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## **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION**

### **CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CONIAC)**

#### **Workers' Safety Adviser Challenge Fund – Headline Evaluation Findings**

#### **Summary**

**HSE will be publishing the evaluation report on Round One of the Workers' Safety Adviser Challenge Fund in September 2005. This paper summarises the headline findings from the evaluation report.**

#### **Issue**

1. To update members on the outcome of the evaluation of Round One of the Workers' Safety Adviser Challenge Fund, which forms part of HSC/E strategy on involving employees.

#### **Timing**

2. For this meeting. The report goes to HSC in July, to Ministers in August and is due to be published in September or October 2005.

#### **Background**

3. The Workers' Safety Adviser Challenge Fund is a grant scheme designed to increase worker involvement and consultation, through the intervention of the Workers' Safety Adviser (WSA), as a means of building of partnership and driving improvements in occupational health and safety. Social partners, such as Trade Unions, Local Authorities, and Healthcare Providers submit joint bids of up to £100,000 to fund the recruitment of WSAs.

4. £812,000 was provided to fund twelve projects in Round One, including two projects operating in the construction sector.

## **Argument**

5. The Fund has delivered improvements in worker involvement and in behaviours likely to lead to better health and safety outcomes. It has, however, proved relatively expensive.

6. The two construction projects from Round One have received funding for round two as well. The challenges projects had with evaluation materials for round one have been addressed and HSE's understanding is that projects expect to comply fully with the evaluation requirements in round two.

7. CONIAC will appreciate that there is a strong expectation from the centre of Government that the use of public money will be carefully evaluated. It is important that all projects help the Fund by completing evaluation requirements rigorously.

## **Consultation**

8. Many organisations were consulted on the overview evaluation report, including the TUC, EEF, IOSH and other stakeholders. Key stakeholder groups are represented on the Challenge Fund Management Board, and were consulted through that mechanism.

## **Presentation**

9. The full report will be published on the HSE website, following Ministerial scrutiny. Positive outcomes and case studies derived from the research will be used to promote Round Three of the Challenge Fund, including prominent display on the HSE stand at the TUC Congress in September 2005.

## **Action**

10. CONIAC is invited to note:

- The headline evaluation findings on Round One of the WSA Challenge Fund attached to this paper.
- That the full evaluation report is due to be published in Autumn 2005.

## **Contact**

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## **Headline Findings from WSA Challenge Fund Round One Evaluation:**

- 1. Positive Impact on Worker Involvement:** The WSA Challenge Fund was effective in Round One in increasing worker involvement and improving health and safety performance. Employers held a positive attitude towards worker involvement at the outset of the year, and maintained this until the end of year. Workers' showed a marked increase at year-end in willingness and confidence in becoming involved in health and safety risk management. The proportion of organisations with no form of worker involvement fell from 28% to 7%. High levels of WSA activity with workers resulted in large increases in the number of workers involved in hazard spotting, risk assessment and group discussions on health and safety.
- 2. Positive impact on Health and Safety Performance:** Workers' Safety Advisers reported increases in behaviours likely to lead to health and safety improvements over the course of the year, even in workplaces with a high baseline standard of health and safety management. This improvement can be attributed to changes in management activity, rather than investments in physical hazard-reduction equipment.
- 3. Identification of key WSA Skills:** The skill-set required by WSA's to effectively achieve worker involvement was evaluated. The results strongly identified that 'softer' skills, such as communication, facilitation and conflict were as important, if not more so, than health and safety qualifications.
- 4. Impact of reduced timescale of round one:** The operation of round one was significantly impacted by the late start for the Fund. As projects were not operational until July 2004, Round One lasted for nine months, rather than a full calendar year, meaning some projects were unable to recruit their target number of workforces. This has adversely impacted on the cost effectiveness of projects, as start-up costs in Round One were high, primarily for WSA recruitment and training, whilst operational time was been truncated.
- 5. Cost Effectiveness:** Projects in Round One were allocated £812,000, of which £710,925 was claimed, leaving an underspend of £101,000. This has been carried over into Round Two. Round One of the Challenge Fund is also being audited by HSE internally, to ensure propriety and best use of public funds.
- 6.** The average cost per workplace visit was £365; cost per worker was £45. Taken as an average, the overall cost of visits was almost identical to the cost of the WSA Pilot per visit, and per worker.
- 7.** Economies of scale envisaged by setting up the Fund have not yet materialised.
- 8. Evaluation:** Evaluation materials were distributed by the projects to responding organisations, rather than by the Fund Evaluators themselves. The evaluation requirements were perceived by some projects to be excessive, and a barrier to securing the involvement of workplaces, particularly within the construction sector. This resulted in variable response levels between pro-

jects, particularly at the end of year stage. The end-of-year figures do not therefore give a completely accurate picture of improvements made in certain projects over the course of the year.

9. The evaluation process has been streamlined in response to these comments, and the need for correct and detailed evaluation was heavily emphasised during the application workshops for Round Two. The quality and timeliness of evaluation should improve for Round Two as a result.

**Conclusions:**

- The WSA Challenge Fund increased worker involvement in the organisations recruited.
- The Fund has increased behaviours likely to lead to improved health and safety standards – even in organisations with existing high standards of managements.
- The WSAs themselves do not require high levels of health and safety qualification to effectively promote worker involvement – communication skills are as important.
- The Fund is a relatively expensive method of generating worker involvement.