sane to support their valuable work and to provide information and guidance on such issues. The CWU will support initiatives to encourage awareness raising and education to tackle suicide amongst LGBT young people. The CWU supports the charity Papyrus, in working to prevent suicide in the under 35s and tackling the high rates amongst LGBT young adults. The CWU also will work with the Campaign Against Living Miserably to raise awareness and support the risk group of males under 45. The CWU will campaign both industrially and politically to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of workers. The CWU will campaign to prevent attacks on people with mental and physical disabilities. The CWU will seek to form links with many organisations that are dedicated to supporting individuals with mental health issues. The CWU will campaign for improved provision for young people's mental health services. The CWU will embark on a plan of educating employers in the area of members Health and Wellbeing in work. The CWU will put in place support and advice for union reps suffering mental health issues. The CWU supports an urgent overhaul of the welfare system around specialised support for people with mental health problems. The CWU aims to bring mental health awareness training to all CWU reps. The CWU supports participation in Mental Health First Aid courses to reps in the regions. The CWU will work towards creating a 'CWU Mental Health Strategy' to address the impact of growing mental health issues. (91/2001, 16/2008, 109/2010, 17/2012, 51/2012, 95/2012, 21/2014, 35/2014, 37/2015, 7/2016, 63/2018, 64/2018, 69/2016, 9/2017, 2/2018, 69/2018)

##### **Full text of CWU General Conference Policy on Mental Health, carried between 1995 and 2018**

**2001**

###### **CATEGORY A**

- 91** Conference recognises that the highest suicide rate is among men aged between 25 and 34 and that the Post Office employs more people in that high risk group than any other UK employer.

The Samaritans have recently seen a 60% increase in correspondence including 25,000 emails.

The National Executive Council through the Youth Advisory Committee are therefore instructed to investigate ways in which the CWU can support this valuable work.

*Eastern No.5*

**2008**

**Motion No. 16:** “Conference notes recent reports have shown the high rate of suicide in LGBT young people compared with young heterosexuals. In order to combat this the NEC in conjunction with LGBT, working with our sponsored MP’s, teachers unions and the wider trade union and labour movement will campaign to:

Encourage awareness-raising and education aimed at reducing levels of homophobia, bi-phobia and transphobia at work and in society.

Ensure schools and authorities provide support to the parents of young LGBT people, including information and counselling and the establishment of support groups organised by and for the parents of LGBT people.

Ensure schools review and revise school curricula, with a view to limiting stereotyping, reflecting diversity of lifestyles and identities, and providing a fair representation of sexual minorities.

Provide trade union reps with the information to enable them to talk about homosexuality, bisexuality and gender identity in an inclusive and positive manner. This will help prepare reps to be understanding and supportive of LGBT members and issues.

To encourage the formation of LGBT youth and student groups, and provide support for them and promote the development of a positive approach to diversity, including sexual minorities in youth groups and clubs”.

*LGBT Conference*

**2010**

**109** **CATEGORY A:** This conference notes the constant concern in society and through the media in relation to the state of working life in Britain and the effects on social and personal health. Recent events in the financial markets have resulted in an increase in concerns and awareness of personal cases and the tragic consequences that can result.

The NEC is instructed to campaign both industrially and politically to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of workers. To this end to work with appropriate organisations, the labour movement, to lobby MP’s and to hold employers to account where we have recognition rights.

**Croydon and South London**

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2012

**17 CATEGORY A:** This conference is shocked by the report "Hidden in Plain Sight", from the Equality and Human Rights Commission on the issue of attacks against people with physical and mental disabilities.

Evidence from a groundbreaking inquiry by Equality and Human Rights Commission shows that hundreds of thousands of disabled people regularly experience harassment or abuse but a culture of disbelief is preventing public authorities from tackling it effectively.

The report found too often, victims see their complaints doubted, or they are advised to change their own behaviour.

Conference therefore instructs the NEC in conjunction with the Disability Advisory Committee to actively campaign with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure any recommendations from any inquiry are taken seriously by those public bodies and agencies and are also pursued to ensure that disabled people are treated with Dignity and Respect in the future.

#### **Disability Conference**

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2012

**Composite Motion No. 51:** "Conference notes it is now over a decade since the carriage of motion 91/2001 and the progressive steps undertaken by the YAC on behalf of the NEC over a number of years.

However, Conference recognises that it is an inconvenient truth that the government has failed to address and the media have barely covered the number of people killing themselves is back on the rise.

In 2008, 5,706 people killed themselves in the UK, an average of almost 16 deliberate deaths a day. After close to a decade of annual declines, recession triggered a sharp spike in suicide. Recent figures published in The Lancet show that the UK suicide rate increased 8% between 2007 and 2009. The latest Office for National Statistics figures suggest a similar rise.

The problem is predominantly a male one, with three times as many men killing themselves as women. It is also a trend not confined to the UK.

Suicide rates have spiked across Europe since 2008, with Greece, in particular, experiencing staggering increases. 2010 saw a 25% rise in suicide, according to the Greek parliament. In October, the country's health minister warned that early signs suggest a further 40% jump in 2011.

Stephen Platt, a professor at Edinburgh University who has been studying suicide behavior for 30 years, fears a decade of unusually high suicide rates. "If you look at the research literature about suicide and economic recession, it's pretty clear that there is a relationship," he says. "The idea of a lost decade is quite possible."

It is the instability of recession that creates this link, according to Richard Colwill, a spokesman for the mental health charity Sane. "No one should be surprised that factors such as unemployment and job insecurity can push people who may be already vulnerable to take their own lives," he says. "Life events like redundancy, bankruptcy and the relationship breakdowns that often follow can cause bouts of mental illness. You expect to see all these issues start to rise."

Conference therefore instructs the NEC to investigate ways the CWU Nationally and Branches can work with the Samaritans and Sane to support their valuable works."

*Eastern Regional Committee and Eastern No.5*

## **2012**

**Motion No. 95:** "This conference instructs the NEC to undertake the following based on the rise in stress and mental health issues in all CWU workplaces.

We are moving into times of reduced incomes, unemployment and greater workplace demands from employers. In light of this situation the CWU must safeguard our members Health and Safety/Health and Wellbeing in these workplaces given the changes in job demands, workloads and job requirements. The HSE has a "6 point Management Standards" that covers the main principle points that if followed correctly, can reduce workplace stress and mental health issues in these workplaces. Stress is now the second biggest reason for sickness in the workplace and costs company's millions per year in lost revenue. Many of our members are also affected by these increased pressures long term which sometimes lead to more complex mental health problems. The CWU has to act now and embark on a plan of educating employers in the area of members Health and Wellbeing in work and through all means available at their disposal.

The following proposals below are being suggested to move this plan in a positive direction for CWU members at the conference.

- Write to all CEO's in each line of business seeking buy in to the plan
- Ratify all existing buy in from CEO's in joint statement with CWU
- Send out a CWU stress survey via an LTB to branches covering all appropriate companies with CWU members
- Design a powerpoint presentation based on "The HSE Management Standards" that would be delivered by nominated safety individuals in each region, to management teams within each company section
- Send the powerpoint copy on an LTB to branches that could be shared via email, printed for members use or displayed on workplace noticeboards
- The survey and Powerpoint must be suitable to read for members with dyslexia
- Liaise with all relevant internal committees in the future proofing of this plan if necessary
- The National Health and Safety Committee to set about implementing this plan directly after the close of general conference 2012
- The actions in the plan would be delivered in full and plan implemented via LTB communications by August 31<sup>st</sup> 2012

This list is not exhaustive and can be amended to suit each company where we have CWU members."

*North West Regional Health & Safety Forum*

## 2014

**Motion No. 21:** “This Conference instructs the NEC to investigate as a matter of urgency the provision of support and help to branch officers and representatives who are suffering work related stress, depression and mental health issues.

This conference is concerned at levels of stress union reps are increasingly experiencing in their day to day role and the lack of a cohesive support network from the union. Too often reps are left with the onus of struggling to cope with long hours, abusive members and lack of support. More and more we are seeing reps having to cope with member’s personal issues, members who see us as an outlet for their domestic problems, members who are themselves suffering mental health problems that impact on the reps who are dealing with them.

While some employers have support networks for their employees we have nothing similar for our reps. In those companies that have employee counselling or other support services available, reps can feel uncomfortable at accessing them, not only by admitting they need help in the first place, but also because we don’t like to admit to their employer they may need help, especially when it relates to pressure felt from members.

While conference applauds the passing of Motion 51 at Annual General Conference 2012 in supporting SANE the mental health charity and the Samaritans we feel it is imperative this union puts in place at the earliest opportunity a support and advice provision for union reps at all levels suffering mental health issues, stress and depression.”

*Great Western*

## 2014

**Composite Motion No. 35:** “Statistically 1 in 4 people are affected by mental health issues at some point in their life and that, for many, this can result in long term illness.

Conference is alarmed at the stigma that some workers with mental health issues feel and that, consequently, they are unable to share this problem with other work colleagues, or inform their employer that they have a problem for fear that they may damage their job or career prospects.

Conference calls on the NEC, as a matter of urgency, to join the fight against the stigmatisation of mental health in our society. The CWU should seek to form links with many organisations/charities that are dedicated to supporting individuals with mental health issues to provide our members and representatives with information and guidance on mental health and the rights and protections for those suffering with such conditions.”

*Eastern No.3  
and Eastern Regional Committee*

## 2015

**Motion No. 37:** “The pressure and cumulative effect of an increasingly demanding work culture in the UK continues to generate high levels of work-related stress and mental ill-health.

It is estimated that nearly three in every ten employees will experience a mental health problem in any one year.

Conference instructs the NEC to campaign and support:



- The promotion of messages about better work-life balance
- Acknowledgement of the association between work and related stress and mental health.
- Mechanisms to support staff who experience mental health problems.
- A culture of openness about time constraints and workload.
- Better training of managers on the identification of work stress and its effects.
- Promoting a culture of 'working smart, not long' as outline above.
- Manageable workloads.
- Workplace and work environment monitoring, audits and inspections.
- Monitoring performance indicators and sickness absence.
- Improvements in staff satisfaction.
- Provision of time to attend counselling and support services.
- Activities that promote good mental health.
- Raising awareness and combat the stigma of those who suffer from mental ill health/work place stress.
- Utilisation of expert advice/help either through the NHS or UK Charities.”

*South West Regional Health and Safety Forum*

## 2016

**Motion No. 7:** Conference notes a report in the Guardian (27.8.15), which confirmed that 90 disabled people a month are dying AFTER being declared fit for work.

Conference believes that an urgent overhaul of the welfare system is required, specifically around more specialised support for people with mental health problems and less focus on pressuring into work and stopping their benefits.

Whilst the Government dismissed any causal link to the deaths being caused by the cut to welfare payments, a recent coroner report directly correlates a death with the stoppage of the welfare payment.

This Conference instructs the NEC, in conjunction with the DAC, to strongly campaign to challenge the indignant manner in which many disabled people are being treated by the Government, in relation to what appears to be the unjust stopping of welfare payments. This campaign should include:

- Suitable spreads in the CWU Voice and internet news
- Coverage of the issue on CWU TV
- Posters/Flyers and articles to be produced for the Disability in Focus publication
- A protest outside the DWP HQ, which should be organised in conjunction with the TUC and its affiliates
- Re-double our efforts to work and support Disability Rights NGO's such as DPAC (Disabled People Against the Cuts)
- A public meeting to be organised by the CWU specifically so that this issue can be debated

*CWU Disability Conference*

## 2016

**Motion No. 69:** Conference is becoming increasingly concerned about the increased rate of suicide within young men under the age of 45.

Figures collated by the Campaign Against Living Miserably (Calm) show there were 4,623 male suicides in the UK in 2014, the second highest number in 15 years and the equivalent of 12 deaths a day.

In this country we have a problem that we can't shy away from anymore. Suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 45, 32% of men who contemplated suicide didn't want people to worry about them while 41% of men who contemplated suicide felt that they couldn't talk about their feelings.

With such a rise in the rates of suicide in young men, it is now becoming a serious health issue. More men feeling able to talk about their problems and seek help would be a step in the right direction. That said, improvement in attitudes alone can't serve as a substitute for resources and the funding of services that help people when they need it.

Conference therefore calls for the Executive to work with charities such as CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) to raise awareness of the help and support that exist.

The Executive to arrange a campaign, by means of posters, leaflets and the relevant helplines available to encourage more of our male members to highlight and talk about any issues causing them a concern.

*Great Western*

## 2017

**Motion No. 9:** Suicide is the biggest killer of young people – male and female – under 35 in the UK. In 2014, 597 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 took their own lives. Under the age of 35, the number rose to 1,556. That equates to over four per day. Every year many thousands more attempt or contemplate suicide, harm themselves or suffer alone, afraid to speak openly about how they are feeling.

It is known that LGBT teens and young adults have one of the highest rates of suicide attempts: from pain caused by actual bullying, stigma, harassment and the mental distress caused through the fear of perceived reactions and judgements, by those who are usually of a younger age and are struggling to come to terms with their own sexuality.

Papyrus are the national charity for the prevention of young suicide: they deliver awareness and prevention training, provide confidential support and suicide intervention through HOPELineUK, campaign and influence national policy, and empower young people to lead suicide prevention activities in their own communities.

Conference notes the above and instructs the NEC working with the LGBTAC to contact the charity PAPYRUS, to find out ways in which the CWU can promote their charity and offer what support is available in the way of a donation, printing, leafletting etc. this list is not exhaustive.

*LGBT Conference*

**2018**

**Motion no.2** Conference notes with concern the increasing number of reports in the media about the rise of mental health issues in children in the UK. A report by the Association of School and College Leaders' (ASCL) in 2017 found that over the past five years:

- 79% of heads saw an increase in self-harm or suicidal thoughts among students.
- 40% reported a big rise in cyber-bullying
- 53% of those who had referred a pupil to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) rated them poor or very poor.
- Overall, 80% of respondents wanted to see CAMHS expanded in their area.

Conference believes that this issue must be addressed as a matter of urgency and the Trade Unions need to lead the fight in improving access to mental health support for children. Conference therefore instructs the NEC to work with other likeminded unions and the DAC to campaign for improved provision for young people's mental health services.

*Disability Conference*

**2018**

**Motion no.63:** Conference congratulates the CWU Education Department on the introduction of the successful Mental Health Awareness training course for Reps.

There is widespread recognition across the CWU that this training would be of great benefit to all CWU Reps at all levels and should be made available on as wide a basis as possible.

Conference instructs the NEC to work with the Education Department to bring about this training for all. The aspiration should be that the training as far as possible would attract release in line with other CWU Training Courses.

*Scotland Regional Committee*

**2018**

**Motion No.64:** Conference instructs the NEC to work with the Health & Safety Dept that "Mental Health First Aid "Tutors are trained in order to cascade this valuable 2-day course & the half Day Awareness course out in the Regions ", furthermore they are instructed to achieve "release "for this course with the employers where we have recognition, this to be achieved by Conference 2019.

*York and District Amal*

**2018**

**Motion No.69:**

This conference believes that the CWU has undertaken some excellent work at branch, regional and national level in relation to raising awareness of mental health and its impact on individuals, the workplace and society in general. This conference notes that the Union:

- has over a number of years, through annual conference motions, committed to work with an increasing number of charities and organisations
- has a number of joint initiatives with employers eg. Royal Mail and British Telecom
- has trained a number of people as Mental Health First Aiders and others who have attended awareness courses
- issues a large amount of information to Branches
- has an increasing demand for information, advice, guidance and training

This conference believes that the impact of growing mental health issues on CWU members requires a comprehensive “CWU Mental health Strategy (CWU MHS). The NEC is therefore instructed to work with the Young Workers National Committee and other appropriate Departments, with a vested interest, e.g. Health and Safety and Equality, to assist in developing such a strategy which should consider the following:

- developing a working relationship with a small number of organisations/charities to assist in developing and executing the strategy. This should not prevent working with other organisations/charities particularly where there is a need for specialist expertise
- a joined up training programme
- ensure the most effective methods of communicating with branches, reps and members on issues of building awareness and encouraging openness
- support for Reps who are impacted through dealing with members who have mental health issues
- support for Reps effected by the increasing stress of the job
- put in place measures to ensure that the “strategy” is operating efficiently and effectively.

This list is not exhaustive.

*South East No.5  
Eastern Regional Committee*