

Health and Safety Commission Paper		HSC/03/145	
Meeting Date:	9 December 2003	Open Gov. Status:	Partially Open
Type of Paper:	Above the line	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

A STRATEGY FOR WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY IN GREAT BRITAIN TO 2010 AND BEYOND

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Issue

1. A strategy for health and safety to 2010 and beyond.

Timing

2. Immediate. It would be preferable to make a submission to Ministers before Christmas to meet the spending review timetable.

Recommendation

3. The Commission is invited to agree the strategy document at Annex 1.

Background

4. The Commission has been engaged in developing this strategy since the start of the year. It last discussed development of the strategy at its meeting on 23 September and agreed a final round of consultation on a draft strategy document. HSC/03/136 contains details of work done to that point. Des Browne, with the Chair, launched the document on 8 October. In approving the draft strategy, the Commission also agreed a truncated consultation period lasting until 1 December.

Argument

5. The document at Annex 1 has developed through three main strands of activity:
 - drawing on further research evidence;
 - repeating the three pronged approach to external consultation;
 - taking the opportunity to simplify the text, clarify the presentation of certain issues, and focus more rigorously on the key messages.

Evidence

6. A literature review was commissioned to research the effectiveness of interventions. The Executive Summary of a report by Greenstreet Berman report is at Annex 2. Key points we would highlight are:

- evidence for a balanced mix of interventions but advice and guidance is less effective without enforcement, and the comparative efficiency of interventions is still untested;
- enforcement and the fear of enforcement is an effective motivator;
- there is scope for improved occupational health support but less evidence of its effectiveness and take up;
- there is scope for improved access to advice;
- there is evidence to support the need for national coordination of delivery by LAs.

External consultation

7. Between 8 October and 1 December, a second round of external consultation was carried out. Once again, this involved three different consultation strands to gather views from as broad a cross-section of stakeholders as possible. The three strands were:

- written and electronic responses to a consultation document;
- focus groups of workers who are not members of unions and small employers who are not members of major trade associations. The findings were validated by a telephone survey of 2000 working people;
- consultations arranged by HSE's Regional Directors, principally consisting of consultation meetings with key regional stakeholders.

8. Annex 3 leads with a summary of the key findings from the three strands of consultation followed by summary reports on each of the individual consultation strands. A summary of individual replies to the consultation document from major stakeholders is at closed Annex 4 (Exemption 14 of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information – Information held in consequence of having been supplied by a person who was not under any legal obligation, whether actual or implied, to supply it, and has not consented to its disclosure).

What's changed?

9. Through examining the evidence and listening to consultees, we have reflected some important messages in the revised draft. Key among these are the following:

- making more of strategic partnerships;
- the contribution of employee involvement in health and safety management;
- the value of a mix of interventions but doing more to determine the most appropriate mix in different circumstances;
- that inspection and enforcement is valued by employers and employees alike;
- greater access to simple advice and support but retaining its authority and consistency;
- the value of good communications as an intervention in its own right.

10. The following key changes to the strategy document have been introduced:

- rigorous analysis has reduced the original seven point strategy to four - each with a distinct message - which should greatly assist its communication;

- direct reference to our core and ongoing business drivers;
- greater clarity on our intended distinct approaches to guidance, advice and support;
- more on worker involvement, major hazards and occupational health;
- a section on delivery which, while not repeating what might be in the business plan, flags up some early deliverables;
- a commitment by the Commission to review progress with implementation in a year's time and to report conclusions in its Annual Report.

Consultation

11. The strategy has been subject to extensive external and internal consultation, as described above. The Commission and the Minister have been involved and kept informed about progress throughout. HSE's Board has seen and commented on the final draft strategy.

Presentation

12. Plans are in hand for a launch in the New Year and Commissioners will be asked to take part in the coordinated marketing and communication of the strategy.

Costs and Benefits and Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

13. A provisional strategy implementation programme has been drawn up which relies on delivery through strategic programme working. The resource implications of the strategy's component parts will be examined as part of that process.

Environmental Implications

14. None

Other Implications

15. This strategy has implications for HSC and HSE relations with LAs, regional administrations, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. These have been well trailed throughout the development of the strategy.

Action

16. The Commission is asked to agree the strategy document at Annex 1.