

Health and Safety Commission Paper		HSC/05/10	
Meeting Date:	8 March 2005	Open Gov. Status:	Open
Type of Paper:	Above the line	Paper File Ref:	N/A
Exemptions:	None		

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

Update on progress with the Public Services Programme (PSP) and the Commission's future Involvement.

**A Paper by Mark Dempsey and René McTaggart, Public Services Programme Team,
(Jane Willis – Board Member).**

Cleared by Jane Willis on 15th February 2005

Issue

1. To update the Commission on developments with the Public Service Programme (PSP) and to seek the views of the Commission on its future involvement.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. That the Commission notes progress with the programme and:
 - advises the PSP Team on the role it wants to take in supporting delivery of the programme; and
 - agrees to host a high level public sector symposium at the end of the year.

Background

4. The GSE (Government Setting an Example) Programme was designed to deliver the Revitalising target of a 30% reduction in working days lost through work related sickness absence by 2010 and the PSA target of a similar reduction of 9% by 2008. Misc paper/04/42 summarised progress, especially the publication of the joint Cabinet Office and Task Force review, "Managing Sickness Absence in the Public Sector". The review attracted broad support from key stakeholders including, crucially, public sector trade unions both for its analysis of the issues and its balanced recommendations. Developments in the management of the programme since December include:

- re-organising the work on GSE and the Health Services programmes to create a new Public Services Programme (PSP). This now covers the wider public sector to include, for example, local authorities as employers;
- bringing together of the policy led GSE team and the FOD public services sector to form a single programme team headed by Peter Brown and reporting to Jane Willis as the Strategic Programme Director.

5. The Task Force met for the fifth time on 10th February to agree the delivery plan and arrangements for future stakeholder involvement. The delivery plan was warmly welcomed by the Task Force (as was the report published in December). Work on both was led by HSE in partnership with the Treasury, Cabinet Office and a network of stakeholders and contacts in the Task Force departments. The Chancellor referred to this work in the Spending Review announcement and Pre Budget Report. The delivery plan will now be submitted to the Chancellor prior to his Budget announcement. An update on the position will be provided at the Commission meeting.

6. The PSP Team is developing plans to achieve the aims of the programme which include the implementation of the Task Force's delivery plan - much of which involves human resource management actions on which others will lead, and delivering the Revitalising and PSA targets. Meeting these targets will not be easy. A summary of the programme's three work streams designed to achieve the targets is attached at Annex A. To help develop and deliver these plans the PSP Team has brought together and involved a network of key stakeholders from departments and others with an interest in this work.
7. Stress, musculo-skeletal disorders and slips and trips are by far the most common causes of work related days lost in the public sector, and a coordinated approach with other programmes is key to success. There are also links to the construction programme given our commitment to ensuring that the public sector uses its purchasing power to drive up standards in the construction industry and elsewhere.

Argument

Links to the HSC Strategy

8. The Public Sector Programme (PSP) is an example of how the Commission's strategy can be delivered. It is based on the need to influence organisational and cultural changes through a communications led approach which engages at a high level with public sector bodies and in partnership with duty holders and other key stakeholders. If successful, it will achieve a change in the way health, safety and sickness absence is managed across the public sector through leadership and the involvement of workers and their representatives in issues around job design and work organisation. The high level of ministerial interest in our work provides HSC/E with an ideal opportunity to open doors previously closed to us and, if we maintain ministerial confidence and support, to enhance HSC/E's reputation as an organisation that can contribute to the wider efficiency and productivity agendas.

HSC's role in delivery

9. To maintain this profile, we have to show that this initiative can succeed where previous attempts to address health, safety and sickness absence (such as the 1998 Working Well Together study and follow up) fell short. The key recommendations from the Task Force address this, and a robust delivery plan, properly followed through, is essential. To help maintain momentum HSE needs to 'practice what we preach' and the HSE Board is being invited to consider its response to the recommendations in the review. However the biggest risk to success is that high level interest diminishes. Another key risk is that we fail to establish effective 'drivers' within the wider public sector – especially in the health services and local authority environments. The Commission can play an important role in ensuring that the impetus is maintained by becoming involved in the direction and promotion of the programme.
10. We think that one way to maintain the profile of the this work, and enhance the Commission's role, would be for the Commission to host a high level symposium for senior managers and HR directors from across the public sector in late 2005. The details will need to be developed but we should be able to attract DWP and Cabinet Office ministers as key speakers along with expert commentators such as the Work Foundation and public sector organisations that can demonstrate success. The Commission's views on this proposal would be welcomed.

Consultation

11. This paper has been drafted in consultation with the relevant parts of HSE including the Communications Directorate and PEFD.

Presentation

12. The work of the Task Force and HSC/E's role is high profile. If we continue to get it right it can enhance our reputation by providing opportunities to demonstrate:

- the benefits flowing from the effective implementation of the HSC strategy;
- the contribution that sensible health and safety can make to well managed organisations;
- the strong links between our work and wider government objectives on the delivery of services to the public and Incapacity Benefit.

13. Current Communications Directorate led research to deliver results in May 2005 will be the basis of a new set of tested messages for employers, employees and other stakeholders in the relevant sectors, including the public sector.

Costs and Benefits

14. There will be the cost of hosting a symposium should the Commission agree to do so. The cost of which will need to involve the hire of a venue, refreshments, publicity, etc. The cost of which - based on the relevant cost of hosting the Construction Summit - will be approximately £75k. The benefits include the positioning of HSC/E as a major contributor to central initiatives and ensuring the issue stays high on the management agenda.

Resource Implications for HSE

15. There are currently 25 HSE staff in the newly formed PSP Team. Forty three FOD Inspector staff years have been bid for as part of the planning process. This, coupled with the resources allocated to the other programmes, as they relate to the public sector, equates to less than 2% of HSE total staff resource in 2005/06.

Environmental/Other Implications

16. The Public Sector Programme is a UK wide programme. As a result the devolved administrations are included in all relevant activities and are shortly to be invited by the Minister to be involved in the work taken forward by the ministerial Task Force.

Action

17. The Commission is invited to:

- note progress on the Task Force and with the new Public Services Programme;
- consider how it wishes to be involved in the implementation of the programme, and;
- provide view on the proposed high level symposium.

Public Services Programme (PSP): Summary of Workstreams

*(To deliver a reduction in the number of days lost to sickness absence the programme concentrates on three main areas of work (workstreams) all of which are linked and have overlaps. To ensure the delivery of this programme has the desired effect **evaluation** of the activities of the programme are built into each project. This is essential to the success of the programme as the underlying theme of the programme is establishing what works and disseminating the information so that others can adopt successful approaches.)*

Workstream 1 – The establishment and maintenance of the Ministerial Task Force for Health Safety and Productivity and the development and implementation of the recommendations of the Review of sickness absence in the public sector.

This workstream consists of five key elements of work to be undertaken as part of the Public Services Programme:

- Provision of Secretariat function to the Task Force;
- Development and monitoring of a plan to deliver the recommendations of the review (which includes the development of individual departmental plans of action);
- Establish and maintain reporting procedures for progress against the delivery plan;
- The development and implementation of departmental plans for achieving reductions in the levels of sickness absence of their staff (targets to be set and agreed with individual departments);
- HSE's contribution to the overall targets for reduction to sickness absence levels through pilots, etc within HSE.

Key to the success of these initiatives is the links to other programmes and the co-ordination of HSE resource.

Workstream 2 – Communications and Research

Communications and Research

The success of the programme will rely heavily on the establishment and maintenance of good communications between the main stakeholders of the programme (including internal stakeholders) and robust information to influence behaviour. Communications and research plans are being developed which will enable, for example, the:

- expansion of the client base and the roll out of top level influencing meetings and ensure public sector managers understand the business case for health, safety and sickness absence management;
- maintaining a public sector focus on the importance of managing sickness absence via various media (Articles in Public Sector Magazines, possible development of a public sector H&S management award, etc);
- development of influencing plans for the Local Authorities and health sector at a senior level;
- development of a centre of excellence (joint working with ACAS and/or a university).

Workstream 3 – Targeted/planned intervention strategy

Central and Local Government

- We will work in partnership with departments and with LAs on the same issues - MSDs, slips and trips, and stress - because analysis shows that these are the main causes of ill health absence in the public sector.
- These interventions will be based on two models – one for central government departments and one for LAs and health services. Both models involve the engagement at a senior level to agreed priorities for action and will aim to establish what works through pilots with a view to dissemination of best practice.

Health services

- The Health Services aspect of the PSP has been organised as portfolio of projects which target NHS Trusts and the main causes of sickness absence. The activities include the need to develop an annual Inspection Programme for Field Operation Staff, securing high level interventions with key stakeholders, liaising with counterparts in Scotland and Wales, and providing timely reports on progress.

Regional Plans

- High level plans will be developed for each of the seven HSE regions (inc Scotland and Wales – who have a degree of autonomy due to devolution) in conjunction with the PSP team.
- These will be based on the main topics agreed with departments and will also take into consideration the local priorities.