



**Partners for Better Health at Work  
Newsletter 08  
September 2006**



**Welcome to the Eighth issue of the Partners for Better Health at Work Newsletter**

In this quarters edition I am pleased to bring you information on the launch of the new sensible risk principles, the new asbestos and backs campaigns, along with the latest statistics and other articles of interest. 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:

Joanne Morgan <mailto:joanne.morgan@hse.gsi.gov.uk> (020 7717 6088)

**Get a life and let others get on with theirs!**

This was Commission Chair Bill Callaghan's message to anyone who tries to use health and safety as an excuse for stopping people doing everyday activities. 'I'm sick and tired of hearing about petty health and safety stopping people doing worthwhile and enjoyable things, when at the same time others are suffering harm and even death due to poor management and complacency.'

On Tuesday 22nd August HSC stepped up the fight back against bad risk management and silly health and safety stories with the launch of the sensible risk principles. Bill Callaghan was joined by TV presenter and Atlantic rower Ben Fogle for the launch at a children's sailing centre in north London. The principles aim to get the focus back on managing risks that cause real harm and suffering and away from bureaucratic back-covering. 'All of us involved in health and safety have a vital role to play in promoting sensible management of risk – and fighting back against the 'elf and safety' stories that can do so much damage. I'd ask you all to join us in putting the spirit of the principles into action in your everyday work'.

The launch follows publication in July of new risk assessment guidance. The new version of Five Steps to Risk Assessment and example Risk Assessments call on organisations to avoid over-complication - making risk assessments fit for purpose and acting on the findings.

We would like your views on actions to put the principles into practice. We also welcome comments on the principles themselves. Until 30th November 2006 you can "Have your say" by visiting our risk web pages at: [www.hse.gov.uk/risk](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk). At the beginning of 2007 we shall publish the finalised principles, together with specific commitments to turn them into reality.

**Better Backs**

As Autumn approaches, so does this year's Better Backs campaign, being run by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in partnership with local authorities.

The campaign aims to reduce the incidence of back pain in the workplace, its impact on staff and the number of working days lost due to back pain - and the HSE is keen to involve as many people as possible in the campaign. Here are some examples of how you could take part:

- Sign up to the campaign online to demonstrate your organisation's commitment to the campaign and we'll publish your details.
- Hold a campaign event to promote some of our key messages and we may be able to help with funding and support materials, including display stands and campaign packs. Again, we will publish event details on our website.
- Promote the campaign to your organisation or clients, using our workplace posters and CDs.

These are just some of the many ways to take part in this important campaign. To find out more, please visit [www.hse.gov.uk/msd/campaigns](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/campaigns) or email [betterbacks@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:betterbacks@hse.gsi.gov.uk).

**OH Strategy website**

The OH Strategy website will no longer be an independent website site as from the end of October, instead it will be part of the main HSE website with information on the securing health together strategy, the results of the Programme Action Groups and an events calendar for occupational health events. For more information go to: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/plans/index.htm>

**Is work good for you?**

Work is generally good for health and well-being! The results of the study by Gordon Waddell and Kim Burton 'Is work good to your health and well-being?' has now been released and is available from the Stationery Office, ISBN0117036943.

### **Asbestos - Don't take the gamble communication campaign**

Every day, thousands of maintenance workers are gambling with their lives by working on buildings where asbestos is still present and where the risks are not being managed.

HSE is committed to protecting these workers by ensuring that:

- Dutyholders comply with their duties under Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2002 and that;
- Maintenance workers are aware of the risks surrounding asbestos and know how to work safely.

HSE and Local Authority inspectors have been carrying out 'duty to manage' inspections and awareness raising events throughout the year. HSE's Construction division have been targeting building maintenance and refurbishment contractors.

To support and strengthen this work, HSE's Disease Reduction Programme are running a communication campaign throughout September and October. '**Don't take the gamble**' was launched by Bill Callaghan, HSC Chair, at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health's (CIEH) Annual Conference in Bournemouth on the 7th September. The campaign will involve targeted activity in trade and regional press as well as information being sent directly to just over 80,000 dutyholders.

Campaign material will include free promotional playing cards and information packs. A new 'one-stop shop' asbestos website [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos) has also been created which includes comprehensive advice (including free downloadable versions of the Asbestos Essential task sheets) and guidance together with downloadable versions of most of the campaign material. For further information please email: [asbestos.campaign@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asbestos.campaign@hse.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Occupational Health Statistics Bulletin 2005/06**

On 31 August HSE published on its website a bulletin setting out the latest picture on work-related ill health in Great Britain, using updated statistics from several sources. The bulletin gives an overview of the different types of occupational illness - the numbers involved and the jobs with the highest risks. It also provides links to disease-specific webpages where more detailed analysis can be found. Please see <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/ohsb0506.htm>.

### **European Week for Safety and Health at Work 2006**

This year's campaign slogan is 'Safe Start' and is dedicated to the occupational safety and health of young people. European Week 2006 will run from 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> October. To find out more information on the European Week for Safety and Health at Work 2006 log onto: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/index.htm>

### **Workplace Health Connect - Update**

Workplace Health Connect is a service delivered in partnership with the HSE. It provides confidential, practical and free advice to smaller businesses in England and Wales on any workplace health and safety issue. It also provides advice on managing sickness absence and returning to work after illness.

Targeting businesses employing between five and 250 workers, the service has been up and running since February. By the middle of September Workplace Health Connect had helped over 3,200 callers to the Adviceline (0845 609 6006) and 96% of callers say they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received. In addition, over 1,700 smaller businesses have requested a free workplace visit by one of the advisers, taking the service beyond its workplace visit targets.

Independent evaluators, the Institute of Employment Studies, have produced a preliminary progress report detailing the first four months of operation of Workplace Health Connect. Whilst it is too early to assess the success and impact of the totally new service, the early findings are extremely positive. Workplace Health Connect appears to be well received by Small and Medium Sized Enterprise (SME) employers and employees, and the service offer is appreciated because it is free, credible and does not adopt a punitive approach. The progress report can be viewed here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/workplacehealth/evaluation.htm>

**Next issue due out in December 2006**