

**HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION and LOCAL GOVERNMENT PANEL
MEETING 9 MAY 2006**

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE HSE/LA PARTNERSHIP

**A Paper by LACORS/HSE Local Authority Unit
Cleared by Mark Du Val (LACORS) on 25 April 2006**

Issue

1. The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and Local Government Panel (LGP) are asked to consider future communication challenges and consider specifically how to better engage with local authority elected members.

Recommendation

2. That HSC/LGP note the planned actions to meet the communication challenges and to suggest other initiatives they consider may help.

Background

3. HSC's Strategy for Workplace Health and Safety to 2010, published in February 2004, set communications as one of its four key themes. At the core is effective communications that are more mature, open, transparent, productive, inclusive and two-way with a wide range of stakeholders, championing "the case for sensible health and safety controls that are sensibly applied".

4. Effective communications should improve the HSC's decision-making, help improve trust and achieve higher levels of recognition and respect for health and safety. One particular strand of improvement was that Health and Safety Executive (HSE) must become more adept at dealing with different audiences in different ways. HSE subsequently published "A Communication Strategy for the HSC/E (2004/5 to 2006/7)". As well as setting out the relevant communication objectives, target audiences were identified that included local government.

5. The Commission's Strategy for Workplace Health and Safety to 2010 also identified developing closer partnerships as a key theme and specifically identified its partnership with local government and the regulatory responsibility of local authorities (LAs) shared with HSE. One of the "early deliverables" of the Strategy was a high-level partnership agreement between HSE and LAs. This was delivered by the "Statement of Intent", published in September 2004 and signed up by the LGA, WLGA, COSLA and LACORS for local government and the HSC and HSE. It set out agreed high-level

commitments which provided the framework of objectives for the “Local Authorities and HSE Working Together” Strategic Programme.

6. The Statement’s Vision recognised that the infrastructure to support the partnership between LAs and HSE needed clear and effective communication tools and systems. A key challenge for the Programme was to raise the public and political profile of health and safety so that it is recognised as a vital component of worker and public protection that significantly contributes to local community health and wellbeing.

7. The Statement therefore included a commitment to improving communications between HSC, HSE and LAs to ensure, in particular, that LAs and their representative organisations are adequately involved in the development of policy advice to the HSC, and in the planning and delivery of the operational activities that carry them into effect.

8. To support the delivery of this commitment for the Programme a communications strategy was developed. Details of the strategy and summary activities, including proposed next steps, are attached at Annex 1. An important strand of this strategy was to improve communications with relevant local authority elected members and they are identified as target audiences for a number of activities. Research has shown that face-to-face and correspondence represents their major preferred methods of communicating with HSE. A significant development in relation to future governance arrangements was the creation of the LGP and establishing the necessary dialogue between the Panel and the HSC. Ensuring political support from local government for the Partnership Programme and delivery of the Statement of Intent started with the Statement being signed by the Chairs/Leaders of the LGA, WLGA, COSLA and LACORS, and local signing up of individual authorities at a political level, such as Leaders or Portfolio Holders, at regional events.

9. At the joint HSE/LACORS Partnership conference in December 2005, “an elected members’ handbook” was published recognising their key role in authorities. The Handbook sought to explain the wide ranging nature of health and safety regulation, set out some of the challenges in relation to work-related injuries and ill-health and their implications for local businesses, explain some of the links, through case studies, of health and safety enforcement and an authority’s local strategic priorities, as well as suggest what a Councillor could do locally. This included ensuring effective use of local resources, promoting health and safety’s contributions to wider corporate agendas such as community safety or health improvement and promoting the “sensible health and safety” message as part of their wider community leadership role.

10. An elected members’ checklist was included in the Handbook that set out a number of questions to help inform Councillors discussions with colleagues locally. These included:-

- Am I adequately informed?

- What is the scope of my local authority's role?
- What priority is given to health and safety regulation? and
- Is my local authority doing enough?

11. Evaluation of the impact of our communications work is planned for later this year. However, there is anecdotal evidence that elected members have welcomed the Handbook and wish to use in wider Council presentations.

Discussion

12. Discussions are continuing within HSE and with LACORS on how to consolidate, sustain and where necessary further improve the partnership between LAs and HSE. Communications with local authority elected members remains a very important aspect of the partnership. But we recognise the competing demands on local authorities attention and time eg the introduction of the new licensing laws last year, Foods Standards Agency issues, etc.

13. We intend to continue to communicate with them using their preferred methods. However, the views of the LGP are sought at its meeting with the HSC on communications with Councillors generally, and any suggestions for future initiatives that might help to improve communications at a LA political level, for example, perhaps building on the regional events or the elected members' handbook.

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April 2006

ANNEX 1

LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HSE WORKING TOGETHER STRATEGIC ENABLING PROGRAMME COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES APRIL 2006

1. Introduction

Communications are central to HSC's Strategy to 2010 and beyond and all Strategic Programmes must have a Communications Strategy. The Communications Strategy for the LAs and HSE Working Together Strategic Enabling Programme is presented in Part 2 below, developed following external research. In addition, the Programme's Steering Group considered that high priority should be given to influencing the views of LA elected members and CEOs.

In Part 2 below there is a summary of the activities undertaken in implementing the Strategy, together with the proposed next steps.

2. Communications Strategy

Communications Activity	Timing	Target Audience	Key Messages	Desired Outcome
<i>1. High level communication of the Partnership Programme and Statement of Intent</i>	Ongoing	CEOs, EMs and Practitioners	<i>HSE is committed to developing and strengthening relationships with you and your LA. The Statement of Intent developed by HSE and LACoRS is testament to a commitment to working in partnership with you.</i>	Awareness of Statement of Intent increased to 50% by 2006-07 Increased awareness of the impact H&S can have on local wellbeing and increased resources devoted to H&S work.

Communications Activity	Timing	Target Audience	Key Messages	Desired Outcome
<i>2. Review the Governance Arrangements.</i>	Review completed July 2005	CEOs, EMs, Practitioners	A review of the governance structures to ensure that LA will be able to fully participate in the development of H&S strategy and policy.	To encourage LA staff participation in Policy development.
<i>3. Building Capacity</i>	Review completed in November 2005	CEOs, EMs, Practitioners	We are committed to providing the same level of training and resource to LA practitioners as is available to HSE staff.	Equitable provision of training, information and advice to the H&S enforcing authorities.
<i>4. Review of Legal Framework</i>	Ongoing	CEOs, EMs, Practitioners	We are committed to providing a framework for the consistent application of H&S law.	Transparent and consistent enforcement activity between HSE and LA staff
<i>5. Strengthen relationships with partner stakeholders (eg LACoRS, CIEH and REHIS)</i>	Ongoing	Partner stakeholders	The value of the contribution that all stakeholders and their members make to H&S is recognised and all want to work in genuine partnership.	Strengthened relationships between all stakeholders (HSE, LACoRS, CIEH and REHIS).
<i>6. To develop effective cross-policy team working and internal communications within HSE departments that have</i>	2006-07	HSE policy development and implementation teams, FOD, Comms Directorate	HSE is committed to improving internal communications so that all in HSE are aware of the Partnership and the part they can play in maintaining it.	That HSE has an integrated approach to communicating with LAs on policy and enforcement issues.

Communications Activity	Timing	Target Audience	Key Messages	Desired Outcome
<i>LAs as key audiences.</i>				
<i>7. Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	Ongoing	All stakeholders	We need to monitor and evaluate our work to be able to demonstrate that the programme has had a positive impact .	To demonstrate the effective impact of the Programme

3. Summary of Activities and Proposed Next Steps

Communications Activity	Timing	Target Audience	Summary of Activity	Outcome and Next Steps
<i>1. High level communication of the Partnership Programme and Statement of Intent</i>	December 2005	CEOs EMs and Practitioners	An “Elected Members’ Handbook” and a “Briefing Note for LA Health and Safety Enforcement Services” were both published and launched at the annual Partnership Conference in December 2005. These publications provide information on the role of LAs in enforcing H&S legislation and the links between H&S enforcement and the delivery of an Authority’s Corporate Plan.	<p>We intend to produce presentational material for portfolioholders and Heads of Service so that they can give wider briefings/ presentations within their councils.</p> <p>Opportunities will be taken to contact CEO’s as part of the Public Services Programme. Briefing will be prepared for HSE staff undertaking this.</p>

Communications Activity	Timing	Target Audience	Summary of Activity	Outcome and Next Steps
<i>2. Review of Governance Arrangements and communication of the new arrangements.</i>	Review completed July 2005	CEOs, EMs, Practitioners	<p>The review reported in July 2005 and its recommendations are being implemented.</p> <p>Recommendations for the LGP and new HELA are being appropriately communicated. Work to align the HSE and LA planning cycles and development of the FIT3 'roadmap' setting out broad priorities for both HSE and LAs has been initiated and communicated to LA.</p> <p>A series of FIT3 roadshows were run for HSE and LA staff in spring 2006 and training events for the Disease Reduction Programme are planned for May/June 2006.</p>	No further activity currently planned as the new arrangements are being implemented. LA staff are now have the opportunity to participate in policy development. The impact of this participation has yet to be determined.
<i>3. Building Capacity</i>	Ongoing	CEOs, EMs, Practitioners	<p>A review on the Support, Information and Training Needs of LA Practitioners reported in November 2005 and its recommendations are being implemented and appropriately communicated.</p> <p>A number of 'roadshows' have been held at which LA staff have had poster demonstrations the opportunity to meet HSE S&T professionals.</p>	No further activity currently planned as the recommendations are being implemented. The impact of improved access has yet to be determined.
<i>4. Review of Legal</i>	Ongoing	Practitioners,	A series of consultation workshops	Proposals will be

Communications Activity	Timing	Target Audience	Summary of Activity	Outcome and Next Steps
<i>Framework</i>		CEOs, EMs	around the country for LA and HSE staff to consider proposals for amending the EA Regs, S18 Guidance and for a common assessment tool were held in November 2005. Proposals were considered by HSC in February 2006.	considered further in 2006-07.
<i>5. Strengthen relationships with partner stakeholders (eg LACoRS, CIEH and REHIS)</i>	Ongoing	Partner stakeholders	Stakeholder Engagement Plans have been produced/updated for LACoRS, CIEH and REHIS.	Stakeholder Engagement Plans to be put into effect. The impact of this activity has still to be determined.
6. To develop effective cross-policy team working and internal communications within HSE departments that have LAs as key audiences.	2006-07	HSE policy development and implementation on teams, FOD, Comms Directorate	A communications plan for this has been developed for implementation during 2006-07.	Implement the communications plan. Guidance for HSE staff on 'Working with LAs' is being prepared.
<i>7. Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	Ongoing	All stakeholders	An evaluation strategy is being developed.	Ensure that the Evaluation Strategy is developed for implementation as soon as possible