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Step 4 – RECORD your findings and implement them

Step 5 – REVIEW your assessment and update if necessary

## Lords Award again!

Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum has won yet another Alan Butler Award for Excellence. This will be presented at the House of Lords on the 25th January 2010.

The award, sponsored by BT plays an important role in recognising, celebrating and communicating the work of health and safety groups in the UK.

The Forum has won the award for having the best membership and recruitment and retention approach out of all the health and safety groups nationwide.

We believe that our high membership numbers and retention of members is partly down to membership being free. We are fortunate to receive a small amount of funding from the Healthy Community Fund, which is now being led by the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The services we provide have much added value because of the hard work and dedication of the Working Group members, whose individual organisations allow them to have time off to attend Forum meetings.

Well done to all the Working Group

## What is a risk assessment?

It is careful examination of what could harm people in your work so that you can decide whether you have done enough to protect them or whether you need to do more. John Blanchfield from Bradford's Environmental Health Team sets out clearly and simply the five steps involved in sensible risk assessment.

### The Five Steps



Step 1 – IDENTIFY the hazard

Step 2 - DECIDE who might be harmed and how

Step 3 – EVALUATE the risks and decide on precautions

Step 1 What are the hazards?

- Spot hazards by:
- walking around your work place;
- asking your employees what they think;
- visiting the 'Your industry' areas of the HSE website or HSE 'Ask an Expert' Infoline 8453450055;
- checking manufacturers' instructions;
- contacting your trade association.

Don't forget long-term health hazards.

Step 2 Who might be harmed and how?

Identify groups of people. Remember: some workers have particular needs eg; people who may not be in the workplace all the time; members of the public; if you share your workplace think about how your work affects others present. Say how the hazard could cause harm.

Step 3 What are you already doing?

What more do you need to do List what is already in place to reduce the likelihood of harm or make any harm less serious. Is it enough? Be honest. What else needs to be done?

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#### Step 4 How will you put the assessment into action?

Remember to prioritise. Deal with those hazards that are high-risk and have serious consequences first.

Make a list of actions and who is going to do them and set a time for when they will be done.

What further action is necessary?

You need to make sure that you have reduced risks 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

An easy way of doing this is to compare what you are already doing with good practice.

If there is a difference, list what needs to be done.

#### Step 5 Review date:

Review your assessment to make sure you are still improving, or at least not sliding back.

If there is a significant change in your workplace, remember to check your risk assessment and make changes where necessary,

#### SUMMARY

- Don't be afraid
- Don't put it off
- Use HSE website
- Keep it simple/sensible
- Nothing is risk free
- Develop and review



## Mens Health MOT's.

The health inequalities facing men are stark:

- Men are much less likely to visit their GP than women.
- Men are twice as likely as women, both to develop and to die from the ten most common cancers that affect both sexes.
- The average male life expectancy is about five years lower than the average female life expectancy.

In an attempt to address men's health inequalities the Bradford Health of Men (HoM) project was created by a group of health professionals in 2002. One particular aspect of our work involves the delivery of 'Health MOT's' which are designed to grab men's attention and generate ideas of body maintenance. These one to one consultations last between thirty to forty five minutes and are intended to give men the opportunity to discuss health issues in a confidential manner and provide basic health checks.

What does an MOT consist of?

Measurements

These usually include blood pressure, pulse, body mass index, waist measurement, blood cholesterol and glucose, urinalysis and carbon monoxide (if a smoker).

Lifestyle review

This may include questioning regarding smoking, alcohol, eating and exercise. Health MOT's can be ideal recruiting tool onto weight management and stop smoking groups!

Discussion

The discussion covers family history of illness, current medications, emotional well-being, sexual health, male specific illnesses such as prostate and testicular cancer, and general health topics.

Health MOT's can be delivered anywhere that men gather. Consequently, workplace and community locations such as mosques, community centres, pubs and barbers shops, provide excellent venues for this type of health promotion. We believe that men are concerned about their health and are willing to engage with health topics in situations they feel comfortable.

Men attend for various reasons. Sometimes men come along for some reassurance that everything is alright. They may not have reviewed their health with a nurse or doctor for many years and wish to "have a bit of a check up". On other occasions men discover that one or more of their clinical measurements are out of the normal range and they may require referral to another health professional for review. Health MOT's can be an effective and a lifesaving intervention and this is illustrated in the case of Brian Johnson who we saw in 2005 (link attached). <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4565069.stm>

Finally from a political perspective, health MOT's address Lord Darzi's (2008) national programme of vascular risk assessment, which specifically aims at reducing risk to 40 – 74 year olds. A health MOT incorporates the reviews six key goals namely, tackling obesity, reducing alcohol harm, treating drug addiction, reducing smoking rates, improving sexual health and improving mental health.

If you would like to arrange some health MOT's (whatever the venue) please contact:

Andrew Harrison

01274 322 169

email: [Andrew.harrison2@bradford.nhs.uk](mailto:Andrew.harrison2@bradford.nhs.uk)

[bradford.nhs.uk](http://bradford.nhs.uk)

## 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 was the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bhopal disaster

Members of the Workers' Health Advice Team and Bradford Area Safety Reps Association were honoured to meet Satinath Sarangi who founded the Bhopal Group for Information and Action at the Hazards Conference held in Manchester earlier this year.



Satinath spoke about the Bhopal disaster which happened on 3 December 1984 – 25 years ago this Thursday.

Twenty five years ago the catastrophic gas leak from a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India saw the beginning of the worst industrial disaster in history.

Union Carbide now DOW released 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate gas into where there was a population of 1.2 million. Satinath spoke about:

‘a 30 foot wall cloud of gas that covered over half a million people. No warnings were given and people were running into the gas not away from it. People living in the shanty settlements nearby suffered immediate and devastating effects which are still being felt today, Around 8,000-10,000 people died within the first 72 hours, most of them immediately drowning in their own body fluids in their chests. Since then another 15,000 have died from their exposure to the gas and another 120,000 have chronic medical conditions that require constant healthcare’.

‘The company blamed the workers, but in fact the causes were managerial; they had cut down on the workforce, cut down on training drastically and there had been over 80 incidents and accidents before the disaster and one worker had been killed’.

“Two years before the disaster journalists had been informed of problems. Most of the more hazardous work was carried out by migrant workers. Any complaints made were responded to by sacking this led to even more blind leadership.”

‘The emergency team which tried to relieve the disaster did not even get their medical bills paid by the company afterwards. 500 dollars were paid per person to cover a lifetime suffering’.

The Bhopal Medical Appeal has funded clinics that offer the only source of free health care to survivors of the 1984 gas disaster and those suffering from the ongoing water pollution. [www.bhopal.org](http://www.bhopal.org) to view full story, photographs and to make a donation.

Bradford Area Safety Reps and the Workers' Health Advice Team sent a message of support to Satinath and the Bhopal group and sent photographs of the memorial tree that was planted outside Bradford City Hall in memory of the Bhopal victims, and which is visited each year on Workers' Memorial Day by safety reps who annually mourn dead workers and fight for the living.

Bradford Council are removing the tree for the development of a mirror pool in the near future, Carol

Duerden from the Workers' Health Advice Team is in negotiations with the council to have the tree replanted at a suitable location.



## Don't oversimplify accidents

Rober Bibbings, RoSPA's (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Occupational Safety Adviser - reports in RoSPA Occ Safety & Health journal.

There are two very common errors in the way people perceive accidents. Either they see them at one extreme as rare, chance chains of events and circumstances which are beyond both prediction and control or, at the other end of the spectrum, they see them as quite simple events with single causes.

In reality nearly all accidents - even mundane ones - turn out to be as complex as they are preventable. Our failure to understand the complexity of accidents leads both to missed opportunities for prevention as well as over-simple and inappropriate prescriptions to improve safety and reliability.



## Mental Health First Aid

The WHAT (Workers' Health Advice Team) is an independent voluntary organisation for employees, offering free advice on all work place occupational health and health and safety issues.

Together WHAT and Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum have put a funding application to the Governments Health Work and Wellbeing Challenge Fund for a MHFA (Mental Health First Aid) Project.

This would be 2 day training programmes to train Health and Safety reps from Bradford Occupational Health and Safety Forum's Safety Rep, Small to Medium Enterprise Employers and Worker's in the use of MHFA. This would extend the 'worker involvement' aspect of improved workplace health and well-being.

Common mental health problems are a major cause of sickness absence and worker ill health and there is a lack of appropriate and timely diagnosis and intervention.

Bradford has higher levels of disability amongst the working age population (22,4%) compared to England (18.4%) The Working Age Population is 287,600 (Annual Population Survey 2006) leaving 64,422 people with a disability, and a high number of people with disabilities declaring a problem around their mental health.

3 in 10 employees will experience mental health problems during a single year and virtually anyone is susceptible to psychiatric illness.

The aims of Mental Health First Aid are:

- to preserve life where a person may be a danger to themselves or others
- to provide help to prevent the mental health problems developing into a more serious state
- to promote the recovery of good mental health
- to provide comfort to a person experiencing a mental health problem

MHFA does not teach people to be therapists. However, it does teach people how to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems, how to provide initial help and how to guide a person towards appropriate professional help. MHFA is approved by the National institute for Mental Health in England which aims to deliver the MHFA course within England by working in partnership with others. The project also fits very well with the new NICE guidance aims to improve workplace mental health and well-being.

The Bradford Mental Health First Aid Project would help with the development of a network of workplace listeners, and offer continuing support and supervision to these listeners.

### BAOHSF

Tel: 01535 691049  
E.mail [jane@baohsf.org.uk](mailto:jane@baohsf.org.uk)  
web: [www.baohsf.org.uk](http://www.baohsf.org.uk)  
13 Scott Street  
Keighley BD21 2JH  
Tel: 01535 691049

### WHAT

Workers' Health Advice Team  
Unison Offices, 2nd Floor  
Auburn House, Upper Piccadilly  
Bradford, BD1 3NU  
Tel: 01274 393949

See the Forum Website [www.baohsf.org.uk](http://www.baohsf.org.uk)



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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Business Type \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Send to Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum, 13 Scott Street, Keighley, BD21 2JH