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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

“CONSTRUCTING BETTER HEALTH”: AN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SUPPORT SCHEME FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

A Paper by Gavin Pugh

Advisor(s): Colleen Bowen & Mike Cosman

Cleared by Elizabeth Gyngell on 3rd October 2003

Issue

1. This paper reports progress towards the instigation of an occupational health support pilot scheme for the construction industry.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. That the Commission notes the developments on this project.

Background

4. At the *Tackling Health Risks in Construction* conference in October 2000, representatives of every part of the industry from clients to contractors, employers and trade unions, indicated their willingness to co-operate in establishing a comprehensive, national occupational health scheme. Since that time, work has progressed through a series of stages to develop a model scheme with major players from the construction industry:
 - HSE commissioned Sygol to produce a proposal and scoping /specification for a feasibility study into the establishment of a comprehensive occupational health scheme for all construction workers.
 - The feasibility study, conducted by Amey Vectra, recommended that a national scheme could be viable and should be piloted.

- A model for a pilot scheme, called “Constructing Better Health”, has been designed and its feasibility tested with potential providers. The scheme will be confined to a discrete geographical area and based on the model designed by Securing Health Together’s Support Programme Action Group. The potential providers have confirmed that the model is workable and that there is capacity within the market to deliver the scheme.

The Pilot Scheme Action Forum

5. Securing commitment and funding for the scheme has been a major challenge in progressing this project. Although HSE has provided funding for the studies mentioned above, our primary role has been one of facilitation. A major step was the establishment of an Action Forum of influential individuals from the construction industry (nominated by CONIAC), to encourage industry ownership of the scheme to take the pilot forward.
6. The Action Forum was established in May and met for the first time in July. Membership includes individuals from the Construction Confederation, Federation of Master Builders, the Association of British Insurers, UCATT, the Construction Industry Training Board, DTI and HSE. Specifically, the Action Forum’s role is to:
 - Decide on a strategy for raising funds for the pilot scheme and work out the arrangements for fundholding/fund management.
 - Use networks to raise funds and other resources.
 - Select the most appropriate product/provider for the scheme.
 - Determine the structure and status of the Pilot Scheme Consortium (the organisation that will eventually manage the pilot scheme) and oversee its formation.
7. Progress to date includes:
 - Agreement and approval of the model for the pilot scheme (see Annex A).
 - Completion of a fundraising audit, including a business case, by experienced consultants (funded by HSE)
 - Establishing the selection process and criteria for the product/provider for the pilot scheme.
 - Agreement to the fundamental contents of the ‘business case’ that will be used to persuade parties to contribute funds towards the scheme.
 - The exploration of options for holding and managing funds for the pilot scheme with appropriate organisations.

- Contact with the Construction Workers Health Trust which manages a broader based health promotion scheme for construction workers in the Republic of Ireland see www.cwht.ie)
- Confirmation that evaluation will play a key role in ensuring the experience of the pilot is captured and used to help determine options for a future national scheme

Emerging Lessons

8. The following lessons have been learnt during the development of this project:

- Construction industry involvement in developing the pilot scheme has been essential to industry ownership of the project. Enthusiasm for the project has increased greatly since the Action Forum convened.
- Establishing the Action Forum and working through expectations has been a lengthy process and took a great deal of work outside the official Action Forum meetings.
- The primary focus of the scheme remains health risk management. However, partnership working has required us to be flexible about the coverage of the proposed pilot scheme to achieve buy-in from industry, for example an element of health screening has now been introduced into the pilot scheme model.
- Securing long term funding for sustaining a national construction occupation health scheme is a key issue which has been raised by the Action Forum and will have to be addressed.

Next Steps

9. Over the next few months the Action Forum will be concentrating effort on identifying preferred bidders for delivering the pilot, taking forward discussion with potential fundholders and exploring in more detail options for funding the pilot.

Presentation

10. The construction press has shown a high level of interest in the pilot scheme and HSE has issued two press notices on behalf of the Action Forum. More press notices and press events will happen as the project reaches its milestones.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

11. HSE has funded the fundraising audit and remains committed to funding the evaluation of the pilot scheme. However, although the project has progressed significantly in recent months, if the Action Forum's fundraising efforts fail, the pilot scheme will not go ahead.

Action

12. The Commission is asked to note the information provided.

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