

Small Business Trade Association Forum Minutes

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Small Business Trade Association Forum

Minutes of the Meeting of the Small Business Trade Association Forum, held on 9th October in the Shakespeare Room, Rose Court.

Present:

Judith Donovan CBE, Chairman
 Linda Gowling, Association of Charity Shops
 Philip Clarke, British Association of Chemical Specialities
 Wayne Smith, British Coatings Federation
 Annabel Berdy, British Retail Consortium
 Andrew Braund, Confederation of Paper Industries
 Rosina Robson, Federation of Small Business
 Chris Dabner, National Association of Master Bakers
 Pat Stanley, National Farmers' Union
 Matthew Cowan, Professional Contractors Group
 Ron Bonner, Professional Lighting and Sound Association
 Martin Isles, Quarry Products Association
 Mike Floodgate, Radio, Electrical and Television Retailers' Association
 Tony Hutchinson, Rural & Industrial Design and Building Association
 Steve McFarlane, United Kingdom Warehousing Association
 John Morecroft, Vehicle Builders and Repairers' Association
 Sofia Gkiousou, National Federation of Retail Newsagents

Apologies:

Paul Smith, Aboricultural Association
 Kieran O'Keefe, British Chambers of Commerce
 Pete Walker, British Constructional Steelwork Association Ltd
 Haydn Steele, Construction Plant Hire Association
 Daniel McAlonan, British Dental Association
 Declan Moore, British Glass Manufacturers' Confederation
 Bob Cotton, British Hospitality Association
 Robert Keen, British International Freight Association
 Michael Lee, British Woodworking Federation
 Leslie Hill, British Wood Preserving & Damp Proofing Association (representing the Property Care Association, the Wood Protection Association and the British Pest Control Association)
 Peter Newport, Chemical Business Association
 Andrew Large, Cleaning and Support Services Trade Association
 Janet Asherson, Confederation of British Industry
 Shelley Atkinson Frost, Construction Confederation
 Paul Reeve, Electrical Contractors' Association
 Louise Ward, Engineering Employers Federation
 Phil Russell, Federation of Master Builders
 Andrew Cooper, Federation of Tour Operators
 Ian Douglas, Federation of Window Cleaners
 Jane Bennet, Forum of Private Business
 Gary Pritchard, Glass and Glazing Federation
 Wendy Nixon, Hair and Beauty Industry Association
 Bob Towse, Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association
 Geraint Day, Institute of Directors
 Robert Hudson, National Association of Shopfitters
 John Gililand, National Care Homes Association
 Howard Button, National Federation of Demolition Contractors
 Ray Seymour, National Hairdressers Federation

Mervyn Pilley, National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors
 Frank Ursell, Registered Nursing Home Association
 Ruth Pott, Road Haulage Association
 Collette Best, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
 Tim Webb, PICON
 Garry Parker, Small Business Bureau
 Jean Rennie, Timber Trade Federation

Officials Present:

Roger Brentall, Horizon Scanning Team
 Hugh McNeil, Director of the Health and Safety Review Team (Better Regulation Executive)
 Ben Davison, Policy Advisor (Better Regulation Executive)
 Professor Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work (Department for Work and Pensions)
 Mike Owens, Business Efficiency Unit

Heather Butler – SBTAF Secretariat
 Zoe Woodrow - SBTAF Secretariat
 Chris Trantom - SBTAF Secretariat

[DN: Put any information about the lunch in the minutes? Pos just that it took place?]

1.	Introductions and apologies
1.1	Judith Donovan welcomed members to the meeting. Judith informed members that since the last meeting 2 new members have joined the Forum. This means that there are now 51 members in total.
2.	Minutes of the last meeting
2.1	It was agreed that the minutes reflected an accurate and true description of the July SBTAF meeting.
3	Horizon scanning
3.1	<p>Roger Brentnall, Horizon Scanning Team, introduced this item. Roger explained that Horizon Scanning is the systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and likely developments. It is about taking a step back and looking forward to the future. This in turn ensures that HSE is adequately prepared for the future.</p> <p>Roger then explained in detail a number of the socio-economic trends and related health and safety implications that may be of interest to SBTAF members. These include the growth in the number of SME's, the ageing workforce, the impact of migrant workers and changing working patterns. The Horizon Scanning team also consider technological developments and a number of these were briefly explained to the forum. These include hydrogen fuels and rapid manufacturing.</p> <p>Following the consideration of potential trends and implications a number of possible scenarios for 2017 have been developed and these were briefly touched upon by Roger.</p>
3.3	<p>Several questions were put to Roger following the presentation. It was mentioned that although climate change was briefly touched upon during the presentation should it not warrant greater consideration as it could be the key trend in the future. Roger agreed that huge importance can be attributed to the effects of climate change and that this is a key driver alongside ensuring security of supply in the development of new energy technologies. A question was asked regarding the implantation of knowledge to ensure that health and safety information could be permanently recalled. Roger advised that although work is being done in this area it is currently at the stage of mapping the brain's response to various stimuli using a technique called fMRI and that "mind control" lies beyond current planning timelines.</p> <p>Tony Bandle, Head of Business Involvement Unit, took the opportunity to state that any of the</p>

	<p>trends that Roger discussed would hit SMEs hardest as they would have the least resources to adequately prepare for them. HSE would therefore appreciate it if Forum members would alert us to any difficulties they may have when encountering the effects of new trends or just let us know how these trends impact on the traditional ways of dealing with health and safety issues.</p>
4	BRE Review
4.1	<p>Hugh McNeil, Director of the Health and Safety Review Team, introduced Forum members to the Review of the Health and Safety Regime. He showed members the specific terms of reference of the review. It was explained that the review is assessing the cumulative impact of the health and safety regulatory regime upon low risk businesses, particularly SMEs.</p> <p>Hugh explained that so far the review team have concentrated on desk based research. This has involved international comparisons and a review of the academic literature. The review team will report to the HSC in November. The next step for the project is to undertake the evidence gathering process. Coming to talk to forum members is a part of that process. The team would like to determine HOW they should go about this and WHAT the issues are that they should consider. The evidence gathering process will take place from November and will include a number of events across the country, focus group work etc.</p>
4.2	<p>There was a lively discussion following the presentation. Members discussed in detail the difficulties they encounter as a result of the health and safety regulatory regime. Members expressed frustration at the perceived lack of 'joined up thinking' regarding regulatory reform. The Global Harmonisation System (GHS) and Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) regulations were cited as a specific example where difficulties arise for SMEs.</p> <p>Several members expressed the belief that increased inspection is vital to ensuring SME understanding and compliance. This developed into a discussion around the need to provide advice to SMEs. Hugh queried as to whether members thought that it would be worthwhile having a body outside of the enforcement regime to provide advice.</p> <p>A number of members commented upon the difficulties they encounter as a result of the differing interpretations of risk by HSE and LAs. The importance of working closely with LAs was stated. The HSE Example Risk Assessments was cited as being one example where HSE initiatives have not been picked up by LA enforcement officers/EHOs and as a result difficulties have arisen. It was explained that when members mentioned using the example risk assessments to LA enforcement officers/EHOs they were unaware of the details. It was pointed out that although it may be local councils and not HSE who are guilty of excessive interpretation of health and safety regulations SMEs do not distinguish between LAs and HSE. This then reflects badly upon the HSE. Members agreed that this is an area where much confusion is found and where improvements could be made. Members also commented upon the difficulties associated with the prevailing compensation culture.</p> <p>The Chair asked Hugh what the potential outcomes of the inquiry could be. Hugh highlighted the fact that the review is at an early stage and it is therefore not possible to pre-empt its results. He explained that it could result in a variety of practical options but that there was also the potential for a more radical outcome.</p>
5	Health Work and Well Being
5.1	<p>Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work at the Department for Work and Pensions introduced members to the Health, Work and Well-being strategy. The strategy aims to improve the health and productivity of the working age population, help people with health problems to enter, remain in and return to work and to prevent people from falling out of work and onto benefits.</p> <p>The strategy has been in existence since 2005 and so far a good start has been made. A range of co-ordinated initiatives have been put in place for example an evidence review showing links between health and work, national and regional business awards for those carrying out health and work related initiatives and HSE's work on the stress management standards. However there</p>

	<p>needs to be a stronger focus on SMEs in these initiatives. Dame Carol explained the challenges that the strategy faces and the importance of prevention and early intervention in keeping people in or getting them back to work.</p> <p>Dame Carol discussed with the forum the approach that BT has taken to stress and mental well-being. Their strategy was comprised three components. Primary – reducing stress at source and making adjustments. Secondary – identifying early signs of distress and supporting individuals. Tertiary – assisting established cases cope and recover. A number of statistics support the success of this strategy both on individuals and the company.</p> <p>There are specific challenges when trying to make the strategy work for SMEs. SMEs do not have the same resource levels as larger companies, it is often more difficult to communicate with SMEs and more information on the business case to invest in health is essential. However, small, low cost changes can make a big difference to keeping staff happy, healthy and at work. Reducing sickness absence would have benefits for turnover, business productivity and continuity. The benefits could in fact be even greater for SMEs than larger businesses. Dame Carol provided the group with a case study of an SME that put the health work and well being strategy into action and explained the associated successes.</p> <p>Dame Carol finally informed the forum about her Review of the Health of the Working Age Population. This will be a wide ranging Review, looking at the health related factors that influence working life in Great Britain. Dame Carol is particularly keen to get the views of SMEs about the eight key Review questions, and to receive both quantitative and qualitative data about the issues that affect them. The deadline for responses (through the HWWB website) is 30 November, with the Review due to be published early next year. The Review is of key importance to the strategy, as it will shape its direction for the next few years.</p>
5.2	<p>. A lively discussion between members took place after the presentation. Members discussed the difficulties associated with making the strategy a reality in industries where 'one-man bands' predominate. It was stated that although this strategy sounds excellent in theory it may seem very distant to the sole trader who is suffering stress. Members explained that a tight knit atmosphere often prevails in smaller companies and employees in SMEs will often work through an illness so as not to jeopardise the security of the organisation. Dame Carol explained that she appreciated the difficulties encountered by SMEs and would find it very useful to know what would help to make a difference. Where we identify challenges we need to work towards practical, relevant solutions.</p> <p>A member told the group of a case study of an SME that had employed a part time nurse to be on site for employees and the benefits that were associated with this scheme. It was suggested that the sponsorship of an increasing number of nurses to be 'on site' in workplaces could have significant benefits. Dame Carol agreed that having access to GPs or nurses in the workplace could be very successful; although it would inevitably be easier for larger companies to organise this there could be a way to make this kind of service available to SMEs. Dame Carol is keen to investigate the concept of an early intervention return to work team, comprising a number of different healthcare professionals, which might also benefit SMEs. The possibility of having chaplains visit workplaces was also put forward as a suggestion.</p> <p>Members spoke about the mixed messages that they felt they were receiving from the government. The Workplace Health Connect Pilot was referred to as an example. It was stated that despite this being a free and useful service funding was being removed. Tony Bandle contributed to the discussion by pointing out that there is in fact a conundrum associated with the Workplace Health Connect Pilot, although one of its primary aims was to help SMEs understand health issues it was primarily used to help access information on safety issues. Dame Carol added that the Workplace Health Connect process can be time consuming and SMEs would prefer to tailor the package to their specific requirements. Judith Donovan stated that the difficulty with Workplace Health Connect is that it is accessed by the telephone, it could be more useful if it made visits to workplaces in the way that blood banks do. The Workplace Health Connect Pilot evaluation is due to report in February.</p> <p>It was pointed out that SMEs often find it difficult to source occupational health advice at a reasonable price. SMEs need tailored advice, rather than a 'one size fits all' solution. The difficulties of maintaining consistency with human resource legislation was also mentioned.</p>

	<p>Organisations are unwilling to push people back into the workplace for the fear of being taken to a tribunal. It was stated that the provision, by the Government, of matrix within which to work would be useful to SMEs.</p> <p>A member of the forum asked Dame Carol if her team had been talking to GPs. Dame Carol advised the forum that they had undertaken a survey of 1500 GPs about their attitudes towards health and work and have organised a number of road shows for GPs to provide them with a better understanding of the positive links between health and work. They are also trying to influence the under-graduate and post-graduate curriculum to ensure that there is a greater prominence of occupational health.</p>
6	Easier Access to Services (EASe) programme
6.1	<p>Mike Owens, Business Efficiency Unit, spoke to the forum about the Easier Access to Services (EASe) Programme. Mike explained that the Programme is in the very early stages of development and that he would like to explain what the Programme is about and try and determine what the involvement of SBTAF members could be.</p> <p>A brief overview of the current services was provided. This covered HSE Infoline, RIDDOR Incident Contact Centre, Workplace Health Connect (pilot), HSE Books, the HSE website and local offices.</p> <p>The drivers for change were then outlined. The drivers are both internal and external. Internal drivers included existing contracts are nearing the end of their lives and the overhead of co-ordinating multiple contracts. External drivers are political, economic, social and technical. The Varney review was cited as a specific example of a political driver. The aim of the Varney review is to achieve a better service to the public by organising and delivering them in a way that is meaningful to the citizen and businesses. To do this both citizens and businesses need to be engaged in the process of review.</p> <p>SBTAF help will be needed throughout the process to ensure that the services delivered through EASe are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the services needed; • the services that address all sectors of the economy; • services that are easy to understand and apply; • services that make a real difference to health and safety in the workplace.
6.2	<p>A very brief discussion followed the presentation. Members stressed the importance of responsiveness of the services. . It was stated that it is not useful to request information and then receive it several days later. Mike reported that HSE Infoline currently answered more than 90% of queries on the first contact.</p>
7	Information Exchange
	No issues were raised.
8	AOB
8.1	<p>A member of the forum mentioned the example of an employer who, following an accident at work had been told by the police that a RIDDOR report must be filled in immediately. The employer had been under the impression that the requirements were for a report to be completed within 3 days of an accident taking place. The secretariat will confirm the requirements and attempt to discover why this confusion could have arisen.</p>

9	Meeting round up and close
10	Date of next meeting – 15th January 2007, <u>14:30 – 16:30</u> (Please note this is an PM meeting)
Actions	<p>Secretariat to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise SBTAF members of the details of the Health, Work and Well Being consultation. This can be found at http://www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/Carol-Blacks-Review/Default.aspx. A link will also be placed on the e-community. • Confirm how the police are engaged with RIDDOR reporting <p>SBTAF members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and return the questionnaire about the SBTAF

To contact the Small Business Trade Association Forum Secretariat, please email sbtaf.secretariat@hse.gsi.gov.uk or telephone 020 7717 6482 or access the e-community at <http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/sbtafcommunity/grouphome>