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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
Senior Management Team

People Issues – A Strategic Approach

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Issue

1. In recent months, there have been a number of activities and initiatives which have given a wealth of feedback on many, but often similar, people issues. The Senior Management Team [SMT] is keen to look at the main themes emerging, prioritise these, and address them in a joined up way. The purpose of this paper is therefore to pull all of the strands together to identify the main themes emerging, and then to point to clear areas for action in a co-ordinated way, rather than respond to the separate initiatives. This paper attempts to do this whilst taking account of what's already happening and only proposing new work where there are gaps.
2. We have explicitly excluded a response to discrimination, bullying and harassment issues raised recently in the People Survey, as this is subject to separate research.

Timing

3. For discussion at the May 2010 SMT meeting.

Recommendation

4. That the SMT:
 - agree to the approach;
 - note and agree the themes and the gaps; and
 - consider the appropriateness of the proposed priorities for action.

Background

5. Over the last couple of months, there have been a great deal of valuable, but separate, activities that have generated feedback and information about how staff feel about being an HSE employee and people issues in general. These are:
 - The Employee Engagement (People) Survey – 71% of staff took part in this Civil Service wide survey – the first of this kind undertaken, and HSE's first survey since 2006.

- Investors in People (IiP) reassessment – HSE underwent a successful reassessment of our status against the IiP standard. It involved interviews with 138 HSE employees of from all Directorates and grades and in multiple locations.
- The Corporate Workforce Strategy 2010 to 2013 – developed after discussion with a wide range of managers and informed by analysis of relevant data. It examined the future workforce HSE needs over the next 3 years, and the challenges it needs to overcome to ensure we have the right staff to deliver our business.
- Improving Leadership Project – gathered feedback from a number of focus groups, and from all Directorate management boards, including SMT on what leadership was like in HSE and where we needed to improve.
- SMT visits – well attended events took place at all HSE offices during March 2010 and gathered a variety of issues.
- Employer branding research – gathered views on what our existing and prospective employees think of us and what we could do to improve our employer brand to increase our recruitment prospects, particularly in scarce areas.

What are the common themes and the priorities?

6. Even though we have a wealth of feedback and potential areas for action, we cannot and should not try to do everything – this will run the risk of initiative overload with little real success or movement in key areas. Whatever priorities we tackle, we need something that will pull these strands together under one umbrella to make them meaningful, joined up and sustainable – we believe the People Strategy provides the right vehicle for this. We have therefore analysed the feedback from each of the activities [which is presented in more detail in Annex 1] and have summarised the common themes below around the People Strategy headings:

- **Effective leadership** – across all bands and roles we need to :
 - Continue to improve leadership and management competence in HSE
 - Focus on, and communicate, what needs to be achieved and why
- **Planned and Diverse Workforce** – we need to:
 - Continuously improve our success in recruiting specialists
 - Improve the perception of careers in HSE internally and externally
 - Consider how we reward staff in a wider sense [i.e., not just pay]
 - Improve succession planning and be transparent about how we plan to do it
- **Improving performance** – we need to:
 - Tackle poor performance consistently
 - Be clear about what we expect, particularly with junior staff
 - Improve our competence framework
- **Engaged workforce** – key themes are:
 - Staff feel valued by their team but not always by senior management
 - Empower more and improve decision making
- **Right skills** – key themes are:
 - We need to communicate learning and development [L&D] opportunities better so staff understand what's available

- Staff and managers need to identify development needs better and make the right choices – this will save money and ensure more targeted and relevant development.
 - We need to evaluate the impact of L&D activity
7. We suggest we focus our efforts on addressing these themes. It's important to note however, that though Human Resources Directorate [HRD] and Communications Directorate [CD] will [or plan to] lead and provide many of the tools to facilitate improvement, there is an equally, and arguably more important role for all Directorates in this process to actually make the improvements and changes happen.

DO SMT AGREE WITH THE COMMON THEMES AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED?

What's already in place or planned?

8. It is encouraging that we have already embarked upon, or have clear plans in place to do so, specific activities to address many aspects of the issues staff have raised – a point the liP assessor explicitly acknowledged.
- We have developed a new management and leadership development programme, Pathways, which as well as meeting the needs of new managers, is for the first time, also aimed at those who have been a manager for a while or are in a leadership role. Feedback so far is very encouraging, and we either need to encourage more managers to make use of it, **or make it [or elements of it] mandatory?**
 - We plan to review our competence framework and in particular to better reflect management and leadership expectations. This will provide more focus for career development discussions, along with more clarity on what's expected at each band, and the learning and development available to underpin this.
 - We will use e-HR to record competence levels against the new framework – this will promote discussions between managers and staff to identify development needs (and a proper solution) more accurately. In time it will give an organisational picture of our competence and in effect, undertake a skills analysis. This will allow us to map the development journey and the effectiveness of L&D interventions.
 - The Regulatory Development Needs Analysis [RDNA] tool and Guidance for Regulators Information Point [GRIP] provides a structured way for assessing regulatory competence and meeting gaps. FOD plans to extend this to B5/6 front line roles, and is discussing it's application to similar roles within HID.
 - We have held focus groups to examine where we are with leadership, and SMT has also undertaken some self reflection.
 - We have produced a 3 year workforce strategy which highlights the workforce challenges we face, along with proposals for action. We are already well on with many of these, with priority activity focussed on: reviewing and revising the performance management and pay arrangements [including identifying other ways for rewarding staff outside of performance pay]; ensuring we can recruit and retain scarce disciplines; extending current activity for developing specialists; developing visible career development opportunities; the provision of a development scheme for BME staff with potential to progress, and developing a robust succession planning process.

- In response to the employer branding research, we are employing measures to make us more attractive to prospective employees, and developing a long term engagement strategy to raise our profile as an employer. The actions described in this paper will also help improve our employment offering further.
- To help improve performance management, HRD has improved its related guidance and support – the latter through field workshops on absence management etc – this has helped to reduce sickness absence significantly in HSE. We will continue this successful approach, but change the emphasis this year to more general performance related issues.

Where are the gaps?

9. The work already underway will go a long way to addressing the priorities we have identified. There are still some gaps in what we need to do to improve in these areas which we've summarised below, and Annex 1 also includes actions to address these too:

- We need to communicate the 'learning and development' offer more clearly to help staff understand and decide what they need.
- We need to evaluate the success of our learning and development activity, organisationally and in the line.
- We have lots of good practice of managing, developing and motivating staff, but don't have established mechanisms for sharing it.
- To make staff feel more informed and valued, we need to communicate better in general, but in our expectations of them in particular – not just what SMT, HRD and CD do formally, but within Directorates and teams and do it more often and informally – the latter is particularly relevant to more junior staff.
- We need to review how we make decisions i.e. how we involve staff and how much autonomy we give them - do we want them to ask for permission or ask for forgiveness?
- We must develop workable proposals for succession planning.
- We need to get better at addressing poor performance, and give a clear message that we will set objectives for managers in this area and expect them to be met.

Should we consider resurrecting the 'Few Better Manager's project?

- There is a perception that people issues, including addressing poor management and leadership, are HRDs responsibility to solve. Whilst HRD can provide the policies, reward structures, training opportunities etc, the reality is that making these changes reality is the responsibility of Directorates, managers and staff.
- There is an underlying theme running through the feedback, which relates to Internal Communications. There is a desire by employees for greater visibility of leaders and more face to face communication. Whilst people seem to understand the overall strategy, employees would prefer more verbal communication around it. In addition, the feedback suggests a need to increase the communications capability of our leaders and line managers, so they feel better equipped to communicate face to face, to communicate change effectively and to engage their staff. It is proposed,

DO SMT AGREE THAT THESE ARE GAPS WE SHOULD ADDRESS?

How will we measure success?

10. We need to know if the actions and measures outlined in this paper are moving us forward. Some of this won't be easy to measure and we won't see the pay-off for some time in a number of areas. That said, there are some practical things we can do in the short and longer term:

- Short term
 - The People Survey 2010 will be another temperature test and will give us information on how far the measures we've put in place are taking effect
 - Directorates need to put feedback mechanisms in place to 'test' to what extent their part of HSE is improving in the priority areas
 - We will track the take up of management and leadership training as a surrogate for movement in this area
- Longer term
 - We need robust evaluation methods organisationally and locally to gauge the impact of our L&D activity. The evaluation strategy HRD is preparing will make a start on this.
 - Recording against the new competence framework will allow us to see how our competence has improved individually and organisationally over time, in important areas such as communication, management, and leadership. It will also tell us a great deal about the effectiveness and impact of the learning and development opportunities we offer.

DO SMT AGREE WITH THIS APPROACH TO MEASURING SUCCESS?

Conclusion

11. Our analysis of all of the feedback has pointed to some common themes. In most cases, we already have work underway that will go a long way to addressing these. We have also made proposals for action where we do have gaps. We believe the proposed action plan covers all of the priority areas i.e., by work already planned with further suggested activity to cover the gaps. That said, whatever tools and processes we put in place, we need to make sure we focus on achieving the right outcomes – this requires commitment and action from all levels of staff and should be a key message in our underpinning communications plan.

Consultation

12. A range of HSE staff and managers have been consulted as part the various activities that have led to this paper.

Financial/resource implications

13. Most HRD activity is already factored in to work plans – provided the resource is not reduced significantly this year or more urgent work is not of greater priority, most of the actions ought to be achievable. There may be some additional work for CD in creating new communications activities, and if SMT would like any element of the Pathways programme to be mandatory, there would be a need for additional funding or top-slicing from Directorate budgets.

Action

14. That the SMT:

- agree to the approach;
- note and agree the themes and the gaps; and
- consider the appropriateness of the proposed priorities for action.

Annex 1: Summary of main themes and action plan

	People Survey	IIP	Leadership project	Workforce strategy	Employer branding research	SMT visit feedback
Effective leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions of leadership are low Visibility of senior management is a particular issue Perceptions of change management, communications and opportunities for upward feedback are low. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preference for more verbal and face to face communications. More top management visibility Some good examples to demonstrate improvement in leadership and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to improve leadership and management Tackle poor performance Focus on, and communicate, what needs to be achieved and why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future resource pressures may mean change management challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More face to face communications would be welcome Better communications is vital.
Engaged workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of staff have a clear understanding of HSE's purpose and objectives Majority find work interesting and challenging Strong team ethos Scope for more autonomy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of people are proud of the work they do. Some excellent examples of involvement in decision making. Scope to make this more consistent. People feel valued by team/colleagues but less so by top management. Preference for more verbal communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visibility of leaders better, but could be improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low turnover and high satisfaction levels. 'Social worth' of the job is a strong driver for HSE employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HSE's senior managers have in the past failed to defend HSE's reputation
Planned and diverse workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve perceptions of opportunities to develop career in HSE Second most common theme to change in open comments was training and career development 60% of staff feel they have an acceptable workload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some lower level staff feel there are few opportunities for development or career progression. Negative perceptions about promotion process – process unfair or not transparent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a lack of clear career paths and options in some areas Scope for more managed career moves No explicit link between succession planning and development activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The variety of the roles available within the organisation are highly motivating to employees Lack of overt career path for 'non-career' civil servants For employees wishing to continue in their specific area of specialism, the extent of career potential is limited. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career progression in some directorates is a concern.
Improve performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 33% feel poor performance is dealt with effectively. Most common theme to change in open comments was "management". High neutral response when asked about benefits package suggesting more communication may be required to assure staff of monetary value of benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address inconsistencies regarding management effectiveness. The HSE Core Competence Framework is inconsistently applied and not specific or measurable . Great employee terms and benefits but taken for granted by some employees and there may be scope to communicate and present better. HSE need to consider how to improve staff perception of how performance is recognised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to tackle poor performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant reductions in the levels of sickness absence. Increasing number of managers are seeking advice from HR on how to tackle poor performance. Remains a view that there is scope to improve performance management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A flexible & enjoyable working environment engendered by benefits of public sector employment Overall employees claim to be content and satisfied with HSE as an employer but pay was an area of frustration. HSE is felt to be very flexible as an employer, this was felt to be a particularly motivating among those who have private sector experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance pay is a source of stress. Perception if you are not in the top 50%, you are under-performing.
Right skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall encouraging but some relatively high degrees of uncertainty. Just over a third of staff are unsure if L&D has helped improve performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wealth of learning and development opportunities are available but need to improve communication of them. RDNA is excellent, Excellent coverage of appraisal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not covered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multitude of development programmes available to staff but these are not presented or marketed very effectively There is no coherent framework of talent management arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wide variety of roles are available, potential to move into other areas e.g. policy, management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warwick training – balancing demands with the job.

	People Survey	liP	Leadership project	Workforce strategy	Employer branding research	SMT visit feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second most common theme to change in open comments was training and career development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> process. There are inconsistencies in evaluation of the impact of L&D activity. 				