



**LACORS** working together

# Annual Report 2006



## Introduction

It has been more than two years since the Health and Safety Commission (HSC), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local government representative bodies signed a 'Statement of Intent', setting out a commitment to partnership aiming to make the best use of our joint resources. This was a result of the *Strategy for workplace health and safety in Great Britain to 2010 and beyond* published by HSC in 2004. The relationship between local authorities (LAs) and the Commission and Executive is much improved and the main elements of the partnership are now in place:

- a stronger voice for local government, through regular meetings with HSC and involvement in policy and programme development;
- joint teams in HSE's regions helping to develop partnership working with LAs;
- joint planning and working focused on HSE's Fit for Work, Fit for Life, Fit for Tomorrow (Fit3) programme of work aimed at delivering the Commission's priorities;
- an interactive Extranet for LAs/HSE to communicate better;
- better access to common guidance, technical support, training and research.

LAs are showing great commitment to the partnership and the HSC priorities and the work of the LA programme is at an end. However, the principal challenge now is to maintain the relationship and demonstrate that the partnership is, in practice, delivering the health and safety impact we are all aiming for.

The establishment of the partnership teams has been, and continues to be, crucial in encouraging and co-ordinating the various activities and elements of the partnership and helping to shape LA and HSE plans to meet the Commission's priorities. Delivery of these priorities relies heavily on significant LA involvement and there is still a challenge to ensure this commitment is sustained.

The whole of HSE must be aware of, and work in partnership with, LAs. This is vital to the aims of the programme and the wishes of the signatories to the agreement. Partnership teams and the Local Authority Unit within HSE are currently working on getting all parts of HSE to consider how their work impinges on LAs and how they can effectively contribute to the partnership.



## News on the programme workstreams

### Training and support

The provision of support, information and training to LAs is a key part of sustaining and developing the LA/HSE partnership. During the year, HSE resources were used to provide a series of one-day training sessions on stress and asbestos, as well as a legal update. The events were targeted at LAs in only England and Wales because of the different legal system in Scotland and previous training events held there. The training sessions were in addition to the Fit3 roadshows and briefings and local training organised by the Partnership Managers and Partnership Liaison Officers.

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) and Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACoRS) have been key partners in a project seeking to understand the long-term training needs for LA health and safety enforcement officers. It has been agreed that the first objective should be to produce a set of core competencies for all health and safety regulators. This should be completed in early 2007.

Work continues to create a common approach to writing guidance. The long-term aim is to remove Local Authority Circulars (LACs) and produce common guidance applicable to all health and safety regulators. In the interim, HSE internal operational instructions and guidance is available under the Freedom of Information Act at [www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops](http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops).

### Science and technology

The Science and Technology Funding Scheme was launched in May 2005 to allow LAs to use the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) resources, to help investigate a range of issues across the spectrum of activities for which they are the enforcing authority.

LAs are making good use of this resource and provide a steady flow of applications for support of planned projects and incident and other investigations. Some of the outcomes of this work for LAs include:

- awareness-raising seminars and an inspection toolkit on asthma in bakeries;
- awareness days and guidance material on key health and safety issues in Korean restaurants, in builders' merchants and on workplace transport activities;
- the development of a web-based version of the virtual Enforcement Management Model (vEMM);
- a toolkit for Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) addressing manual handling issues in care homes;
- preventing the supply of contaminated tattoo inks;
- initiating formal proceedings against duty holders following slips and trips and other incidents.

Information on completed projects is available on the HELA (Health and Safety Executive/Local Authority Enforcement Liaison Committee) Extranet.

## HELA Extranet

Communication between HSE and LAs is critical to sustain an effective post-programme partnership. The HELA Extranet has been further developed and improved this year. It still provides a secure 'virtual' environment for uploading, downloading and exchanging relevant information. It now gives more access to information previously only shared within HSE or individual LAs.

The password system has been re-engineered making it more secure and easier to use. The content has expanded hugely, in particular with Fit3 documents, guidance and plans to enable LAs to engage with and report on this work.

The aim for the Extranet is that it will be a one-stop-shop for information exchange, and ultimately provide the means for exchanging 'live' inspection/enforcement data between enforcing authorities. Work has started on considering how to do this and overcoming technical barriers.

As part of HSE's commitment to continual improvement, the Extranet will soon be linked to key parts of HSE's Intranet. Following input from the Extranet User Group Forum, new website analysis techniques will be used to enhance the front page and site navigation.

The 'HELA Training Co-ord' website closes in March 2007 and the vEMM is now available on the Extranet.

## Flexible warrants

A number of LAs (Hampshire and Isle of White, North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, East Riding and Hull, Sunderland and South Tyneside) have piloted 'flexible warrants'. HELA has agreed to set up a 'task and finish' group to complete this work to enable flexible warrants to be available for national adoption from April 2007 and to plan their managed and controlled roll-out.

## Review of Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998

Another pilot involving Peterborough City Council has trialled the transfer of enforcement responsibility of motor vehicle repair and dry cleaning from HSE to an LA. Once this pilot has been evaluated, and the flexible warrants work has been concluded, decisions will be taken on the review of the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998.

## Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 Section 18 guidance

Section 18 guidance, issued by HSC on making adequate arrangements for enforcement, has continued to be developed and has undergone a consultation involving LACoRS, HSE and HELA. It is intended that 'Section 18 Guidance to LAs and HSE' will be available from April 2007 when it will 'shadow' operate for a year before being fully introduced in April 2008.

## Common performance framework

The development of a common performance framework is awaiting the progress of the Local Better Regulation Office proposals on performance frameworks.

## LA contribution to Fit3

LAs are making a growing contribution to Fit3 policy and programme governance as well as design and development of the workstreams. LAs' involvement in partnership working and their uptake of Fit3 priorities in service plans has been a great success. A substantial commitment of time was pledged by LAs for 2006/07, and plans for 2007/08 are well advanced.

Each Fit3 component programme is designed in co-operation with LAs, and contains a mix of interventions. Delivery plans discussed at regional level enable HSE and LAs to determine the best deployment of their joint resources to deliver the desired national outcomes, while also taking account of local and regional priorities.

Partnership Managers have indicated that significant progress is being made. LAs have supported two main publicity backed campaigns in partnership with HSE: 'Height Aware' and 'Backs! 2006'. There have also been a number of other initiatives and interventions, which included the jointly delivered 'Moving Goods Safely' supply chain interventions with logistics service providers and tackling skin disease in the hair and beauty sector.

The activity within the 'Height Aware' campaign included: arranging mailshots, breakfast meetings and seminars to raise awareness; getting involved with safety and health awareness days (SHADs) and the portable ladder equipment exchange scheme; targeted follow-up inspections focusing on the safe use and maintenance of ladders; or targeting types of premises where work at height is likely to be a key risk, such as theatres.

In preparations for 'Backs! 2006' LAs and HSE worked together to arrange stakeholder events and well-targeted interventions with poorer performers. The huge demand for campaign materials outstripped the available supplies demonstrating that the scale of LA effort exceeded expectations.

Many authorities take advantage of food hygiene visits to deliver Fit3 contributions on skin disease and slips and trips. Other Fit3 work is also being woven in with local priorities such as those of the Central and Local Partnership Framework (improving the quality of life; promoting healthier communities; creating safer and stronger communities; and promoting the economic vitality of communities).

Looking to the future, smoking legislation will be relevant in many of the businesses subject to Fit3 targeting such as catering, hospitality, pubs and clubs.

There has been continuous improvement in the HSE/LA partnership way of working, and the search will continue for new ways in which we can better work together, especially by improving the quality, co-ordination and timing of communication.

# What's happening in the field?

## London

Partnership working has progressed in several ways across London. The partnership team has continued to work on 'Moving Goods Safely' following the announcement that it would be rolled out nationally as 'Moving Goods Safely 2' (MGS2). Meetings at company headquarters plus site inspections led to national companies making improvements on a national scale in their health and safety management systems. HSE is currently considering how to spread best practice resulting from this work.

The partnership infrastructure is bedding in. Out of 33 London Boroughs, 32 have 'signed up' to the Statement of Intent. All LAs and HSE Environmental Liaison Officers (ELOs) are taking part in regular meetings to discuss Fit3 and joint working. A one-page table has been distributed showing where the Fit3 work is being done – a useful visual communication tool. There are local projects as well as a number of cross-London initiatives.

Many London Boroughs have been reporting back on Fit3 work via the HELA Training Co-ord website. An additional screen to record Disease Reduction Programme visits has been incorporated, which gives greater access to information input by LAs at any time in the year.

There have been a number of local training events set up jointly by HSE and LAs – pooling resources has helped spread the organisational load.

London LAs are making good use of science and technology money. Useful results on Korean gas burners and on approaching the Korean community culminated in a seminar for Korean restaurant owners. Alongside a bid for research and guidance on hazards in nail bars, London Boroughs and HSE set up a working group to plan extending the Fit3 work on asthma and dermatitis to include this growing sector. Training has taken place, visits are underway and the results will be used to feed back into the wider science and technology work initiated by Southampton, as well as making improvements in working conditions.

A number of events for elected members and Chief Officers have been organised enabling productive discussions on progress and the future.

## East and South East

More than 95% of LAs in the region have committed the equivalent of 120 years of input to Fit3. Regional priorities have been identified and used to raise the profile of partnership with elected members.

Partnership arrangements have been established – regional groupings focus on local, county and regional impact.

- During the year, there has been work to develop cross-authority approaches, eg in the East the partnership targeted carpet suppliers – securing improvement with national companies.
- In the South East, project teams pooled expertise for campaigns – making an impact by combining events and interventions.
- HSE supported a South Cambridgeshire District Council initiative using wider environmental health disciplines to increase outcomes.
- Reading Borough Council worked with HSE to pioneer Fit3 project management – giving clearer direction to HSE and LA resource across four counties.
- Peterborough County Council tackled motor vehicle repair throughout the city – demonstrating the benefits of locally focusing on a sector.
- Medway Council's staff are authorised to investigate accidents in HSE-enforced premises – delivering more through their investigation skills.
- In Suffolk, cross-LA warranting is targeting supply chain work where both HSE and LAs have enforcement responsibility but in different parts of the chain.

The next development in the South East is the consolidation of the 2007/08 Regional Plan which combines individual LA/HSE work plans with project management to better target resources. In the East an LA-inspired 'Regional Slips' project where HSE and LAs are working together is demonstrating that partnership is a two-way relationship.

## South West

This year has seen the continuing development of the partnership at both a strategic level and in day-to-day activities.

The Forum for Regional Excellence in Safety and Health (FRESH) has met regularly to develop better planning, including an agreement to develop a joint regional service plan and mid-year management report on progress. In early 2007, FRESH will publish a series of template documents, available for all LAs to use, to comply with Section 18 or good practice.

Two joint project teams have been created to work on supply chains for the MGS2 Project, and there is regional co-ordination of visits to the Royal Mail.

Applications for support from the Science and Technology Fund continue, with major work to deliver a reference DVD for LAs, covering the inspection of asbestos-stripping operations; development of a standard interactive self-assessment questionnaire for low-risk premises; and a review of manual handling in the meat industry.

All LAs have delivered aspects of the Fit3 work plan and joint planning meetings are proposed to develop regional, county and locally based service plans to deliver Fit3 in 2007/08. All major campaign media launches have been undertaken jointly between HSE and LAs – partnership working is the norm.

## Midlands

Partnership working in practice has greatly improved working relationships and fostered increased understanding in the region. HSE trainee inspectors will make joint visits with LA counterparts, looking at non-health-and-safety work so they get a better appreciation of the other pressures facing LA colleagues. The Royal Mail project work has seen closer working with HSE/LA inspection teams agreeing on enforcement actions enabling the development of a 'floor cleaning project', and LAs' knowledge and experience has been extended to help with effective targeting on slips and trips joint inspections.

The LA/HSE Builders' Merchants Project continues, with a series of county-based Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs). Companies who did not attend an event were inspected, while attendees 'earned' an 18-month inspection-free period. In addition the 'big 5' builders' merchants were audited by cross-boundary LA teams. It is proposed to set benchmarks for the industry as an outcome. The Builders' Merchants Federation is now more proactive, actively requesting input from HSE/LAs to help improve standards.

There have been and continue to be SHADs and other project work around the region, many of them now on a countywide basis, showing that partnership work is as much LA/LA as it is LA/HSE. There are many examples of LA/HSE and LA/LA working, such as Lincolnshire/HSE work with care homes; Warwickshire/HSE transport SHAD aimed at logistics and warehousing, involving LAs from Leicestershire; a smoking seminar arranged by Corby for businesses on behalf of all Northamptonshire LAs; and use of a common questionnaire by Nottinghamshire LAs in targeting hairdressers for the Disease Reduction Programme campaign. During the 'Height Aware' campaign, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council worked closely with HSE in organising a very successful SHAD at Bescot Stadium, where 7% of attendees were from ethnic minorities, which reflected the numbers living in the area. North West Leicestershire, HSE, the LA and VOSA (Vehicle Operator Services Agency) have been working together, following a fatal accident, to improve the information provided with vehicle trailers.

## Yorkshire and North East

Developing and rolling out the Safer Working Community initiative has been a significant area of work for the Yorkshire and North East partnership team in 2006. Successful campaigns have been held in Blyth Valley, Driffield (East Riding of Yorkshire Council) and Washington (Sunderland City Council). Further campaigns are planned this work year in Calderdale, York and Tynedale. For more information see [www.hse.gov.uk/safercommunity](http://www.hse.gov.uk/safercommunity).

A priority for the team has been to develop a Partnership Management Board to oversee the partnership in the region. The board consists of an HSE Divisional Director and Heads of Operations, Heads of Service from LAs, elected members, and regional LA associations. The Board has met three times and has now agreed work priorities for next year, based on the Fit3 portfolio.

The region is participating in the flexible warrants pilots and a number of LAs are working with HSE on these pilots. Different themes are being tested, including construction work and a countywide group of local authorities issuing warrants to LA and HSE inspectors across the county.

There has been a successful joint working initiative between HSE, LAs, and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and other stakeholders on care homes.

## North West

All North West LAs now incorporate Fit3 priorities in their work plans and include their progress as a standing item at liaison group meetings that the ELO and partnership team attend.

To promote a consistent approach, county groups are developing group-wide policies, drawing from HSE's procedures. Some LAs are planning Local Area Agreements and are looking at how to incorporate health and safety to contribute to the targets.

During the 'Falls from Height' campaign, Merseyside LAs refurbished a trailer to use as an educational tool at different locations, including Builders' Merchants' sites, communicating key messages and raising awareness on falls and asbestos to a range of audiences. Colleges were also a focus to capture students and apprentices on construction or maintenance courses as well as lecturers. HSE/LAs worked together providing funding, materials and staffing for the trailer. Chorley, in Lancashire, had a similar initiative. LAs, like Rochdale, were very proactive on falls from height with over 80 inspections carried out during the campaign period. Oldham led their contribution on falls with a ladder amnesty project.

Blackpool Metropolitan Borough Council and an HSE noise specialist have been working in partnership to develop good practice and industry guidance for the entertainment industry. This team has carried out a number of joint inspections to pubs and clubs, attended licensing forums, delivered seminars for CIEH and held several local events for health and safety enforcement officers in the North West.

The vEMM has been downloaded by over two-thirds of LAs nationally with 867 downloads. The evaluation phase continues until the end of March 2007 when HSE will be considering whether to adopt vEMM.

A North West survey of LA Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) and HSE staff has been carried out to establish their views on the partnership at work intended to engender cultural change and inform direction for the next 18 months.

## Wales

In April 2006 'A strategy for improving occupational health and safety in Wales' was launched, with the support of all 22 LAs, and in partnership with CIEH and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). Also launched was a joint LA/HSE plan of work for implementing the strategy that describes the LA and HSE contributions to the various campaigns, as well as the Injury and Disease Reduction programmes. This is intended to

deliver the HSC strategy and Fit3, while at the same time reflecting local priorities and supporting Welsh Assembly Government initiatives including 'Health Challenge Wales', 'The Corporate Health Standard', 'Making the Connections', 'Excellence Wales' and 'Welsh Backs'. The strategy provides a framework for the co-ordinated delivery of better health and safety regulation in Wales to secure better compliance.

Key themes include: removing barriers to joint working; concentrating on priorities, risk, and poor performance; promoting positive and interactive engagement with businesses; identifying, developing and promulgating good practice and capturing this as guidance; engaging with workers and their representatives; building on current partnership working and joint project delivery; making better use of campaigns and publicity; and delivering a targeted, consistent, transparent and proportional enforcement regime. In summary, jointly directing resources to maximise the positive impact on health, safety, welfare and the benefits to business in Wales and promoting sensible health and safety as part of sound and cost-effective business practice.

## Scotland

A group has been established to oversee the delivery of HSC's policy on partnership working. It includes representatives from HSE, LAs, LACoRS and REHIS and is chaired by Danny Carrigan of HSC.

All the LAs have embraced the Fit3 programme. This is evident from seeing the outcome of the approach to traditional inspections as well as a range of new ways of working, for example:

- West Dunbartonshire Council held a 'Better Backs 2006' awareness day for local businesses. The event was run in partnership with HSE, Healthy Working Lives and Healthy Return.
- South Ayrshire Council held a transport seminar focused on agricultural-type vehicles that are used at golf courses, public gardens, private estates and similar locations. The event was run in partnership with Strathclyde Police and a local machinery distributor.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) is looking at how the use of joint authorisations can have benefits for an island community, where HSE inspectors are not normally based but LA officers are resident.

North Lanarkshire Council has produced a Joint Health Improvement Plan and, working with partners, including HSE, has identified the workplace as a specific area for action to build on past success and to accelerate the rate of the nation's health improvement. The work is focused on varying methods of signposting businesses to relevant information and advice.

A number of councils have run events for young people to coincide with European Week for Health and Safety, which has included targeting pupils who are preparing to leave school to enter the workplace and holding a 'safe start' conference.

## Are we making a difference?

The national statistics were published in *Health and safety statistics 2005/06* in November 2006 and more detail can be found in this publication, which has been distributed to every local authority.

### Fatal injuries

In 2005/06, 212 workers were killed, a 5% decrease on 2004/05 (223) with 22 workers in the LA-enforced sector, one more than the previous year.

In 2005/06, 384 members of the public were killed (around two-thirds were suicide or trespass on railways), a rise of 4% on the previous year. Numbers have fallen in the LA-enforced areas although the trend in residential care homes is still worrying.

### Non-fatal injuries

The rate of major injury in 2005/06 is 110.1 per 100 000 employees. There have been reductions in the last two years – by 2.1% in 2004/05 and 6.6% in 2005/06 – but it is too soon to say if these will translate into a longer-term trend. There has been a fall in the rate of major injury in the Services sector for the last two years, but overall since 1999/2000 the rate has increased by 21%, so hopefully we have 'turned the corner'.

Workers off work for more than 3 days (over-3-day rate) is down by 5% to 452.2 per 100 000 employees, continuing a downward trend since 1997/98. It is falling more slowly in the LA-enforced sector but this is encouraging news.

The rate of non-fatal injury estimated from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) for mainly LA-enforced sectors is 810 per 100 000 workers in 2005/06 compared to 960 in mainly HSE-enforced services. Overall there have been 9% and 31% reductions since 1999/2000 respectively. Further work is planned to give an improved understanding of the different trends in reported major and over-3-day injuries and LFS estimates for total reportable injury.

### Non-fatal injuries to members of the public

Overall the number of non-fatal injuries to members of the public rose 7% on the previous year although in the LA-enforced sector there was a 13% reduction from 2004/05. However the bulk of the injuries occur in retail.

### Ill health

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and stress, depression or anxiety account for around three-quarters of work-related ill health each year, both overall and in LA-enforced sectors.

For people working in the last 12 months, there was a significant fall in the overall incidence rate of new cases from 2200 per 100 000 people in 2001/02 to 1600 per 100 000 in 2005/06. It is hoped that again trends are beginning to reverse.

## Working days lost

In 2005/06, 30 million working days were lost, 24 million due to work-related ill health and 6 million due to workplace injury. This is a significant drop in the rate, from 1.8 days lost per worker in 2000-02 to 1.3 in 2005/06.

## Slips, trips and falls on the level

This is still a major concern with a 40% increase in the LA-enforced sectors, from 2227 in 1999/2000 to 3101 in 2005/06. It is the second most common kind of over-3-day injury, accounting for around a quarter each year. Overall, there has been a small reduction since 1999/2000, down 1%, but numbers increased by 21% in LA-enforced sectors between 1999/2000 and 2005/06.

Slips and trips account for around 50% of non-fatal injuries to members of the public each year.

## Falls from a height

Overall, falls from height are the most common kind of fatal injury to workers. The number of fatal injuries to employees has reduced since 1999/2000; major injuries are down by around a third. In the LA-enforced sectors, fatal injuries fell from 6 in 1999/2000 to 1 in 2005/06, major injuries dropped from 878 in 1999/00 to 681 in 2005/06 (22%) and over-3-day injuries from 1522 to 960 (37%).

## Hotel and catering

The overall rate of major injuries to employees fell by 6% in 2005/06 but this is still higher than in 1999/2000. In the LA-enforced sectors, the biggest increase in the number of major injuries for this sector is in public houses, bars and clubs with approximately an 80% increase since 1999/2000.

The overall rate of over-3-day injuries to employees rose by approximately 5% in 2005/06 to 224.6 from 213.0 in 1999/2000, continuing an upward trend since 2001/02.

The hotel and catering sector had a lower-than-average prevalence rate of work-related illness in 2005/06. Data from specialist doctors shows the main causes of work-related ill health are dermatitis, upper limb disorders and infections.

## Retail and wholesale

The overall rate of major injuries to employees has risen by approximately 9% since 1999/2000. This has fluctuated during the period, although it has decreased in the latest reporting year.

The overall rate of over-3-day injuries to employees fell by approximately 10% in 2005/06 to 325.9 from 363.2 in 1999/2000. This is one of the lowest rates in the period, but shows no clear trend since 1999/2000.

The wholesale and retail trade sector had a lower-than-average prevalence rate of work-related illness in 2005/06. Data from specialist doctors shows the main causes of work-related ill health are stress, dermatitis and upper limb disorders.

## Local authority activity

The full-time equivalent number of health and safety enforcement staff decreased to 1140 in 2004/05, following an increase in the previous two years. Despite this, LAs are maintaining or increasing the relative priority of visits to wholesale premises and residential care homes, where risks of fatality and injury to workers and members of the public are high. Clearly the pressure needs to be maintained to ensure LA resources are protected.

# Keeping key managers and politicians involved

The LA programme has always seen success as heavily dependent on achieving a higher profile for health and safety in LAs. Persuasive communications aimed particularly at councillors are crucial. Elected members welcomed the publication last year of a 'Members' Handbook', aimed at raising awareness of the beneficial links between health and safety regulation and the wider strategic objectives and priorities of LAs.

A substantial effort will be needed to maintain effective communications with over 400 LAs and other stakeholders.

There will need to be a similar amount of effort within HSE. Work has been done this year to develop a 'Hearts and Minds' communications plan aimed at ensuring the partnership profile is maintained. To support this, an internal management group has also been established with a focus on making partnership working the way HSE does its business. HSE has also engaged positively with central initiatives, such as the post-Hampton agenda, the Better Regulation Executive and the developing Local Better Regulation Office.

The importance of regional differences is clearly recognised and HSE/LA high-level partnership forums now exist in English regions, Wales and Scotland. This is a strong foundation for our mutual partnership ambitions, achieved by co-operation and mutual respect between local and central government, focused upon common goals. Another good year for health and safety and 'LAs and HSE working together'.



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## Further information

Strategy:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/lau/strategic.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/lau/strategic.htm)

LACoRS:  
[www.lacors.gov.uk](http://www.lacors.gov.uk)

Statistics:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/statistics](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics)

Fit3:  
<http://intranet/strategy/fit3plan.htm>

