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HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

Progress report: LAs and HSE Working Together Strategic Enabling Programme

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Issue

1. Progress in developing the partnership between local authorities (LAs) and HSE. A final report on the outcomes of work in progress will be presented in February 2006.

Timing

2. Routine.

Recommendation

3. The Commission is invited to
 - a) Note the progress made with the LAs and HSE Working Together Strategic Enabling Programme.
 - b) Reaffirm its commitment to partnership working with LAs in the light of developments across Government relating to better regulation.
 - c) Endorse the principle that both HSE and LAs need to continue to develop the ways they participate in the evolving partnership.
 - d) Comment on the work in progress, including the communications strategy.
 - e) Note the intention to return to the Commission in February 2006 with firm proposals and recommendations to sustain partnership working with LAs.

Background

4. A progress report and forward look on the Strategic Programme were presented to the Commission (HSC/04/115) in November 2004. Key developments in the first year of the Strategic Programme have included:
 - **April 04: Establishment of Partnership teams** in HSE's geographical regions. Partnership teams comprise HSE Partnership Managers, supported by LA secondees who are providing valuable insights into the working of LAs and support in taking forward local initiatives. The teams are raising the profile of health and safety with LA Elected Members (including the devolved administrations), CEOs and senior managers, developing joint planning and operational activities between HSE and LAs and supporting work in the field to carry the programme forward.
 - **July 04: Agreement of Statement of Intent** (an early deliverable in HSC's 2010 Strategy) between HSC/E and local authority representative bodies at the first

meeting of the Strategic Programme Steering Group. The statement sets out the high level commitments providing the framework of objectives for the Programme (copy attached).

- **July 04: Creation of LACoRS Health and Safety Policy Forum:** A LACoRS-coordinated group of heads of service and managers of health and safety professionals from LAs met for the first time in July 2004. The forum now meets regularly and advises LACoRS representatives on practical issues associated with the developing programme. This advice is fed to the joint LACoRS:HSE programme team and will increasingly inform the development of the Fit3 programme.
- **September 04: Launch of Statement of Intent** at CIEH Conference, followed by regional launches by Partnership Teams and subsequent sign-up to “local” Statements of Intent between HSE and LAs in regions.
- **March 05: Launch of best practice guide:** Examples of best practice in partnership working published (copy attached).
- **May 05: Launch of initiative to provide support for LAs to research Science and Technology issues:** HSE is making available £5m over the next five years to enable LAs to commission research via HSL into issues of local significance.

5. Work is also progressing on a number of fronts including

- **Fieldwork:** Regional partnership teams are developing regional and local partnerships to take forward joint working in priority areas and to support pilot work contributing to core projects. The teams have supported much of the work set out in the best practice guide; current highlights and achievements are summarised at Annex 1.
- **The Steering Group:** This group of six LA Elected Members (plus Hugh Robertson and Joyce Edmond-Smith (Chair)) advises the Programme Team on the development of the programme to ensure it takes full account of the perspective of LAs as democratic bodies. It has influenced the communications strategy, aided the development of a common performance assessment tool to allow the performance of HSE and LAs to be compared equitably and progressed work to develop long term governance arrangements for the HSC/E:LA relationship.
- **Communications:** A Communications Strategy (attached at Annex 2) to support the programme has been developed. It is based on research into the views of LA elected members and employees. It has been developed with the assistance of HSE’s strategic communications consultants (COI). The strategy has been informed by comments from the Programme Board, Steering Group and HELA. The strategy sets out key messages for the main audiences and sets measures by which the effectiveness of our communications can be evaluated.
- **Extranet:** An Extranet connection that will allow LAs to access directly HSE’s electronic technical information and key support systems is due to come on line in September. This system is also being developed to allow information sharing between individual LAs and with HSE. This will be integral to any future development of integrated planning and enabling coordinated approaches, for example to nationally-operating companies
- **Support, Information and Training:** HSL has recently completed a review of the support, information and training necessary for LAs to maximise their contribution to partnership working. The report will be published shortly. Initial proposals to implement the report’s recommendations are currently being developed.
- **The legal and institutional framework:** There are three key projects

- a) **The allocation of responsibilities for processes and premises between LAs and HSE:** A pilot in which LA and HSE officers will all have transferable enforcement responsibility is investigating the practical problems and solutions associated with developing a more joined-up approach to LA-HSE enforcement.
- b) **Common evaluation of the performance of LAs and FOD:** The potential of an audit mechanism that can be used to evaluate i) the contributions of both LAs and HSE to supporting the strategic programmes process and ii) their arrangements for health and safety enforcement, is being assessed.
- c) **Evaluation of regulatory decision-making:** LA staff are being involved in peer reviews of HSE's regulatory decision making performance. For the first time LA processes have been included within this review.

So far LA and FOD staff have worked together effectively in all these projects. It is expected that these projects will be sufficiently developed by the end of 2005 to indicate how common performance assessment tools could be used to allow the direct benchmarking of the contributions of both HSE and LAs.

Argument

6. HSE's Resources and Delivery Group considers that good progress has been made in the first year of the development of this Programme. But it is also clear that there are some difficult challenges ahead that will require sustained effort from all sides of the partnership.
7. In particular HSE and LAs need to reach a much more explicit agreement about the contribution each will make to achievement of the Commission's objectives by contributing to HSE's Fit3 programme. The Fit3 programme team is addressing this by reviewing planning arrangements to ensure that sufficient information is available to LAs early enough to allow them to incorporate the necessary activities into their corporate plans. For their part, when LAs plan for what is relevant locally, they should have full regard to the Commission's priorities and participating in national campaigns. Attention to the Commission's priorities will improve health and safety for employees and the wider public in both the HSE and LA-enforced sectors.
8. To be fully effective the partnership must involve LAs in all parts of our business life cycle, from the formulation of policy and strategy, the development of programmes and projects and the delivery of operational activity, through to the review and evaluation of operational achievement. These issues and how communications channels between the Commission and LAs can be facilitated will be considered in paper HSC/05/45 on Partnership Governance arrangements also to be considered at this meeting.
9. The Hampton report and the Treasury's Better Regulation Executive are likely to affect how Local and Central Government interact to discharge regulatory responsibilities, including health and safety enforcement. It is still too early to be certain of the implications of these initiatives for the ways LAs and HSE work together. However, early indications are that other government departments are responding by moving to a central control model for their relationship with LAs. This contrasts markedly with our partnership approach.
10. Many of the projects making up the programme and currently underway are due to reach completion by the end of 2005. This will mean that the majority of mechanisms

necessary to support partnership working will be developed or in place. It is therefore intended to report to the February 06 meeting on the situation at that stage and to seek the Commission's view as to whether these mechanisms should be sustained, further developed or if more fundamental work is needed.

Consultation

11. LACoRS, HELA and Programme Board members. HSC will be consulted in February 06 on further progress and on the outcome of research into the legislative framework.

Presentation

12. The programme will be publicised following the themes within the proposed communications strategy (Annex 2), subject to any necessary revisions.

Costs and Benefits

13. The programme seeks to integrate LAs into the development of policy and the delivery of operational activities. It does not envisage LAs devoting additional resource to these activities, so should be cost neutral to LAs.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

14. Resources will come from existing programme allocation.

Environmental Implications

15. None.

Other Implications

16. The Hampton report (as para 9) may affect the development of the programme and developments on this front will be kept under observation.

Action

17. The Commission is invited to comment as set out in the recommendations in paragraph 3.