



LOCAL AUTHORITY/HSE PARTNERSHIP

DEVELOPING A SHARED FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This note is for the information of all with an interest in the development and maintenance of professional competence amongst regulatory practitioners and follows a workshop held on Monday 9th July 2007

Background

Over the past several months a project management board drawn from HSE, CIEH, REHIS and LACORS and LA representatives has overseen work to produce a common competence framework for all Health and Safety Regulators that recognises different levels of authorisation. The aim is to ensure ongoing training and development needs for HSE Inspectors and LA Health & Safety Enforcement Officers can be identified and met and that their authorisation to enforce reflects their own personal competence set, when viewed against a standard benchmark.

The need for this type of agreed framework emerged from the Local Authority Health and Safety Enforcement Officer's Perceptions of their Support, Information and Training Needs (SITNA) report of November 2005 (HSE Research Report 418). One of the key drivers for the production of this report was to support the LA/HSE partnership.

Why a framework?

A competence framework is not simply an academic exercise – indeed, its whole virtue is in the practical benefits it brings to developing staff and managing their performance towards the ends of the organisation in which it is applied. In short, a competence framework for H&S regulators will:

- strengthen the regulators' partnership through convergence of approaches, processes and standards;
- achieve better value for money (more targeted learning and development, including CPD and scope to share resources);
- confirm and demonstrate competent workforces and consistent regulation;
- help manage business risks (e.g. through ensuring appropriate attention and resources are given to maintaining regulators' competence); and
- provide a foundation for a shared vision for long term development.

Framework Development

Whilst a project management board has overseen the development of the framework, the practical 'hands-on' work has been undertaken by a smaller team, drawn from the organisations who form the project partnership and a range of practising Inspectors. As part of the framework development process, the project team ran a workshop on 9 July at CIEH in London. Those attending included a range of Local Authority interests, operational staff from HSE, and colleagues from the Food Standards Agency, the Office of Fair Trading, and the Environment Agency, as well as the team.

A key overall objective was to reach a common understanding of the concepts of competence and knowledge frameworks and how these might be used to assess learning and development requirements.

The workshop essentially comprised two halves: first, delegates heard about the competence model itself, the concepts on which it was based, and views of its value from each of the organisations represented on the project team; and second, delegates undertook some work to probe the model, its shape and completeness, and its usability. In particular the workshop heard from the Environment Agency about its experiences of developing a similar framework for its own staff.

The outcome was validation of the model, though it was noted that development work remains ongoing and no final decisions concerning ratification and implementation have been taken. There was also agreement that the model was flexible and could be adapted for areas of regulation other than health and safety. The workshop agreed that the model should remain simple, allowing detailed supporting material to be developed (or existing material linked) to suit the particular application and regulatory regime. Workshop delegates all agreed that there was a great benefit in their remaining in touch with the work, and continuing to contribute to its development.

The Framework

The framework will specify a **minimum requirement** for those fully authorised to enforce. The **role** of these inspectors within a team or organization will determine the mix of **additional** knowledge, skills and competences they will need to develop and maintain. Competence levels will also need to be developed to clarify the requirements for part-authorization. Further work is planned to tackle these issues. The framework comprises the following:

- A "general" competences menu comprising:
 - a core behavioural framework (being open and communicative, acting professionally, taking personal responsibility, valuing people, learning and innovating and applying and developing job related expertise);
 - basic IT skills (such as use of word processors, e-mail and web browsers, and understanding of security and health and safety issues associated with the use of IT)
 - personal management, procedures and organisational skills.
- A "regulatory" menu containing those common regulatory competences required by regulators of health and safety, such as:
 - enforcing
 - Inspecting and investigating
 - Auditing
 - Advising and influencing
 - Planning and organising
 - researching
- A "professional" menu which captures those areas of professional competence required in this context, including:
 - working from first principles
 - risk assessment

- partnership working
- business awareness

What happens next?

The CIEH has committed itself to ensuring that the framework's competences are built-in to the curriculum studied by Student EHPs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The CIEH expects the graduation of the first students to meet the framework during the summer of 2010. CIEH is also committed to supporting its existing members to maintain and enhance their competences under the framework.

In Scotland, the REHIS Council has endorsed the development of the framework and will ensure that it is embedded in the REHIS accredited degree programmes and schemes of practical training for all officers involving health and safety enforcement. REHIS has benchmarked the framework against the existing competences of its EHO members and is satisfied that they meet the requirements. REHIS is also committed to supporting its existing members to maintain and enhance their competences under the framework through its Scheme of Continuing Professional Development for Environmental Health Officers.

LACORS is committed to working with the Professional Bodies and Enforcement Agencies to produce a competence framework that will enable Health and Safety regulators to demonstrate their competence, identify those skills needed for specific roles and ensure that employers can authorise regulators to their level of competence.

HSE is in the process of developing a new PG Diploma for inspectors in partnership with Warwick University. This has been and will continue to be developed in line with the competence framework.

The intended application within HSE and LAs is in setting out a clear standard of competence expected of H&S inspectors, against which their competence can be demonstrated, and development needs identified. Its primary use will therefore be in training needs analysis. To this end, the model will be developed as a web-based package for use by HSE and LA staff and their managers to facilitate and enable a more robust assessment of L&D requirements.

The working group will put the final touches to the model following analysis of the feedback from the consultation workshop, and develop it for use as a web based system accessible to HSE and LA staff and their managers for use in assessing development needs. Given the views of the July workshop this will not be radically different from the version discussed there. As well as prescribing a framework of core competences to be met by enforcement officers, including ability to identify, risk assess and control matters of evident concern, supporting documentation will assist inspectors and managers to evaluate compliance with the framework by identifying key supporting knowledge that will be need to be demonstrated in respect of key industries and processes.

The framework will then be piloted in two or three county group areas, and in HSE, during October – December 2007 to enable robust consideration of its implications and its effectiveness in identifying staff development needs. The framework, supporting documentation and guidance will be put to all local authorities and other stakeholders for consultation in the early part of next year, and be subject to further trialling and consultation within HSE. It is envisaged that the final version will be submitted to the LACORS policy forum, HELA, the HSE Board and the HSC during the summer of 2008 with the intention of the framework going live in autumn 2008.

Communications

The team thought it right to put out this communiqué following the workshop as a means of raising general awareness about the work and its potential benefits to practitioners, employers and business. It is acknowledged that a full communications strategy now needs to be developed in order that all stakeholders may be made aware of the detail of the framework and will have an opportunity to contribute and comment as

necessary. To this end in particular the team will shortly be developing and publishing a question and answer brief, and will welcome a continuing dialogue with all interests.

The joint management board for this project fully anticipates that colleagues will wish to carefully consider all of the opportunities presented by the development of a competence framework. The board welcomes the submission of thoughts and questions and is committed to publishing responses to common and key questions at a very early date. Please send any comments and/or questions to:

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