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Evaluation results on the Sharing our Knowledge pilot May 10 to January 11

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Cleared by Elaine Harbour on 15 June 2011

Issue

1. To update HELA on
 - a) the evaluation of the Sharing our Knowledge pilot which ran in the South East from May 10 to January 11; and
 - b) the plans to make similar facilities available to all Local Authorities in the United Kingdom.

Timing

2. For information at the meeting.

Recommendation

3. That HELA note:
 - a) that the Sharing our Knowledge functionality will be made available to all Local Authorities on the new HELEX website; and
 - b) that LAU will continue to provide a content management role

Background

4. Sharing our Knowledge was a web based resource that allowed LAs to share locally created best practice materials in a secure environment.
5. The strategic driver for the Sharing our Knowledge pilot was the 2008 Partnership Evaluation Report recommendation on “exploring ways of improving inter-authority collaboration through more sharing of good practice and experiences between Local Authorities.” It also aligned with the aims of the 2009 Statement of Commitment between HSE and local authority representative bodies by supporting “better sharing of information between partners”.
6. The pilot was undertaken in a cost effective manner, hosted on an aging standalone server which was not fully integrated into HELEX. Content management during the pilot was undertaken by LAU with LA champions promoting its use.

7. The web based evaluation was carried out from 18 to 31 January 2011.

Argument

8. The evaluation of Sharing our Knowledge found that the majority of respondents considered the facility useful (a good idea), fairly easy to use, and have potential to save time/resources. The evaluation also identified that the potential to fully exploit the system needed more time than the pilot provided. On the downside was the variable quality of the material provided and the need to log into a separate server (since the pilot used an old standalone server).
9. The HExLex extranet hosted by HSE for LA regulators is due to be upgraded as the software used is no longer supported. The addition of a Sharing our Knowledge system within the HExLex extranet environment could be undertaken as part of the upgrade at no additional cost. In addition, hosting it via HExLex would speed access, make the search for materials easier and remove the need to log onto a separate server. Document quality would be addressed by LAU continuing its centralised content management role for HExLex.
10. Providing a facility to share locally produced material nationally using an IT system managed by LAU would assist LAs to implement the government's health and safety reforms by sharing best practice material. The system would provide a means of optimising LA resources, assist risk based targeting and maintain the focus on outcome based interventions. It is in keeping with the localism agenda by allowing local solutions to be found for local problems with the ability to access relevant material developed by other LAs.

Consultation

11. Consultation has been undertaken with LG Regulation and the Sharing our Knowledge project team, Marcus Herbert (Reading Borough Council), Helen Barnsley (Guildford Borough Council) and Mark Jewell (East Hampshire District Council).

Costs and Benefits

12. The HExLex extranet is currently being upgraded and the Sharing our Knowledge system could be added as part of this upgrade at no additional cost allowing the sharing of locally produced material on a national basis.

Action

13. For LAU to progress with the 2012 upgrade of HExLex and include access for LAs to a national knowledge sharing system.

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