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**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
The HSE Board**

**Reducing Stress at Work in HSE:
HSE wide actions following on from the Directorate/Divisional Action Plans
A Paper by Elizabeth Gyngell and Jon Buckle
Advisor(s): Tim Beaumont and Alison McKenzie-Folan**

Cleared by Justin McCracken on 27 June 2006

Issue

1. This paper sets out the actions which have been taken, or are in hand, following the decisions that the Board made at its meeting on 2 November to reduce stress at work in HSE, and recommends further action to ensure continuous improvement.

Timing

2. It is an appropriate time to encourage review and refreshment of the Directorate/Divisional Action Plans because a number of the actions were due for completion by the end of Q4 2005/6 or in Q1 of 2006/7. The HSE wide actions though involve several other work streams including:

- a. The launch of the "Rough Guide on Managing Change",
- b. The HR issues set out in the Annex,
- c. The implementation of Service Improvement Plans for some day-to-day central services,
- d. The next Staff and Stress Survey,

and we need to ensure these mesh seamlessly together.

Recommendation

3. That the Board:
 - a. Note the progress made with the recommendations from the Corporate Health and Safety Committee (CHSC)
 - b. Agree to the actions at Annex 1 – HSE's Corporate Stress Action Plan
 - c. Agree that the HR Service Centre request information from the Directorate/Divisional contacts on progress against their Action Plans to be delivered by end Q2 (29 September) and that this becomes a regular return on a 6 monthly basis
 - d. Agree that they will act as Champions in their own Directorates in taking this forward

Background

4. At their meeting on 2 November, the Board considered issues and recommendations arising from the Stress Management Standards survey (HSE/05/052) and agreed to:

- a. make the management of stress related risk an explicit part of the change management activity,
- b. the reconstitution of the management/trade union stress steering group, preferably with Board representation,
- c. arrange for Directorate/Divisional Action Plans to be produced,
- d. ensure consistent implementation of agreed plans,
- e. align a repeat stress survey with the next staff survey.

5. Organisations implementing the Stress Management Standards (or equivalent) have recognised the importance of integrating managing work related stress with other aspects of management. The Board has been considering other related matters - the report-back on the spring round of Exchange (B/06/48) and improving the management of change (B/06/49) – and it is essential these be seen in the round.

6. Work related stress is still a challenge for HSE and information available shows this is increasing. In 2005/6, 43 cases of work related stress was reported on IH1s (38 in 2004/5), and 7645 days (equivalent to approximately 35 staff years) were lost from stress related illness (6353 in 2004/5).

Argument

7. To ensure consistent implementation of plans, the Stress WG identified cross HSE issues that need a coordinated approach to make a difference. Action needed is set out in paragraphs 12 to 15 and Annex 2. However stress will only be effectively managed if Directorates/Divisions tackle this at local level through their own plans (see para 10)

8. Improving the management of change (covering the stressor, Change)

Staff report that they are overwhelmed with the pace and agenda for change and that they feel their views are not given genuine consideration. The Board has agreed to tackle this by a number of actions (see Board paper B/06/49). A central element is the production of the “Rough Guide to Managing Change” together with arrangements to launch and embed this. The secret of success in ensuring this really tackles stress will be to mainstream this approach into normal management practice and to make sure that **every** change (e.g. including such things as restructuring within teams, reallocating responsibilities) is dealt with as per the Guide – but proportionately. The Communications Plan will play a vital part in embedding this into HSE’s culture and this may be aided by producing a simple aide memoir for managers (e.g. a desktop guide, credit card version etc)

9. Corporate H&S Committee Stress Working Group

The management/trade union Stress WG was reconstituted with Alex Brett-Holt as the Board representative. Activities focussed on the assessment of the Directorate/Divisional Action Plans and the development of HSE wide actions. This joint approach has been valuable and we propose the WG should continue.

10. Directorate/Divisional Action Plans

All parts of HSE, including HSL, have now provided Action Plans, and most are in the format of the Stress Management Standards approach. We are though not convinced that

all managers are conversant with the approach and the tools available. These are being revised currently, but the Stress Team could provide a pack with case studies etc to help raise awareness and skills, for consideration by the Stress WG prior to implementation by managers. We need to ensure that the Actions Plans are seen as living arrangements to be kept under review and amended as necessary. We know that a number of management teams are doing this effectively but we need to review progress centrally. A substantial number of the actions are due for completion by now so it would be appropriate to ask for feedback on implementation and update from the Directorate/Divisions by the end of Q2, and to do this on a 6 monthly basis. These reports should be assessed by the Stress WG on a six monthly basis and by the CHSC and the Board annually. Any improvements needed as a result of the Q2 review could be aided by the pack suggested above.

11. Some of the feedback from the focus groups used to develop the Action Plans indicated that the facilitators had not kept the groups focussed on the risks/stressors, resulting in a “stream of conscience”. There is huge benefit to HSE having ready access to trained and competent facilitators but if it is to be retained, the membership and skills base of the group needs reviewing, as some of those involved have retired and others may need additional training.

12. People Management (covering stressors Role and Support)

Comments from the focus groups (which are in tune with the results of the Staff Survey results) reveal a range of issues sparked off by looking at the stressors, but the solutions to which lies directly in good management practice. Staff report that they are unclear about what is expected of them at a time of change, they do not receive adequate support from managers, or thanks and reward for good performance and they perceive that managers are not dealing with poor performance.

13. Relationships, including unacceptable behaviour and bullying

The number of **reported** cases is increasing and some staff report that they feel that they are the recipients of patronising and degrading behaviour, and work in a gradist set up. They feel undervalued. There are clear tensions in teams but something is holding people back from being open about this. There needs to be a clear distinction between firm management and bullying. HSE’s “Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour” booklet gives good guidance on these issues, including the procedures to be followed but it is out of date (especially in relation to references to HR support arrangements etc) and most people don’t know it exists. Work is in hand by HRSP to review this, but it will then need to be brought to staff’s attention in a vibrant and hope filled way.

14. Environmental Demands

There is a strong feeling that some of our day-to-day services need to be improved. Some apparently simple things do not seem to get fixed (e.g. it is too hot/cold, the IT crashes and nobody important cares, people do not understand with whom to raise problems or what they can do to avoid problems like managing the size of their email accounts). And even when some of these things are sorted out, staff don’t know that this has happened. Some important improvements are already in hand including:

- a. better resourcing for BSD’s Estate Management Unit in Rose Court (to cover southern England),
- b. service improvement plans,
- c. better feedback on problems relating to IT, lifts etc

but more needs to be done. There are two key opportunities to take this forward:

- a. the Procurement Theme Team's work under Alex Brett-Holt's guidance
- b. the review of staff health and safety arrangements in Rose Court (which may be appropriate for sharing elsewhere)

but we need to ensure that these strands mesh together and that the consultation arrangements link as well, and with the work of the CHSC and its Stress WG.

15. Surveys to measure success

Responsibility for meshing both the stress survey and the staff survey has now passed to HRSP and work is on going. The Board has not get agreed the timing for the next amalgamated survey.

Implications for policy development

16. Two members of the Stress Team have been working with the Stress WG so that any lessons learnt can be fed back into the project development. Our own experiences are similar to other organisations in particular:

- a. the importance of top level commitment, especially to make sure the stress work is integrated with other initiatives,
- b. to keep the momentum going until tackling stress is part of the culture.

Presentation

17. There continues to be external interest in how HSE is managing the Stress Management Standards approach and HSE will need to be prepared to share this. Additionally there is a challenging presentational issue internally to ensure we have a consistent message stretching across all the strands which touch on tackling stress. Some of these will be promulgated shortly, e.g. the change management improvements, the next steps with the Fundamental Review. Comms Directorate will work together with the Health and Safety Adviser (HSA) to create a Communications Plan to assist in spreading the message.

Action

18. Key matters still requiring attention are:

- a. Maintaining the effectiveness of Directorate/Divisional plans
- b. Ensuring the Learning and Development Strategy includes the identified "people management" issues
- c. Tackling unacceptable behaviour
- d. Improving service, and feedback to staff, on environmental demands
- e. Ensuring improved change management becomes part of HSE's culture
- f. Meshing the staff and stress surveys
- g. Producing a comprehensive Communications Plan and promulgating it

and the Board is asked to agree to these forming HSE's Action Plan to reduce stress at work in HSE (Annex1).

19. A number of issues identified for action are already in hand and progress is tabulated at Annex 2.

20. The Stress Working Group that has worked on this plan will continue to meet to monitor the plan's progress.

Contact

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REDUCING STRESS AT WORK IN HSE: CORPORATE ACTION PLAN 2006/7

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO	WHEN
1. Directorates / Divisions Stress Action Plans to be vibrant, living documents, acted on and continuously improved	1.1 Directorates /Divisions to review these plans, encouraged and supported by Board members responsible 1.2 Completed plans to be reviewed by Stress WG and then CHSC and Board	1.1 Board members 1.2 Coordinated by HSA	29 September Q2 & 4 by Stress WG Q4 by CHSC and Board
2. Ensure that the Learning and Development Strategy really covers the people management issues identified by the Stress WG, and in a timely way	2.1 Specific actions are set out in Annex 2	2.1 HRSP (with HSA)	December 2006
3. Raise awareness of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and take action to make this extinct.	3.1 Review HSE's unacceptable behaviour guidance and promulgate	3.1 HRSP	September 2006
4. Improve service and feedback to staff on environmental demands	4.1 Implement service improvement plans 4.2 Ensure improved procedures	4.1 BSD 4.2 BSD	September 2006 Ongoing

ISSUE	ACTION	WHO	WHEN
	include timely feedback to staff 4.3 Consider appropriateness of contacts	4.3 Fundamental Review Procurement Theme Team	October 2006
5. Ensure that the philosophy of improved change management becomes part of HSE's culture	5.1 Put in place arrangements to implement "Rough Guide to Managing Change" in Directorates / Divisions	5.1 Board members	September 2006
6. Make sure the Stress and Staff surveys are appropriately meshed	6.1 Revise survey questions and agree timing for next survey	6.1 HRSP	January 2007
7. Mesh together the various strands of work and produce a coherent story board for communicating to staff	7.1 Produce and promulgate a comprehensive Communications Plan	7.1 Internal Combs (working with HSA)	September 2006

Action in progress

ACTION	PROGRESS
<i>Actions arising out of review of Directorate/Divisional Plans</i>	
<p>1. Provide general feedback on action plans to Directorates/Divisions remind action plan owners that there is a template which they should use and a model action plan to help them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth Gyngell has spoken to Divisions with major discrepancies • BHAWD will offer further guidance/help to those Directorates / Divisions who identify that they have challenges
<p>2. Offer "teach-ins" for managers who would benefit so they can upgrade and monitor their action plans.</p>	<p>Stress Working Group to decide how to take forward, but this may tie in with work already underway for upskilling managers in the HR Learning and Development Strategy.</p>
<p>3. Initiate discussions with the facilitators group "owners" about enhancing the facilitators group.</p>	<p>Tim Beaumont and Mary McCarthy, HR Service Centre will contact Policy Group on this issue as the facilitators are run from there.</p>
<i>People management issues</i>	
<p>4. Make it clear what we expect from managers, perhaps communicating this via a pocket guide/card. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talking to their teams on a regular basis; • listening to comments, ideas, complaints; • ensuring all staff have a Performance Agreement which is SMART, is quality assured by peers, line managers and which contains the "hows" which must then be checked up on. 	<p>We can do this, but this kind of initiative needs to be factored in to the overall management capabilities strategy being taken forward by HR SP under the L&D Strategy, and more corporately by HR Business Partners.</p> <p>Alison McKenzie Folan will ensure this is taken forward within HRSP and HR Business Partner forum.</p>

ACTION	PROGRESS
5. Make sure that managers are properly trained in people management issues. The current suite of managerial modules needs reassessing and the rules for attending these modules before undertaking management duties need reviewing.	The training and upskilling of current, and future, managers is at the heart of the Learning and Development Strategy, being taken forward by HR Strategy and Policy. We are looking at a broad range of ways of improving management capability within the organisation, for example professionalising managers using accredited courses.
6. Review arrangements by which managers are measured on their management skills. This needs to include obtaining feedback from staff, either formally through 360°, 180° etc (but this will need proper procedures) or informally (the “what are the 3 things you like I do, don’t like that I do, what can I improve” approach)	Performance management and performance appraisal also form part of the L&D Strategy.
7. Ensuring managers are properly supported. The new HR Centre and Business Partners approach will help, but identifying “old stagers” who can provide informal sage counsel, their experience could be explored	Information needs to be forwarded to Dave Hockey so that this can be included in HR Service Centre business processes.
8. Look again at the job evaluation arrangements (eg. monitor) to ensure that it reflects moderate requirements and rewards people appropriately.	<p>Both HR Strategy and Policy and HR Business Partners have reviewed the “Monitor” system as part of the Management Capabilities workstream. It was judged that the current system is so similar to other available job evaluation systems as to make it of little value to switch at this stage.</p> <p>This decision will be revisited, as appropriate, as the HR L&D Strategy progresses.</p>
<i>Relationships, including unacceptable behaviour and bullying.</i>	
9. Review HSE’s “Unacceptable Behaviour” guidance and reissue with a campaign to raise awareness	Jon Buckle, HR Strategy and Policy Team are now taking this work forward.

ACTION	PROGRESS
10. Encourage people to say sorry to those involved.	“
11. Examine the procedures for what you do if you believe you have been bullied to make sure they are not too complex and intimidating. Ensure they are balanced, with clear “firm lines” where appropriate.	“
12. Include in the procedures that HoDs have to be made aware of, and when appropriate deal with, bullying behaviour. Cases involving serial complaints should be dealt with at D/D management team level to avoid the “move them on syndrome”.	“
<i>Environmental demands</i>	
13. Improve messages to staff about the services and any difficulties and be more sensitive about how it affects staff, including their feelings. Make sure that we are managing the contracts as effectively as possible, and consider changing these contracts where this is found to be necessary.	Service improvement plans have been put in place for Estates and IT. A services 'surgery' has been held in Rose Court. Service managers and contract managers have been seeking to resolve problems first time and publicise better whom should be contacted if customers are dis-satisfied. These issues are also being addressed as part of the Fundamental Review, Procurement Theme.
14. Improve the management of problems so that more are resolved quickly, first time.	See above. Our SLAs are being examined to incentivise “first” time fix.

ACTION	PROGRESS
<i>Change</i>	
<p>15. The Board Subgroup for Change will develop proposals to put to the Board to ensure better management of individual changes including more effective consultation - including listening and acting on feedback, consistent and clear communication and better consideration of how individuals would be affected. It was also proposing arrangements to better control the overall scale and coherence of the initiatives HSE commissioned.</p>	<p>A 'Rough Guide to Managing Change' has been produced which addresses these issues. The arrangements for how it will be embedded in HSE are under consideration in connection with the development of a Communications Plan.</p>