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**Occupational Health & Safety Issues in the  
Korean Community**

**HSL/2006/57**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Objectives

The Korean community in Kingston forms the largest population of Koreans outside of South Korea. They operate an extensive variety of businesses, many of which are enforced by the Local Authority (LA). The LA, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, is eager to develop a more proactive approach to supporting the Korean business community in relation to engaging with and influencing the businesses regarding occupational health and safety (OHS).

In order to assist in this aim, the Health & Safety Laboratory (HSL) were commissioned to provide insight into levels of OHS knowledge and practice amongst Korean businesses in Kingston, and to identify methods of engaging, communicating with, and influencing these businesses regarding OHS. The findings of this project will form the evidence base for future interventions with the Korean business population involving Kingston LA and the HSE, and can contribute to similar initiatives for other communities in other LAs.

## Main Findings

- There are ongoing issues between the Korean community restaurateurs and Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. These relate to general OHS issues, such as risk assessments, and specific concerns over the use of table-based cookers (primarily concerning gas and electrical safety due to the ad-hoc connections to the mains system), which are yet to be fully resolved.
- There are only a limited number of locations in which the Kingston community of Koreans communally meet as forums for discussing business. The two main forums are the Korean Residents Society and the Korean Restaurant and Supermarket Association. Engaging with these societies may offer the opportunity to access large numbers of people from the business community in a single session with regard to health and safety.
- Like many ethnic minority communities, the Korean community is very close-knit. They display a wariness of regulators, reflected in their preference to avoid regulatory contact wherever possible. In order to protect their businesses from any perceived threat, they maintain a low profile and seek to avoid any attention from regulatory bodies.
- In previous dealings with regulators from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, despite conveying an overt willingness to address the problems during inspection interactions, in the majority of instances the Korean dutyholders have failed to take the required action. As a result of this inactivity, the regulators are required to take more formal action, such as serving improvement or prohibition notices.
- There is often a considerable language barrier that impedes successful interactions between members of the Korean community and the regulators, as the proprietors of many Korean businesses speak very little English. Difficulties with language can also result in a lesser familiarity with expectations of the UK regulatory system, an undermining of the understanding of health and safety risks, or be used as a justification for lack of action to make necessary changes to comply with the law. A lack of health and safety training conducted in Korean language was cited as limiting businesses' potential to both understand requirements asked of them under UK law, and to choose appropriate corrective action.

- Those business managers interviewed demonstrated a limited awareness and knowledge of occupational health risks at their workplace, and consequently had taken little action to control these risks. Linked to this, there appears to be only minimal use of information material related to health and safety. In main, the business managers consulted had little or no knowledge of any OHS material, and had not used any HSE-produced material.
- Another barrier cited to detract from the likelihood of behaviour change to comply with UK law was the costs associated with implementing required changes. These costs are off-putting to many Korean businesses, perhaps stemming from a lack of understanding that some of the changes required can be made relatively quickly and cheaply.
- There appear to be cultural differences related to perceptions of the salience of certain health and safety risks. More specifically, in terms of the Korean restaurateurs, the risks related to the use of directly imported self-installed gas table cookers are considered to be acceptable, whereas within the UK this is not the case. There exists to a certain degree the perception that these risks are not of direct relevance to some of the restaurateurs, given that they are not required to address these issues a similar degree in their homeland.

## **Recommendations**

- Although difficult to achieve given the language barrier, it is important to try to formulate a more open and trusting approach between the dutyholders and HSE / LA, as a means of helping to overcome the avoidance of regulators within the Korean community. Ensuring a good flow of dialogue between involved parties may help to avoid the necessity for the regulator to adopt a harder line of enforcement, which has the inevitable consequence of reinforcing the feelings of wariness towards them within the Korean community.
- For future reference, making initial contact through intermediaries appears to be an effective means of gaining access to a difficult-to-access group. Therefore, HSE / LA should be willing to work flexibly with a broad range of intermediaries, as part of a wider strategy of engagement with various ethnic minority groups.
- Discussions with key members of the Korean community highlighted a number of potential interventions to engage and influence businesses within the community regarding occupational health and safety. It should be remembered that in organising any intervention, it is important to clearly convey the benefits of participation to businesses to ensure buy-in from the outset.
- A consensus was reached amongst interviewees that the organisation of an awareness-raising seminar for local restaurateurs would be the most effective and even-handed means of communicating health and safety messages to a large proportion of the community en-masse. Dissemination to a group could help to minimise the need to ‘fire-fight’ issues as they arose at individual premises.
- A number of recommendations were made regarding how to best ensure the success of an awareness-raising seminar. In terms of the content of the event, it was suggested that rather than just giving a series of lectures, HSE / LA could give examples of good practice relating to specific relevant topics. It would also be necessary to provide interpreters at any event to ensure that the understanding is adequate. Due consideration must be given to timetabling and location of the event to ensure attendance is maximised. Discussions with representatives from both the Korean Residents Society and Korean Restaurant and Supermarket Association would be of benefit in finalising both content and logistics.

- In order to increase the likelihood of a desired change succeeding, an effective approach would need to include complementary interventions, where each intervention compensates for the shortcomings of others. Therefore, it may be possible to translate key pieces of OHS guidance into Korean and distribute this at the end of an awareness session to reinforce the messages HSE / LA is trying to convey. Similarly, there exists potential for advertising in local Korean press as a means of enhancing attendance at any awareness raising session.
- It will be necessary to ensure that any intervention implemented is followed up by an evaluation as regards its impact in terms of behavioural change in dutyholders. It is likely that this will be most effectively achieved through inspection visits to premises.
- The Korean businesses must be made aware that they are not being treated in any way exceptionally. The OHS enforcement procedures are the same as those for any other business in Kingston. Therefore, the Koreans receive the same enforcement policy treatment as all other dutyholders, and should not be treated differently if they fail to comply.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The UK ethnic minority population is sizeable, consisting of around 8% of the overall population, and tends to be concentrated in specific geographical areas (Szczepura et al. 2004). Despite frequent use of the definition “the ethnic minorities”, in reality this is not a single target public, being comprised of a multitude of different racial, cultural and religious groups. As such, this diversity reflects a challenge with respect to developing a strategy to engage and influence these groups in terms of occupational health and safety.

One of the many ethnic groups that the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and Local Authorities enforce with regard to health and safety are the Korean community, who are primarily located in Kingston. The Koreans operate an extensive variety of businesses, many of which are enforced by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, who wish to develop a more proactive approach to supporting the Korean business community regarding occupational health and safety (OHS). At present, limited resources mean that the LA is currently responding reactively to OHS problems within the Korean community. In order to successfully engage with the community, it is likely that a proactive approach will be required to overcome barriers that often exist between regulators and ethnic minority businesses.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES

The Health & Safety Laboratory (HSL) were jointly commissioned by HSE and London Borough Kingston to help provide insight into levels of OHS knowledge and practice amongst Korean businesses in Kingston, and to identify pathways and methods of engaging, communicating with, and influencing these businesses regarding OHS. In order to achieve this aim, the objectives were:

- To find intermediaries, from both business and community groups, to help Kingston LA engage with Korean businesses regarding OHS issues.
- To gain insight from intermediaries into potential methods of engagement, communication and intervention with Korean businesses regarding OHS. Also to identify a range of suitable Korean business contacts.
- To interview a range of Korean businesses to ascertain their level of OHS awareness, knowledge and practice, and to gain insight into their OHS needs.
- To produce a report describing the outcomes of the work and detailing a series of recommendations for engaging, communicating with, and influencing the OHS practices of Korean businesses, paying attention to the understanding and informational needs of this audience.

## 1.3 BARRIERS TO ACCESSING ETHNIC MINORITY BUSINESSES

Research findings indicate that there are a number of potential barriers that can affect the likelihood of access and engagement of ethnic minority businesses (EMBs) with respect to occupational health and safety. These are considered briefly below as context to the present work.

Firstly, an important characteristic of small businesses in general, and of certain ethnic minority (EM) groups in particular, is an entrenched suspicion, hostility and evasiveness towards authority, particularly that represented by government inspectors. Such attitudes tend to be based on feelings of discrimination and unfair treatment as a result of prior experiences, and also the extent to which the business owner might be knowingly engaged in illegal practices. This often results in a preference to minimise contact with regulatory officials (Vickers et al 2003). As such, most EM groups have a low propensity to look towards formal sources of OHS information and advice, preferring instead to rely on more informal sources and/or professionals from within their own communities.

Secondly, language can present a significant communication barrier between authorities and EMBs (Stephens et al. 2004). Here, the educational level of the businesses owner/manager (particularly whether they have experienced any education/training in the UK), and the extent to which the business' market context requires use of English is important in determining ease of contact using English. EMBs are much more likely to refer to a lack of clarity in the regulations than their native counterparts, resulting in a lower uptake of legislation, although this might also reflect differences in educational attainment and social class. Similarly, EMBs often struggle with respect to the legal requirement to produce written documentation, such as risk assessments.

Thirdly, linked to the above points, a lesser familiarity with the expectations of the UK regulatory system may exist in EMBs, compared with their native counterparts. Lesser knowledge of established networks may result in an inability to access services easily, an issue likely to be of greater relevance with more recent immigrants within the UK system. Therefore, the length of time the EMB has been established, and the extent to which the business owner has absorbed elements of the 'British' system is important. Invariably, EMBs with the poorest OHS performance tend to be recently established (often illegal immigrants), pay their employees poorly (often below minimum wage), and typically have a low compliance profile across a range of legislation, hence are amongst the most difficult to access.

Finally, since the majority of EMBs are micro enterprises (with fewer than 5 employees), many of the recognised barriers for accessing very small businesses in general are also pertinent. For example, such businesses often are not persuaded by the 'business case' for health and safety investment, which, when compounded by time and resource constraints, limit the willingness and ability of such businesses to invest in OHS measures.

#### **1.4 INTERVENTIONS TO INFLUENCE ETHNIC MINORITY BUSINESSES**

The literature suggests that successful interventions must respond to the needs, characteristics, and local circumstances of each group where influence and engagement is desired (Stephens et al. 2004). As such, the heterogeneity that exists within the EMBs means that the approach used by regulators to increase awareness of OHS issues and improving OHS practices in such businesses must be multifaceted (Vickers et al 2003).

In terms of the approach used to contact EMBs, research suggests that a personalised direct approach is more effective both in stimulating assimilation of information and in motivating changes in behaviour (e.g. participation) than a more general direct approach (Breakwell & Petts, 2001). Being identified by name appears to reduce the willingness to dismiss or ignore messages. This may be particularly important for members of groups who believe that those in authority normally disregard their opinions. Of note, the value of direct personalised approaches is however limited if the target recipient has either poor fluency in the language used or poor



literacy (Okazaki & Sue, 1995). Most methods for overcoming poor literacy skills or limited fluency of language require mediated approaches, which entail the organisation that wishes to gain access doing so either through or in collaboration with one or more other parties. Therefore, in order to access publics that are difficult to reach, it may be beneficial to use opinion leaders, those who operate to set the public agenda, to focus attention and legitimate concern (Brosius & Weimann, 1996; Weimann, 1991).

Research suggests that intermediaries from ethnic minority groups have a potentially valuable role to play in some localities in reinforcing OHS messages, particularly with respect to those ethnic groups that tend to be most mistrustful of authority and experience most difficulty around compliance (Vickers et al. 2003). There exists a need to identify the intermediaries that are most likely to be able to act as authoritative, credible influences on EMBs, criteria most plausibly fulfilled if they have a common cultural background with the target audience and operate independent from the regulator. The rationale is that EMB managers will be more likely to listen to a message if it comes from “someone like them” who can provide practical evidence of business benefits from the context of a similar business. Information is in essence “badged” in relation to best practice by means of a peer group (Nevid & Maria, 1999).

Some researchers propose that increased inspection visits to EMBs are an effective catalyst for raising awareness and stimulating improvement in OHS behaviours (Vickers et al. 2003). Inspectors need to adopt a persuasive and educational role during interactions with EMBs, whilst at the same time ensuring that regulations are properly and consistently enforced. Research also indicates that fear, in terms of prosecution, litigation, and loss of customers, is a principle driver for improving standards (Vickers et al. 2003). As many EMBs often consciously seek to avoid contact with health and safety regulators, the “implied threat” of inspection, and therefore potential enforcement action, may provide motivation to comply with the law in some instances.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

Prior to considering the Korean community specifically, information was sought from other Local Authorities who regularly deal with ethnic minority groups, and HSE staff involved in similar types of work in order to identify approaches to maximise the likelihood of successful interactions. A brief study of available background literature on this topic was also conducted.

Following this preparation, and in order to gather information regarding methods for engaging, communicating with, and influencing the OHS practices of Korean businesses, it was first necessary to identify respected, influential individuals within the community to act as potential intermediaries through which to access businesses within the community.

Such individuals were identified primarily from previous interactions with the Environmental Health Officer from Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, and through contacts forwarded by a Korean national on secondment to the LA. Suitability for interview was also based to a degree on ability to speak and understand English. Other appropriate individuals were discovered following discussions with the first intermediaries. In total, 6 intermediaries from both business and community groups were interviewed face-to-face using a semi-structured interview format (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the question set).

It became apparent from discussion with these individuals that a saturation level of input had been reached with regards to the information obtained. In other words, the interviews repeatedly revealed the same material. At this point, it was therefore decided that there was little to be gained from attempting to arrange further interviews to meet the numbers stipulated in the original specification.

On further discussions with the LA customer and HSE project officer, it was agreed that sampling only a limited number of businesses would be beneficial (given the apparent language barrier and the utility of suggestions already voiced through intermediaries). These were identified through discussions with the intermediaries, and predominantly represented Korean restaurants, as this sector had been identified by the LA as of key importance. In total representatives from 4 businesses were interviewed face-to-face (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the question set) to ascertain their level of OHS awareness, knowledge and practice, and to gain insight into their OHS needs.

The present report describes the outcomes of these discussions, detailing recommendations for effective engagement, communication and influencing of the Korean business community in relation to health and safety.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 BACKGROUND TO THE KOREAN COMMUNITY

The UK Korean community may be split into are three main groups, in terms of longevity of occupancy within the UK:

- Long-term residents / citizens (numbering approximately 8000 people);
- Korean businesspeople (around 7000) and;
- Full time students (around 20,000)

Thus, in total, there are approximately 35,000 Koreans living in the UK (Lim, 2006), with the vast majority in the Kingston area, centred on New Malden. In addition, roughly 150,000 Koreans visit the UK each year, mostly for tourism or to learn English, but do not stay for a prolonged period.

There are only a limited number of locations in which the Kingston community of Koreans communally meet as forums for discussing business, which could offer a means of access to the community with regard to health and safety. Of primary importance in this respect are the forums associated with the Korean Residents Society (KRS) and the Korean Restaurant and Supermarket Association (KRSA). The KRS provides a good accessible location for meetings, and has been used to meet the community previously for an awareness raising session by the Police. The KRSA is made up of around 50 businesses that meet on a regular basis. Thus, these two groups offer the opportunity to contact large numbers of people from the Korean business community in one session.

In addition, there are also over 100 Korean churches in the UK, 50 of these located in south London. These provide the main social forums, as many of the Korean community visit these churches regularly. Since there are a large number of churches, the congregations at each are usually small and mixed with respect to potential influence regarding OHS. As such, this is unlikely to constitute an effective route for reaching sufficient numbers of relevant members of the community.

### 3.2 CONTEXT TO REGULATORS' INTERACTIONS WITH KOREAN COMMUNITY

Historically, there have been ongoing problems between the Korean community restaurateurs and Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. These relate to concerns over the use of table-based cookers (primarily concerning gas and electrical safety due to the ad-hoc connections to the mains system), which are yet to be fully resolved.

The cooking equipment used in Korean restaurants is in general directly imported by the proprietor from Korea, and if so, will not have not passed through a UK testing house. As a result, it does not have the appropriate CE<sup>1</sup> marking to comply with current UK regulations, which state that all new appliances need to be CE-marked. If registered gas engineers, such as CORGI, conduct an assessment of any installation and certify an appliance as safe, then that

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<sup>1</sup> CE Marking is a mandatory marking on certain products, which is required if they are placed on the market in the European Economic Area (EEA). By affixing the CE marking, the manufacturer, or its representative, or the importer assures that the item meets all the essential requirements of all applicable EU directives.

appliance may lawfully be used (the EHO from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is awaiting further specific guidance on this issue from HSE Utilities Section). Furthermore, as some of the equipment used at Korean restaurants is only made in Korea, the standards for design and production may potentially not be as high as those in the UK.

Prior to commencing this project, the EHO provided the relevant information regarding how to ensure table cookers are in compliance with the law to restaurants within the Korean community, but did not observe any subsequent change in working practices within the restaurateurs. Due to these ongoing concerns, the current project is particularly interested in addressing health and safety issues in restaurants, relating to gas and electrical safety of table burners.

On the basis of this context of continued need for enforcement, and discussions with restaurant managers, it is apparent that with Korean restaurateurs, the knowledge of occupational health risks at their workplaces is limited. This is particularly true for the gas and electricity risks generally, and specifically related to the table burners mentioned above. Consequently, the steps taken by restaurateurs to address these hazards are also limited, and there exists significant scope to engage the Korean community to improve their OHS performance.

### **3.3 BARRIERS TO ENGAGING WITH THE KOREAN COMMUNITY**

**Language barrier:** The presence of a language barrier was highlighted as a significant impediment in engaging with Korean businesses, many of who speak very little English. This is corroborated through attempts made in the course of the present project, whereby both initial and ongoing contact and mutual understanding with members of the Korean community was very difficult to achieve.

The language barrier presents a number of potential negative outcomes apart from difficulties in accessing members of the community. Dutyholders can be unclear about what is required of them, due to a lesser familiarity with the expectations of the UK regulatory system resulting from confusion regarding the language. In some instances, the lack of English language is used as a justification for lack of action to make necessary changes to comply with the law. The language barrier may also undermine the understanding of health and safety risks, particularly given the apparent cultural differences in risk perception (as discussed in section 3.4).

A number of Korean restaurants have recently opened that employ unskilled, poorly paid individuals who are recent immigrants. Due to their recent arrival in the UK, these workers also have limited English speaking skills, and consequently little understanding of health and safety requirements and practices. This is likely to be compounded by limited input on this topic from management, as discussed below.

**Limited uptake of H&S material:** Potentially linked to the language barrier, interviews with businesses revealed that there is limited use of information material related to health and safety. In main, the business managers consulted had little or no knowledge of any OHS material, and had not used any HSE-produced material. At best, some businesses display a Health & Safety poster at their workplace as a perceived means of demonstrating their commitment. This would seem to reinforce other findings, which suggest OHS is not a major priority for these businesses, and information on these topics is not actively sought after. At present, there is no health and safety material written in Korean.

**Fear of regulators:** A number of interviewees identified that many Korean businesses view regulators as individuals to be wary of. With respect to restaurateurs, this apprehension is

reflected in a reluctance to let inspectors into their kitchens due to a fear of enforcement action. This perception appears to have resulted in part from interactions between certain Korean restaurants and Kingston EHO's. It was stated that within such a close-knit community, word quickly spreads around within the community, and consequently businesses try to avoid visits from the regulators. The Koreans are keen to protect their businesses from any perceived threat, and they feel the way to most successfully do this is to maintain a low profile and avoid attention from regulatory bodies.

**Unresponsiveness from dutyholders:** Where the EHO has observed a serious problem at a business, they provide feedback to the dutyholder and set a time scale for the rectification of that problem. However, despite conveying an overt willingness to address the problems during inspection interactions, in the majority of instances the Korean dutyholders have failed to take any action, simply ignoring any feedback produced. As a result, the regulators are required to take more formal action, such as serving improvement or prohibition notices. This behaviour may reflect either a lack of understanding or a lack of willingness to expend money or time to resolve issues. It also fits with a close-knit description of community, and propensity to avoid attention. Alternatively, the lack of knowledge of the English language is used as a justification for inaction to make necessary changes to comply with the law.

**Costs associated with changes:** Another barrier cited to detract from the likelihood of behaviour change to comply with UK law was the costs associated with implementing required changes. This is off-putting to many businesses, perhaps stemming from a lack of understanding that many of the changes required can be made quickly and cheaply. Linked to this, it was stated that a number of Korean restaurants have recently opened. Therefore, it is likely that management of these establishments place a low priority on investing in health and safety, given the scarcity of resource and finances that new businesses are typically subject to.

### 3.4 DIFFERENCES IN RISK PERCEPTION

Discussion also revealed that there might exist differences between Korean and UK businesses with regard to perceptions of the salience of risk. From a Korean point of view, it was stated that some of the OHS requirements expected of dutyholders are very different from those in Korea. There may to a certain degree be present a perception that the risks are not of direct relevance to some of the Korean restaurateurs, given that they are not required address these issues to a similar degree in their homeland. Therefore, they do not feel obliged to take action to address these risks, which are considered insignificant. This is of particular relevance to the self-imported and self-installed gas cooking equipment, which whilst acceptable in Korea, is not safe to use with the UK gas system.

The variance in risk perception may also reflect a lack of awareness of the potential risks. Those interviewees representing Korean businesses also displayed a lack of knowledge regarding other health and safety hazards, and means of effectively controlling these hazards. As an adjunct to this, it was revealed that these businesses rarely, if ever, use H&S guidance and information, and seem to have little or no knowledge of what is required of them to comply with the law. However, it was felt that risk awareness varies between different establishments, with some being more conscious to hazards and controls measures than others. For example, it was cited that kitchen managers and chefs in some restaurants personally teach trainees the skills and knowledge they feel are required for the job, rather than ensuring any formal qualifications in OHS are gained. Apprentices may frequently learn from peers in a more traditional way, which does not necessarily meet the standards set in the UK.

Some of the intermediaries interviewed felt that Korean businesses *do* place a high priority on OHS, but that perhaps their lower self-imposed standards signified a lack of information about what was required in order to comply with UK law. As such, they might benefit from more information.

*“Once [Korean restaurateurs] come to understand why the standards are important, they may be motivated to make changes and meet criteria”* [Korean intermediary]

### **3.5 METHODS OF ENGAGING WITH THE KOREAN COMMUNITY**

Discussions with representatives from the Korean community provided useful insight into what they considered to be the most effective methods of engaging with other dutyholders from the community. These may be segregated into two groups: general suggestions for improving interactions, and specific interventions to promote engagement, as outlined below.

#### **3.5.1 General comments for improving interactions**

To overcome fear of regulators within the Korean community, it was felt that there is a need to formulate a more open and trusting approach between the dutyholders and HSE / LA. This may be achieved by building up a rapport with the community on friendly terms, which might potentially percolate down from positive experiences with regulators. This may help to educate dutyholders that there is no need for them to be concerned if they have things working at their site in a safe way. As such, there is a pressing need to convince Korean community that:

*“We [the regulators] are here to help and not close your businesses down”*

#### **3.5.2 Interventions to promote engagement**

The interviews provided a number of useful suggestions with respect to how to best engage with the Korean community.

##### **3.5.2.1 Awareness raising event**

The most popular idea was to hold an awareness-raising event, to include a number of brief talks on a range of pertinent specific OHS issues. This would allow the EHO to convey messages to a large proportion of the community en-masse, rather than ‘fire-fighting’ issues as they arose at individual premises, or conducting resource intensive door-to-door inspections, which are liable to fail to reach all the target population.

**Location:** Two potential locations for such an event were suggested. The first option would be to utilise facilities at the Korean Residents Society headquarters. This previously provided an effective venue for a meeting of 30-40 members of the community regarding the new licensing laws. The second option would be to use a local Korean restaurant as the venue for an event. Here, representatives from all similar establishments could be invited, and there would be possibilities of communication between each business regarding the issues discussed.

**Content:** In terms of the content of the event, it was suggested that rather than just giving a series of lectures, HSE / LA could give examples of good practice during a session with dutyholders. Through actively identifying examples of what HSE / LA considers acceptable / appropriate standards within a specific work setting, it is more likely that the message will be

retained. This sort of physical “hands-on” approach would likely be more effective than a simple lecture on health and safety, as it is referenced to specific work practices. A question and answer session could also be useful to clarify anything the restaurateurs were unsure of.

In terms of topics to cover during the session, the key areas appear to be gas and electrical safety. In addition, brief periods spent on requirements for risk assessments and how to produce them, and safe use of equipment was also considered useful. Some intermediaries commented that as fire safety standards are high in Korea, it might not be worthwhile to cover these in as much detail. The exact details of content would require further consideration.

**Incentives for attendance:** It was highlighted that potential attendees may need an incentive to encourage attendance. The example used for the licensing meeting was that attendees would save the cost of a solicitor’s fee by gaining the information for free. If a restaurant were chosen as the venue for the event, the incentive here could be a free health and safety assessment of the owner’s kitchen. Choice of an existing compliant example would help to reduce friction in arranging the session, as the positive aspects of the working environment could be highlighted and praised. Some interviewees recommended the adoption of a hard line approach to provide sufficient incentive to ensure a decent attendance:

*“You need to say ‘come and listen to us, or we will come and get you later on’, otherwise people will not take an interest”* [Korean restaurant manager]

It was mentioned repeatedly that throughout any awareness-raising seminar, it is important to underscore to dutyholders that it does not necessarily cost a lot of money to make the required changes, and in the long run can be worthwhile and often result in money-savings. This could help to persuade dutyholders to make changes with less resistance. Where changes are more costly, it must be understood that this is the way businesses have to be run in this country. Lastly, it was also felt to be important to highlight that the seminar was being run for the restaurateurs benefit:

*“You need to make it clear that ‘we are doing this to help you here’”* [Korean restaurant manager]

Tackling all the restaurateurs at one event also has the benefit of being visibly even-handed, by dealing with *all* dutyholders on a particular issue, thus ensuring all are aware of their duties to meet the required standard. Previously, the EHO has dealt with premises on an individual basis as problems are encountered, which may not be perceived as ‘a level playing field’ by those who feel they are being singled out for special treatment. Some intermediaries stated that there might be competition between different players from within the same business community, therefore dealing with the community en masse, with the co-operation of the KRSA, would minimise feelings of discontent.

**Logistics of running an event:** Some businesses considered it important to provide the training in Korean where possible, as it was felt that gaps in dutyholder’s knowledge base could be most successfully filled with an explanation in their own language. However, in the likely absence of this level of translation, it was highlighted that it would be necessary to provide interpreters at any event to ensure that the understanding is adequate. It is likely that the audience will ask questions that cannot be answered properly without the appropriate translation facilities. The police-run licensing seminar was less successful in this respect as the police brought their own interpreter who was not able to understand the court proceedings / legal implications / law side of the questions. Therefore, it was recommended that HSE/LA would not necessarily need to engage a professional interpreter for the OHS seminar, but an individual who also already knows about health and safety matters.

In terms of the time and day, it was considered that holding the session in the afternoon, between lunchtime and dinner (3-5pm time slot was suggested), on a less busy day such as Tuesday or Wednesday would help to maximise attendance. A seminar no longer than 2/3 hours was recommended, as otherwise it was likely that the attendees could become overloaded with information.

**Follow up to event:** Any awareness-raising event organised should try to capture a list of all participants in attendance. These individuals could then be followed up, possibly through inspection visits, to see whether attendance at the event had any effect on dutyholder's actual OHS practice and behaviour.

### **3.5.2.2 Translating guidance**

LB Kingston is already beginning to translate information on certain issues into Korean, but these are not related to health and safety. As a prompt for the discussion on this topic, interviewees were shown examples of existing HSE guidance to ascertain whether the type and level of language would be comprehensible. Some of those interviewed proposed that translating this type of material into Korean would be both appropriate and of use, and this should be taken forward:

*"I think it [translation] would be a good idea because the more exposure to information about OHS the better"* [Korean restaurant manager]

Others stated that as most Korean people can understand written English, provision of written materials in English should be sufficient. This would therefore avoid the need for time-consuming and costly translations to be produced. Further consideration of the English skills of the target audience would be of use here, as impact of any material is highly dependent on the understanding and informational needs of the audience.

If the decision is taken to translate OHS written guidance into Korean, this material could be successfully distributed at the end of an awareness session to reinforce the messages HSE / LA is trying to get across. However, some interviewees suggested that the regulators should avoid producing too much translated material as this may overwhelm the dutyholders and limit uptake:

*"The amount of material should be condensed to increase the likelihood that it is all read. For example, just give a list of the key points regarding gas safety"* [Korean intermediary]

### **3.5.2.3 Advertising**

The possibility of advertising OHS messages was explored. These could be engaged to provide targeted advertising for a particular event, as described above, or also for general awareness raising purposes, although this is likely to be of limited impact unless followed up. Advertising was felt to have greatest potential effectiveness if used as a means of increasing attendance at a specific event.

The Korean Residents Society is to produce a monthly newsletter, which could potentially be utilised as a publication to place information relating to health and safety. Within the New Malden area, there are also 6 weekly Korean newspapers which provide good coverage of the community, and some of which have wider distribution to the UK Korean community. There are also 2 Korean Internet broadcasting sites, which are less well subscribed to. It was highlighted that there would be a cost associated with any advertising requirements.



#### **3.5.2.4 Further inspections**

Whilst interviewees appreciated the input gained from regulators during inspections of their businesses, it was generally considered that adopting a group approach, such as the awareness raising event described above, would present a more even-handed method of dealing with the issues faced by all businesses from within a particular industry. It was however acknowledged that inspections subsequent to any awareness day would be justified in ensuring that the information had been taken on board, and the required changes implemented.

## 4 MAIN FINDINGS

- There are ongoing issues between the Korean community restaurateurs and Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. These relate to general OHS issues, such as risk assessments, and specific concerns over the use of table-based cookers (primarily concerning gas and electrical safety due to the ad-hoc connections to the mains system), which are yet to be fully resolved.
- There are only a limited number of locations in which the Kingston community of Koreans communally meet as forums for discussing business. The two main forums are the Korean Residents Society and the Korean Restaurant and Supermarket Association. Engaging with these societies may offer the opportunity to access large numbers of people from the business community in a single session with regard to health and safety.
- Like many ethnic minority communities, the Korean community is very close-knit. They display a wariness of regulators, reflected in their preference to avoid regulatory contact wherever possible. In order to protect their businesses from any perceived threat, they maintain a low profile and seek to avoid any attention from regulatory bodies.
- In previous dealings with regulators from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, despite conveying an overt willingness to address the problems during inspection interactions, in the majority of instances the Korean dutyholders have failed to take the required action. As a result of this inactivity, the regulators are required to take more formal action, such as serving improvement or prohibition notices.
- There is often a considerable language barrier that impedes successful interactions between members of the Korean community and the regulators, as the proprietors of many Korean businesses speak very little English. Difficulties with language can also result in a lesser familiarity with expectations of the UK regulatory system, an undermining of the understanding of health and safety risks, or be used as a justification for lack of action to make necessary changes to comply with the law. A lack of health and safety training conducted in Korean language was cited as limiting businesses' potential to both understand requirements asked of them under UK law, and to choose appropriate corrective action.
- Those business managers interviewed demonstrated a limited awareness and knowledge of occupational health risks at their workplace, and consequently had taken little action to control these risks. Linked to this, there appears to be only minimal use of information material related to health and safety. In main, the business managers consulted had little or no knowledge of any OHS material, and had not used any HSE-produced material.
- Another barrier cited to detract from the likelihood of behaviour change to comply with UK law was the costs associated with implementing required changes. These costs are off-putting to many Korean businesses, perhaps stemming from a lack of understanding that some of the changes required can be made relatively quickly and cheaply.
- There appear to be cultural differences related to perceptions of the salience of certain health and safety risks. More specifically, in terms of the Korean restaurateurs, the risks related to the use of directly imported self-installed gas table cookers are considered to be acceptable, whereas within the UK this is not the case. There exists to a certain degree the perception that these risks are not of direct relevance to some of the restaurateurs, given that they are not required to address these issues a similar degree in their homeland.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Although difficult to achieve given the language barrier, it is important to try to formulate a more open and trusting approach between the dutyholders and HSE / LA, as a means of helping to overcome the avoidance of regulators within the Korean community. Ensuring a good flow of dialogue between involved parties may help to avoid the necessity for the regulator to adopt a harder line of enforcement, which has the inevitable consequence of reinforcing the feelings of wariness towards them within the Korean community.
- For future reference, making initial contact through intermediaries appears to be an effective means of gaining access to a difficult-to-access group. Therefore, HSE / LA should be willing to work flexibly with a broad range of intermediaries, as part of a wider strategy of engagement with various ethnic minority groups.
- Discussions with key members of the Korean community highlighted a number of potential interventions to engage and influence businesses within the community regarding occupational health and safety. It should be remembered that in organising any intervention, it is important to clearly convey the benefits of participation to businesses to ensure buy-in from the outset.
- A consensus was reached amongst interviewees that the organisation of an awareness-raising seminar for local restaurateurs would be the most effective and even-handed means of communicating health and safety messages to a large proportion of the community en-masse. Dissemination to a group could help to minimise the need to 'fire-fight' issues as they arose at individual premises.
- A number of recommendations were made regarding how to best ensure the success of an awareness-raising seminar. In terms of the content of the event, it was suggested that rather than just giving a series of lectures, HSE / LA could give examples of good practice relating to specific relevant topics. It would also be necessary to provide interpreters at any event to ensure that the understanding is adequate. Due consideration must be given to timetabling and location of the event to ensure attendance is maximised. Discussions with representatives from both the Korean Residents Society and Korean Restaurant and Supermarket Association would be of benefit in finalising both content and logistics.
- In order to increase the likelihood of a desired change succeeding, an effective approach would need to include complementary interventions, where each intervention compensates for the shortcomings of others. Therefore, it may be possible to translate key pieces of OHS guidance into Korean and distribute this at the end of an awareness session to reinforce the messages HSE / LA is trying to convey. Similarly, there exists potential for advertising in local Korean press as a means of enhancing attendance at any awareness raising session.
- It will be necessary to ensure that any intervention implemented is followed up by an evaluation as regards its impact in terms of behavioural change in dutyholders. It is likely that this will be most effectively achieved through inspection visits to premises.
- The Korean businesses must be made aware that they are not being treated in any way exceptionally. The OHS enforcement procedures are the same as those for any other business in Kingston. Therefore, the Koreans receive the same enforcement policy treatment as all other dutyholders, and should not be treated differently if they fail to comply.

## 6 APPENDICES

### 6.1 QUESTION SET FOR INTERMEDIARIES

#### Current mindset amongst Korean businesses

What do you feel are relevant H&S issues / risks for the Korean business community?  
What would you tell someone in order to help them communicate H&S issues to Korean businesses?

#### Subgroups of Korean community

What do members of the Korean business sector have in common? What defines them?

- Industry? Religion? Educational background? Trade Association? Age?

Where do they get together as a group (forums / community centres)?

Are there specific cultural beliefs in relation to H&S held by Koreans?

#### Historical context

Traditionally, how does the Korean community view regulators, including H&S?

What is the historical context re Korean community interactions with regulators?

Have any previous dealings being resolved amicably?

Have there been any problems in dealing with regulators within the community?

#### Behaviour prediction

What is your understanding of Korean businesses' awareness of risks?

Do you think that they feel these risks are of direct relevance to them?

What do you think motivates management to make changes to improve H&S (*e.g. compliance with regulatory bodies, desire to improve health of their workers*)?

- Any examples they have of improvements made & motivations

Is H&S an area that receives any priority in the Korean business sector?

What else do they prioritise as a business community?

Are you aware of any particular gaps in their H&S knowledge base?

#### Barriers to engaging / accessing Korean businesses

What do you see as potential barriers to engaging Korean businesses to improve H&S issues?

- Time / money / inclination / resources / language / cultural differences

How could these barriers be best overcome?

#### Scope for improvements

What do you think might be effective ways to engage & influence Korean businesses about H&S?

1. Contact through intermediaries

- What or who has influence with Korean businesses?
- What sources do they trust?
- Are there specific individuals HSE could work through to potentially influence the Korean business community? (*Opinion leaders in TA's, media, local communities*)
- Which organisations could HSE work with to develop an information network? (*TA's, community centres, Small business support networks relevant to Koreans*)
- How would the use of intermediaries be made most effective?
- Who else contacts them and how? Could existing networks be utilised?
- Is there a possibility of 'piggybacking' on other events with greater relevance to the community?

- Would intermediaries be willing to disseminate H&S messages?
2. Contact through the media
    - Which types of media Korean businesses regularly use / access? (*Industry journals, local papers*)
    - Is this mainstream or culture specific?
    - What types of advertising do you feel might be effective in raising awareness? (*TV / radio / newspapers / billboards / letters / [trade] magazines / mail shot*)
  3. Direct contact with HSE, LA or representative (WCOs)
    - Would Korean businesses respond to site visits?
    - Do you envisage problems regarding the language barrier?
    - Other problems re pretending not to understand English
  4. Translating HSE guidance (already done in Urdu, Hindi etc.)
    - Do you feel the Korean businesses would use guidance if it were provided? If not, why?
    - What level of uptake would you predict?
    - Where would the material be best distributed to reach its intended audience?
    - What format would be suitable? –
      - o Written (leaflets / books / posters) or auditory?
    - What are the key subjects / points to translate for this audience?
    - How could HSE ensure the information is pitched at right level? (*give examples from 5 topic areas –from HSE website, free leaflets*)
  5. Seminars / safety awareness days / training courses on H&S topics
    - Do you feel Korean businesses would respond to these events?
    - What level of uptake would you predict?
    - Would incentives / threats of inspection enhance this?
    - What topics would it be useful to cover?
    - What considerations are there to organising an effective day?
      - o Good location to engage multiple businesses? Work / neutral setting
      - o Good time of day?

Can you think of other potential means of accessing / engaging Korean businesses not already mentioned?

- Obtain details. Positives and negatives of each approach

#### Specifics of interventions – after discussing different types

- Which type of intervention mentioned above do you feel would elicit greatest responses? Where could HSE best target its interventions?
- Benefits and drawbacks of each approach?
- What content in the messages used would motivate businesses to make changes? (i.e. what are important as key motivators: ‘Good health is good business’ / personal risk / compliance with legislation)
- Would different sectors of industry respond better to different interventions?
- Would it be possible to orchestrate multiple interventions at the same time?
- At whom would it be most effective to aim interventions (particular forums, managers, or employee-based)?
- Would there be a need to translate any contact with Korean businesses into Korean (prevalence of English speaking)?
- When would be the best time to launch an intervention?

### Possible incentives

- What would motivate improved H&S performance in the Korean community?
- Would the business community be responsive to positive incentives for good performance? (*Reduced cost – tax / insurance; benefits of good OH - improved productivity, reduced sick leave, better work conditions*)
- Would the business community be responsive to negative incentives where they are failing? (*Immediate – penalties for poor OH, increased insurances; intermediate – bad publicity, expulsion from TA; long – increased absenteeism and ill health*)

### Maintaining progress

What do you feel would be the best way to evaluate the impact of any interventions?

How could any positive changes be maintained?

How to best maintain any links forged with the Korean community?

Any other ideas

### Next stage of the project

Would you be willing to help us gain access to a range of businesses to interview them?

Would you help with translation issues?

## 6.2 QUESTION SET FOR BUSINESSES

### General Questions

#### General information about manager

1. Position (needs to be owner / manager)
2. Experience
3. Responsibilities
4. Education level / training / qualifications
5. Born in England / abroad
6. Membership of a Trade Association
  - If so, which one

#### General information about business

1. Size of business (medium / small / micro)
2. Number of permanent workers / PT workers
3. Type of business – industry sector
4. Length of time in business
5. Turnover
6. Part of a larger organisation (e.g. sub-contracting / outsourcing)
7. Use contractors

### Risk Identification & Control

#### Main occupational health risks / hazards at their workplace

What do you think the main health and safety hazards and risks are for your staff?

What do you think the main health and safety hazards and risks are for your clients?

- Manual handling, chemicals, repetitive strain injuries, noise, stress [long-hours], dust inhalation, dermatitis
- Specific issues relating to Korean businesses –
  - o Gas safety
  - o Fire
  - o Electricity
  - o Plant and machinery
  - o Risk assessment

#### Control of hazards

How have you dealt with these issues?

What steps have you taken to reduce the risks to staff?

What steps have you taken to reduce the risks to clients?

- PPE, equipment purchased, ventilation, reporting of accidents, training courses in OH / specific hazards

Where did you get the information from to reduce risks?

- Has it solved the problem

Have you heard of Risk Assessment?

Do you know that you are required to assess the hazards in your business?

- If so, how and when did you find out (visit, info material, courses)?

Have you conducted risk assessments for all the hazards in your workplace?

Do you think your H&S has been improved because of doing the RA?

- Why, why not?

#### Sources of H&S information

Do you use any H&S information in the running of your business?

- If so, which do you use? (HSE-based, identify which bits)
- What form is it (guidance, leaflets, tapes, posters)
- Is it useful / usable / understandable?
- What could be done to improve it?

How do you find out about H&S information? Where do you access H&S information? Do you know where to go?

- Council, Trade Associations, HSE, community centres

Do you feel there are any areas where there are specific gaps in your H&S knowledge? (*Do they need to know more to comply with the law*)

How could these be filled?

What other information sources of non-H&S information do you use?

Where do you access this information?

### **Methods of engagement**

#### Intermediaries

Which individuals do you listen to / in contact with as sources of information?

Which organisations do you listen to for information purposes?

#### Events / awareness raising days / training

What events do you already attend? (Trade fairs, community centre days etc)

Would you attend a session solely about H&S issues?

What type of session would be most suitable & when (whole day / afternoon / evening)?

#### Translating guidance

Show examples of types of currently available HSE guidance leaflets

Would these be suitable / relevant / appropriate level of language?

#### Contact through media

Which types of media do you regularly use / access?

Is this mainstream or culture specific?

#### Inspection

Have you received an inspection by HSE/LA?

What were the outcomes of the inspection?

Was the inspection useful to you? Did it help you to improve your H&S practices?

#### Incentives

What would motivate you to improve H&S performance at your business?

- Positive incentives (*Reduced cost – tax / insurance; benefits of good OH - improved productivity, reduced sick leave, better work conditions*)

- Negative incentives (*Immediate – penalties for poor OH, increased insurances; intermediate – bad publicity, expulsion from TA; long – increased absenteeism and ill health*)

Discuss other potential means of engaging with community



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