



# EDUCATION SAFETY NEWS

*JULY 2003*

*News from HSC's Education Services Advisory Committees*

## **Welcome to the third edition of Education Safety News.**

This newsletter brings you the latest information on the work of HSC's Education Advisory Committees; Higher and Further Education Advisory Committee (HIFEAC) and Schools Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and includes items on related health and safety topics. It is for anyone in education with a role to play in health and safety.

**This edition is only being sent by email to interested parties - we are relying on you distribute it further.**

If you would like to receive future issues directly, please contact the Secretariat, email: [calgergeneral.hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:calgergeneral.hse.gsi.gov.uk). We hope to place later editions of the newsletter on HSE's website.



## **SEAC/HIFEAC Open Meeting 1 April 2003**

The Schools Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and the Higher and Further Education Advisory Committee (HIFEAC) held their second Open Meeting on 1 April 2003 at Loughborough University.

Key organisations within the education sector were invited and the level of interest was high. All areas of education were represented.

The aim of the meeting was to engage education stakeholders in delivering the Revitalising Health and Safety programme. This was done through workshops that focused on the priority topics of:

- Stress
- Slips, trips and falls
- Musculo-skeletal disorders
- Occupational health Provision

Each workshop agreed on an action for delegates to complete outside of the meeting. The HSE priority programme managers for each of the topics led the workshops and gave an overview of HSE's work to date. Delegates then provided a practical perspective, which was followed by lively discussion and debate.

Following the workshops delegates agreed to provide HSE with feedback on the actions agreed in their workshops. A dedicated email account has been set up for this [rhs@hse.gov.uk](mailto:rhs@hse.gov.uk)

HSE confirmed that it would use the feedback to help it develop examples of good practice which would be made available on HSE's website. Over time this would provide a good source of guidance that could be shared throughout the education world.

Overall, delegates expressed the view to the secretariat that the meeting had been useful in gaining commitment to achieve the RHS targets. The Secretariat felt the meeting was a useful contribution to developing partnerships and delivering RHS outcomes.

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## **EVALUATION OF EUROPEAN WEEK 2002**



EUROPEAN WEEK 2002, which focused on work-related stress, proved to be a great success with nearly twice as many people requesting action packs than in the previous year.

Not only was there a great effort during the week but 53% of participants said they had made specific changes to their working practice as a result of the awareness of stress issues raised during the week, with many citing the week as the starting point for long term change.

A high variety of activities were undertaken during the week including exhibitions, seminars and demonstrations. A wide variety of alternative therapies to aid relaxation were available to try. The response to the week was excellent and many organisations used it very positively to reassess their policies on work-related stress. A number of companies carried out staff surveys and made plans to address the needs of their employees and to look at how they could achieve a better work-life balance.

**THIS YEAR'S EUROPEAN WEEK FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK,  
BEGINS ON 13 OCTOBER 2003**

**WORKING ON DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES  
IN THE WORKPLACE**



This year's European Week for Safety and Health, commencing on 13 October 2003, will target the use and control of dangerous substances in the workplace.

Dangerous substances cause serious illness to thousands of people every year. Across all different industry sectors people suffer from cancer, asthma and skin diseases all related to their work with dangerous substances. This is of great concern to HSE and is the reason that European Week this year is focusing on the problem.

The European Week for Safety and Health provides the perfect opportunity for organisations to demonstrate their leadership quality and involvement in health and safety.

**FOR A FREE ACTION PACK, POSTERS, STICKERS, FACT SHEETS CALL 0800 085 0050**

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**A SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES' CHARTER FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR**



Work is nearing completion on a groundbreaking initiative aimed at promoting greater involvement of the workforce, and more effective partnership working on health and safety, in the education sector.

The Safety Representatives' Charter was unveiled on 1 April 2003 at the joint open meeting of HSC's Education Advisory Committees, HIFEAC and SEAC, at Loughborough University. Speaking at the meeting about the health and safety challenges facing education, Health and Safety Commissioner Owen Tudor welcomed the Charter and said, "Signing up to the Charter would demonstrate recognition of the contribution that partnerships between employers and safety representatives can make towards improving health and safety standards in the workplace." The Charter was jointly developed by the employer and trade union representatives of the two Advisory Committees.

Plans to formally launch, promote and implement the Charter throughout the education sector are underway.

Promotion and support for the Charter already forms part of the health and safety work programme for both the University and Colleges Employers Association and the Local Government Employers Organisation. Both organisations are fully committed to the aims and objectives of the Charter, which seeks to promote the benefits and emphasise the importance of consulting with and involving safety representatives, to ensure they can make a contribution towards effective health and safety management in education establishments. The major trades unions in education are also looking forward to the Charter's launch, which will provide an opportunity to begin discussions with employers about signing up to the Charter and then developing plans to implement the recommendations on good practice it contains.

The full text of the Safety Representatives' Charter can be viewed on HSE's website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/index.htm>

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## CAUTIONARY TALES FROM HSE

### Loss of radioactive materials in a school

There have been a number of cases where radioactive materials in schools have been lost. One recent case was where sources surplus to requirements were 'forgotten about' and as such no arrangements were made for appropriate disposal. This led to the sources being found by a contractor working at the site. The school was prosecuted by HSE and fined £1500 and £2226 costs. This, of course, did not include the cost of the adverse publicity associated with the case.

The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1999 (IRR99) deal specifically with the control of radioactive substances. Regulation 27, 28 and 29 require employers to:

- keep radioactive sources in a suitable receptacle in a suitable store;
- account for and keep records of the quantity and location of radioactive sources;
- carry out leak tests on sealed sources at appropriate intervals and keep records of these tests.

Other requirements of IRR99 are to:

- carry out a risk assessment for the work;
- consult a radiation protection adviser; and
- provide information, instruction and training to employees.

Schools are reminded to check that they are following guidance agreed by their Radiation Protection Adviser (RPA) who will have been appointed by the employer and that details of the RPA are included in the science department's health and safety policy. All staff involved with radioactive materials should be familiar with the relevant guidance - CLEAPSS guide L93 '*Managing Ionising Radiations and Radioactive Substances*' (England) and the SSERC guidance '*Protection against ionising radiation in science teaching – explanatory notes on local rules for teaching establishments 1998*' (Scotland).

## **Near drowning of a 7-year-old during a holiday fun swim at a school**

HSE's investigation into a near drowning of a 7 year old child taking part in a holiday fun swim at a school has led to the introduction of a number of changes to the way this activity is managed. The background and recommendations are summarized below. This information may be useful to those who arrange and manage swimming activities.

A holiday fun swim took place at a school. Parents were required to complete registration forms for their child. The form included a special needs section for parents to give information about allergies asthma, medication etc. In the same section parents were asked whether the child had any 'trouble swimming'. The information was then duplicated onto a daily register, which was checked by the lifeguards and staff prior to the activity. In this particular case, the parents (whose first language was not English) had written 'None' in the special needs box and the organisers of the activity took this to mean that the child could swim.

On the first swimming session the child entered the water out of his depth and immediately got into difficulty. A lifeguard rescued the child and resuscitated him (his breathing and heart had stopped). The child spent a night in hospital.

HSE's investigation led to a review of the risk assessment for swimming activities with the following recommendations being put into place:

- Testing of children's swimming capability in the presence of a lifeguard or supervisory staff and grouping them according to their swimming ability.
- Restricting children to different zones of the pool depending on their swimming ability.
- Use of coloured arm bands to indicate the children's swimming ability.
- Provision of two-chamber swimming aids or swimming jackets for all non-swimmers.
- Minimum supervisor/ lifeguard numbers dependent on the age and number of children in the pool at any one time.
- Redesign of the registration form with the child's swimming ability clearly marked and duplicated to the daily register.

These simple, good practice measures should be used for all organisations that arrange such activities. More detailed guidance on swimming is contained in HSE's 'Managing health and safety in swimming pools' HSG179 available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA. Tel: 01787 881165, email [hsebooks@prolog.uk.com](mailto:hsebooks@prolog.uk.com)

# HEFCE-funded Study investigating Occupational Stress in Higher Education Institutions

By Michelle Tytherleigh, Research Fellow, University of Plymouth

## Aims of the project

In 2001, the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) provided funds to the University of Plymouth for a three-year nationwide study of occupational stress in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The primary aim of this study was to provide stress benchmarks for Higher Education, to enable comparisons with other professions and intra-sector comparisons with cognate HE institutions (i.e., Old versus New universities). A secondary aim was to enable HEIs to share best practice.

Further information on the project, results and participating Universities is available on the project website at - <http://www.ihs.plymouth.ac.uk/~stresshe/>

## Benchmarking Results

The ASSET questionnaire was used in a survey of approx. 27% of all of staff (irrespective of category of employee) from 14 participating HEIs. In summary, the results of the study showed that the most significant source of stress for all HEI staff (irrespective of category of employee) was job security. In comparison to the Norm, these levels were extremely high. In comparison to the Norm, HEI employees also reported significantly higher levels of stress relating to work relationships, control, and resources and communication, and significantly lower levels of commitment both from and to their organisation. In contrast, however, they reported significantly lower levels of stress relating to work-life balance, overload, and job overall, and significantly lower levels of physical ill health. Significant differences were also identified between employees working at Old versus New universities, and by category of employee.

In October 2002, the overall results for Year 1 of our study were presented to the Consortium Members. There was a reasonably high level of concern as to where to go next, but matched by equally high levels of commitment to plan the next steps. Specific questions and concerns raised and answered during this meeting can be found by accessing *Consortium Meetings* on our project website (referred to above). A copy of the Main report, together with an Executive Summary of Results, can also be downloaded from our website via *Study Update*.

The original intention was to run a further survey 18 months on from the first. However, it was decided that, rather than get HEIs to focus broadly on a wide range of interventions and then re-send out the ASSET questionnaire in May 2004, it would be much more appropriate and beneficial for HEIs to focus on one or two hotspot areas. It was also decided that, pending receipt of further funding from HEFCE, the same benchmarking exercise of occupational stress in HEIs should be carried out in approximately two to three years time.

Reports of the results from each of the HEIs were produced and released during the latter part of October 2002. These results were presented to the HEIs during November and December.

## Exchange of Best practice

There are regular consortium meetings of the participating HEIs. These are facilitated by the project team and allow for exchange of information and best practice and discussion of progress and direction of the project.

The first of our intervention-focussed was held in February 2003. In addition to the usual exchange opportunities, consortium members were given a half-day workshop on the types of interventions that they might consider in their Action Plans in response to the survey. This was provided by Robertson Cooper Ltd (RCL), the providers of the ASSET questionnaire (copies of the PowerPoint presentations are on the website via *Consortium Meetings*).

The second intervention-planning meeting was held in May 2003. During the meeting, members shared details of their proposed Action Plans (these can be downloaded from our website via *Consortium Meetings*). Most HEIs are working along similar lines, in particular: - by linking preventive measures to HR strategies (e.g. by improving people management skills, improving sickness absence policies and work-life balance initiatives); by introducing EAPs and Stress Policies; by running further in-house surveys for particular hotspot areas of concern, and by re-marketing existing policies and services. Some of the interventions introduced by Birmingham University (e.g., the availability of a Citizen's Advice Bureau on campus) were also suggested.

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## VOICE CARE by Roz Comins Voice Care Network

The Voice Care Network (VCN) is a charity dedicated to helping people to keep their voices healthy and to communicate effectively. VCN has published a guidance booklet titled 'More Care for Your Voice' which explains how the voice works, what can affect its quality, how to care for it and when to seek medical help.

People who have to speak at work or in public depend on their voice. The voice is used to hold the attention of others, to be interesting and to create an impact. Speaking for long periods to large groups in large spaces can cause the voice to be strained. A strained voice has less impact on the listener and this may reduce the speaker's effectiveness, ability and confidence.

Studies carried out by the VCN suggest that up to 34% of people with voice problems are teachers. A survey in 1992/3 suggested that one in ten long serving teachers might need clinical treatment for their voice at some time during their career. A further study in 2001/2002 showed that of the 3268 voice patients attending 36 hospital clinics around the country, 12% were teachers. There was a very wide variation between geographical locations with some clinics recording no teachers and others with 35% being teachers. Voice problems in teaching are recorded in other countries.

The VCN was established in 1993 and has a current membership of 250 experienced voice teachers and speech and language therapists. The network shares practical skills and knowledge and provides voice awareness sessions to over 3000 trainee teachers each year.

The guidance booklet is clear, concise and user friendly. Each aspect of the VCN's practical voice workshops is described including ways to develop skills in speaking. Full of practical ideas,

people who need to know about their voice and cannot get to a workshop have found it invaluable, although it cannot replace practical training guided by experienced voice teachers and speech and language therapists.

There is a great deal of support for the work of VCN from government bodies and teachers' unions. The DfES and the DH have acknowledged that teachers can experience voice trauma as a result of teaching in their 'Fitness to Teach' document and that voice care training should be provided.

'More Care for Your Voice' is bought by teachers, trainee teachers, preachers, managers, lawyers, supervisors, call centre workers and many other people who depend on their voice for their work. Voice clinics recommend it to their patients and use it as an adjunct to voice therapy.

Copies are available from the Voice Care Network, VCN 29, Southbank Road, Kenilworth CV8 1LA. Phone/fax 01926 864000 email [vcnuk@btconnect.com](mailto:vcnuk@btconnect.com)  
Single copies £4.00 (p&p 50p),  
10 copies £30 (includes P&P)  
50 copies £100 (includes P&P)

Overseas buyers can buy them from Heffers (Blackwells) in Cambridge.  
Cheque with order, or Official Order and Invoice paid by BACS

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## **RIGHTS OF WAY ACROSS SCHOOL PREMISES**

From 12 February 2003 local highway authorities in England can divert or close rights of way which cross school land to protect pupils or staff from violence, or threat of violence; harassment; alarm or distress arising from unlawful activity; or any other risk to their health or safety arising from such activity.

Further information is available online at [www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/cl/publicrow.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/cl/publicrow.htm).

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## **HSE's enforcement activity**

Information about prosecutions and notices can be found on HSE's website at [www.hse-databases.co.uk/prosecutions](http://www.hse-databases.co.uk/prosecutions)

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### **Feedback**

We would appreciate your comments on the newsletter and any suggestions for improvements. We would also welcome any items for inclusion in the next issue planned for December 2003.

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### **Contacts for SEAC & HIFEAC:**

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| Chair:       | John Cullen       | 01582 444262 |                                                                                               |
| Secretary:   | Robert Parkes     | 01245 706246 |                                                                                               |

### **Other useful contacts:**

HSE Infoline: 08701 545500  
HSE Books: 01787 88165  
Incident Contact Centre: 0845 3009923

HSE website: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)  
HSE Direct: [www.hsedirect.com](http://www.hsedirect.com)

DfES website: [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)  
DfES Publications: 0846 602260

Email [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com)

TUC website: [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

CBI website: [www.cbi.org.uk](http://www.cbi.org.uk)

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work: <http://osha.eu.int>

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