

STAM MERING AT WORK

ISSUE 3

Q2'24

SUPPORT & GUIDANCE FROM STAMMA FOR TRADE UNIONS & THEIR MEMBERS

Welcome to Stammering At Work. This is a quarterly newsletter with information and resources related to stammering and the work of your union. STAMMA is a UK charity. We work with people who stammer and with those whose jobs bring them into contact with staff, customers and service users who stammer.

INTRODUCING
OUR
PRINTABLE
WORKSHOP
PLANNER FOR
2024

**EMPLOYMENT
SUPPORT SERVICE**



STAMMERING MISCONCEPTIONS, PRIDE, & HOW TO BE A SUPPORTIVE COLLEAGUE

Izzy Hall

First thing's first: some myth busting. It's a common misconception that people who stammer are bad communicators. Wrong.

Being a 'good' communicator is more than just speech - it's about body language, facial expressions, and listening skills. Many people who stammer are dynamic and interesting communicators. If you prize fluency, you're at risk of alienating people who stammer.



Izzy Hall copyright Izzy Hall 2024

STAMMERING IS A 'BAD' THING

Recently, the team at STAMMA ran a survey to find out what impact stammering can have on people and their lives. Our survey revealed that 36% of respondents say stammering has brought something positive into their lives, for reasons including: listening more, being more open-minded, and being more patient.

And it doesn't end there: stammering can make people more approachable, which can make them more engaged listeners, determined, and thoughtful - attributes we can all agree are sought after when describing the dream colleague or employee!


But there are, of course, people who have a negative relationship with their stammer - it would be naive to think otherwise. Survey respondents listed feeling stressed, anxious, and embarrassed as emotions they sometimes feel when stammering.

RAISING AWARENESS AND SUPPORTING COLLEAGUES

So, we're aware of the wider impact stammering can have on someone's life and approach to work, but how can we be supportive colleagues?

Firstly, being direct, patient, and kind are amongst the best things you can be. And it's worth bearing in mind that people may not always want to disclose the fact that they stammer, so let them take the lead with the conversation.

There are certain workplace circumstances that can be challenging for someone who stammers, including introductions, meetings, and phone calls. Here's how you can help:

- Be open to reasonable adjustments. See STAMMA's downloadable *Supporting colleagues who stammer - reasonable adjustments guide* at the bottom of [this webpage](#). 
- Working alongside the person to find out how they prefer to work. For example, are they comfortable taking phone calls in an open plan office or would they work more effectively taking calls in a private area away from an 'audience' of colleagues? Do colleagues make space for them to speak in meetings or do they get talked over when they stammer?
- Listen and learn: When a person feels confident about being open, stammering can become much less of a concern

By making space for everyone, we can empower and celebrate those who stammer, bringing uniqueness and diversity to the workplace.

Izzy



CELEBRATE THE POWER OF YOU AT STAMMAFEST 2024

Every couple of years, the team at STAMMA comes together to celebrate the stammering community in the perfect way: a festival.

STAMMAFest provides inspiration, entertainment, connection, and the power of voice. It doesn't matter who you are, how you stammer, or how you feel about your stammer: this is an event for you.

Attendees can expect workshops and inspiring panel discussions, as well as networking with other people in the stammering community over social events. And don't forget [Family Day](#) on Saturday 17th August, when there's a special [programme of activities](#) for children who stammer, their siblings and their parents.

You can see the [full programme here](#). But we've described a few of the highlights below.



Bob Adams, Master of Bubbles
Welcoming everyone to Family Day
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FRIDAY: THE POWER OF ONE

One story can make all the difference. One story can build campaigns that make real world change. Your story has the power to change people's lives.

For our first day, speakers from STAMMA and guest speakers from the world of law, government policy and from the organisation Hidden Disabilities will discuss how real-life experiences have triggered lasting change.

SATURDAY: FAMILY DAY

On Saturday 17th August, we welcome families to STAMMAFest. With a special programme of activities and events, kids who stammer get to hang out and have fun with other kids who stammer. Knowing you're not alone can really make a difference!

Tickets for Family Day are heavily subsidised at just £7 for children and £12 for parents and guardians. See [here](#) for more details.

SATURDAY:

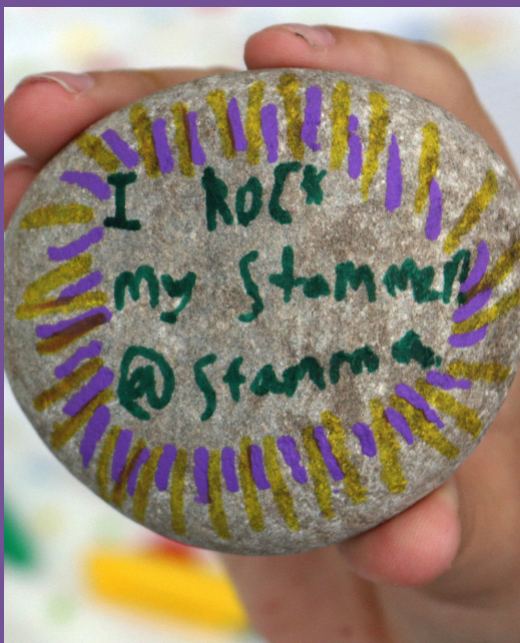
OUR TRIBE

Everyone has their own experience of stammering, and everyone has a different relationship with their stammer. Some see it as a source of pride and strength whilst others find it more of a challenge. But this uniqueness is what brings the community together.

Day two of STAMMAFest will see STAMMA patron, actor, writer, and podcaster Scroobius Pip take to the stage for a panel discussion alongside speakers with differing views regarding their stammer.



Scroobius Pip hosting
copyright STAMMA 2024




I Rock my @STAMMA
copyright STAMMA 2024

SUNDAY:

STAMMERING IN SPORTS

Last, but by no means least: the final day of STAMMAFest.

To wrap up the festival, we'll be joined by STAMMA patron and former Scottish rugby union international team captain and coach Kelly Brown. Deep diving into the world of sports along with Kelly we have invited guests, ex-rugby union and league international player for Wales Mark Jones; boxer and personal trainer Padraig McCrory; Footballer Ken Sema; and the power behind Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at the Football Association of Wales Carys Ingram. Our panellists will be talking about their experiences of stammering in the world of sport, exploring how it's impacted them and their careers.

It doesn't end there... STAMMAFest 2024 will also be home to  a number of exciting workshops, covering topics on everything from poetry and art to stammering at work and in school. Themes include public speaking, creative expression, research, and technology.

So there you have it: the run down of what to expect in just a few months. Join us this August in Nottingham for STAMMAFest 2024. [Tickets available now.](#)



STAMMAfest crowds

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STAMMA AT THE BFAWU CONFERENCE

Gary Clark

The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) have recently affiliated with STAMMA and we were delighted to run a workshop and a stand at their annual conference this June.

BFAWU's General Secretary, Sarah Woolley, and National President, Ian Hodson, welcomed us warmly to the event. They're rightly proud of the way their union are playing a leading role in bringing stammering onto the union agenda. Speaking to the full conference, STAMMA's Trade Union Liaison, Gary Clark, described the difference trade unions can make for their members who stammer, and how those changes can impact society for the better.



Delegates showed a clear interest in STAMMA's work. During the workshop, we explored the experiences of people who stammer, including what we tend to find helpful and unhelpful. We looked at common workplace challenges that people who stammer have to deal with, and took a dive into the specific reasonable adjustments that can address those challenges. We shared STAMMA's guide to Reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Some of BFAWU's members work in customer roles, either on the phone, or face-to-face. With this in mind, we discussed how BFAWU and STAMMA can work together, so that these staff know what to do when speaking with

customers who stammer. For example, we shared the work that STAMMA did with the debt support agency Money Wellness. Following training and discussions, Money Wellness realised that they were probably accidentally hanging up on callers who stammer if they were having difficulty speaking at the beginning of calls. They decided to change their procedures for dealing with silence on calls and were delighted when, as soon as they made the change they instantly began to get spontaneous feedback from callers who stammer talking about how supportive their call handlers had been and how useful they'd found the conversation. [Read more here.](#)



Gary Clark at the BFAWU Conference

Photograph by Rob Williams

Over the coming months, we're looking forward to visiting and talking to the BFAWU regions to find out where those areas of overlap are. How we can support BFAWU members who stammer to thrive in the workplace. And how we can challenge employers and organisations to make a difference.

It's also great to know that STAMMA's programme of workshops for affiliates (page 6) is now open to BFAWU members. Together we can make a difference and ensure that there's space to stammer in our workplaces and in society more broadly.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Gary'.

Read more from Gary about his long history with Trade Unions in Issue 1 of Stammering At Work.

PREVIOUS ISSUES

Issue 1 features an article with suggestions for practical reasonable adjustments for telephone work, as well as a dive into the 'M v Manchester Rusk Co' employment tribunal to understand what lessons we can learn.

Issue 2 includes a focus on icebreakers and the challenges they can bring for so many employees, a look into the very interesting 'A v Pennine Care Foundation Trust' employment tribunal case, and a handy page on support for families with children who stammer.

Look out for Issue 4 coming out in the autumn, with a feature on chairing inclusive meetings, lessons from another employment tribunal, and [STAMMA's Minecraft Club](#) for kids who stammer.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS FOR UNION AFFILIATES

Check your email for the
printable full page poster pack
to help your members the
most from your affiliation

11th JUL '24
11am
30 minutes

WORKING WITH CUSTOMERS AND SERVICE USERS WHO STAMMER

SIGN UP

23rd SEP '24
7pm
45 minutes

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN WHO STAMMER

SIGN UP

22nd OCT '24
1pm
60 minutes

UNION PROCEDURES AND STAMMERING

SIGN UP

22nd NOV '24
1pm
60 minutes

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AT WORK FOR PEOPLE WHO STAMMER

SIGN UP

WHAT IS STAMMERING?

Stammering is different to the occasional repetition or hesitation that everybody experiences. From a listener's perspective, stammering is when someone repeats, prolongs, or has silent pauses or blocks when they are trying to say sounds and words. There might be visible signs of effort or tension as the person works hard to get the word out. However, stammering tends to fluctuate so you might not always know that someone stammers if it's not happening much at that particular moment. Also, some people work hard to make their stammer less obvious some or all of the time to avoid negative, unhelpful reactions from others. So while you may not notice the pauses, the swapped words, the exhausting preparation in sounding fluent, or everything they are not saying, that person stammers.

WHAT STAMMA OFFERS

Our aim as part of the employment support service is to provide support to both individuals and organisations when it comes to thinking about stammering and the workplace. If a member of your union is having an issue related to stammering at work, STAMMA's Employment Service offer free consultations to your union reps and the union member to discuss the issue and explore options including reasonable adjustments, advocacy work, and training and resources for the employing organisations.

We also work directly with organisations to review and provide guidance and resources ensuring the organisation's processes and procedures are accessible for union reps, union members, staff, service users and customers who stammer.

**DO REACH OUT TO US FOR SUPPORT, INFORMATION,
TRAINING & RESOURCES OR JUST TO CHAT.**



employmentsupport@stamma.org

Drop us an email at a time convenient to you and one of our team will get back to you.



0808 802 0002

Give us a call and ask someone from the Employment Support Service to call you back.

STAMMA