

**LAs and HSE Working Together STEP
Progress report****Communications Strategy 2005-2006****Background**

The strategy has been developed with the support of HSE's strategic communications advisors (COI). The strategy has been informed by independent research into the views, attitudes and opinions of LA CEOs, elected members and health and safety practitioners.

Research methods

The research into the views of LA CEOs and Elected Members involved 200 structured telephone interviews; in total 100 CEOs and 100 Elected Members were interviewed (there are 410 LAs with health and safety enforcement responsibilities). The survey work was undertaken during January and February 2005.

The research into the views of LA health and safety professionals (Environmental Health Officers, Technical Officers and their managers) was undertaken during February 2005. It involved structured interviews with 210 staff. This survey and the survey of CEOs and Elected Members were undertaken independently.

Research findings

Generally, the findings of the surveys were encouraging. All groups saw HSE and its staff as knowledgeable and supportive. They saw HSE making positive efforts to develop relationships and new ways of working with LAs. They recognised HSC/E's commitment to develop a partnership approach to working with LAs. However, improvements were needed in some areas, for example HSE was seen by many as bureaucratic, remote and not understanding the pressures on LAs.

Development of the strategy

The strategy has been developed in the light of advice from the programme's Steering Group (consisting of 6 Elected Members and two Commissioners), the Programme Board and HELA. They have all endorsed the strategy, subject to some amendments which have been incorporated in this document.

The strategy is particularly aimed at addressing the criticisms of HSE. It is envisaged that the strategy document itself will be an important communications tool. It will be circulated widely within the LA sector.

However, some of the concerns regarding remoteness and not understanding the needs of LAs are being addressed through additional routes. In particular advice from the LA secondees working in the programme teams has assisted in responding to these concerns. The efforts of the Fit3 team to make information more widely available to LAs at times appropriate to their planning cycles (see para 7 of main paper) will be crucial to demonstrating HSE can respond to LA concerns.

Key points

The elements of the strategy particularly important to HSC are set out below.

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