

fack families against corporate killers

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FACK Statement International Workers Memorial Day 28 April 2026

“It will never happen to us.” So we thought. So you might think. It’s sure as hell what all we FACKers thought. First time around at least. Though for some of us, the proverbial lightning has struck twice. And for so many of us, it continues to strike time and time again for reasons we’ll explain.

What is it that’s happened? Our loved ones died because of work. Whether in incidents that would never have happened had safety been given the priority it deserves. Or because of illnesses, which were entirely avoidable had the right precautions been put in place. Or because the pressure of excessive work demands, hours, deadlines; lack of control, resources and support, bullying, sexual harassment, insecurity, low pay - these work stresses accumulated, got all too much and a loved one made their final decision: to end their own life.

When we say it’s happened to us, we’re not speaking in the past tense. It continues to happen to us.

As a shadow is cast over every missed birthday, when the dread sets in as Mother’s and Father’s Day approaches, and every anniversary of their death looms large. As family traditions are abruptly ended; the shared laughter is silenced; the major milestones can no longer be shared with the person who would have been proudest of all.

Family holidays, checking into a hotel for work, approaching our retirement missing the soulmate we planned to share it with, first drinks in the pub, the walk down the aisle. Countless ways in which our loved one’s absence will continue to reverberate throughout our lives. Especially for those who lost someone to a work death when they were very young.

And the intensity of those reverberations are made all the stronger because of the way we are treated after our loved one dies.

We have to fight when we are at our lowest. We’re not treated as victims of crime. Yet that is what we are. We face intolerable delays waiting for answers: as to why our loved one is dead and who will be prosecuted for the failures which resulted in their death. More than 6 years so far for John Mackay’s wife and sister. More than 10 years for the families of the 4 men who died in the Didcot power station demolition collapse, 6 years for the 4 men, one a boy of 16, killed in an explosion at Wessex Water. Others feel investigations are poor and rushed.

For others, the trauma is deepened by their quest for answers being ended before it has even begun. The families of loved ones who have died by suicide, are faced with the HSE determined not to look. A regulator which chooses not to investigate, even where clear evidence points to work being the cause of the decision to end life. So causes of work-related suicide are not being addressed in a systematic way and future such deaths are not being prevented.

Every time we hear a news story about another work-related death, this compounds our suffering. Joyce Davies lost her dad in a fire at his workplace approaching 60 years ago. She wrote movingly recently: “We developed so much empathy, we drown in it every single day. Every other person’s suffering affects us. We pick up on tiny signs and we feel it deeply. The path back to our own suffering is fast, furious and frightening. We can’t ignore injustice. We can’t ignore the pain of a stranger. We put ourselves at risk to help other folk and we speak up for the voiceless.”

The voiceless Joyce speaks of...they were the lights of our lives. The ones who were the life and soul of the party. Our someone oh so special. The ones who lit up the room simply by their presence.

But all now snuffed out. Why?

Because employers neglected their duties: risk assessments were not done or haphazard, rather than addressing the hazards; a blind eye was turned in the pursuit of profit; cutting of corners was condoned to get the job done; trade unions and their safety reps were not engaged with; the concerns of workers who knew there was an "accident waiting to happen" were stifled; or the dangerous phrase "but we've always done it this way" was subscribed to.

And they got away with it. Until they didn't. And our loved ones didn't come home.

And sadly, almost unbelievably the lightening of work-related death can strike twice, break hearts and devastate family lives all over again.

Linzi Herbertson was a young woman in her late twenties when her husband Andy 'Herbie' Herbertson was killed by his employer's negligence in a scaffolding collapse in Oldham in January 1998. Devastated and heartbroken she fought for what justice she could get, which at that time was an insulting slap in the face, and then fought for others not to go through what she had experienced. She became a campaigner and a founder member of FACK. She brought up their young son and daughter on her own without the love of her life but with love and strength, and had another son later while never giving up the fight. About 13 years ago she found the second love of her life Pete Percival. They were happy and surrounded by their large families creating joy and love and enriching the lives of the many people who knew them. But sadly a work-related illness took Pete's life in January this year and Linzi is once more back in the hellish wasteland of the grief and loss journey she knows only too painfully, and which she is facing with enormous bravery, honesty and love.

We wish beyond measure that this had never happened to us. The fact that it has is what gives us a strength unmatched, and we vow to continue to advocate for and support other families who find themselves on this hideous journey, speaking truth to power and giving voice to our voiceless.

We remember all of our dead. And renew our commitment to continue to fight like hell for the living.

For more information Hilda Palmer 0729800240 hild.palmer52@gmail.com

FACK was established in July 2006, by and for families of people killed by the gross negligence of business employers, <https://gmhazards.org.uk/index.php/fack/>

Founder Members of FACK:

Dawn and Paul Adams – son Samuel Adams aged 6 killed at Trafford Centre, 10th October 1998

Linzi Herbertson -husband Andrew Herbertson 29, killed at work on 30th January 1998

Mike and Lynne Hutin – son Andrew Hutin 20, killed at work on 8th Nov 2001

Mick & Bet Murphy – son Lewis Murphy 18, killed at work on 21st February 2004

Louise Adamson – brother Michael Adamson 26, killed at work on 4th August 2005

Linda Whelan – son Craig Whelan 23, (and Paul Wakefield) killed at work on 23rd May 2004

Dorothy and Douglas Wright – son Mark Wright 37, killed at work on 13th April 2005

**For more information and to support FACK, contact Greater Manchester Hazards Centre:
Tel: 0161 884 4229 or the Scottish Hazards Centre: 0800 0015 022.**