

**Partners for Better Health at Work
Newsletter 6
March 2006**



Welcome To the sixth issue of the Partners for Better Health at Work Newsletter

In this quarters edition I'm pleased to bring you news of the launch of Workplace Health Connect; the new service delivering impartial advice on health at work in partnership with the HSE, as well as news of plans for BACKS! 2006 due in the autumn.

As always 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 received this through a contact and would like to sign up, my contact details are below.

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Understanding HSE's Health Agenda

People increasingly refer to the health agenda, but surely preventing ill health at work has always been a major part of HSE's remit? Over the years we have progressively and successfully tackled exposure to hazardous materials, such as lead and asbestos, so what now? To see a note which explains the shifting emphasis of the health agenda, why it has become even more important, and what it means for the way we work, please visit:

www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/plans/healthagenda.htm

Workplace Health Connect Launches

Smaller businesses in England and Wales now have access to free and impartial advice and support on workplace health issues, via Workplace Health Connect.

The service is all about making connections: it is about connecting employers and workers, and it's about connecting them with the advice and support that will make their workplace a safer and healthier place.

Workplace Health Connect comprises an Adviceline for England and Wales, which will sit alongside Healthy Working Lives in Scotland. It will be supported by free workplace visits in five areas, in the North East, North West, West Midlands, South Wales and Greater London.

Owners, managers and workers from small and medium sized enterprises (between 5 and 250 employees), can call the Adviceline on 0845 609 6006.

Workplace Health Connect launched on Thursday 23rd February 2006. The national launch was supported by regional activities on the same day, and in South Wales and Birmingham the following day.

For more information on our delivery model visit; www.hse.gov.uk/workplacehealth.

Alternatively go to www.workplacehealthconnect.co.uk for the service website where SME's can find out more information about the service and request to be contacted by the adviceline.

Falls from Height - 'Height Aware' Campaign

Publicity/media activity, educational/promotional events and targeted inspections will take place across GB from 22 May to end of June 2006. Targeted activities are building and plant maintenance in their widest sense - both those who manage or procure it and those who carry it out. A campaign pack will be available from early April. Further details will appear on the HSE website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm>

Advice for employers on involving workers in health and safety management

The Worker Involvement Programme has developed new web-based information to help employers involve their staff in managing health and safety. The new worker involvement website contains a range of new materials including case studies, which it is hoped will encourage employers in this area. Find the pages at www.hse.gov.uk/involvement

BACKS! 2006

Despite better awareness and more lifting aids, back pain still accounts for one in five reported cases of work-related illness.

Almost five million working days - that's one in six - are lost because of back pain every year and work-related musculoskeletal disorders cost society an estimated £5.7 billion (1995/96 figures).

Therefore, following on from "Backs! 2005", the HSE is launching a follow-up backs campaign this autumn. The emphasis will again be on promoting the use of sensible precautions - such as lifting and handling aids - to reduce the risk of back problems at work. But this year's campaign will also focus on the best ways of managing back pain - including the importance of staying active, and staying in work, wherever possible.

The campaign will again involve a co-ordinated programme of publicity, education, and HSE and Local Authority inspection. It will also build on "Backs! 2005" by offering ample opportunity for wider stakeholder activities - "Backs! 2005" enjoyed excellent support from Local Authorities and many other stakeholders including unions, charities, public and private sector employers, professional bodies and trade associations.

See www.hse.gov.uk/msd for the interim results from "Backs! 2005" and helpful advice on managing back pain and associated workplace risks.

Worker Safety Advisor Challenge Fund; Winners announced

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, DWP Minister responsible for health and safety, on the 1st March announced the 13 award winners from the third round of the Workers' Safety Adviser (WSA) Challenge Fund. The aim of the fund is to increase worker involvement and consultation. Successful projects are based on organisations working in partnerships to generate and improve collaboration between employers and workers in small firms.

The third round winners are from a wide range of industries, including the construction, hospitality, printing, retail and voluntary sectors. Project partners include trade unions, trade associations, local authorities, primary care trusts, voluntary organisations and business organisations.

Each project has been awarded between £52,777 and £100,000 to engage and enthuse employers and workers alike, through the activities of the Workers' Safety Advisers they employ, to establish collaborative environments in which to drive through improvements in occupational health and safety.

To find out more and the details of the successful organisations go to: <http://www.wsa-cf.org/>