

HSC Open meeting 12th October 2004

'Our Interventions Strategy and Working with other Regulators'

Report on the discussions

Chair: Daniel Carrigan, HSC Commissioner

**Rapporteur: David Ashton, HSE's North West Divisional Director
(designate)**

Introduction

The session explored the development of an intervention strategy, the aim of which is to direct the resources of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities (LAs) for maximum improvement in workplace health and safety. Related to this is the matter of working with other regulators

The strategy, entitled 'Regulation and Recognition – towards good performance in health and safety' identifies 13 types of interventions and proposes that the HSE and LAs should focus their efforts on 8 of these in particular. It also explores whether current targeting of resource towards poor performers could be made more effective by formal, public recognition of good performance elsewhere.

The document is out for public consultation and we invite your comments – [click here](#) to go to the consultation page.

General comments on the approach taken in the consultation document.

In general, contributors to the discussion thought that the HSC should seek further evidence as to which interventions (and in what combination) achieve the greatest improvement in workplace health and safety standards when directed at particular industrial sectors or types of business. The Rapporteur agreed that piloting of particular approaches was essential to the development of a predictive model.

Main threads of the discussion, categorised by intervention

Partnership

On the issue of partnership, the audience felt the HSC could make greater use of others in UK health and safety system, but in doing so need to forge a genuine partnership with both pressure groups and professional bodies and not just regard them as conduits for HSC strategy. Doing this may actually require more resources than are currently available. Whilst agreeing with the general sentiment, the Rapporteur observed that if partnership work is too resource intensive then it becomes unattractive. HSC wished to gain leverage through partnership work, to multiply and maximise its effect.

Motivating senior managers

Business is motivated by profit and the HSC should do more to develop and market the business case for health and safety.

Supply chain

With UK plc becoming more and more contractorised, standards specified by clients can have a significant effect. For example, all members of the EEF insist that their contractual suppliers have worker health and safety representatives.

Working with those at risk

With regard to worker involvement, many in the audience felt that it was crucial to the delivery of improvement in workplace health that safety representatives be empowered to enter all workplaces and have the tools to do the job such as Provisional Improvement Notices. Union safety representatives are a major untapped resource, with TGWU having trained over 3,500 such representatives. The Rapporteur pointed out that working with those at risk was on the list of preferred interventions and high up on that list.

Recognising good performance

Some in the audience were concerned that a system of recognising good performance could end up using more resources than it supposedly saves and that would take resources away from enforcement.

Inspection and enforcement

A number of contributors to the debate referred to research by the Centre for Corporate Accountability which made clear that enforcement is the main motivator for employers and levels of enforcement should be increased. The Rapporteur agreed that enforcement remained a vital part of the regulator's armoury but pointed out that regulators were unlikely to ever have the resources to police their way to high standards by all dutyholders.

Best practice

There needs to be greater understanding of the difference between 'good practice' and 'best practice'.

Working with other regulators

Some members of the audience advocated greater joined-up working particularly with at the local government level. For example, more links with the granting of planning system to engage start-up business with occupational health and safety and fire safety legal requirements.