

## FORMER WELL-BEING OFFICER MAKES CLAIMS



An ex well-being officer who once worked for the Scottish Borders Council, says that stress related to work is at an all-time high. He considers the stress to be at a pandemic. The former officer, Gordon Branston, who lives in Ettrickbridge, also says that the reason he received the axe is because he was constantly expressing his frustration over such a serious issue and how the issue simply was not being tackled in the right manner. Branston says that he was constantly bringing up concerns on staff members who were overly stressed due to work and how to deal with such problems but that apparently, no one wanted to listen. Branston, who is 47 years old, says that after just a few days of working last year, he noticed that data showed nearly 50% of all employees were dealing with some kind of work-related stress. In his eyes, this was a pandemic by all means necessary. He believes that the stress relates to employees being bullied and intimidated in their place of work. Branston also says he felt he needed to contact TheSouthern, especially since there have been many revelations about people being absent from work due to sickness. In fact, anxiety, stress, and even depression were apparently accounted for nearly 25 percent of absences that lasted long-term. Recommendations were made, which included that staff members should be allowed to share their concerns with counselors. In the meantime, Branston says that the amount of work-related stress absences did not match up with the higher figures that he managed to see when he had to carry out an audit of employee's well-being. Branston had plenty of experience, having worked in both local and national government for the country of South Africa. He had hoped to bring his experience with him to his new job in Newtown. However, after only being at his new position for a little over a month, he was urging the managers to find efficient ways of dealing with the work-related stress that employees were dealing with. He claims that after doing so, he was shouted at by one of the managers and felt humiliated. He was then signed off with a diagnosis of work-related stress. A hearing had been set for the 10<sup>th</sup> of May but Branston was not allowed to attend the hearing, due to the advice he received from his doctor. However, the next day, he received a confirmation, letting him know he had been dismissed from his position due to a breakdown between himself and his managers at the workplace. Branston was upset about the entire situation but does not wish to work for the company ever again. SBC, in the meantime, refused to comment about the situation.