

Health and Safety Executive Board Paper

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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

THE NEW MANIFESTO: TEAM BRIEFING REPORT AND THE BOARD'S RESPONSE

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Issue

1. To consider and respond to the feedback provided by teams and individuals from the 'New Manifesto' team briefing exercise.

Timing

2. Urgent. There is a commitment that following this meeting the Board will publish its response to the feedback it has received.

Recommendation

3. This paper raises a number of different issues:
 - On the feedback itself: I strongly encourage all Board members to read the entire feedback and recommend you set aside time at your away day in July to discuss it further.
 - Future of Team Briefing: There has been generally positive feedback to the process and I suggest the Board continues with team briefings in a strictly limited way; and that it is located in any future corporate communication capacity.
 - Response to the feedback: An 'elevator speech' has been prepared for circulation at the meeting and a draft response is at Annex 2. The Board will also want to agree how it can keep pushing and restating these messages in other ways to maintain momentum.

Background

Process

4. The Senior Civil Service conference on 26/27 March was presented with the 'New Manifesto' setting out the vision, mission and aims for the future. The conference agreed to brief staff and gather feedback from across HSE using 'team briefing'. As part of this the SCS conference also asked that a copy of the manifesto should be given to each member of staff.
5. A team brief and Q&A were put together by SID, copies of the new manifesto printed and distributed, an Intranet site and electronic feedback form created with the help of DIAS and these things were communicated to all staff by global message from Timothy Walker on 7 April.
6. The original plan was for the briefings to be completed in April but following reasonable representations this was extended to 16 May.
7. One Directorate decided to collate its own replies first rather than have teams send them directly to SID. Any preliminary filtering of corporate team briefings is undesirable because those providing the feedback then have mixed motives for what they say. Communicating the importance of direct team feedback on corporate team briefings is a lesson learned for the future.
8. An evaluation of the team briefing process is being conducted and the results will be fed back to the Board at the meeting.

The Feedback

9. Matters of particular concern were dealt with immediately rather than await this Board meeting. For example, early on SID received from Linda Buxton, Chair of the Diversity Officer Liaison Network, feedback that she was getting messages of concern about diversity aspects of the images in the New Manifesto. Timothy Walker wrote to Linda [Annex 3] setting out the Executive's views shortly after the issue surfaced. Similarly SID tried to bottom out feedback alleging one of the images featured a well know extreme right-wing politician. We asked the publisher for details but he was only able to tell us that this and other images used unknown actors.
10. By 16 May SID had received more than 250 pieces of feedback from teams and individuals – see Annex 1. It is open, honest and some of it quite robust. The summary and analysis is based on a careful reading of all the feedback. But since there were no 'right answers' there is no attempt to put 'scores' on the frequency of particular replies. And to do so may distract other readers from seeing for themselves the significance of the overall evidence. I believe four major themes emerge:

The subject matter of the 'New Manifesto'

11. Opinion is about equally divided between those who recognise the need to change and those who believe: 'the document reiterates things we do already'; that it contains 'little or nothing new' and that it is 'too general or too high level'. The big questions from the feedback are: "what does this mean for me/my team/what will it look like when we get there?"

12. Linked to issues of 'what it means' is a need for much greater clarity about change in HSE, the strategy process and more generally how this initiative links more widely with Government change. This is evident from questions like: 'do we need more research?' 'what criteria will be used to decide themes?' 'what do Ministers' want of HSE?' 'will the programme be applied consistently across HSE?' and 'where do LAs fit in?'
13. Detailed feedback on the content of the vision, mission and aims needs further analysis but the comments received show how difficult it is to get the entire organisation to either see the relevance of, or agree on high-level statements such as these.
14. The feedback contains a mine of useful information on 'local issues of concern' to staff from across the organisation that will need addressing as the strategy evolves. With it there are questions 'what training will we get'; and from the field questions about more direct involvement of admin staff in front line work.

The document

15. The document itself elicited a largely (but not entirely) negative reaction in terms of its language, presentation, images and 'glossiness'. A key issue for many was the perceived waste of money at a time when resources are tight. Linked to this is the question about the audience for the new manifesto and how the vision etc. will be communicated to external stakeholders.

Team Briefing

16. The team briefing process provoked relatively few comments but from these SID has learned a lot in a very short time. They will be of considerable help in identifying areas for improvement if the Board uses this approach again.

Leadership and management commitment

17. About one third of all respondents raised, in one form or another, concerns about HSE's leadership/management's commitment to see this strategy through, whether senior managers would accept the inherent business risks; and whether resources would be available. This clearly needs a strong response.

Argument

The feedback

18. The feedback is extremely powerful and a mine of useful information about the way the organisation is thinking. Despite anonymizing it there are still some important messages for Directors and their managers to address at a local level. The feedback also needs to be shared with the Star Alliance because it contains messages for them that will help inform their work on leadership, communication and change.
19. Despite the number of comments, I encourage all Board members to read the complete feedback and to set aside time at your away day planned for later this month to discuss it. **This is picked up positively in the Board's response to the feedback.**

Future of Team Briefing

20. The feedback suggests that generally this has been a success and the lessons learned show ways in which this can be improved. The process is expensive in staff time both in giving briefing and providing feedback. As such this should be used sparingly. But if it is to be used again it is important that the Board signals this intention straight away and anticipates at least the next time it is to be used. **The Board's response to the feedback assumes a positive reaction.**
21. Managing the process at the centre is equally resource intensive and while it has been very valuable in helping SID on this occasion, it is also a major distraction for such a small team. The work is ideally situated in a communications team and should be located in whatever communication capacity that emerges from Kate Timms' work.

Response to the feedback

22. There is an expectation that the Board will respond quickly after its meeting and technical arrangements have been put in place to ensure this happens.
23. Board members also have a part to play in drawing attention to the feedback and the Board's response. A draft 'elevator speech has been prepared and will be circulated at the meeting'.
24. A draft response to the feedback is at Annex 2. **This is for discussion.**

Consultation

25. None. The feedback is anonymous.

Presentation

26. A copy of the full, anonymised, feedback is annexed to this Board paper. It has already been made available to teams and individuals providing feedback with thanks from SID for their contribution. And a summary passed to the change team to help them link the feedback with their behaviours and leadership work.
27. The Board's response, this paper including the feedback, and the team briefing evaluation should be available to all staff as soon as possible after this meeting.
28. SID will shortly set up a strategy page on the Intranet and this will also form the core of material for the HSE website.

Costs and Benefits

29. For a copy of the 'New Manifesto' to go to all staff in cost £7,500. The evidence shows there were at least 250 briefings involving more about a half of HSE/HSL staff. Anecdote indicates the actual number of briefing was considerably higher. The benefit has been the considerable amount of open and honest feedback on a wide range of subjects.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

30. Good communications, system investment and a re-usable model.

Environmental Implications

31. None

Other Implications

32. NA

Action

33. The Board is invited to note this paper and the team briefing evaluation; discuss the feedback, and agree a response and next steps.

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Feedback, Summary and Detail

[To be added]

DRAFT RESPONSE FROM THE BOARD TO HSE's FEEDBACK FROM THE TEAM BRIEFING EXERCISE.

One of your feedback forms suggests we should have piloted team briefing first; several others doubt our ability to lead and take risks. And lots of you are asking us 'what does all this mean for me' or 'what will it look like'?

We could have consulted widely on the manifesto to start with and piloted team briefing - a very traditional HSE approach. We didn't. Instead the Board took responsibility for settling the whole thing and the booklet went from concept to distribution in under three weeks. And we undertook to publish all the feedback without knowing what we would get back. Why? To show that we can do more than 'bang on about change', we can change ourselves. To show we can take risks, we have confidence in you and value your opinions, and that we have been listening to your concerns about internal communication and change in HSE and we are trying to make a difference.

We want to encourage new ways of working at all levels and for everyone to take calculated risks. This is part of our vision for what we want all of HSE to be like in the future.

The way we are developing the strategy this time is substantially different from what has happened in the past and so the question 'what does this mean for me' is natural. Traditionally we have taken a largely 'bottom-up approach' to strategy and so people have been a lot clearer sooner through their branch plans of work and their PWPs what this all means to them. This time we are starting from the top with a new vision for health and safety, a mission for HSC/E and broad aims and then looking for big issues, like HSE's relations with the local authorities, to support that vision. By developing ways of tackling issues and going on to deliver change is the way we really get involved. In some cases moving from proposal to delivery may be a number of years away. And for the immediate future we still have to continue to deliver 'Revitalising' and protect people against major hazards. In the short term therefore your feedback shows you think there is little or nothing new in the vision,

mission etc. So we clearly need to do more to explain to you what is changing and especially when, and we will do this.

Being clearer about what we need to tackle and how we go about it, rather than continuing to try to be all things to everyone, is part of our plan for resourcing this strategy. And with it we recognise we will need to take - and stand by - tough decisions about what to stop doing. Some of your feedback suggests that this is about being critical of the past or not valuing people and what they do. That is unfair. We are an incredibly talented team of people in HSE but sometimes we are spread too thinly. We need to make the most of what can learn from the past, but not be held back by it, so we can tackle the issues of today and the future. We can see from the feedback that even though SID only really started work on the strategy in February it has developed at such a pace that has outstripped the internal audience. And while SID are trying hard to get round the organisation to collect your ideas the process needs to be more open. So but we have also asked them to quickly set up an Intranet page (which will also form the basis of an HSE web page for our external stakeholders) to give those of you who want to contribute ideas more of an opportunity; and to give those of you who want it more background information and news on developments. We will also use the site to expand more fully on the thinking behind the strategy and highlight practical examples of what the emerging strategy means to particular groups of people in HSE.

Your feedback raises many points that need further consideration or a more 'local' response. (Clearly we don't know who said what but there are points that we can take back for further discussion within Directorates.) We are all going to read the feedback carefully and use the opportunity of a meeting already arranged for July to see whether we need to expand on this response today.

The 'New Manifesto' document itself attracted most comments. Most, but not all of them were critical. Some objected to the language and the pictures, others were critical of the cost at a time of financial pressures. We produce for our external audiences innumerable glossily printed documents, many with illustrations. These cost thousands of pounds and pass without internal comment. The new strategy represents a major departure for HSE and we feel we have nothing to reprove ourselves

about in spending £7,500 to ensure that everyone in HSE had a copy of the 'New Manifesto' to support team briefing. Of course we accept that the timing could have been better.

In terms of the language and the images we believe it had the desired effect of getting it noticed. Would the same have been true if it was on one side of A4 with or without workplace images? That said, we clearly recognize the points being made in your feedback and if we produce documents of this kind in future, we will certainly look closely at the language and include different pictures, for variety if for nothing else. We will certainly take into account your feedback but in the final analysis the choice of word or pictures always gives someone the opportunity to say they would have preferred something else.

The team briefing feedback has given us all a valuable insight into the mood of the organisation and we are very grateful to you for your open, honest and robust comments. We recognise the need to give serious thought to what more we should do to get across the messages about change and what the strategy means for all of us in our daily work. And finally, we are also grateful to all managers throughout HSE who successfully got across this new way of working. There are lessons we can learn to improve the process but we are persuaded by the success of this event that from time to time we should return to this as a way of gathering your feedback. And, having started it with the new strategy the obvious next occasion to seek your views is when we have a completed draft strategy in the autumn.

TIMOTHY WALKER TO LINDA BUXTON RE: DIVERSITY AND THE NEW MANIFESTO

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I have to say I have been surprised by the reaction to the pictures. With hindsight we might have chosen something different but:

- on the issue of diversity females appear in three of them, non-Caucasians in four, one has a child, 'older' people appear in two. Two pictures are not sufficiently clear to identify those in them other than they are probably male of some age. And it is important to remember that not all disabilities are obvious from a photograph.
- sport generally is internationally recognized as something that transcends religious, political, ethnic, social, gender and age barriers. It is also a common metaphor for teams and team working. Of course it is equally true that some people do not like sport generally while some people do not like certain kinds of sport. This just shows that we can't please everyone all of the time.

That said, clearly we do not want to annoy or affront people unnecessarily but there is also a tendency to believe that because someone complains they must be right. I accept that some people may feel genuine offence but these images are not in themselves vulgar, distressing, insensitive or exclusive. They are common images to be found in any paper or magazine, on TV and even on the street corner.

If we produce documents of this kind in future, we will certainly include different pictures, for variety if for nothing else, but I do not think that we can undertake to have them representing perfect cross sections of HSE staff or of the population. But we will certainly take into account the feedback we have had although in the final analysis the choice of pictures always gives someone the opportunity to say they would have preferred alternatives.