

HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE

Minutes: 36th meeting

Occupational Health Advisory Committee

HSE, Rose Court, London

1st April 2003

These are the minutes for the 36th meeting of OHAC. **Main topics** discussed included consideration of changes within HSE and the impact on the way we work, an update on the Priority Programmes for Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) and Stress, an update on OHAC's horizon scanning, and an update on Improving Access to Occupational Health Support.

Members Present:

- **Mrs Sandra Caldwell** HSE (Chair)
- **Mr Andrew Foster** CIEH
- **Ms Carol Bannister** RCN
- **Prof Tom Cox** BPS
- **Dr Keith Palmer** BMA/FoM/SoM
- **Mr Doug Russell** TUC
- **Prof David Stubbs** Ergonomics Society
- **Ms Claire Sullivan** TUC

Assessors Present:

- **Dr Arthur Johnstone** Scottish Executive
- **Dr Peter Wright** DWP
- **Dr Kit Harling** DH

Observers Present:

- **Ms Elizabeth Gynge** HSE
- **Dr David Snashall** Chief Medical Advisor HSE
- **Dr Delia Skan** DETI NI

Secretariat Present:

- **Miss Anna Bliss** HSE (Acting Secretary)
- **Miss Melissa Webb** HSE (Assistant Secretary)

APOLOGIES RECEIVED FROM:

- Mr Roger Alesbury, Mr Steve Bailey, Ms Kim Sunley, Dr Derek White, Mrs Nola Ishmael, Dr Nerys Williams
- Resignations: Dr Ruth Chambers, Ms Brenda Stephens

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. **Sandra Caldwell** welcomed OHAC members to the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2.1. Routine check on day's agenda. No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. CHANGES WITHIN HSE AND THE IMPACT ON THE WAY WE WORK

3.1. **Sandra Caldwell** passed around the revised HSC/E's vision and mission, which she stressed is built upon the original. The Commission will use this for their new Strategic Plan for 2004-7.

3.2. **Sandra Caldwell** set out the context and background to change within HSE to assist OHAC members' understanding of why there will be changes in the way we engage with our stakeholder groups. Restructuring within HSE includes a new Policy Group, mostly from the old policy Directorates, and introduction of a Strategy and Intelligence Division (SID) who will support the strategic decision making of HSC and the HSE Board.

3.3. It was highlighted that one of the new ways of working will be a more 'task and finish' approach to programmes, projects and their supporting stakeholder groups.

4. NEW WAYS OF WORKING (Paper OHAC/01/03)

4.1. **Anna Bliss** introduced this paper and focussed on how we believe change in HSE, and in particular the task and finish approach, is likely to effect standing committees.

4.2. The reconstitution of OHAC is due in 2004 and the **OHAC members** felt that proposals put forward in the 'New Ways of Working' paper, such as a virtual stakeholder network and National Occupational Health and Rehabilitation Conference, would complement OHAC but should not replace it as a standing Committee.

4.3. **Sandra Caldwell** welcomed the members constructive views and said that at reconstitution we would need to revisit what OHAC does and ensure it had clear aims and the means to deliver on those.

4.4. **OHAC members** provided constructive feedback on the idea of holding a stakeholder conference and asked HSE to consider what

niche it would be filling, who the target audience are and how HSE will make it different to existing OH events.

5. PRIORITY PROGRAMME UPDATE: MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS (Paper OHAC/02/03)

5.1. **Carol Bannister** reported on the Priority Programme and the MSD Working Group who held a teleconference on the 21st March 2003.

5.2. The revised DSE guidance has been well received and the mSD priority programme research agenda will soon be published on the web. The evaluation of the Back in Work (Scotland) project was reported as promising:

5.2.1. there has been a shift of 30% of general public understanding as to what they should do if they experience back pain and

5.2.2. a shift in GP behaviour, with GP's recommending rest for back pain reduced from 21% to 11%.

ACTION: Sarah Moore to distribute the evaluation report of the Working Back in Scotland. She asked **OHAC members** to send her their views on how the message could be further promulgated.

5.3. **Carol Bannister** indicated that the Working Group is looking to see the evaluation of the English NHS Back in Work campaign and developments in Europe, where there are plans to scrutinise the working of the DSE and MHO Regulations.

6. PRIORITY PROGRAMME UPDATE: STRESS (Paper OHAC/03/03)

6.1. **Laura Whitford** reported on the Priority Programme as in the paper and asked for any comments from around the table to take to the Commission on the 8th April. She pointed out that there were 6 standards drafted (Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role and Change), not 7 as originally stated; because Organisational Culture is now seen as an overarching issue. Piloteers are being organised and HSE is now looking to broaden the debate.

6.2. The OHAC members supported moves to make the standards widely available and agreed that an early press release and open access website to the pilot pack was a priority.

6.3. Tom Cox confirmed that the Stress Working Group (of which he is Chair) should meet to discuss the pilot scheme.

6.4. Elizabeth Gyngell asked for ideas from OHAC members as to how we can assist LA inspectors to make an impact on stress related illness in the sectors where they enforce the H&SW Act eg retail and finance.

7. HORIZON SCANNING (Paper OHAC/04/03)

7.1. **Anna Bliss** reported on the horizon scanning paper and asked for comments from around the table as to whether the three main issues highlighted were the key issues that should be put forward.

7.2. It was felt by the group that if the paper was looking at the next 3 years or so then the three main points highlighted were correct, however if the Commission were looking for a true 'horizon' picture of the next 5-10 years the issues may be different and would include the ageing workforce, genetics and the changing patterns in work.

7.3. There is a Commission meeting on the 13th May where a representative from each Advisory Committee will present for 5-10 minutes the main points arising from their Forward Look exercises.

7.4. **Anna Bliss** asked whether there were any volunteers and **Carol Bannister, Claire Sullivan** and **Tom Cox** said that they would be prepared to go, so long as their diaries were free.

7.5. **OHAC members** agreed to email or call Anna Bliss with any editing comments.

ACTION: Sandra Caldwell to arrange with **Carol Bannister, Claire Sullivan** or **Tom Cox** the arrangements for reporting on the 13th May.

8. UPDATE ON IMPROVING ACCESS TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SUPPORT (Paper OHAC/05/03)

8.1. **Elizabeth Gyngell** introduced this paper and set out the work completed or no longer viable, but stressed that not all of the work is complete. This will now be taken forward without the Project Board.

OHAC members thanked the Project Board Chair, members and Secretariat for their work. In particular, beyond the measurable

outputs, eg the pilot helpline, they saw that the Project Board has assisted the significant shift in thinking on what is feasible for OH support.

8.2. OHAC members noted the recommendation at paragraphs 12 and 13 that actions on self-assessment and primary care will be pursued within the framework of HSE's work with DWP.

8.3. OHAC members asked for a further paper in one year to set out progress on these two areas.

9. MATTERS ARISING

9.1. Doug Russell provided OHAC with a report on Trade Union activity to promote employee awareness of occupational health and a leaflet on what safety reps can do to manage the risks of stress at work. He also provided booklets 'Voices from the frontline', a report on shopworkers' experience of work-related violence and abuse and 'Charting Back Pain', an USDAW survey of women's experience.

ACTION: OHAC Secretariat to distribute further papers to all OHAC members.

The **Secretariat** provided what limited information was available on notices and prosecutions relating to stress as requested at the last meeting.

10. OTHER INFORMATION

- OHAC/06/03 'Current Issues April 2003'
- OHAC/07/03 'New and Expectant Mothers at Work'

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. The next meeting will be on 17th July 2003.

12. MEETING CLOSED