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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

Workplace Health Direct – HSE’s Occupational Health, Safety and Return to Work Pilot Scheme

A Paper by Jessica Hodgson

Advisor(s): Colleen Bowen, Elizabeth Gyngell

Cleared by Jonathan Rees on 26th January 2005

Issue

1. Progress on Workplace Health Direct, HSE’s Occupational Health, Safety and Return to Work (OHSR) Pilot Scheme.

Timing

2. Routine

Recommendation

3. That you note: -
 - the progress with the OHSR pilot scheme
 - the planned Ministerial announcement at the beginning of February

A further paper, outlining our plans in greater detail, will be presented to the Commission at its meeting in April.

Background

4. In November 2003 the Health and Safety Commission considered proposals to extend access to occupational health support (HSC/03/142 ‘Occupational Health Support: Developing a National System’). The Commission agreed the model of support presented and endorsed further work to develop local, regional and sectoral pilots with

the ultimate aim of providing a service with national coverage. A simplified version of the model is an Annex 1.

5. Much work has been done to progress this vision. HSE has worked closely with NHS Scotland on Safe and Healthy Working, an Occupational Health and Safety service similar to the model presented. We have also facilitated two further pilots which test different aspects of the model, one with the construction industry in the East Midlands (Constructing Better Health (CBH) launched in October 2004, and another in partnership with Kirklees metropolitan council, launched in January 2005.
6. These incremental pilots have provided important lessons for us and helped us to refine the model of OHSR support. We now need to implement a larger scale pilot programme to test how best to deliver a framework of OHSR support with the capacity to develop into a system with national coverage. A model of what the basic pilot programme will deliver is at Annex 2 and the service is described in more detail below. At Annex 3, there is a description of what the service will actually mean for the various groups of people involved.

WORKPLACE HEALTH DIRECT

7. Our occupational health safety and return to work (OHSR) support service for small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) across Great Britain, will provide
 - Initial contact through a telephone OHSR Adviceline and website (Level 1);
 - Referral to regional pilots across England and Wales to provide a problem solving OHSR service to employers and workers in SMEs (Level 2);
 - and signposting to specialist help (Level 3);
8. The OHSR service will be called Workplace Health Direct after market research was undertaken to select the most appropriate name.

LEVEL 1: WORKPLACE HEALTH DIRECT ADVICELINE AND WEBSITE

9. The telephone OHSR Adviceline and website will be nationally available services for both employers and workers. It will be provided through a centrally managed contract, delivered by experienced call centre operators with a standard of knowledge and skill about health, safety and return to work issues specified by HSE.
10. Workplace Health Direct advisors will have the skills to probe callers to find out their problem and will be able to give all callers competent and consistent advice. They will also be able to signpost those callers who do not live or work in the regional Level 2 service pilot areas, or who are not suitable to receive Level 2 support, to other sources of help.
11. Where urgent or specific advice is needed from a more experienced person, a trained problem solver will always be available.

12. The Adviceline will be fully confidential but where the caller agrees, the advisor will pass them on to the appropriate Level 2 regional pilot. Those clients passed onto the Level 2 service providers will be: -

- an England and Wales based employer or worker living or working in one of the pilot areas
- working for a small and medium sized enterprise (SME) employing less than 250
- an employer or worker who does not currently have access to [or use] OHSR support, whether provided in-house or commercially

LEVEL 2: WORKPLACE HEALTH DIRECT PILOTS

13. The Level 2 regional pilots may be provided through a range of partnerships from the public, private and voluntary sectors. There are a number of potential partnership models, with different bodies in the lead e.g. as in Kirklees where the Local Authority is working in partnership with three PCTs and Jobcentre Plus; or as in CBH where the service is led by a private sector provider. We are already starting to stimulate interest in providing the Level 2 pilots and will be running a number of information events for potential partners in the first two weeks in March to begin the process of eliciting expressions of interest.

14. Level 2 services will receive most of their clients from the Adviceline. However, they will also be able to use other access points to attract clients, particularly those which might raise awareness amongst hard-to-reach groups, e.g Primary Care Trusts, community centres, places of worship.

15. At Level 2, both employers and employees will be able to speak to a fully trained problem solver who will have the advantage of "local knowledge". For a small proportion of clients, it may be more suitable for them just to receive support on the phone. Employers will also have the benefit of being offered a workplace visit, carried out by the problem solver. This will provide advice and support on, for example, assessing workplace risks, managing health in the workplace, and helping those off sick to return to work. The aim is to improve understanding of how to improve health and safety in the workplace and transfer skills between the problem solver and the client.

16. To help employers understand what they need to do, they will receive a written report from the problem solver after the workplace visit. It should be written in simple, accessible language and where English is not the main language spoken in the workplace, copies of the report should be provided in the appropriate language(s).

17. All clients will be offered a follow-up service by the problem solver after the initial workplace visit and report. This will aim to consolidate support and skills given in the workplace visit. The aim of the service is that after a workplace visit and a follow-up, clients know how to manage their health and safety in the workplace.

LEVEL 3: SPECIALIST SUPPORT

18. The Level 2 regional pilots will be expected to maintain a list of approved Level 3 specialist service providers. The regional pilots will approve those who are able to demonstrate their competence in relation to appropriate publicly available criteria. This might include membership of existing professional or trade bodies or for some specialisms might involve negotiating a new standard, probably with the assistance of the PMC. The list will include for example: -

- Ergonomists
- Physiotherapists
- Occupational Health and Safety Consultants
- Occupational Hygienists
- Ventilation Engineers

19. Level 2 support advisors will explain to clients any quality assurances that come from such existing registrations for those on the list, but will not recommend particular providers. They will be responsible for assisting clients to frame their query and to make contact.

20. The Level 3 support provided will depend on the individual company and its particular problems. It will be a chargeable service.

Timescales

21. Workplace Health Direct will launch in January 2006 and will run for 2 years. Key milestone dates before then are: -

- I. Information events for potential Level 2 service providers – March 2005
- II. Level 1 service provider appointed – May 2005
- III. Level 2 service providers appointed – June 2005
- IV. Service Preparation – July - December 2005

Consultation

22. The Occupational Health and Safety System Model (at Annex 1) was developed by the Securing Health Together Support Programme Action Group, whose members were from both the public and private sector and included occupational health specialists and both employer and employee representatives.

23. The pilot scheme is being taken forward under a formal Project Board following OGC Gateway Review processes with members from within HSE, DWP, DTI, DH and an intelligent customer.

24. The Project team has consulted and engaged with HSE regional inspectors, HSE Directors, Business Services Division, Communications Directorate, the Small Business Trade Association Forum and the Central Office of Information (COI).

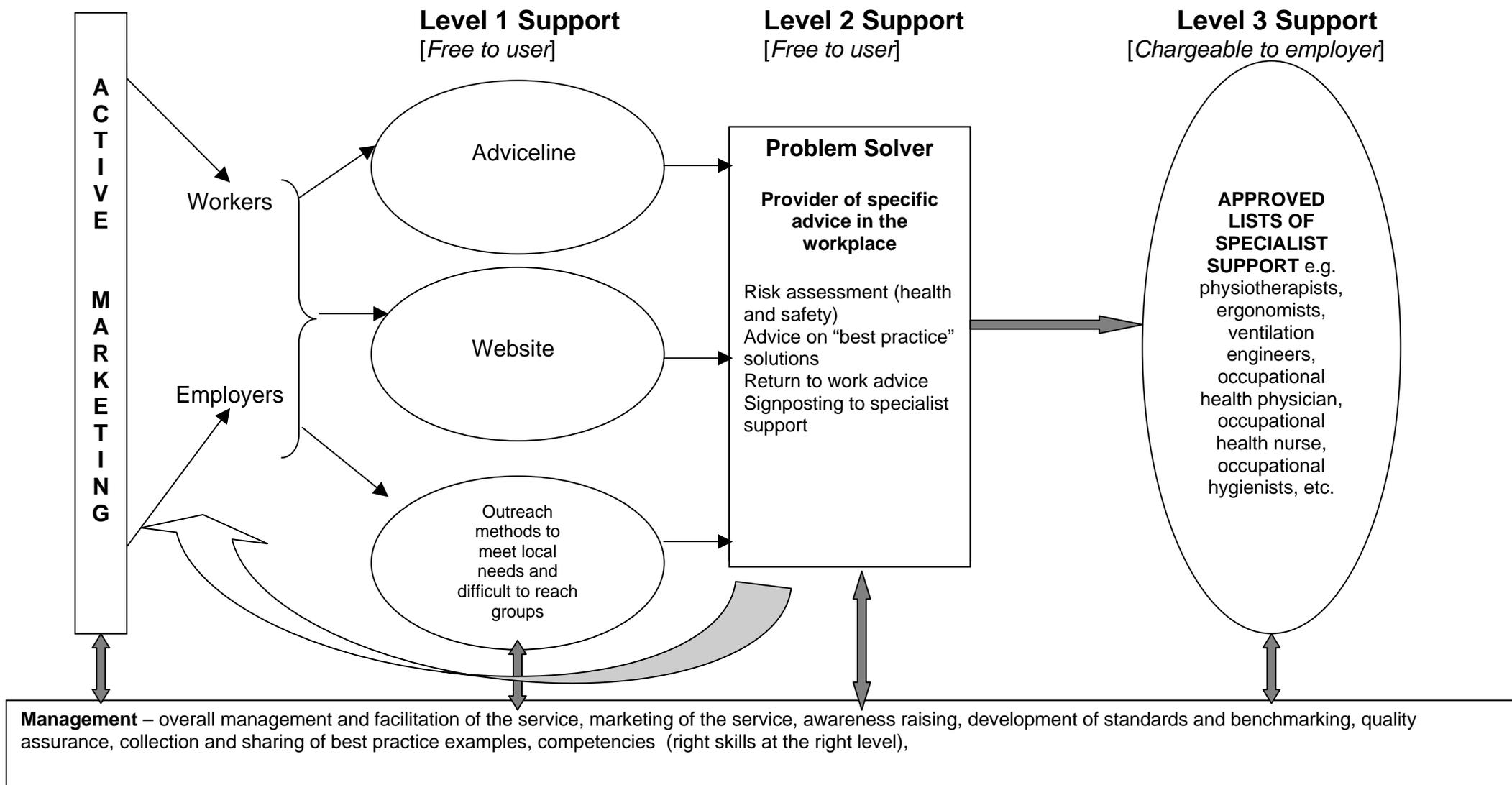
Presentation

25. The Secretary of State will announce the scheme formally as part of the launch of DWP's 5-year strategy document on 3rd February, in order to raise awareness and alert all potential partners.
26. There has been some drip-feeding of HSE's proposals for an OHSR support service, including mentions in both the Government response to the Select Committee Report and the Choosing Health White Paper. HSE has also been speaking informally with key stakeholders, with the full involvement of Communications Directorate.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

27. HSE has submitted the Business Case to DWP for agreement to pay up to £20 million on a programme of work to deliver OHSR support to SMEs in Great Britain over the next 3 years. The Business Case has been agreed in principle.
28. The project shall be wholly funded from HSE's programmes funding and will be subject to HSE's internal financial controls systems and procedures, in line with Treasury guidance.
29. HSE has a dedicated project team from across the organisation but that is largely based within the Better Health at Work Division in Policy Group. Resource for the project is being delivered through reprioritisation of work.

Occupational Health and Safety Support System Model



The Workplace Health Direct Service

Elements	Basic Service
LEVEL 1	
Access Points	
Telephone Helpline	•
Website	•
LEVEL 2	
Initial Visit	
Workplace Visit	•
Pre-visit research	•
Report	
Written Report provided in all appropriate language(s)	•
Follow-Up	
Follow-up includes at least a phone call	•
Aims to consolidate support and leave clients self-sufficient	•
Clients passed on to Level 3 if more support needed	•
Problem Solvers	
H and S or OH qualification	•
Facilitation and Influencing skills	•
Signposting to Level 3 Support	
Maintenance of approved list of providers	•
LEVEL 3	
Provision	
Specialist Support delivered to individual	•

WHAT THE SERVICE WILL LOOK LIKE TO:

The Employer

A typical employer will contact the service because they need advice about a specific health problem, or because they have heard how the service helped someone else in their area to understand how to do a risk assessment. They may own the firm, or be responsible for HR or health and safety. They may not know where to get good advice, or may be too stretched to do it without help.

As a result of Workplace Health Direct, the employer will receive occupational health, safety and return to work support over the telephone from a trained problem solver. They will then be offered a visit by the problem solver in their workplace, specific to the particular needs of the workers and hazards in the workplace. The problem solver will be able to provide the employer with the information and skills in order that they can better manage their health and safety. If after the workplace visit, the employer still needs further support in order to be at a level where they can manage health and safety in their workplace, the problem solver will signpost them to specialist support at Level 3.

The employer will benefit from a reduction in ill health in the workforce, a reduction in injuries due to preventative action, and further reductions in days lost due to greater emphasis on rehabilitation.

Example

Hilary is an HR manager in a small firm which manufactures industrial clothing. She is responsible for the whole range of HR services, from payroll systems to health and safety. The company is working in a competitive market and cannot afford staff to go off sick, as there are penalties for missing production deadlines. They recently lost £5000 on an order because two staff were off with back ache. This is not the first time this has happened. She does not know whether this is a work related problem or not. She needs some help to get to the root of the problem, and decides to contact Workplace Health Direct as she has heard that they may be able to help.

As a result of her call to Workplace Health Direct, a trained problem solver who knows the area and has researched potential health and safety problems in the manufacturing industry visits Hilary's workplace. Together, they discover that staff are incorrectly using one of the machines which is causing them back problems. The problem solver also helps Hilary to conduct a risk assessment, so that a similar problem is unlikely to occur.

The problem solver suggests that Hilary gets some specialist support from an approved physiotherapist to speed up the recovery of the staff off sick, so that they can return to work more quickly.

The Employee

An employee suffering from a work-related illness can call the Workplace Health Direct Adviceline from which they will be offered advice and access to a trained workplace advisor if appropriate. They will then be given support to make their employer aware of the service. If this is not possible, direct marketing can be sent to the employer as part of an area-wide marketing “blitz”. By accessing Workplace Health Direct, the employee will benefit from improved health and safety management in their workplace and thus less ill-health and a decreased chance of an accident.

Example

Anna works in the Accounts Department of a small company, employing fewer than 50 people. She already suffers from asthma and since joining this company she has suffered exacerbated breathing problems and has been beset with colds and headaches.

She has seen a flyer for Workplace Health Direct in her local community centre and so calls the Adviceline. A Workplace Health Direct advisor asks her some questions about her job and workspace. The advisor checks whether there is someone who might be sympathetic to the idea of a free workplace visit by a trained problem solver, which will hopefully lead to some practical suggestions for solutions. Anna thinks that the Operations Manager might be interested and suggests it to him.

A few days later, the Operations Manager rings the Adviceline and speaks to an advisor. The advisor explains what is involved in the free visit, and what the company will get out of it. The Operations Manager feels that a workplace visit would be beneficial and sets up an appointment. He thinks he understands how to assess risks but would like to know whether he is doing properly.

During the workplace visit the trained problem solver and the Operations review his risk assessment. This suggests that the ventilation systems in the office might be a problem. The problem solver advises the Operations Manager to consult a ventilation specialist, details of which he can provide. They agree to speak again in a couple of weeks time to review how things are going.

The Workplace Health Direct Advisor

Adviceline workers will be trained, to a standard set by HSE, in occupational health and safety. They will also have been trained to probe callers to find out their particular needs, as often callers will be unsure of their actual problem. All calls will be strictly confidential. With the caller’s agreement, they will be able to pass on a call which they do not feel experienced or qualified to deal with to a trained problem solver who will be present in the call centre at all times.

Workplace Health Direct advisors will be equipped with a number of algorithms which they will be able to use to find out whether the caller could be passed onto the Level 2 regional pilots. If they are and if the caller agrees, the Workplace Health Direct advisor will be able to transfer them immediately to the appropriate pilot, or if not convenient give the caller the details of the pilot.

If the caller is an employee, the Workplace Health Direct advisor will ask if the caller would feel able to pass on information on the service to their employer. If not and if the caller agrees, the advisor will ask for the details of the caller's workplace so that the workplace can be targeted as part of an area-wide marketing "blitz". Callers' details will be confidential.

The Problem Solver

The problem solver will provide employers with the skills to be able to manage health and safety in their workplace. The problem solver will offer advice on conducting risk assessments, best practice on managing return to work and advice on how to reach solutions to any problems that employees are experiencing in the workplace. If after a workplace visit and follow-up, the employer is not able to manage health and safety in their workplace, the problem solver will signpost them to specialist further support.