

Atos Healthcare's Occupational Health Hotline Records 129 Per Cent Rise in Financial-Related Calls

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Credit crunch leads to spike in calls on workplace stress

Recent data from Atos Healthcare reveals that anxiety in the workplace is on the rise. Registration for its Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which helps employees mitigate personal problems that may impact workplace productivity and efficiency, increased by 37 per cent in 2008, compared to the year previous. The number of calls relating to debt issues increased by 44 per cent in 2008, compared to 2007 and almost 129 per cent in the final three months of 2008, versus the same period in 2007.

Atos Healthcare, the number one occupational health provider in the UK¹, offers support services ranging from debt advice through to stress-risk assessment audits and crisis management planning.

Andrew Kinder, chartered psychologist and manager of the EAP services at Atos Healthcare, commented: "There is a clear link between financial, relationship and mental health issues. Concerns about repaying debts result in increased levels of stress and anxiety. It is also not uncommon for relationships to fail when the inability to keep up with bills takes its toll."

Unsurprisingly, following the recent announcement that unemployment figures in the UK had reached almost two million, the majority of calls to the EAP line in 2008 were about work-related, financial and mental health issues.

Cases on workplace issues were the most widespread in 2008 and 34 per cent higher than in 2007. Calls from employees anxious about losing their jobs, increasing workloads and by staff suffering 'survivor guilt', demonstrates the impact ongoing staff cuts are having on those left behind.

Cases on mental health increased by 107 per cent in 2008 compared to 2007 and calls to the EAP line regarding relationship issues increased 43 per cent in 2008 compared to 2007, showing how home life can be affected by what is happening at work, which in turn impacts on performance at work.

Kinder continued: "Initiatives such as the upcoming Stress Down Day are great for highlighting the importance of health and wellbeing in the workplace. In these harsh economic times, organisations need to invest in workplace wellbeing if companies are to reduce sickness absence and ensure staff

¹ Based on market share and according to the latest UK Occupational Health Market Development Report, Market and Business Development 2008, published by MBD.





are working efficiently and effectively. Effective EAPs help people to increase their resilience and confidence to deal with problems. Early intervention is absolutely crucial when it comes to dealing with stress at work. The longer people worry about a problem, the harder it becomes to deal with. Line managers should understand the importance of their role and be more aware of and proactive in managing stress issues.”

For more information or to talk to Andrew Kinder about what employers could be doing to maintain staff morale and motivation during these difficult times, please contact:

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