

HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE

Minutes: 37th meeting

Occupational Health Advisory Committee

HSE, Rose Court, London

17th July 2003

These are the minutes for the 37th meeting of OHAC. **Main topics** discussed included consideration of changes within HSE, a report back from the Commission meeting on the Forward Look, an update on First Aid, an update on the Priority Programmes for Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) and Stress, and a report on the SWI survey.

Members Present:

- **Miss Elizabeth Gyngell** HSE (Deputy Chair)
- **Mr Andrew Foster** CIEH
- **Ms Carol Bannister** RCN
- **Prof Tom Cox** BPS
- **Dr Keith Palmer** BMA/FoM/SoM
- **Mr Doug Russell** TUC
- **Prof David Stubbs** Ergonomics Society
- **Ms Claire Sullivan** TUC
- **Mr Roger Alesbury** CBI
- **Mr Steve Bailey** CBI
- **Dr Derek White** CBI

Assessors Present:

- **Mr James Steatham** Department of Health,
England

Observers Present:

- **Dr David Snashall** Chief Medical Advisor HSE
- **Dr Delia Skan** DETI NI
- **Dr Nerys Williams** HSE
- **Peter Farley** NAW

Secretariat Present:

- **Miss Anna Bliss** HSE (Acting Secretary)
- **Miss Melissa Webb** HSE (Assistant Secretary)

APOLOGIES RECEIVED FROM:

- Mrs Sandra Caldwell (Chair), Ms Kim Sunley, Dr Arthur Johnstone, Mrs Nola Ishmael, Dr Peter Wright, Dr Kit Harling

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. **Elizabeth Gyngell** welcomed OHAC members to the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2.1. Routine check on day's agenda. No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MANAGING HEALTH AT WORK (Paper OHAC/08/03)

3.1. **Anna Bliss** introduced the Managing Health at Work paper and the commitment in the HSC's developing strategy for 2004-2010 to do more to address the new and emerging work-related health issues.

3.2. Anna checked that the group had received the 'Strategic Thinking – Work in Progress' paper and asked that members contributed feedback and encouraged people in their wider networks to also do so.

3.3. Attention was drawn to the list of jobs arising from the HSC's discussion on 29th April of how they can do more to address health issues. HSC saw access to occupational health support as a priority. Any comments from the group on the list of jobs were welcomed to Anna.

3.4. It was highlighted that the overall strategy of Securing Health Together was still seen as the right one but we must now get on with it implementing it.

3.5. OHAC members were asked to comment on the possibility of combining their open meeting with a stakeholder conference to be held in the autumn. The general consensus was that it was feasible as long as the focus and structure was managed appropriately so that the value of an open meeting was not lost.

3.6. **Elizabeth Gyngell** asked for volunteers to help form the conference/open meeting working group. The volunteers were: Steve Bailey, Tom Cox, Carol Bannister, Dave Stubbs, Andrew Foster and Doug Russell.

ACTION: Secretariat to notify OHAC once a date has been set for the conference/open meeting.

4. REPORT FROM HSC FORWARD LOOK

4.1. **Carol Bannister** fed back from the Commission meeting on 13th May 2003 where she was asked to give a brief 5-minute presentation on OHAC's forward look.

4.2. The group was reminded that the 3 topics put forward to the Commission were; Improving occupational health support, vocational rehabilitation agenda and work-related mental health problems. The Commission were informed that these topics of importance might be different if a look of beyond 5 years were to be considered.

ACTION: Secretariat to distribute copies of the HSC forward look paper, which includes all Acs priorities. Carol said her impression was that the other ACs were more focused on hard science and that it had been fascinating to hear them.

5. UPDATE ON FIRST AID (Paper OHAC/09/03)

5.1. **Alastair Steele** introduced the first aid at work paper and asked for any comments on the proposed discussion document.

5.2. It was noted that episodes of mental ill health manifesting at work was an area that could be addressed within the proposals on first aid training. This was distinguished from the mental trauma to onlookers after a catastrophic incident, and the need for first aiders to be able to cope effectively with the situation. OHAC members remarked that there was a tension between a desire to have cost-effective FA cover, but to provide sufficient prescription in the Regulations that all parties seem to seek.

5.3. OHAC agreed to the discussion document going to the Commission on the 5th August 2003.

ACTION: Members to encourage their networks to contribute the discussion process once it begins.

6. UPDATE WITH MSD PP (Paper OHAC/10/03)

6.1. **Carol Bannister** reported on the MSD Working Group meeting on the 30th June 2003. A key output is the mapping exercise of HSE's activities.

6.3. The Manual Handling Assessment chart previously introduced to OHAC as a tool for inspectors is being adapted for use by the public and safety representatives.

6.4. An evaluation of Working Back in Scotland was provided (annex 3) as requested at the 36th meeting on the 1st April. Carol referred members to the paper for full details of progress.

ACTION: Secretariat to circulate the mapping exercise.

7. UPDATE WITH STRESS PP (Paper OHAC/11/03)

7.1. **Colin MacKay** reported on the progress of the Stress PP as in the paper. It was noted that the pilot standards were reviewed at an 'experts' stakeholder meeting on the 21st May and further meetings for TU reps and the human resource community will be held in the autumn. Tom Cox reported that the Stress Working Group members had been in dialogue with HSE and attended this meeting. They will now be involved as a group on a more formal basis.

7.2. The group discussed whether the standards are only appropriate for organisations predisposed to make them work.

8. SWI REPORT (Paper OHAC/12/03)

8.1. **Melissa Webb** introduced the Self-reported Work-related ill health paper. OHAC members had mostly tried to access the document via the Internet and had experienced difficulties.

8.2. Questions were asked regarding the real meaning of the figures.

8.3. Melissa also reported on the HSE bid for a module in the 2003/4 and 2004/5 LFS and the plans for a HSE work place based survey.

ACTION: Melissa Webb to feedback to EMSU the difficulties with accessing the document on the web. Also to obtain hard copies of the SWI and circulate to OHAC and to ask EMSU to answer question raised by OHAC.

9. OTHER INFORMATION

- OHAC/13/03 'Current Issues July 2003'
- OHAC/14/03 'Primary Care'

9.1. It was noted that **Peter Farley** was concerned that the Primary Care paper did not mention its existence in Wales or the organisational differences.

9.2. **Carol Bannister** alerted members to an RCN conference in October addressing OH in Primary Care.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1. OHAC voiced concerns regarding HSE's decision not to replace Dr. David Snashall as Chief Medical Adviser at the end of his contract. They believed this might suggest HSE was not committed to health at a time when it appears to be saying it wants to do more. **Elizabeth Gyngell** assured the group that there were other means of obtaining medical advice such as Ron McCaig taking a stronger lead, closer communications with DWP's CMO team and use of Nerys Williams and EMAS David Snashall will be retained to do some specific work for HSE.

11. MEETING CLOSED