

Annual Report 2009 - 2010



Trade Union Safety Team



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Chesterfield

**34 Glumangate, Chesterfield S40 1TX
Monday - Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm**

Introduction

There is little doubt that the Trade Union Safety Team (TRUST) is a much needed community resource. Only recently the TUC claimed its research “smashes the myth” of Britain being a safe place to work and called for the appointment of a “health and safety tsar.” The TUC highlighted that 20,000 people are killed annually at work through workplace accidents, disease, occupational cancers and work related driving accidents.

TRUST believes that workplace-related deaths could have been prevented.

We feel we have a vital role in the community in raising awareness of health and safety issues. Over the last year there has been an increase in the number of workplace enquiries. We also support Workers’ Memorial Day, where we remember the dead and fight for the living and will continue to do so in the future, reminding the coalition government that no one voted to die at work. As part of our work with the Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group we have been raising awareness to the dangers of noise and the damage it can cause.

Our previous work with former miners and our current project with former Avenue Plant workers shows a deadly legacy that failure to protect workers can result in lives cut short and a significant quality of life reduced. Compensation and benefits recovered by TRUST helps to increase an individual’s quality of life.

In the year under review TRUST helped to generate £465,859.70 in Government compensation, civil compensation and benefits for people in North Derbyshire. We also offer qualitative support in helping people manage their Tinnitus. This support is invaluable to people who are suffering from anxiety and sleep deprivation. We have also developed further links with Chesterfield Royal Hospital and Kings Mill Hospital, gaining recognition for the group.

Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team (DAST)

In March 2002, TRUST established the Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team. Without TRUST, the Asbestos Support Team could not exist to help victims of asbestos related diseases. Although DAST now has separate charitable status the organisation calls upon the support and resources of TRUST. TRUST also supports DAST with awareness campaigns and for fighting for justice for victims.

Please see separate Annual Report for further details.

Advice and Compensation

The table below shows the amount of benefits and compensation brought into the local economy by TRUST. The bulk of the money was as a result of the Avenue Plant project. The money would not have been claimed had it not been for raising awareness as part of the project. The figures for benefits represent one year, but benefits will continue being paid into the future.

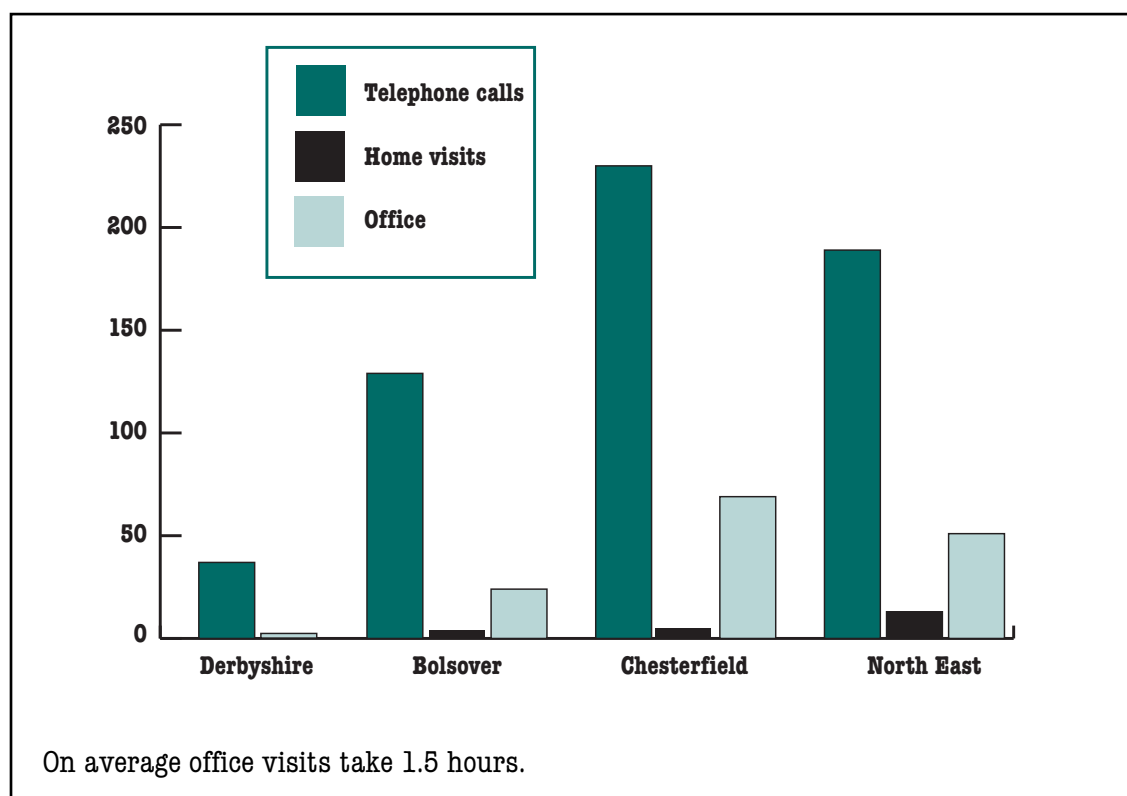
Disability Living Allowance	Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	Workers Compensation Scheme Government Lump Sum
£29,115.10	£4,552.60	£6,682

Total amount recovered as a result of the project £40,349.70.

The Table below shows the amount of compensation that TRUST was instrumental in recovering for each area.

Area	Compensation
Bolsover	163,000
Chesterfield	155,510
North East Derbyshire	107,000

The graph below shows the type of enquiries undertaken by TRUST for each area.

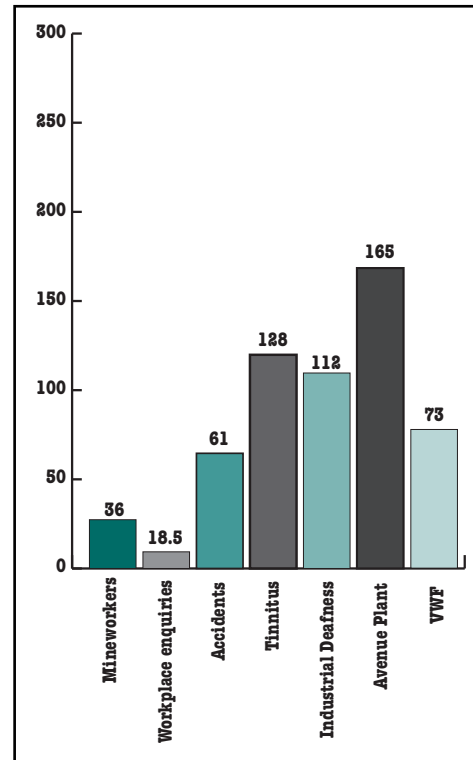


TRUST Enquiries

The graph on the right shows the type of enquiries undertaken by TRUST. One person may have enquired about a number of issues.

Key

VWF - Vibration white finger



Trade Union Safety Team Celebrates 20 years of helping to support and protect workers

This year TRUST looked back over the last 20 years of helping and supporting people in North Derbyshire. To help us celebrate, the Derbyshire Times featured TRUST in a double page spread.

TRUST was established by the Chesterfield and District Trades Union Council. The organisation was established by Trade Unionists who would campaign on many health and safety issues facing workers across the area. At the time there was growing concern over 'cowboy' claims handlers preying on workers made ill by their occupations. Barry Johnson vice President of the Chesterfield and District TUC told the Derbyshire Times "Our intention was to make sure we protected people from those trying to get their greedy hands on workers' entitlements."



Supporting mineworkers

The Trades Council set up a team in 1989, then led by John Knight, a volunteer who had experience in engineering and expertise in health and safety. Then based in the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres and starting with just a desk, filing cabinet and a phone, the organisation has been built on the strength of trade unionists and volunteers and now employs 3 members of staff.

Over the last 20 years TRUST has been responsible for bringing over £200 million in compensation and benefits into North Derbyshire. This money has helped to build local communities devastated by pit closures.

However, TRUST is not just about benefits and compensation, TRUST pioneered one of the first health studies to be carried out by workers of a former chemical plant. The Vinatex Report, which looked at the range and incidence of ill-health amongst plastic chemical workers in Staveley, has been internationally recognised. It was as a result of this study that TRUST changed the law allowing former Vinatex workers to claim for Raynaud's Phenomenon (a condition characterised by whiteness and numbness of the fingers, toes and extremities of the body). It also influenced the international debate questioning the low number of cancers attributed to occupation. In particular, the study revealed a larger number of bladder cancers than expected in the general population. In many instances it is assumed that cancer is due to environmental factors such as smoking history. The Vinatex Report challenged this.

Today, TRUST, led by Joanne Carlin, Co-ordinator since 2003, has moved to new offices in Chesterfield. The organisation continues to support anyone injured by work, offering diagnostic tests for industrial deafness, vibration white finger and chest disease, which provides evidence for benefits and civil compensation claims. We continue to fight for

victims and campaign for better working conditions. With the present recession, workers are always being asked to do more and cut corners.

The team is working on their second health study with former Avenue Plant workers and was responsible for establishing DAST – (asbestos support team) which continues to grow, providing help and support and a voice for anyone diagnosed with an asbestos related disease.



The Team in 2001



Undertaking Diagnostic Testing



The team with Jim Gladman (Solicitor) and former Vinatex Workers

TRUST's Service

The Trade Union Safety Team (TRUST) helps and supports anyone injured by work. We offer free diagnostic tests for vibration white finger, industrial deafness and lung function, as well as answering questions about workplace health and safety, current legislation and best practice.

Over the last year we have helped a number of people suffering from breathing difficulties caused by exposure to chemicals and other toxic substances.

Exposure to chemicals and toxic substances

Case Study

Mr C came to us because he was suffering from severe breathing difficulties as a result of scarring on his lungs caused by exposure to Epoxy resin. He made surgical footwear and had to pour the resin into a big tub for mixing. We advised him to make an application for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit because he had been made ill through work, as well as to claim a lump sum from the government. We carried out research into the resin to support his application for benefit. He was awarded £129.24 a week in benefit and also a lump sum from the government of £5,177.

Mr E from Chesterfield had been diagnosed as suffering from pulmonary fibrosis caused by exposure to plastic chemicals whilst maintaining injection moulding machinery. We advised him to claim Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit and also to claim against the companies that had caused his ill health. At first the Department of Work and Pensions refused benefit stating he did not work in an occupation likely to cause the condition. We provided evidence that plastic dust causes scarring of the lungs and he was awarded benefit.

Mr P from the Bolsover area worked at a maggot farm in Nottingham. TRUST provided information about industrial asthma and advised him to speak to his employer about finding him alternative jobs. This had the effect of reducing his asthma symptoms. TRUST also advised him to claim IIDB for industrial asthma and Vibration White Finger and Beat knee in relation to a previous employment.

Over the last year we have also received a number of enquiries from employees who were experiencing health and safety issues at work. Below are examples.

Mr A from Chesterfield worked for a supplier of building materials. He was concerned because the environment where he worked did not have proper welfare facilities including hot running water or facilities to have meals. We provided Mr A with information from The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 on adequate drinking water and facilities to rest and eat meals. He was also concerned because he and other workers were constantly cutting material and he was concerned about the risk of Vibration White Finger. TRUST also sent him information about symptoms of Vibration White Finger and action his employer should take to protect the workforce. A referral was also made to the Law Centre because his employer wanted to change workplace terms and conditions.

Legacy of Industrial Disease from local coking plant

The Avenue Coking Plant, based in Wingerworth, North East Derbyshire, is thought to have been one of the most dangerous places to work. At the time, the workforce were exposed to deadly chemicals including benzene, toluene, creosote, sulphuric acid as well as asbestos.

Last year we began a project (which is ongoing) to look at the range and incidence of ill health amongst former workers. We have interviewed 133 former workers. Our results to date show that 16 have been diagnosed with cancers including carcinomas of the lung, bladder, skin and bowel. Since the start of the project 14 have died. Forty-nine former workers also suffer breathing difficulties including asthma and emphysema. TRUST has undertaken diagnostic lung function tests with former workers and advised them to seek further advice from their GP and in some instances to make industrial injuries disablement benefit claims. We have also been testing former workers for vibration white finger and industrial deafness.

Twenty-six have suffered heart related problems and 33 blood clots and circulation problems.

Case Study

Alan was a fitter at the Avenue Plant from 1954 to 1961. He worked all over the plant including the acid plant, oxide plant, tar plant and salt house. He has been diagnosed with bladder cancer and has suffered a heart attack. We helped him claim benefits relating to his care and mobility needs.

Follow-up welfare benefits advice for former workers has been undertaken and preliminary work on civil claims has begun.

TRUST has also collated extensive research including old paper cuttings of the plant and chemical data sheets. We also have a video of the plant taken by one of the former workers. The video portrays the dangerous working conditions at the plant.



Office staff from the Avenue Plant photographed outside the coking plant - early 1960's



Diagnostic Testing

Tribute to the “Unknown Worker”

A coffin representing all those who have died in Derbyshire from work related illnesses or accidents was carried through Shirebrook.

The event was organised to mark the Internationally recognised ‘Workers Memorial Day’. The day is commemorated on or around the 28th April each year to remember all those who have died through work and to fight for better working conditions for the living. This year was the first Workers’ Memorial Day to be officially recognised by the Government.

The Government, through their agency, the Health and Safety Executive, give a very skewed and limited picture of the damage done by work every year. They say 180 people die in workplace incidents and 8,000 die from workplace cancers, but we believe the true figures are much higher and the overall picture much grimmer.

A more realistic estimate should include work-related road traffic deaths, as well as suicides that can be attributed to work-related stress. If such tragic deaths are taken into account the figure would be around 1500-1600 work-related deaths per year. But even these figures are the tip of the iceberg; if the many thousands who die from illnesses caused by their working conditions is taken into account the total could be as high as 50,000 a year!

Derbyshire was a heavy mining and industrial area. Many miners have lost their lives through working in the pit or as a result of the chronic diseases such as emphysema and pneumoconiosis. Local workers have also been exposed to the deadly material – asbestos, which causes debilitating and terminal illnesses such as asbestosis and a rapidly fatal cancer – mesothelioma.


In 2009 the Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team (DAST) helped and supported 26 former workers in Derbyshire suffering from mesothelioma.

TRUST believes the day is very important as it reminds us that thousands of local workers have lost their lives by merely going to work. Many of these deaths were preventable and these workers should not be forgotten.

The day also helps to raise awareness to the dangers of workplace hazards, such as



Worker's Memorial Day 2010



asbestos. Many maintenance and construction workers are still at risk from exposure to asbestos. Moreover, many workers today are subjected to stress of working long hours or bullying in the workplace, particularly in today's uncertain climate with constant redundancies and job losses.

The event which took place on Friday 30th April 2010 was well attended. The coffin was blessed by the Rev John Hargreaves and Reverend Harold Dobbin - Principal Chaplain Industrial Mission in Derbyshire. James Eaden from the Chesterfield and District Trades Union Council gave a passionate speech, along with various Trade Union speakers, Dave Green (FBU), Craig Stewart (GMB) and Shaun Lee (UCATT) about the difficult job of protecting their members and making health and safety a priority in all workplaces. Joanne Carlin finished with a poem by GMB member Wendy Lawrence entitled "Empty Shoes" about the effect on a family after losing a husband/father in a work accident.

For more than a decade TRUST has organised Workers' Memorial Day events and campaigned for a nationally recognised day.

Workers' Memorial Day – A Decade of Campaigning

- 2000** - Planted 3 trees around Derbyshire – Tapton Peace Gardens, Bolsover District Council and Arkwright town
- 2001** - Laid a memorial wreath and plaque at the tree in the Peace Gardens
- 2002** - Launch of the Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team
- 2003** - Church Service in Chesterfield Crooked Spire
- 2004** - Church Service in Chesterfield Crooked Spire
- 2005** - Industrial walk around Chesterfield, visiting factories that had left a deadly legacy of industrial disease
- 2006** - Industrial Walk along Chesterfield Canal. Taking in the site of the Staveley Vinatex Plastic Chemical factory which was the focus of TRUST's health research report in 2000
- 2007** - Exhibition to highlight the number of work-related road accidents. In that year a worker of a local service provider had been killed on the roads following working long hours overnight
- 2008** - Display to highlight the number of Construction Deaths, as well as floral tribute garden in North East Derbyshire
- 2009** - Development Worker – Shay Boyle painted a Workers' Memorial Day picture depicting many of the industries that have left a legacy of industrial diseases including the coal mines
- 2010** - Tribute to the 'Unknown Worker'. TRUST also revisited the memorial tree in the peace gardens and laid a wreath

Report from the Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group


When you answer the phone and a voice at the other end says “I’m desperate for your help”, you know that it is someone experiencing tinnitus and finding it difficult to cope and manage their life.

Tinnitus is ringing in the ears or head. The noise people experience varies and can be described as anything from a constant buzzing, high pitched whistle or the noise a radio makes when it is off station, to sounds that appear to change or alter in intensity. On first being diagnosed with this constant noise, many people are unable to concentrate and suffer from anxiety and depression. Many have trouble sleeping which causes a never-ending vicious circle of stress-related conditions.

The group offers telephone one-to-one counselling from volunteers who also experience Tinnitus but who are successfully managing the condition. Audrey Carlin, Group Secretary said “We offer advice and support with practical ways in which to manage their tinnitus. It is important for them to know that it is a condition that is manageable and that we are here to support them through this process. In doing so we encourage them to set realistic targets. It is important that they learn how to distract themselves and not to focus on the tinnitus and we support them through this process.” Many of the people who are diagnosed with Tinnitus have experienced noise at work. The group, in conjunction with the Trade Union Safety Team, can offer practical and emotional support.

Case Studies

Roger developed Tinnitus after being exposed to loud noise as a result of work. He contacted the group and was referred to TRUST for a hearing test. As well as providing information about Tinnitus and how to manage this, he was asked about the protective equipment provided at work and was given appropriate information about what type of equipment he should be using. At the time of his first contact with the group, he was on sick leave as he was unable to concentrate on his job which was operating machinery as he was suffering from stress. He had been on sick leave for some months and was expecting to finish work on the grounds of ill health. He contacted the group on several occasions to talk to a Lay Counsellor; he was sent fact sheets and advised on management techniques. Although his sick leave from work was quite protracted, he did eventually return to work and thanked the group for their support.



Charles was finding it increasingly difficult to continue at work because he worked in an environment where radios were played by different sections of the factory adding to the noise of the machinery. He found the radios more intrusive than the machinery. He contacted us as he had decided he could not continue working and although not of retirement age, felt that he would have to give up work. We gave him some management strategies to help him to cope with the tinnitus and sent him some information. We also discussed hearing protection and suggested that he speak to his employer. He did so and was able to continue working as his employer provided appropriate hearing protection as well as minimising, to an acceptable level, the noise to which he was exposed.

Helen worked at a hospital where she had to use a dictaphone. She also worked in a noisy office with others. Due to the noisy working environment, she suffered from tinnitus, anxiety and stress which resulted in her leaving the job. At this point she contacted the group as she felt that she would be unable to take up another job because the condition had resulted in her losing her confidence. She was given help and support in managing the tinnitus, backed up by information and factsheets. She was also encouraged to seek another job. Telephone support continued until she felt confident enough to apply for another job and eventually she informed us that she had secured a new job.

Sometimes family members find it difficult to support Tinnitus sufferers as they often fail to understand what they are experiencing. One of the ways in which the group can help is by providing a CD of noises similar to those experienced by Tinnitus sufferers. This has been useful for a number of people who have then found family members to be more supportive.

This year Chesterfield and ND Tinnitus Support Group has helped 60 people dealing with over 128 enquiries.

Tinnitus Support Meetings

Following a successful bid to NDVA, Chesterfield and ND Tinnitus Support Group have re-introduced Support Group meetings. Over the past few years the group have not held meetings as the numbers attending had diminished. However, new members had expressed their interest in meeting others in an informal environment. Speakers have also attended the meetings to provide practical help and advice. One of the speakers was a Research Scientist from the National Biomedical Research Unit in Hearing in Nottingham who talked about their current research programme. Meetings have been well attended.

Links with the Chesterfield Royal Hospital

The Audiology department at Chesterfield Royal Hospital set up a six-month pilot study which involved Tinnitus Lay Counsellors attending monthly meetings with some of their patients on their follow-up appointment, the purpose of which was to provide

practical support in helping them to manage their tinnitus. Partners of the patients were also invited to the meetings so they too could learn how to support their partner. The meetings were very successful and it is expected that they will continue on a bi-monthly basis. Patients attending the meetings expressed their gratitude at being able to talk informally and to receive practical support from others who also experience tinnitus but who are successfully managing the condition.

Improving support to members and Tinnitus sufferers

Thanks to a successful bid to the Derbyshire Community Foundation – Grassroots Grant, the Chesterfield and ND Tinnitus Support Group have been able to provide marketing merchandise including key rings and new leaflets/posters to promote the service. It has also enabled the group to improve the service to members and new enquirers by producing professionally printed newsletters and factsheets. The grant has also helped the group with resources to contact GPs surgeries, medical centres and clinics to provide them with information about the help and support available to people with tinnitus.



Help and support if you experience Tinnitus

If you experience Tinnitus (ringing or noise in the ears or head) and need help, information and advice or would like to speak to someone who also has Tinnitus.

Contact The Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group

"I have trouble sleeping at night"

"I can't concentrate during the day because of the noises I can hear in my ears"

"I feel anxious and stressed"

If this is how you are feeling, it is common to many people experiencing the condition and the support team are here to help you.

Contact us:



Greg Hill Aubrey Carlin Joanne Carlin Cole Redington

Telephone 01246 380415
Website: www.tinnitusupport.org.uk
E-mail: mail@tinnitusupport.org.uk

grassroots grants

Raising Awareness

During last year the group undertook a project in a school to encourage children to look after their ears. With the increasing number of young people contacting the helpline as a result of exposure to loud noise, in many cases connected with loud music, the support group wanted to target young people. Resulting from the project, 3 posters, designed by children warning of the dangers of loud noise, were professionally printed. One design has been chosen to produce mouse-mats to encourage young children to 'turn the noise down'.

The group are also supporting the RNID campaign "Don't Lose the Music". The RNID are encouraging festival goers to protect their ears by wearing protection. Music at festivals can reach sound levels in excess of 110dB – the equivalent of an aircraft taking off. Although festival goers would not choose to stand near an aircraft for long, many will stand next to loud speakers. Don't Lose the Music warns that, without protection, a few days of noise exposure at such levels could cause permanent hearing damage.

We didn't vote to die at work

According to the TUC, their new research “smashes the myth” of Britain being a safe place to work and called for the appointment of a “health and safety tsar.”

Lord Young's offensive and callous statement that 'People occasionally get killed at work, it's unfortunate but it's part of life' is ignorant of the facts that most people killed by work are not killed in rare and unavoidable accidents, but most were killed by employers breaking health and safety law. The Young review is charged with investigating “concerns over the application and perception of health and safety legislation, together with the rise of compensation culture over the last decade.” (Number 10 Press Release, 17th June, 2010). But during Labours time in office, the burden of Health & Safety was lessened anyway. This is reflected in the following trends over the past decade:

- a 69% fall in the numbers of inspections made of business premises;
- a 63% decline in investigations of safety incidents at work; and
- a 48% reduction in prosecutions

This collapse in inspection, investigation and enforcement has dramatically reduced the chances of businesses being detected and prosecuted for committing safety offences. This is hardly the deluge of red tape or the burden of regulation that permeates public debates about health and safety at work.

This decline in investigation has occurred across every category of RIDDOR - reportable incidents which HSE might be expected to respond to – that is, dangerous occurrences, injuries to members of the public, over 3-day injuries, and major injuries.

So, between 1999/2000 - 2008/09, investigations of:

- major injuries fell by 49%
- over 3-day injuries fell by 85%
- dangerous occurrences fell by 35%
- injuries to members of the public fell by 75%

By 2008/09, less than one per cent of over 3-day injuries that were reported to HSE were actually investigated. Less than one in ten (8%) - of reported major injuries were actually investigated.

The coalition is moving on many fronts, including:

- Lord Young's review of health and safety
- Vince Cable's (Business Secretary) deregulatory review of all regulations
- Nick Clegg's (deputy Prime Minister) requests to name a law to be cut and the overall massive cuts in budgets

which will reduce funding for the enforcement agencies - the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Local Authorities, the rail regulator and others.

TRUST along with Trade Unions and Hazards organisations will make the case that health and safety is not a burden on business, it saves money, health and most importantly lives. When it comes to poor health and safety, business does not face a significant burden because business externalises the cost onto us all, paying less than 25 per cent of the costs arising from work-related deaths, diseases and injuries. Instead, it engages in cost shifting to the victims, their families, the public purse and the community as a whole.

Our campaign is based on the evidence.

Healthy Workplace

TRUST recognises that in order to be able to support the community, we need a healthy workforce. Through the NHS Working Well initiative and the Workplace Health Champion Scheme, we are able to keep abreast of health initiatives and attend Learning Support Network meetings which are helpful to our organisation. We also have access to the Healthy Workforce Nurse and the NHS library resources and we participate in campaigns that are linked to health and wellbeing. We have set up a food co-operative in the organisation and we also have a variety of literature to help people make the right choices to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

“Fruity Friday” is an annual campaign by World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF UK). The day is to encourage more people to eat fruit to keep healthy. To participate in Fruity Friday the initiative suggested that people dress in yellow to symbolise the event. Therefore, we came to work wearing yellow and brought fruit for snacks and lunch. We also did a display in the office encouraging people to eat more fruit, which was viewed by the wider community as well as other organisations with whom we shared the office space.



“Fruity Friday”

Recognising Volunteers

We are very grateful for all the work and support of our volunteers, without whom the organisation could not run effectively and efficiently.

New Location

From June 2010, TRUST has been located at 34 Glumangate, Chesterfield, S40 1TX.
Telephone 01246 380415

Acknowledgments

Our thanks and gratitude are extended to all the voluntary and professional bodies with whom we have worked, as well as our local MPs for their continued help and support and assistance.

TRUST is organised by the Chesterfield and District Trades Union Council and supported by

- Bolsover District Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council

Thank you to Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres for their constant support.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO TRUST VOLUNTEERS WITHOUT WHOM WE COULD NOT EXIST.



Trade Union Safety Team (TRUST) is organised by the
Chesterfield & District Trades Union Council,
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