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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

HSC and HSE Disability and Gender Equality Schemes

A Paper by: Cath Cottam and Sue Williams, External Diversity Team

Advisors: Jenny Eastabrook/ Elizabeth Hodkinson, and John Rowson

Name of Board Member lead: Vivienne Dews

Cleared by: Jonathan Rees on 20 October 2006

Issue

1. Approval of the draft HSC/E Disability and Gender Equality Schemes, subject to further minor amendment in the light of consultation responses.

Timing

2. Urgent. We are required to publish a Disability Equality Scheme by 4 December 2006.

Recommendation

3. That the Commission:
 - i approve the draft Disability and Gender Equality Schemes, Annex A;
 - ii note the feedback from the consultation, Annex B;
 - iii note plans for final clearance of the Schemes (Paragraphs 10 and 11).

Background

4. Under amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act in 2005 and the Sex Discrimination Act in 2006, HSC and HSE are, along with other public bodies, required to publish equality Schemes setting out how they will meet their duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. (We already have a Race Equality Scheme HSC/05/117 that was required by earlier legislation). The Schemes must be in place for disability by 4 December 2006 and for gender in April 2007.
5. Joint HSC/HSE Disability and Gender Equality Schemes (Annex A) have been drafted following the guidance in the DRC and draft EOC Codes of Practice respectively. Other key influencers on the development and content of the Schemes were:
 - the agreement of HSE's Diversity Steering Group and the Equality Schemes Working Group to progressing the Equality Schemes together with a common

publication date of 4 December 2006. They also agreed the adoption of a single overarching framework with links to the distinct Schemes and action plans for disability and gender (the Race Equality Scheme will be integrated into this framework in 2007);

- the establishment of an internal Equality Schemes Working Group to produce the Schemes. Members included HSE Board Champions for disability, women and race, representatives of Equal (HSE's disability staff network) and representatives of HSE's policy and operations groups. HSE's Legal Advisors and Trades Unions were also consulted;
- consulting and involving internal and external stakeholders from an early stage;
- the lessons learned from the Review of our Race Equality Scheme.

This led to decisions on key priorities for disability and gender as set out in pages 5-6 of the draft framework and Schemes (Annex A).

6. The draft framework and Schemes were posted to the HSE website and intranet for consultation and were also sent to key external and internal stakeholders (including staff networks and the HSE Board), to respond by 18 October and to the Plain English Campaign.

Argument

7. The joint draft Schemes set our priorities in line with the HSE Board's renewed commitment to diversity, and build on the Vision and Priorities for diversity published in July 2005. They also take account of the lessons learned from the review of our Race Equality Scheme by focussing upon key priorities, fewer and higher impact actions, and effective driving and co-ordination of delivery of the Scheme. (HSC/05/78).
8. The draft Schemes reflect the main comments from the consultation; these have been addressed by strengthening narrative, refocusing actions or as additional action points. Further amendments will be made before 4 December. An overview of the feedback from the consultation is at Annex B.
9. The main issues that have already been incorporated following consultation are:
 - on disability we have reinforced the connections with the Health, Work and Well Being agenda with new priorities on mental health prevention (through stress management standards) and on rehabilitation;
 - on gender, we have added the priority to include pregnancy-related risk assessment into a 2007/08 campaign.
10. We are still considering further refinements in the light of consultation responses only just received. We propose that the final draft of the Scheme should be cleared by the HSC Chair and HSE Board, assuming that changes are fairly minor ones.
11. If there are more substantive changes, which require Commission approval, we will publish final draft Schemes on 4 December as being subject to the Commission's approval, and put a below the line paper to the December Commission.
12. The challenge for the coming year will be to drive real progress and deliver the action plans. The HSE Diversity Steering Group has a key role in helping to sustain and progress action.

Consultation

13. Although timescales were tight we have had a good range of responses, including the TUC and Equal Opportunities Commission. We recognise that long-term involvement and consultation is crucial to this work and we will continue to respond to comments and take account of them in developing actions for 2007, and feed them into discussions on 2008 actions. Additionally PEFD, HR, and Communications Directorate have also been consulted.

Presentation

14. The final version of the HSC/E Disability and Gender Equality Schemes will be subject to Commission agreement published by 4 December 2006. It will be promoted on the HSE website and intranet, in *Express* and *e-express*. A news alert is proposed. Lord Hunt has expressed a wish to see a copy of our Schemes in view of his concern that Schemes should be written in plain English. The Schemes will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Costs and Benefits

15. The costs of the joint Schemes are borne by HSE (see below). The principal benefits include: better stakeholder engagement leading to more effective, better targeted delivery of our business; improved workforce diversity; progress towards achieving our vision; and compliance with legal requirements.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

16. Costs of developing the Schemes over the last 6 months have been estimated at £80,000 for staff time connected with meetings, involvement and consultation, and writing the Schemes. Estimated costs per year (2006-2009) are between £62,000 - £65,000, for staff time, in the central diversity team and HR, on taking forward the priorities, for action associated with them, and reviewing the Schemes. Other actions are either already in hand, or are planned to be delivered within the existing resource of the wider HSE teams involved.

Other Implications

17. None

Action / Next Steps

18. The Commission is invited to:

- i approve the draft HSC/E Disability and Gender Equality Schemes (Annex A) subject to further minor amendment in the light of consultation responses;
- ii note feedback from the consultation (Paragraphs 8-9 and Annex B);
- iii note plans for final clearance of the Schemes (Paragraph 10 - 11).