



ONUS NI – Market Research of Workplace Policy

ONUS (NI) is a wholly owned social enterprise and subsidiary of Women's Aid. They provide training courses, advice and consultancy services to organisations in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors on issues related to domestic violence.

The Issue

The challenge faced by ONUS was a lack of uptake of the "Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse" published by the DHSSPS & NIO. In addition the services offered by ONUS were underexploited as a direct result of the lack of acknowledgement by many organisations of their need to adopt a validated policy and implement safe-workplace practices.

The Solution

Through an Invest NI innovation voucher, Dr Fred Morrison from the School of Communication engaged with ONUS and identified the need to carry out market research to ascertain the drivers and inhibitors that underpinned adoption of a workplace domestic violence policy.

The University questioned a range of organisations across the spectrum of sectors and organisational sizes in the NI economy and identified that while supportive of the aims of ONUS and Women's Aid, most organisations simply felt that domestic violence was not a workplace concern. In addition Dr Morrison identified a variation in the ability of organisations to respond related to their resources and workforce size and tested out the acceptability of language and policy scope. This resulted in the drawing up of three levels of policy engagement related to organisational size.

In addition to the design of the workplace policy charters the University designed a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure the dissemination of the information and ensure maximum uptake.

Having devised the strategy Dr Morrison also identified success as related to the ability of ONUS to raise brand awareness and extend its operational resources to meet the expansion of demand. This was achieved by engaging potential corporate sponsors and organisations interested in developing Corporate Social Responsibility relationships.

The Feedback

Colette Stewart, Business Manager, Onus (NI) Ltd is delighted with the work carried out by their appointed Knowledge Provider, Dr Fred Morrison from the University of Ulster's School of Communication. *"This project has enabled the necessary research to be carried out which has resulted in the production of a Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence to suit all levels of organisations. We are delighted with the final report and the advice and support received throughout the process and we are looking forward to the implementation of same".*