Welcome to the latest issue of the iROWE newsletter, in which we share with you our research and activities within the world of organisations, work and employment.

iROWE’s staff continue to be awarded funding to carry out their research, and within this newsletter members share their findings on: workplace productivity, domestic violence in the workplace, organisational restructuring and workplace conflict.

Our evening seminar series saw the return of a familiar face, Richard Saundry. He shared his latest research into workplace conflict in the NHS. Details are on page 2.

We are also co-hosting an event exploring workplace conflict from the perspective of those involved in the complaint. Looking at what it’s like to deal with complaints, not be able to discuss your problems, try to resolve them through mediation, and the experiences of conflict in different industries. More details are on page 4.

Our next seminar will be on managing absence from an employment law perspective, focusing on the new fit for work policy. This will be presented by Caroline Rayner, Solicitor at Baines Wilson LLP. Full details are available on the back page. Please book your space now!
In June we saw the return of a familiar face to the iROWE evening seminars, as Richard Saundry came back to discuss his latest research on conflict management. Richard used to lead iROWE, and is now an honorary member, after he left to become a Professor at Plymouth University.

In the seminar, ‘Building a Strategic and integrated Approach to Conflict Management – Lessons from the Research’ Richard drew on his own recent research to identify how organisations can develop more effective approaches to managing workplace conflict. In particular, he set out the key elements of integrated conflict management systems which are being increasingly adopted by large corporations in the US and asked what lessons this has for organisations in the UK.

Richard discussed the recent Acas case study he had conducted with Paul Latreille (Sheffield University), at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. In these healthcare workplaces a conflict management system had been developed, because of concerns about staff wellbeing. Richard discussed the range of approaches the Trust had implemented into their strategy including: mediation, stress risk assessment, team facilitation and conflict coaching. Conflict management also became part of line manager training, and HR policies and practices. It appeared that this approach had increased early dispute resolution, but there were still some conflict management challenges.


Recent iROWE publications

(N.B academic journals typically require subscription for access, or visit Uclan’s repository for alternative access — http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/)


Conference presentations

Louise McArdle, and Pete Thomas ‘Fifty is the new sixty: The competing discourses of age in the English firefighters’ pensions dispute’ 31st EGOS Colloquium in Athens, July.

Ian Ashman and Gemma Wibberley ‘Workplace conflict: the importance of having ‘difficult conversations”’, Learning from Conflict Conference, September


FORTHCOMING:
Gemma Wibberley ‘The voice of the disputants’, The Complaining Body, November


Gemma Wibberley, ‘The experiences of employees’,Cycle of Conferences, University of Coimbra, Portugal, December 2015


Research updates

iROWE staff have been busy this year undertaking research on a variety of projects including:

- Conflict management– practitioners perspectives
- Communication and employee engagement in the fire service
- New trade union representatives
- Workplace productivity

We would like to thank all of you who took part in any of these exciting studies for your time and help with the research.

iROWE staff are discussing the results with the commissioners of these projects and hope to be able to share key findings shortly.
'The Complaining Body' event

Tuesday 3rd November, 5.30 - 7pm
Media Innovation Studio, Room 413, Media Factory, Uclan

Free. Refreshments provided.
Email Elaine Speight (espeight@uclan.ac.uk) to book a place.

Manual Labours, In Certain Places (in the School of Art, Design and Fashion), and iROWE (Institute into Research for Organisations, Work and Employment) invite you to a special event discussing the processes of complaining: from making to managing to mellowing - this event focuses on new research into workplace complaining.

The event features presentations from:

- Manual Labours - a practice based research project, who will discuss our inability to complain with Sweta Rajan-Rankin, lecturer in Social Policy at Brunel University, London.
- iROWE's Gemma Wibberley shares her recent research into workplace mediation and the participants' experience.
- Choreographer Hamish MacPherson presents ideas stemming from a series of workshops with a London based complaints team.

Preston-based artist Steph Fletcher connects work based complaints to the freelance, flexible structures of precarious work.

Following the presentations there will be open discussion, and the opportunity to share your own experience of workplace complaints.

For more information and bookings  http://eepurl.com/bBLAsL
Domestic violence isn’t something that’s generally thought of as a workplace issue, however, the statistics suggest otherwise:

- 10% of staff in every organisation could be suffering from domestic abuse (EHRC 2010a:5)
- 1/3 of deaths resulting from domestic violence take place on work premises (CAADV, no date)

iROWE staff have recently undertaken some research to assess the role that trade unions play in supporting victims of domestic violence at work. In the UK trade unions have had a long standing interest in highlighting the impact of domestic violence in the workplace, raising awareness of its effects on employees and encouraging employers to put a domestic violence policy in place. Union representatives have also been actively involved in supporting their members who are experiencing domestic violence. However, this is rarely explored in academic research.

With the support of trade unions we spoke to 18 union representatives, to examine their experiences of supporting victims of domestic violence, and identify any challenges that representatives face in this role. We found that representatives can be a source of support for both victims and organisations, helping them handle domestic violence in the workplace.

However, domestic violence remains a ‘hidden issue’ in the workplace – the ‘elephant in the corner’ as one representative explained. Respondents gave multiple reasons that it remains hidden, such as staff may not feel able to disclose to managers, or employers see domestic violence as a private issue. Interviewees explained that because domestic violence is not acknowledged in workplaces, when it impacts capability or attendance, performance management processes can lead to victims being disciplined and losing their jobs.

Respondents also described how workplaces can support employees. They explained that representatives can be someone for staff to disclose to. Interviewees gave examples of unions working with employers to introduce effective policy and procedures and awareness raising campaigns. They also highlighted employers who offer practical help, such as providing enhanced security and time off to deal with the situation.

iROWE’s Carol Jones, Tony Bennett, Alison Hollinrake and Gemma Wibberley have been working on this project and hope to be able to share more detailed findings shortly.
Forthcoming book based on iROWE/ESRC seminar series

Reframing Resolution - Innovation and Change in the Management of Workplace Conflict is the title of a forthcoming book based on papers from the 2012/13 ESRC funded seminar series organised by iROWE, hosted at six universities around Britain and supported by Acas. It is co-edited by Richard Saundry, Paul Latreille and Ian Ashman and will appear in 2016 to coincide with Acas’ fortieth anniversary. The finished manuscript is now with the publishers (Palgrave) and includes contributions from nine current or former iROWE academics. Watch this space for details of the scheduled publication date and, in the meantime, here is the cover blurb to whet the appetite.

Reframing Resolution provides an original, accessible and critical point of reference for students, practitioners and scholars interested in the management of workplace conflict. Drawing on contemporary empirical evidence from the UK, USA, Ireland and Australia, the book explores the front-line challenges facing organizations and individuals in addressing and responding to conflict. In particular it examines the extent to which conflict management is treated as a strategic issue and discusses the development of mediation and its impact on employment relations culture, the experiences of participants in mediation and the relationship between ADR and workplace justice.

Downsizing advice for health + safety professionals

Recent advice for health and safety professionals during organisational restructuring features Ian Ashman’s downsizing research.

Ian suggests that health and safety professionals can have a vital role to play in ensuring that stress is managed during downsizing, and that all staff are supported throughout the process. He highlights that it is not only the ‘victims’ of redundancy that may need help, but also the envoys tasked with sharing the news of redundancy, and those employees who ‘survive’ and must carry on after the restructuring.


Ian’s Acas funded research into downsizing is available on the iROWE website, under ‘publications’ http://bit.ly/1FKZvSn
iROWE’s Gemma Wibberley and Ian Ashman recently conducted a case study for Acas to explore the links between conflict management and productivity at YPO.

YPO, previously known as Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation, supplies goods and services for the education sector. It’s a medium sized, unionised organisation. As a growing company they were keen to develop people management skills amongst their staff, and address conflict management issues.

Gemma spoke to staff at YPO and Acas to explore the actions that the organisation had undertaken, and the results of these. YPO described an array of activities including Acas training for people managers, HR staff undertaking the Acas Certificate in Internal Workplace Mediation, enhanced communication and voice channels, and developing people management policies and procedures.

These activities had a positive impact upon YPO’s people management and productivity. YPO were thankful for the support from Acas in helping them achieve this.

The full case study ‘Keeping a check on conflict: a case study in improving people management systems’ is available on the Acas website

The case study is part of a wider examination into workplace productivity in the UK, by Acas. They have highlighted areas that organisations can focus on to help improve workplace productivity, these ‘seven levers’ include:

1. “Well designed work: jobs and work organised in ways that increase efficiency and make the most of people’s skills.
2. Skilled managers: managers with the confidence and training to manage and lead effectively.
3. Managing conflict effectively: systems in place to reduce the likelihood of problems arising and to deal with problems at every stage.
4. Clarity about rights and responsibilities: a working environment where everyone understands their rights and responsibilities.
5. Fairness: employees who feel valued and treated fairly.
6. Strong employee voice: informed employees who can contribute and are listened to.
7. High trust: relationships based on trust, with employers sharing information at the earliest opportunity.”

More information on these ‘seven levers’ and workplace productivity can be found on the Acas website http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5283
Join iROWE on Social Media

We regularly post updates about our research activities and events via social media channels. There is also opportunity for discussion with other people interested in employment issues. If you would like to be connected to iROWE via social media, then please email iROWE at wcseminars@uclan.ac.uk or you can find us on:

- like – IROWE Seminars
  - The iROWE Facebook has been re-launched to offer a new way to access us and our activities.

- Follow – iROWE Uclan
  - The iROWE twitter has all the latest information about research, awards and events

- Join- iROWE
  - The linkedin account has a group where there are regular discussions with other iROWE connections

Become an associate member

iROWE is a research institute located within Lancashire Business School at the University of Central Lancashire. It provides a forum for the development and dissemination of high quality research into organisations, work and employment. Its work has a particular emphasis on policy and practice—in short research that has an impact and makes a difference.

Therefore, iROWE brings together academics, managers, HR professionals, union representatives and policy makers. If you would like to be part of this exciting institute and kept at the forefront of research then become an ASSOCIATE MEMBER. This FREE membership is open to all those with a professional interest in organisations, work or employment. Benefits include: research e-newsletter, regular free seminars by key speakers in the field, consultancy opportunities for your organization, and networking.

To join just email Gemma Wibberley at gwbberley@uclan.ac.uk
Seminar and Audience Discussion

Fit For Work: Managing absence in the new landscape

Guest Speaker:

Caroline Rayner
Solicitor
Baines Wilson LLP

In this session, Caroline will cover what the new government led system of Fit For Work means for employers and how it will work from an employer’s perspective, employers’ obligations, managing return to work and practically what employers should do now.

Tuesday 1st December - 5.30 – 7pm
Brook 008, UCLAN

Refreshments available from 5pm
Attendance is free.
To book a place please contact Gemma: gwbibberley@uclan.ac.uk