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Worker Involvement

The last seminar hosted by the Forum was on Worker Involvement. Below is a report on some of the areas covered by the seminar.

The seminar started off with Sarah Bates and Sue Williams from the HSE speaking. For HSE, Worker Involvement is a priority this year and it is a key strand of HSE policy. Workplace research shows that Worker Involvement and unionised workplaces were safer and healthier. The confidence of health and safety representatives within workplaces, however, was found to be low.

Sue spoke about how more soft skills are needed and went on to say Worker Involvement is most common in larger organisations and that SMEs need to be targeted especially within motor vehicle repair, transport and construction.

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Lord McKenzie awards Forum

In January 2010 four members of Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum went to the House of Lords to be presented with the Alan Butler Award for excellence.

They met up with Lord McKenzie, the Under-secretary of State for the Department of Works and Pensions, who presented the award to Andrew Mawson, and Dr Tony Smith – see photo (left to right Tony Smith, Lord McKenzie and Andrew Mawson).

The award was for winning the best membership, recruitment and retention out of all the Safety Groups in the United Kingdom.

Jane Howie, the Development Worker for the Forum said “it was a great honour to win the award and be invited to lunch at the House of Lords. We have won this award because we are engaging with health work and well-being issues with over 700 employers in the Bradford Area and helping to influence the health and safety of tens of thousands of workers.”

Jane went on to say “I hope that Bradford and Airedale NHS and Bradford District Partnership see the value in continuing to support the Forum so that we can continue offering our services free of charge to employers in the district.”

Sarah spoke about the benefits to employers that worker involvement has. To see the slides of the presentation go to <http://baohsf.org.uk/events.html> . Businesses that value their employees views and listen to what they have to say are financially better off.

The HSE are offering health and safety reps or worker involvement ‘champions’ in SMEs, part funded two day courses including people skills to help them take an active part in health and safety at their places of work. The HSE are also offering **Fully funded joint training** of safety representatives and first line managers to help facilitate joint problem solving, co-operation and agree practical steps to help make improvements.

- **Aimed at any size organisation, unionised or non-unionised across all sectors.**
- Includes organisations that have existing WI arrangements in place but have a need to improve or develop these arrangements further.
- Can be topic based e.g. stress in the workplace, combined risk assessments, joint inspections

Selco Builders Merchants spoke about how they have involved their workers. Stewart Masefield and Chris Roach from Selco, an expanding company that now has 28 branches, spoke about how involving the workforce is vital. Stewart believes that prevention of accidents and ill health is not only better but it is also cheaper. He quoted that;

“Nothing creates more self-respect among employees than being included in the process of making decisions”

“Treat employees like partners, and they act like partners”.

Selco believes that people are the most important asset, and they involve their workforce in group discussion and have a buddying system for new employees who eventually end up becoming ‘the teacher’. Chris talked about the importance of encouraging staff to report concerns and never make it seem as an inconvenience.

Also speaking at the event was HR consultant Michael Millward.

Tell employees about health and safety and they'll know about it.
Involve them and they'll understand.

Visit our subsidised training section



What should I be doing?

We know from experience that workplaces where employees play an active part in health and safety often have lower accident rates.

Talking, listening and co-operating helps to get the best from your workforce, encouraging closer working relationships, as well as a safer workplace.

[Find out more](#)

Taking action

People who feel valued and involved in problem solving play a vital role in a high performing workplace.

Our step-by-step guide will show you how you can effectively and efficiently involve your workers in health and safety.

[Find out more](#)

Subsidised training

We offer two new subsidised health and safety training courses designed to either:

- help organisations get started with worker involvement; or
- improve their existing arrangements for involving workers.

[Find out more](#)

Shared experiences

Discover how organisations can successfully involve their workforce in managing health and safety.

Read about Health and Safety stories, from the employers, employees and representatives involved.

[Find out more](#)

The HSE's new website on Worker Involvement 'Safe and Sound' has now been launched and can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/doyourbit/index.htm>

Fit notes

Following a report “Working for a Healthier Tomorrow” which outlines how work improves workers’ mental and physical health and assists recoveries, the government replaced the Med 3 or sick note with the “fit note” on the 6th April this year. Details of the change are given in the article below.

From April 2010 the current ‘sick note’ will be replaced. GPs will be able to offer advice on what work an employee may be able to perform and will be able to suggest adjustments to working arrangements which could be made in order to facilitate an earlier return to work. This legislation will affect all employers in Great Britain.

Statement of Fitness for Work or ‘Fit Note’

The Statement of Fitness for Work, or ‘fit note’ aims to focus on what an employee may be able to do at work rather than what they cannot do.

What’s different about the new fit note?

In the past GPs have either said that ‘you should refrain from work’ or ‘you need not refrain from work’. The fit note offers a new option - ‘may be fit for work taking account of the following advice’.

A GP will be able to suggest ways of helping an employee get back to work.

This might mean discussing:

- a phased return to work
- flexible working
- amended duties
- workplace adaptations.

Statement of fitness for work Med3 04/09
For social security or Statutory Sick Pay

Patient's name: Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms

I assessed your case on: / /

and, because of these condition(s):

I advise that:

you are fit for work.
 you are not fit for work.
 you may be fit for some work now.

Comments, including functional effects of your condition(s):

If available, and with your employer's agreement, you may benefit from:

a phased return to work.
 altered hours.
 amended duties.
 workplace adaptations.

This will be the case for: / /

or from: / / / / to: / /

I will/will not need to assess your fitness for work again at the end of this period. (Please delete as applicable)

Doctor's signature: _____

Date of statement: / /

Doctor's address: _____

The GP will also provide general details of the functional effect of the individual's condition.

Why the change?

For many employees work means a lot more than just their salary. Studies show that work is good for health; and prolonged sickness absence can produce its own set of problems, such as:

- isolation
- loss of confidence
- mental health issues
- de-skilling
- social exclusion.

Many employers recognise that reducing levels of long-term ill health is about developing a partnership between the line manager, the individual, the GP, occupational health and the HR department.

What do I do now?

Understand the changes

See the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) [web page on fit notes](#) or download a [PDF copy of the guidance](#).

What do you need to do?

If an employee hands you a medical certificate/fit note with suggestions from their doctor for facilitating an early return, you should arrange a meeting with your employee as soon as possible to discuss the possibilities. You do not have to allow them to come back to work if the GP's suggestions are really not feasible from your point of view; the obligation is to give it careful consideration.

You should think about including a new paragraph in your policies, especially the Written Statement and the absence policy if you have one. Have a look at our model policy on www.pers.org.uk/ publications for ideas.

Deciphering the doctor's note

Finally, it is proposed that GPs should print these notes from their practice's computer, rather than issuing hand written notes, which we all have difficulty reading. Now that is a good idea!

Come along to the Forum's next free seminar on 'Fit Notes' to be held on the 28th April at the Impressions Gallery, Centenary Square Bradford.

The Government has also set up and Occupational Health Advice line for line managers of organisations with 250 or less employees. Call 0800 077 88 44

New Hazardous Signs & Labelling

The way that hazardous substances are labelled has been changed recently by European Union (EU) Regulations to meet the requirements of the Global Harmonisation System (GHS). Hazard labelling allows for the communication of hazard classification to the user of a substance or mixture, to alert the user to the presence of a hazard and the need to avoid exposures and the resulting risks.

For those who use or supply chemical substances in UK the following substantial changes will occur:

- There will be new scientific criteria to assess the hazardous properties of chemicals.
- New designs for the existing hazard symbols.

For example, the orange & black skull & crossbones square pictogram that denotes "Toxic" will in future be the black with white background black skull & crossbones with red diamond border.



- The implementation of three new harmonised hazard warning symbols for labels (known as 'pictograms').



This pictogram will refer to less serious health hazards such as skin irritancy/sensitisation and applies to many circumstances where the [CHIP symbol](#) is currently applied.



This pictogram will reflect serious longer term health hazards such as carcinogenicity and respiratory sensitisation.



This new pictogram will be used to indicate 'Contains gas under pressure'

- The existing risk and safety phrases (R and S phrases) will be replaced by harmonised warning and precautionary statements for labels

For example:

R36 will become **H320** - Causes eye irritation

R 51 will become **H401** - Toxic to aquatic life

S2 will become **P102** - Keep out of reach of children

51 will become **P271** - Use only outdoors or in well-ventilated area

Full implementation is not scheduled until June 2015 in the mean time both the CLP and CHIP4 classification systems will run side-by-side. **Envirocare** can advise on how this may affect you and your business specifically. Contact us on 01274 738668 or via our website www.envirocare.org

See the Forum Website www.baohsf.org.uk



To receive newsletters, seminar lists and keep in touch please complete this forum

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Organisation _____

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Business Type _____

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