

## **Paper LGP7/02**

### **HSE EXECUTIVE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PANEL**

**MEETING 15 APRIL 2009**

#### **COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF GOOD HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATION TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

##### **Issue**

1. Ensuring that LA Councillors and Chief Executives are
  - aware of their responsibilities for health and safety regulation
  - communicate messages about sensible health and safety effectively.

##### **Background**

2. Other papers for consideration at this meeting look at how best to launch a document aimed at LA Councillors and Chief Executives and at the interface with Local Better Regulation Office. There is now an opportunity to consider wider communications issues.
3. LA inspectors frequently report to HSE that they struggle to maintain an adequately resourced service. Many report that LA Councillors and Chief Executives have a limited awareness of their authority's role in the regulation of health and safety and their associated duty to ensure that an adequate health and safety service is maintained.
4. We need to engage and more closely involve Councillors and Chief Executives in order to maintain the profile of health and safety regulation, ensure resources are targeted to priorities, that LAs recognise their duty to meet the S18 standard and that they recognise the benefit of good health and safety regulation.
5. LAs also influence the wider agenda on health and safety. As well as being regulators of health and safety, when discharging their service delivery functions, they are bodies that carry wider responsibilities for the health and safety of their staff and the general public affected by their services.
6. This dual role provides the opportunity for LAs to be exemplars in exercising the health and safety responsibilities of a dutyholder and in representing this role to the wider media. For example, LAs have been the target of unfavourable media comment over the way they have been said to

have handled some health and safety issues associated with service delivery (eg hanging baskets).

7. We need to consider if there is more we could do to encourage LA Councillors and Chief Executives to demonstrate leadership in relation to health and safety. We should encourage local authorities to be exemplars in the way they discharge their health and safety duties to their employees and those affected by their services. We need to ensure they concentrate on what is important and ignore the trivial. We also need to ensure that the health and safety brand is not misrepresented or undermined by excessive risk aversion and when it is suggested that local authorities are acting outside these principles we are able to defend the health and safety brand robustly.

### **Questions for LGP/HSE Board members**

8. LGP and HSE Board members are invited to discuss the following:

- a. What else should we do to engage with Councillors and Chief Executives?
- b. Is work with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) likely to prove a productive route to engagement with Chief Executives and if not what approaches are likely to prove effective?
- c. How can we ensure the important role of LAs on influencing the wider agenda on health and safety is exploited to best advantage?
- d. How can we ensure that when media link "health and safety gone mad" to LAs we respond robustly?
- e. How can we ensure that LA regulators and the wider LA community sign up to the sensible risk agenda and senior managers ensure their staff has the discretion to deal with the serious and ignore the trivial and spread this principle to all the activities of their authority?

LACORS/HSE Local Authority Unit  
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