

# LOCAL AUTHORITIES HEALTH AND SAFETY FORUM (LA FORUM)

Minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the LA Forum held on Wednesday 13 July 2005,  
Fortune Room, Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HS

<u>Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Apologies Received</u>	
John Cullen (Chair)	HSE	Joyce Edmond-Smith	HSC Commissioner
Ian Lavery	Glasgow City Council	Steve Sumner	EO
John McClean	GMB	Alistair Dodds	SOPD
John Holden	IOSH		
Marion Johnstone	IOSH		
Allan Parry	TGWU		
Hope Daley	UNISON		
Jonathan Lloyd	WLGA		
Nicholas Booker	HSE		
Robbert Hermanns	HSE		
Nikki Hughes	HSE		
Steve Lee	HSE		
Robert Parkes	HSE		
Katherine Smitton	HSE		

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 John Cullen welcomed Marion Johnstone from IOSH, Robbert Hermanns from HSE's Central Medical Unit, and Steve Lee and Nicholas Booker for the Stress agenda item, to the meeting. Apologies were received from Joyce Edmond-Smith, Steve Sumner and Alistair Dodds.

1.2 Robbert Hermanns explained to members his role within HSE and the work he is hoping to take forward on Occupational Health provision with LAs. He agreed to provide members with an update at the next meeting.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

## 2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Stocktake Questionnaire – an update will be provided at the next meeting.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

2.2 Framework Document – The 32 Councils in Scotland have decided to launch the document in conjunction with the Scottish Executive in September. Following this, they will seek backing from CoSLA.

2.3 Influencing Central Government – a response has been received from Nick Raynsford (ODPM) to the letter from Jane Kennedy. Members found it rather disappointing in that it didn't offer any new way forward. However, other avenues of influence are now being pursued (See agenda item).

2.4 Green Book Guidance – the meeting to develop guidance will be held in August, and members will be updated on progress at the next meeting.

ACTION:SECRETARIAT

2.5 Newly Elected Members – an article is currently being drafted for LG First.

ACTION:SECRETARIAT

2.6 Asbestos in Schools – the forum set up to take this work forward is currently reviewing how best to take this work forward given the realignment of work to reflect the PSA targets. Members expressed their concern that this work may not now take place, and asked that their concerns be relayed to the Asbestos team.

ACTION:SECRETARIAT

2.7 Benchmarking – an update provided as an agenda item.

2.8 All Wales Manual Handling Scheme – the scheme has been adopted in Wales. Members felt further work and consultation needs to be carried out before such a scheme could be adopted nationally. Subject to this further work, the matter will be raised at a future meeting.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

2.9 Stress Standards – an update provided as an agenda item.

2.10 Stakeholder Communication Project – The project sought the views of 100 Chief Executives and 100 Elected Members on LAs role as both employer and regulator. Members felt this had yielded useful information, such as the fact that  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's of LAs contacted had health and safety factored into their Improvement Plan. Members were interested to know the spread of LAs interviewed. The Summary report will be copied to members.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

### **3. PUBLIC SERVICES PROGRAMME (PSP) – A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO LAs -Update**

3.1 **ODPM** – An action plan was drawn up in response to the report of the Ministerial Taskforce. In response to this, the ODPM invited the PSP to attend a National Steering Group for improving management of productive time. This group is receptive to the PSP message that the effective management of health and safety can have a positive impact on the management of sickness absence.

3.2 Members were informed of work with the **Better Regulation Executive (BRE)**. This Executive has been set up to take forward the Hampton agenda, looking at, inter alia, reducing the number of inspectorates, lifting burdens on business and implementing a risk based approach. Health and safety within the CPA process was discussed with the BRE, and was given a good reception. There was commitment from the BRE to pursue this argument within the Cabinet Office.

3.3 **Benchmarking** – Members were updated on the work of the Benchmarking working group (WG). A band of performance criteria in support of the tool is now being developed, drawing on HS(G)65, the EO's Stocktake questionnaire, the WLGA's Annual Reporting document, and the Framework Document developed in Scotland. These criteria will provide the standards against which the LA can assess its performance; HSE inspectors will also use it as a tool for assessing LA performance – see 3.7 below.

3.4 The WG has agreed to put a paper to the Safety Practitioners' Forum to seek their agreement for the tool. Following this, wider consultation of the tool will be carried out. Members will be updated of progress.

3.5 Members agreed that this tool could be developed for the wider public sector, although it was acknowledged that the supporting material would have to be tailored to the individual organisation within the sector.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

3.6 UNISON informed members of research, which they have commissioned, to identify the causes of sickness absence. The report is due to be released at Unison's annual conference in June 2006. Feedback on the research will be provided to members.

ACTION: UNISON

3.7 WLGA provided information on the Joint Council for Wales' Task and Finish Group who are also looking at sickness absence. They propose issuing a statement which places emphasis on the need for prevention, good safety management systems, and good occupational health provision.

3.8 **LA Strategic Intervention Project** – The project of intervention with LAs has started, albeit slowly. The plan is for a third of LAs to be contacted during the course of this work year. It is likely that this will be refined in years 2 & 3 so that engagement will be with those LAs offering the biggest scope for improvement.

3.9 To complement this work, Bill Callaghan has been engaging with CEs (through SOLACE). This has provided an opportunity to notify LAs as a whole about the intervention. Members said they would welcome a letter going to CEs ahead of the intervention, outlining the work. Members will be copied this letter.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

#### **4. Stress at Work Programme within LAs**

4.1 HSE is working closely with organisations in those sectors reporting the highest levels of stress: health, education, local authorities, central government, and the financial services to implement the Management Standards for work related stress.

4.2 HSE is providing a support programme to actively help organisations in these key sectors. HSE will be working closely with ACAS as a source of help and advice.

4.3 The Stress Programme team gave a presentation outlining this work. The team explained the process of recruiting approximately 30 LAs who would participate in the first phase of a project to roll the standards out. It is hoped these LAs will implement the standards and go on to Champion the approach in the second phase of the project.

4.4 The Stress Programme team agreed to attend a further meeting to update members.

**ACTION: SECRETARIAT**

## **5. AOB**

5.1 WLGA informed members of a Violence and Aggression passport scheme which has been developed in the NHS in Wales. It has agreement from the Welsh Assembly, and HSE Wales. Initial impressions from LAs in Wales are that they do not want to adopt this, as there is already best practice available and they believe that further work will be needed before such a scheme can be adopted nationally. WLGA will keep members informed if this work develops.

ACTION: WLGA

5.2 HSE's Waste and Recycling project is commissioning research to look at systems used for collection of recyclables. This research will identify systems currently in use, any technical constraints that exist and future developments.

5.3 LA Strategic Intervention Project – Briefing Pack Pg31 – the wrong acronym has been used for IOSH. This will need to be amended within the pack.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

5.4 TGWU queried work why work to include health and safety within the Green Book had not been extended to include the Red book at the same time. WLGA explained that this was due to the NJC being used, and hence there was agreement within local government for read across between both agreements.

5.5 HSE has agreed to raise awareness of the (low) risks associated with the use of Interactive Whiteboards. A guidance note was circulated to members. Members were asked to inform Secretariat if they were aware of any issues or concerns.

ACTION: SECRETARIAT

5.6 Members' attention was drawn to the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005 (CoVAWR) which were introduced on 6 July 2005.

5.7 John Cullen extended his thanks to John Holden for the significant contribution he has made to the work of the LA Forum over the past 3 years. Members are looking forward to working with John's replacement Marion Johnstone during her term of office.

## **6. NEXT MEETING**

16 November 2005 – 11.00AM, Rose Room, Rose Court