



## Partners for Better Health at Work Newsletter 1 September 2004



### **Welcome to the first Partners for Better Health at Work Newsletter:**

Firstly can I start by thanking you all for replying to our letter and confirming your details so quickly.

HSC's new strategy is committed to the importance of Occupational Health. We hope through this newsletter to keep you informed of our progress, opportunities to work in partnership and other relevant news. This will include current policy developments such as the rehabilitation guidance, stress, occupational health support pilots and the chemicals programme.

You are more than welcome to extract information from the articles or distribute this newsletter to anyone you feel may have an interest in its contents. If you have any comments, suggestions or you have received this through a contact and would like to sign up, my contact details are below.

Simon Thornhill

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### **Kirklees OH Support Pilot:**

Kirklees Metropolitan Authority has teamed up with Huddersfield's three Primary Care Trusts, Job Centre Plus and the Health and Safety Executive, to trial the HSE's Occupational Health and Safety Support model. The partnership aims to improve the health status of people with work-related ill health and the work status of people with ill health. This aims to be done in a way that supports SMEs, helping them to thrive and achieve their potential.

The pilot should be fully operational in January 2005. Funding is in place from Neighbourhood Renewal, and two Worker Safety Advisors have already been appointed. All six partners have been mapping the local service provision, and the HSE has agreed to fund the evaluation. The recruitment and training of the OH advisors and problem solvers will be underway shortly.

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### **Securing Health together - A European perspective:**

HSE participates in TRUSTNET, a 'think-tank' sponsored by the European Commission. The current phase, called Trustnet-In-Action has nominated the Securing Health Together (SH2) initiative and its focus on a partnership approach as an "Innovative Process" (a 'living' case study). Participation allows those involved to share the experience of their process and to draw on that of others, whether involved in other novel processes across Europe or as experts in regulation.

They are using SH2 as a case study of how to take forward work in partnership and will be interested in the progress of the developing stakeholder network - there may also be a role in network members to go and talk about their experiences at future trustnet conferences. Earlier stages of SH2 have already been presented at the annual seminars which gives opportunities for stakeholders, experts and the whole TRUSTNET network to share experiences and common concerns.

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**Launch of HSE's best practice approach for managing sickness absence and return to work:**

This autumn sees the launch of HSE's best practice approach, to proactively manage long-term sickness absence and help those off work sick, whatever the cause, to return to work. It aims to help employers and managers to work in partnership with their employees and their representatives. The best practice approach will be launched alongside the Department for Work and Pensions Framework for Vocational Rehabilitation.

For more information please contact Stephen Taylor Tel: 020 7717 6249  
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**The HSE Chemicals Programme:**

Developed this year, the Chemicals programme builds on work already underway in HSE on asthma, asbestos and COSHH Essentials (a free, interactive, internet based tool to help firms manage the risks of working with chemicals). Originally endorsed in November 2002 by HSC as part of the Chemicals Strategy, the Programme has now been developed to contain the following sub programmes, which will contribute to HSE's target of reducing incidences of ill health:

- Occupational asthma
- Other respiratory disease e.g. silicosis
- Asbestos
- Other chemically induced cancer
- Skin disease

**Skin Disease**

The skin disease sub programme objective is to secure by 2010 a reduction of at least 20% in the numbers of chemical-induced occupational skin disease, compared with figures for 2000/01. HSE will be focusing its efforts on 5 main occupational groups, starting this year with Hairdressing and beauty, and printing. We are also running a project on controlling skin diseases by correct selection and use of Personal Protective Equipment. From April 2005, we intend to develop projects on construction, health care and metalworking.

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**Occupational Health Pilot for the Construction Industry to launch in October:**

Occupational health in the construction industry is to be targeted by the 'Constructing Better Health' pilot scheme. The innovative industry-led scheme will pilot an occupational health support service in Leicestershire.

The pilot will run for 18-24 months and will offer construction employees and employers best-practice advice and guidance on improving workers' health by reducing exposure to key health risks and providing access to free health screening.

The pilot is being facilitated and partially funded by HSE. It will be delivered through a partnership between Sypol and Business Healthcare.

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**Other Occupational Health News:**

**Mental health fact sheets:** Following publication of the Social Exclusion Unit's mental health report in June the SEU and the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMHE) in England have been developing a series of fact sheets for frontline staff. The fact sheets due to be launched to coincide with World Mental Health day (10<sup>th</sup> of October). Visit [www.socialexclusion.gov.uk](http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk) for more information.

**Asthma Guidelines:** The British Occupational Health Research Foundation evidence based guidelines for the prevention, identification and management of occupational asthma are now available free online at: <http://www.bohrf.org.uk/content/asthma.htm>

**Next issue due in December/January**