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## HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

### The HSE Board

## COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### A Paper by Kate Timms and Vivienne Dews

#### **Issue**

1. To bring the Board up to date with the developing communications strategy.

#### **Timing**

2. For the 1 October meeting of the Board.

#### **Recommendation**

3. To note the Star Alliance proposals for an emerging communications strategy summarised in paragraphs 6 to 9 and in the attached chart; and the planned discussion of communications at the SCS awayday on 14/15 October (paragraph 10).

#### **Background**

4. The Board has had several opportunities to consider elements of our developing communications strategy, in particular:
  - recognition in the emerging 2004 strategy of communications as an intervention in its own right;
  - appointment of Heather Bolton to lead a review of the provision of DIAS' services (now underway);
  - plans, now well advanced, for the appointment of a Director of Communications (selection in late October);

- scrutiny of the 2003/04 publications programme with a view to proceeding only with those that demonstrably support HSE's delivery targets and strategic objectives.
5. Under the aegis of the change programme, the Star Alliance has developed ideas and undertaken research on an HSC/E communications strategy, work which in due course will fall to the Communications Director to take forward. We are now at a stage where we are identifying:
- work which must begin now, in advance of the appointment of the Director;
  - of that, those elements which we can "repatriate" from the Star Alliance and take forward ourselves, and those elements on which we will look to them for some further support.

### **Emerging strategy**

6. The draft communications strategy as it has emerged from the Star Alliance rests on four building blocks:
- stakeholder behaviour, understanding and attitudes;
  - addressing reputational issues;
  - giving leadership support for communications;
  - developing a communications – focused culture.
7. These in turn are supported by a recommended three-strand draft communications strategy, namely:
- i. Augmenting the value of HSC/E's current and future activity, including the better co-ordination of communication – dependent initiatives;
  - ii. Developing a stand-alone element of the strategy which seeks pro-actively to support and enhance the organisation's reputation;
  - iii. Communicating through others – a key principle underlying the emerging 2004 strategy.
8. Underpinning these emerging findings is work completed by the Star Alliance which benchmarks HSC/E's performance against other public and private sector organisations; carries out an audit of DIAS' products and services (to inform Heather Bolton's review); and examines what HSC/E has by way of information research assets to equip it for an enhanced communications role. Board colleagues who would like copies of some or all of these reports should contact Shelagh Molloy on extension 6526.
9. Annexed to this paper is a flow chart representing the programme of work which the Star Alliance suggests should be undertaken in order to develop the communications

strategy to the full. This is being critically examined by the Change Team with a view to deciding the key priorities for the next three months and how they should be addressed.

### **Next steps**

10. Given the prominence of enhanced communications in our 2004 strategy, we plan to devote one session of the 14/15 October SCS Conference to this subject. In doing so, we will draw together the principal elements emerging from the Star Alliance work, and in particular present and promote discussion of the findings of the benchmarking study and its implications for HSC/E's communications performance.

### **Recommendation**

11. That the Board:

- notes the latest stage reached in developing a communications strategy;
- notes in particular the intention to present this emerging work for discussion at the SCS Conference in October.