

Health and Safety Executive Board Paper		HSE/06/103	
Meeting Date:	6 December 2006	Open Gov. Status:	Fully Open
Type of Paper:	Below the line	Paper File Ref:	
Exemptions:	None		

**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
The HSE Board**

Feedback from the summer round of exchange briefings on Diversity

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Issue

1. This paper sets out an analysis of the feedback from staff arising out of the summer round of exchange briefings. It also includes recommendations on further action.
2. The Board is invited to consider and agree both the feedback and recommendations so that this may be disseminated to staff.

Timing

3. exchange briefing sessions were held during the period July to 29 September 2006. Updates on action and progress on the issues and questions arising out of previous sessions have been communicated to staff through a number of different channels. Further updates will mainly be made available via the intranet and through e-express.

Recommendation

4. That the Board:
 - i. Notes the issues set out in this paper.
 - ii. Notes the following actions, which are being implemented, planned or shortly to be put into action, in response to the key issues raised by staff.

Background

5. The summer round of briefings saw a departure from the usual approach in that this time around senior managers and facilitators were given increased flexibility allowing them to identify and discuss a topic of their choice, (ideally a corporate topic), rather than deliver the chosen topic if they felt that it would generate a more meaningful discussion within their part of HSE. They were also given the option of not holding an exchange briefing but were asked to let the Internal Communications Team know that they had decided against running a session. To date, there has been a nil response.

6. Despite the increased flexibility, it seems that facilitators elected to stick with Diversity as their topic for discussion. The feedback suggests that most staff welcomed and enjoyed their discussions.
7. Just over a thousand staff attended a briefing session, this figure is in line with previous levels of attendance. However, this estimate is based upon data from the completed and returned feedback forms so it may not actually reflect the true number of sessions held and/or the total number of participants.

Argument

8. In general, staff would like a better steer from the Board in relation to the vision. They seek greater clarity in terms of laying out actions that will lead to the delivery of Board objectives and the achievement of the vision. There was some scepticism expressed about the commitment of both Board and senior managers to driving through the necessary changes. Some staff question whether the Board view this as simply 'another tick in the box'.
9. **Ideas** - many groups identified areas for improvement and suggested actions, which their own teams and units could do work towards and achieve. It was felt that some of the ideas would need to be tackled at senior management level. The Diversity team has been considering and following up some of these suggestions and where practicable, feedback will be given on progress.
10. **Sharing experiences and good practice** - the briefings have helped to identify activity which is taking place around the country which has enabled the Diversity team to develop useful links with colleagues. The team is gathering this information, which will be used to create case studies for sharing with others. The Internal Communications team is working together with the Diversity teams to agree the most effective way of disseminating this work.
11. **Perceived discrimination** – some staff gave examples of what they considered to be discriminatory action/behaviour. This will need to be examined more closely and where considered appropriate, the necessary action taken.
12. **Better management** – there was some concern expressed about consistency and fairness in the management approach to issues, especially when left to local line management. Staff would like line managers to do more to identify their staffs' specific needs and take responsibility for ensuring that they are met. They also want clear direction on what is acceptable behaviour when it comes to diversity and for better leadership on this from the top.
13. **External benchmarking** - a number of staff suggested that we should be benchmarking ourselves against other organisations and that we should explore and consider what is being done in other EU states rather than reinventing wheels.
14. The top 'hot' issues raised at the briefings were:

➤ **Training:**

Many operational staff believe that they need further training to help build their confidence to enable them to deal more effectively with such a diverse and ever changing workforce. For example, we are currently experiencing an influx of Polish workers and we expect this to be replaced with Romanian workers over the coming year. They fear that they may cause offence through a lack of awareness and understanding of cultural issues. It was suggested that reinstating the system of diversity representatives across the organisation would be a positive step forward. However, help is at hand in the form of the following activities:

- I. The Communications Toolkit and Aid-Memoir although aimed primarily at those with responsibility for communications, will go some way to addressing these needs.
 - II. The Worker Involvement Team has identified a need for operational guidance on migrant worker health and safety issues including details of resources in this area (e.g. existing translations of leaflets and the availability of Infoline). The Diversity team is working with them to incorporate this into the Diversity Intranet/Web pages, which are being re-vamped and will include consideration of cultural awareness, (in respect of bereavement, important dates in the cultural calendar and what this means e.g. fasting).
 - III. The provision of better guidance (including consultation with ethnic minority organisations), which takes account of advice from the Commission for racial equality (CRE) and the Cabinet Office.
 - IV. More effective support from central internal diversity teams in HR and Policy Group.
- **Recruitment and career progression** – staff felt that we could do better in terms of targeting our recruitment so that we attract more people from a diverse background but there were very few practical suggestions about how this might be achieved. The Diversity team is considering how different approaches might be adopted to meet local recruitment needs. And, the BME staff career study will help `examine the barriers and wider issues around career progression in HSE. Staff have now been told about this project so it will be important to keep them informed of progress in this area.
- **Staff Networks** –some concern was expressed about the absence of a network for Gay, lesbian and transgender staff, which is being followed up by HR. The networks are providing valuable feedback which is helping to shape policy and direction. Work to help publicise the networks will continue with support from the Internal Communications team.
- **Language:**
- I. Staff want to know how to communicate better with non-English speakers. The work currently underway to redevelop the Diversity intranet pages which includes an improved gateway to both the Interpretation and Translation services will help facilitate this by making this useful information more visible and accessible.
 - II. The possible discrimination by duty holders who appear to unlawfully terminate the employment of non-English speakers is a matter of concern to field staff when

they come across this. They feel that further HSE guidance is needed regarding unlawful discrimination and their responsibilities.

III. Translation of publications – staff feel that there is some inconsistency in the approach to the translation of our publications. This will be addressed by development and introduction of the 'translation standard' and the COI Aid-memoir.

- **Selecting the right channels/media** - the majority of the operational groups identified the need and importance of using the correct media when contacting duty holders, employees and stakeholders including the greater use of visual images (rather than publications) and working more closely with community leaders or social clubs.
- **Identifying the audience** –some questioned whether or not we have identified the right groups/audience. They felt that rather than just tackling one group because they are BME or disabled we should adopt a far more evidence-based approach to make sure that there is a health and safety issue within the specific industry areas. They believe that this would ensure that our limited resources are used wisely, especially given our in the current financial position. This is essentially a corporate objective, as building our evidence base is a long-term goal being coordinated jointly by policy teams, Cosas and HSL.
- **Mainstreaming Diversity** – operational staff feel that if they are to deliver the Diversity objectives then it is vital that Diversity is embedded within the Fit3 programme. The Impact Assessment Tool (to be launched soon) will help achieve this. The Diversity team have secured agreement for a full impact assessment, including race, to be undertaken by part of the Fit 3 programme of work. They are also in discussion with other programme managers. The process is intended to integrate diversity into our day-to-day work. Its inclusion in Fit 3 will not only assist the policy advisers to develop competence (which we hope will be shared) but its findings will inform good diversity practice amongst operational staff.

Consultation

15. The feedback forms have been seen by both HR (Internal Diversity Team) and Policy Group (External Diversity Team) and as such, all actions and recommendations contained within this paper have been agreed with both teams. It should also be noted that HR has consulted both the TUs and Magnet and have duly taken their views into account.

Presentation

16. The Internal Communications team will continue to work closely with the Diversity Teams to review and further develop their internal communications plans ensuring that they reflect any agreed action.
17. Subject to Board agreement, it is intended that a copy of this paper be placed upon the exchange intranet pages, together with a brief account of actions already taken. Further updates will be programmed into the communications plan.

Costs and Benefits

18. It is hard to quantify the overall benefits brought about by delivery of exchange briefings however it is clear that the organisation will benefit greatly from having better informed, more involved staff who are aware of and understand HSE's vision, duties and targets. Engaging in a dialogue with staff on an important topic like Diversity and acting upon feedback should help to make staff feel more valued by the Board and senior managers.

Financial/Resource Implications for HSE

19. It has not been possible to quantify the cost of this particular round of briefings, but it will have involved resources mainly in terms of the time of staff attending these events as delivery of the briefing sessions necessitates more time being given to team meetings by both staff and senior managers.

Environmental Implications

20. N/A

Other Implications

21. N/A

Action

22. The Internal Communications team will ensure that a Q &A brief to answer the less common specific questions is placed upon the intranet. And, that all Directorate/Division specific issues are forwarded to the appropriate HoD for advice and any necessary action.