

Health and Safety Executive Board Paper

Meeting Date:	2 July 2003	Open Gov. Status:	Fully Open
Type of Paper:	Above the Line	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	No		

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

Career Development in HSE

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Issue

1. Proposals for improved career development arrangements in HSE

Timing

2. Routine. The paper reports the outcomes of work on career development commissioned by the HSE Board in November 2002.

Recommendation

3. The Board are invited to:
 - Approve the proposals and associated timescales for improving career development arrangements set out in Annex 3;
 - comment on the possible areas for future work contained in paragraph 14.

Background

4. The Career Development project was one of a number of streams of work commissioned by the HSE Board in November 2002 to take forward the aims of the Change Programme. The project was set up as a means of ensuring that HSE has a workforce capable of delivering it's business and that staff are given every encouragement and opportunity to develop and make the best of their talents. The project was scheduled to report to the Board with proposals in July 2003.

5. A brief description of the project methodology is set out in **Annex 1**. The starting point was an analysis of HSE's present arrangements for career development – largely contained in the “Developing Careers Together Guide.” An overview of these arrangements can be found at **Annex 2**. The bulk of the work consisted of one-to-one and focus group discussions with managers and staff at all levels and with varying degrees of experience in HSE, including relatively recent recruits. We also looked at career development practices in a small number of other organisations to see what lessons we could learn.

Argument

6. As a result of our research we identified 4 priority requirements for action:
 - the need for better staff planning at Directorate/HSE level;
 - access to clearer, more up to date guidance and information;
 - slicker, more efficient mechanisms for facilitating level moves; and
 - better training to give line managers the skills they need for dealing with development issues.
7. Our proposals for addressing these are contained in **Annex 3**. The annex provides a brief commentary on the scope and practical implications of each proposal, suggestions for the lead role and the main links with other work. We have also included target deadlines for completing certain aspects of the work, with the overall aim of having all of the proposed measures in place by 1 April 2004. To illustrate how the measures in Annex 3 could change the ways in which career development is handled in HSE, **Annex 4** includes a few very short scenarios of the proposed new arrangements might operate in practice.
8. We regard the proposals in this paper as a starting point not the complete solution to improving career development in HSE. In a sense this is not surprising. The experience of other organisations (and indeed of HSE) suggests that developing approaches that genuinely support the business and provide the right kind of incentive for staff is an iterative process. Some of the proposals from this project, for example, are about putting some basic processes and mechanisms in place (e.g. to aid better planning) and these will need time to bed in before decisions can be made about whether further developments are required. Perhaps most importantly though, the development of a Workforce Strategy for HSE (a key priority for Personnel over the remainder of this year – see Board paper B/03/037) is likely to prompt further, more detailed work in this area. It is difficult to predict at this stage the precise content of this work, although ideas have emerged in the course of this project which suggest some possibilities. For interest, these are listed at paragraph 14.
9. Although many of our proposals are about putting in place new or improved processes, these alone will not be sufficient to achieve the change and improvement to career development HSE is seeking. As the following 3 themes illustrate, there are also cultural issues to be addressed. At the very least, these indicate that real change is only achievable if there is a genuine management commitment to the direction we have set.

10. The first of these themes is the feeling that career development decisions and particularly the initiative for career moves, rests too much with individual staff. There is a need for management to take more of a lead, particularly in the planning and deployment of staff, both to ensure that business priorities are adequately resourced and that individual development needs are properly addressed. While some Directorates have their own mechanisms in place for addressing these issues (such as career review groups) the fact that other Directorates do not means that there is some inconsistency. Also, the lack of a mechanism to enable a more planned approach to career development, rather than the current ad hoc arrangements is seen as a significant gap. Although this was mainly a management view, it was not exclusively so. Some staff also felt that the onus for their career development rested too much on their shoulders and required them to jump through too many hoops, for example, to achieve the career move which management agreed was right for them.
11. Second, many staff still see career development in terms of promotion and not in terms of the wider development of their skills and experience. Furthermore, the extent to which their promotion expectations are met appears to have a real bearing on their attitude to HSE as an employer. Perhaps this is not surprising, but it indicates that messages about the value of development in the band are not getting through. The challenges that this presents are obvious in an organisation where both growth and turnover tend to be low and where in the context of the overall population, promotion opportunities are likely to be limited.
12. Third, it is generally recognised that whatever arrangements we have in place at directorate or corporate level, the key relationship in terms of career development is that between the line manager and the jobholder. Questions were raised about whether we do enough to provide managers with the knowledge, information and skills they need to do a good job in this area. Many managers said they did not feel equipped to provide advice on career development decisions and questioned whether more that could be done to facilitate the sharing of information, e.g. about possible forthcoming vacancies, job requirements, individual career aspirations and development needs, particularly across Directorates.
13. Underpinning all that was a plea from consultees that any new arrangements for career development should be as rule and effort free as possible. The centre (i.e. Personnel) should facilitate and support but not prescribe detailed processes. Accompanying guidance should be short and simple – perhaps in checklist or flow diagram form, rather than paragraphs of narrative.
14. The proposals in Annex 3 are designed to address these (and other) concerns raised with us during the consultation. In the course of our research (and particularly in discussion with other organisations) we came across other ideas which may be worth looking at in the future and on which the Board may wish to give an initial view. These are:
 - The use of assessment centres to ascertain suitability for promotion to certain key bands. Access to these assessment centres (which would be held periodically) could be by line management or self nomination;

- Development centres to help staff to more accurately diagnose their development needs and to develop plans to address these;
- A structured programme of career briefing sessions. HSE to have a published calendar of open day type events to allow staff to talk directly to those employed in other jobs and disciplines to gather information about their work skills and qualifications required;
- Better description of the experience and skills required in all HSE jobs so that staff can see what skills and experience they need to develop for promotion; and
- A more structured approach to coaching and mentoring.

Consultation

15. Annex 1 provides a list of key consultees, which includes representatives from all D/Ds. We have also informed the trade unions of the scope of this work although they have not so far had the opportunity to comment on the specific proposals in this paper. We will of course consult them on any changes to existing agreed arrangements.

Presentation

16. N/a

Costs and Benefits

17. The costs of the project have been absorbed within PD running costs. A draft benefits realisation plan has been prepared and submitted to the HSE Change Programme Team, but will need to be revised in the light of the Board's discussion.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

18. Our proposals have resource implications for both PD and the Directorates. These will need to be costed as part of the development phase of this exercise.

Environmental Implications

19. N/a

Other Implications

20. None

Action

21. If the Board approve the package of measures outlined in Annex 3, the next step will be for Personnel to draw up a development and implementation plan, involving D/d personnel colleagues where necessary. The aim will be to implement these changes in a phased manner over the remainder of the financial year.

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