

Small Business Trade Association Forum Minutes

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Small Business Trade Association Forum	
Minutes of the Meeting of the Small Business Trade Association Forum, Held on 11 January 2005 at the Rose Hotel, Southwark.	
<p>Present: Judith Donovan CBE, Chair Confederation of British Industry British Chambers of Commerce British Wood Preserving and Damp Proofing Association Small Business Bureau British Woodworking Federation Forum of Private Business Federation of Master Builders National Hairdressers Federation National Farmers Union</p> <p>Apologies: Engineering Employers Federation Federation of Small Business Institute of Directors British Dental Association The Road Haulage Association National Federation of Retail Newsagents</p>	<p>Officials Present Jonathan Rees (Deputy Director General (Policy)) Colin Douglas (Director of Communications) Giles Denham (Director of Policy Programme) Coleen Bowen Donald Goodhew Elizabeth Hornsby Hani El-Sabbahy Meena Sharma</p>

** indicates that a separate document is available – see list at end*

1.	Introductions and apologies
1.1	Judith Donovan welcomed Members, thanked them for commenting through correspondence on the draft Terms of Reference and confirmed that these were now agreed. The final version was circulated with the Agenda for this meeting.
1.2	A note of the first meeting had been circulated. In future, minutes would be circulated for the benefit of Members who had not been present.
2.	Members' Wish list, HSE response, and how HSE is changing.
2.1	The Chair introduced Jonathan Rees who is the new Deputy Director General (Policy).
2.2	Jonathan Rees said that he saw his role as championing the new strategy and making the necessary changes within HSE to ensure that its aims were delivered. A key element is closer partnerships with stakeholders, of which the Forum is an example. HSE will be realigning our structures, which includes the creation of a new Business Engagement Programme. It is not in HSE's interest to have health and safety being perceived as being about stopping people doing things. Health and safety is about sensible risk management. We take opportunities like the recent fuss about paddling pools to try and get the correct facts

	<p>into the public arena.</p> <p>HSE cannot get away from the fact that it is an enforcement body, but a lot of what Inspectors do is give advice. It is about trying to create the right balance but it is not as simple saying that it is 'good' to give advice and 'bad' to enforce. There is a role for both advice and enforcement.</p> <p>Jonathan stressed that he was aware how busy most small businesses are and although it is fine for HSE to put all information on websites, HSE also have to look at other ways of getting health and safety information out to small business.</p>
2.3	<p>On the issue of better regulation, HSE is not in the business of looking for new regulations and does everything it can to minimise burdens on business. We are leaders within government at doing regulatory impact assessments; we were one of the first government agencies to sign up for the new common commencement date rules. On the issue of stress, we have formulated a self-regulating approach and persuaded our European partners that new regulation is not needed.</p> <p>With regard to exemptions in legislation for the self-employed, it is HSE's position that HASWA has always applied to the self-employed. Each new set of regulations needs to be carefully assessed to see whether it should apply to the self-employed.</p>
2.4	<p>The Chair said that within HSC/E there is a real commitment to be more transparent and relate better to small business.</p> <p>The Forum held a broad discussion and reached a general agreement that h&s law should not contain exemptions for the self-employed. They also agreed that if small businesses with few resources need to comply with regulations, then Governments should be able to as well and that there should be no 'Crown immunity' throughout the EU.</p> <p>The issue of general duty of care was raised. The Forum felt that HSE messages seem to be aimed at employers but that employees and the general public have an equally great duty of care towards themselves. An opinion was that the balance of the emphasis is wrong.</p> <p>The Forum felt that small businesses need help. Often h&s seems irrelevant to the owners of micro business and they cannot see how it relates to them. They do not have the resources or knowledge to comply with h&s law. The pressure on small businesses to compete and cut costs sometimes forces down standards. To reach small firms, HSE needs to work through industry-based trade associations and others who have contact with small business. There was scepticism from Forum members about how often small businesses use the internet.</p>
2.5	<p>Jonathan Rees thanked members for their views.</p> <p>HSE plan to influence small business primarily through intermediaries, including trade associations. We already do this to some extent through Safety & Health Awareness Days (SHADs) for example. Engaging Trade Associations will be an aim of the new Business Engagement Programme.</p> <p>HSE believes in proportionate inspection. It is in HSE's interest as much as that of small business that we do not spend a disproportionate amount of time inspecting a small business.</p> <p>On Crown Immunity, HSE is totally at one with the views expressed in the meeting.</p> <p>The issue of personal responsibility has been raised several times. Broadly he agrees that employees and the public need to take greater responsibility for their own h&s.</p>

	<p>There are obvious links here to the question of insurance liability.</p> <p>On the issue of providing practical help to small business, HSE need to take that away from the meeting and think about it further.</p>
3	'The Business Case for Health and Safety' and other forthcoming media campaigns including changes to Chemical Policy
3.1	<p>Colin Douglas gave a presentation on the Communications campaigns for 2005/6 and its' place within the three year Communications strategy. The three main media campaigns that are going to take place are the Business Case campaign, Back Pain campaign and the Slips and Trips.</p> <p>The Business campaign starts in February. It is mainly aimed at larger organisations and is sector focussed. The theme will be around promoting 'Good health and safety is good business'.</p> <p>The back pain campaign. It supports and is supported by an inspection blitz and is set for July this year. There will be guidance on risk assessment, solutions and benefits.</p> <p>The Slips and Trips campaign, which starts in October. Slips and trips are the commonest cause of major injury but that people don't consider slips or trips as a major problem. This campaign will aim to change the perception of slips and trips.</p> <p>Colin also outlined the changes to Chemical Policy, in particular changes to the Occupational Exposure limits (OELs) under COSHH.</p>
3.2	<p>The Chair then asked members which key messages would have the most impact, and what their views were.</p> <p>The discussion centred around the fact small businesses often do not understand what message the HSE is trying to get across. The level of literacy is over estimated in a lot of cases. The messages have to be simple, short and sharp and advertising campaigns should be aimed at practical examples.</p> <p>The term 'OEL' will turn people off because it is jargon and won't be understood. The level of ignorance about chemicals generally should never be underestimated; people do not see items like toilet cleaner as chemicals. Moreover issues like these cannot purely be tackled from the viewpoint of workplaces because they are not only relating to work. Safety with an item like toilet cleaner is an issue for the home as well as the workplace.</p> <p>The Forum was shown the 'Absolutely Essential Health and Safety Toolkit For the Smaller Construction Contractor' publication which has been very well received. There was an opinion that it fired the right sparks of awareness, and had become a very widely used and distributed HSE publication.</p> <p>Safety and Health Awareness Days were raised and example of a HSE initiative which is beneficial to industry. They are aimed specifically at small contractors who employ fewer than 16 people and offer presentations on key topics. They run across the country and are supported, organised and sponsored in partnership with major and large construction companies, intermediaries (FMB) and local 'Working Well Together' groups.</p>
3.3	<p>Colin Douglas agreed with the simple message approach but also stressed that the perception of legislation is not just down to HSC and HSE but included other bodies and so the responsibility of getting the right legislation out to the right people, does not entirely rest on HSE/HSC. In our marketing campaigns, we may need to reconsider the low level of basic skills that has been raised as an issue. In communications, HSE needs to make messages relevant by using simple practical examples.</p>

	<p>The Chair commented that there seemed to be a consensus that we should put more emphasis on targeting employees. Also we need to consider moving our marketing campaigns into mass media.</p>
4	Current HSE issues, and criteria for choosing future agendas
4.1	<p>Donald Goodhew sought the views of Members on criteria for selecting items for inclusion in future agendas, because it was likely that there will be more potential items than time would allow.</p> <p>The occupational health support project had reached a stage where Forum Members could influence future development, which was why it had chosen for inclusion in the agenda; by the April meeting, early work on HSE/Local Authority partnership work will have reached a similar stage.</p> <p>Topics, where work has been completed, are more appropriately dealt with by a written briefing, such as the information on the new 'Tool for SMEs to assess health and safety performance', distributed today. In future, the Forum Secretariat would prepare and distribute similar information sheets with contact details, for Members to follow up if they wished. Any consultation documents and HSC/E press notices relevant to small businesses would also be forwarded to Forum members.</p>
4.2	<p>The Forum endorsed this approach, and also requested a forward look of issues likely to emerge in the following six months, particularly those coming from Europe.</p>
5	Occupational health support
5.1	<p>Colleen Bowen gave a presentation regarding Workplace Health Direct. She talked briefly about the three existing projects Safe and Healthy Working, Constructing Better Health, and Kirklees Metropolitan council.</p> <p>She then went into some detail regarding the three levels of support that would be provided which were: Level 1 National advice line and website; Level 2 Free problem solving service; Level 3 Specialist support.</p> <p>Colleen emphasised that the OH support model was 'open to both employers and employees'. There will be a common marketing service for all pilots. The pilots will be managed centrally but will be provided through partnerships with regional public, private and voluntary sector.</p> <p>The timetable will be: a formal announcement in January 2005; promoting to potential service providers February 2005; expressions of interest April 2005 and bids by the service providers in June 2005. This will be followed by service preparation ready for launch in January 2006</p>
5.2	<p>Forum members observed that small businesses do not understand what Occupational health is and whether it is to do with them. There is a need to use more simple language. The Forum commented that there was a scandalous blindness to occupational health issues within the UK.</p> <p>The scheme could be perceived by small business as a further burden; some members felt that it was unclear exactly what benefits it would bring to small business.</p> <p>The Forum commented that where services have to be paid for, this could be a stumbling block, not least because in the UK, we expect healthcare – all healthcare – to be free at the point of delivery.</p>

	<p>Additionally the Forum felt that there would be concern about where the information gathered from the 'stage 2' free visit was recorded. One solution suggested that to overcome the problem of 'fear of enforcement' the charity sector could be included.</p> <p>Colin Douglas asked what Forum members thought of the name of the scheme 'Workplace Health Direct'. Although no other suggestions were made, there seemed to a consensus that small business would not understand how the scheme related to them or what would be involved. The Chair emphasised that it was key that the service providers had credibility.</p>
6	A.O.B
6.1	No issues raised.
7	Conclusions and next steps
7.1	<p>The Chair asked Forum members to reflect on the meeting and feedback to the Secretariat what they had found most useful and things they would like to change. This would be most useful in the next couple of weeks before the agenda was drawn up.</p> <p>The next meeting would be on 5 April 2005 in Rose Court. The Agenda would include presentations on the HSE/LA Partnership work and on Worker Safety Adviser schemes.</p>

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* Other documents circulated with these Minutes

- Presentation from Colin Douglas
- Presentation from Colleen Bowen