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## HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

### HSC/E Race Equality Scheme, 2005-2008

#### A Paper by Donald Goodhew and Zoe Woodrow

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**Cleared by Jonathan Rees on 23 November 2005**

#### Issue

1. Approval of the HSC/E Race Equality Scheme, 2005-2008, which has been revised following consultation; and an opportunity to signal wider priorities for inclusion in future diversity plans.

#### Timing

2. For this meeting.

#### Recommendation

3. That the Commission:
  - i. review and approve for publication the revised HSC/E Race Equality Scheme, 2005-2008, with particular consideration of the Race Equality Action Plan and its contribution to the wider HSE Board commitment on diversity;
  - ii. note feedback from the consultation and improvements made to the scheme;
  - iii. advise on future priority actions on diversity in the light of the responses to the consultation, in particular to give direction to future Action Plans for 2007 and beyond;
  - iv. consider making personal commitments on diversity, following the example of the HSE Board.

#### Background

4. Under an amendment made to the 1976 Race Relations Act in 2000, public bodies such as the HSC and HSE are required to publish a race equality scheme. The scheme should set out how they will meet their duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. The first HSC/E scheme covered the period 2002-2005.
5. The impetus established by this first scheme established a good record on local initiatives, which include:

- campaigns targeted at ethnic minority communities (eg gas safety, Portuguese construction workers)
  - safety and health awareness days (eg Asian and Caribbean businesses in Birmingham)
  - internal networking meetings for individuals nominated as race equality contacts
  - annual black history / diversity seminars
  - stalls at ethnic minority festivals.
6. An updated and revised scheme for 2005-2008 was considered 'below the line' in July 2005 (HSC/05/78) and published as a Discussion Document in August 2005. It was posted to the HSE website and intranet and was sent to key external and internal stakeholders to respond by the end of September 2005.

## **Argument**

7. The scheme has been revised considerably in the light of the consultation. The revised scheme is contained in Annex A and an overview of the feedback from the consultation is at Annex B.
8. The main areas that were criticised were:
- unclear language;
  - too much focus on process and review rather than action;
  - HSE's targets for internal recruitment to the SCS being lower than the benchmark set by Cabinet Office.
9. These criticisms have been addressed. The scheme has been redrafted in clear English. Progress has been recognised by key internal stakeholders and endorsed by the Plain English Campaign. The earlier targets which appeared in the Discussion Document have since been replaced. HSE's target to 2008 (see Annex E of the Scheme) is in line with the benchmark set by Cabinet Office. Milestones and dates have been added to the Action Plan to give more focus on what will be done.
10. The latest version of the scheme has been broadly welcomed, both by teams within HSE and external stakeholders. It is very clearly in line with the HSE Board's renewed commitment to diversity, as demonstrated by the publication of its Vision and Priorities for diversity in July 2005, and the top priorities where we are keen to make progress quickly:
- driving forward the Board's Vision for diversity, throughout the organisation
  - promoting the use of a simple diversity impact assessment tool, particularly in the Fit3 Programme
  - recruitment, especially in London
  - promoting HSE's image as an organisation where people from diverse backgrounds can prosper and progress
11. In support of the new Vision and Priorities, Board members have drawn up their own personal diversity objectives and published them internally – see Annex C – to drive this Vision forward, top down.

12. **Members of the Commission are invited to follow the Board's example.** One approach they might wish to consider is to associate themselves with work to deliver a particular priority. For example, Sayeed Khan has become personally involved with the joint HSE/DRC project to establish principles for health and safety risk assessment and risk management for disabled people.
13. In spite of good progress we must not be complacent. Much of the feedback from the consultation questions what the scheme will mean in practice and how HSC/E will drive real progress on race equality. It is now important that we **deliver** the Action Plan which has now been extended to cover the period May 2005 to the end of December 2006. The new scheme and the newly established HSE Diversity Steering Group should help sustain and progress action.
14. One event mentioned in the Action Plan has taken place recently: a well attended and really inspiring staff conference on race diversity *Looking back, looking forward* – see Annex D for a short description by the MAGNET Chair.

### **Next Steps**

15. The scheme commits HSC/E to ongoing revision of the Action Plan. A new plan for 2007 and onwards will be prepared by HSE's Diversity Steering Group, and published towards the end of 2006. This will take account of the government-wide ten-point plan for diversity published in November. This has not yet been considered in detail, but covers much the same diversity territory as the HSE Board's Vision, with a strong focus on leadership, accountability, and embedding diversity throughout our work.
16. Members of the Commission may wish to use the opportunity for discussion to
- signal issues for priority attention in future years, based on their own experience of what works on diversity, and
  - indicate issues where they might become involved personally.

### **Consultation**

17. The Discussion Document was published to the HSE website and intranet. It was also sent to key external and internal stakeholders. Of the 324 named consultees we received 32 responses.
18. The revised version of the document was sent again for comment to HSE's Trade Union contacts; HSE's Minorities Action Group Network (MAGNET); HSE Personnel; the Commission for Racial Equality and the Plain English Campaign. Feedback from this final stage has also informed this latest revision.

### **Presentation**

19. The final version of the HSC/E Race Equality Scheme, 2005-2008 will be published in December 2005. It will be promoted on the HSE website and intranet and through HSE's internal magazine *Express* and its weekly electronic companion *e-express*. We

will highlight our top priorities where we are keen to make progress quickly – see para. 10.

### **Costs and Benefits**

20. The costs of the scheme are borne by HSE (see below). The benefits include: better engagement with important minority groups (and, through that, a more effective delivery of our business); good staff management practice and compliance with legal requirements.

### **Financial/Resource Implications for HSE**

21. Costs of running the scheme from 2002-2005 have been estimated at between £180,000 - £200,000 per year, based on £100,000 for research and £80,000 - £100,000 for staff time directly connected with reviewing, developing and monitoring the scheme and taking forward work associated with it. Costs for 2005-2008 are likely to be similar, though taking work forward in the context of action on broader diversity issues, should spread costs and there is scope to reduce the costs of research.

### **Environmental and other Implications**

22. None

### **Action**

23. The Commission is invited to:

- i. approve the revised HSC/E Race Equality Scheme, 2005-2008, for publication.
- ii. note feedback from the consultation and improvements made to the scheme;
- iii. advise on future policy on diversity, in particular to give direction for the Action Plan 2006-2007;
- iv. consider making and publicising personal commitments on diversity.

### **Annexes**

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| A | Race Equality Scheme for the HSC/E 2005-2008       |
| B | Consultation on revised HSC/E Race Equality Scheme |
| C | HSE Board Diversity Objectives                     |
| D | HSE Staff Conference on Race Diversity             |
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