



Well @ Work

Newsletter
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Summer 2004

Report by Geoff Twentyman Updates on Occupational Health and Safety Legislation

It might not have been the snappiest of titles but the Forum's Seminar on the 25th of May at the Carlisle Business Centre in Bradford attracted a large audience.

Four subjects were covered - Asbestos Legislation, Noise at Work Regulations, Fire Safety Regulations and Working Time Regulations. Below is a taste of the contents of each presentation, to see Geoff's fuller report and contact details for the speakers please look at our web site www.baohsf.org.uk

Niall Evans of the Health and Safety Executive spoke first about asbestos legislation. The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 came fully into force on the 21st of May this year and place a duty on persons with responsibilities for workplaces to check on and manage asbestos situated on their premises. There are 4000 asbestos related deaths each year. There are no 'safe' levels of exposure. There is a duty to protect not just employees and building tenants but also tradesmen who may have to carry out work in areas where there is asbestos material. Not all asbestos has to be automatically removed - if it is in good condition it may be left in place and a management system introduced to keep a check on it. Removal of asbestos material must be done by a

licensed contractor. An air clearance certificate must be issued by an accredited analyst after work has finished.

Bruce Appleton also from the Health and Safety Executive spoke about the Noise at Work Regulations. The existing 1989 regulations are set to change and come into force probably in 2006. Bruce emphasised that with machinery it is best to reduce noise at source through the purchase of good quality equipment and regular effective servicing. Where noise is still an issue the rotation of operatives on shifts might be appropriate. As with any other personal protective equipment, ear defenders and the like should be the last resort when nothing else can reduce the noise levels adequately. It is anticipated that up to a million extra employees could be included within the scope of the new regulations.

Duncan Stainthorpe from the West Yorkshire Fire Service outlined Fire Safety legislation and good practices. The Fire Precautions Act 1971 and the Workplace Regulations (Fire Safety) are due to be replaced and be in operation by 2005. The role of the Fire Service is based round inspection, advice and enforcement. Its inspection programme is risk based i.e. those premises/situations



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forming the greatest potential risk are given priority. Items of good practice cover fire prevention strategy and training and awareness courses. The whole process will tidy up around 140 pieces of fire legislation.

Steve Davison, a lecturer in Trade Union studies discussed the Working Time Regulations. Steve quoted situations where workers who were entitled to a 20 minutes break in 6 hours were given it after the first hour, thus defeating the spirit of the regulations. The employment of young people poses particular problems as they are less likely to query imposed rules or make a fuss. Steve believes that in this country the 48 hour maximum working week is completely ignored in many cases. Many people regularly work 60 hours a week - however these days it is often the white collar managerial grades who do this. The TUC believe that the current Working Time Regulations and the 17 week averaging out of hours is a principal weakness and dilutes the European Directive which could be effective in improving the health and safety of overworked employees.

The SHOT event

SHOT stands for Securing Healthy Occupation's Together and it is the name given to an event the Forum is busily organising in partnership with Bradford Visions' Strategic Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) and the Healthy Communities Funding Team (HCFT). The Forum is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and the HCFT have donated some monies for the Forum to help share its good practices through the SHOT event.

Over the last ten years the Forum has been acting as a network for sharing information, ideas and expertise on Occupational Health and Safety and it's time to make a noise about its achievements. So make a note of Tuesday the 19th of October in your diaries and prepare to bring along a stall for your company/organisation or prepare to just spend some time dropping in to listen to one of the key note speakers or joining in one of our workshops .

Central themes of the day, apart from a celebration with balloons, champagne and cake (any donations?), include occupational health in primary care, rehabilitation and reasonable adjustment, the business case for occupational health and safety and construction. The event is running during Health and Safety Week, the theme of which is construction.

Invitations will be sent out during August but at this stage the Forum is very interested in your suggestions for workshops and speakers and is hoping that some of you will want to give a presentation or run a workshop. Please fill in the slip on the back page of this newsletter to show your interest.

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h.o.m

Health of Men

The Health of Men project brings together four Bradford Primary Care Trusts and a number of partner organisations including Worksafe, the charity that encourages good health and safety practices at work.

Health of Men offers free health and lifestyle screening and information in the workplace. The screening can involve taking blood pressure, blood sugars, cholesterol checks and various non-intrusive tests. To take advantage of Health of Men's free service and improve the health of your workforce call Mike Worden on 01274 431180.

Worksafe provides free health and safety consultancy and training to workplaces that are traditionally male dominated. Whether you want a full organisational health and safety audit, or nationally accredited Manual handling training Worksafe can meet your needs. For more information call Pete Kilbane on 01535 664462.

Free health and safety audits are also now been given by the Workers Health Advice Team (WHAT) If you are interested please ring WHAT on 01274 393949.

Trade Union Health & Safety
Reps- Evening Meeting
Thursday 29th July

John Balmforth from the Greater Manchester Hazards Centre will be speaking at the meeting which Bradford Area Occupational Health and Safety Forum has organised. John is to speak about the North West Safety Reps Network.

An evening meeting for health and safety representatives in the Bradford Area was chosen after a fact finding survey was carried out by the Forum to find out the best time to suit H&S reps for a meeting. The meeting starts at 5pm and finishes at 7pm and is to be held in the Unison Office, 2nd Floor, Auburn House, Upper Piccadilly, Bradford.

Hope you can make it! Contact the Forum on 01535 691049 or by E-mail on jane@baohsf.org.uk so we can get an idea of the numbers attending. Thanks.

Occupational Health in Leeds

Karan Brown reports

Some members of the forum attended a recent conference organised by Leeds Occupational Health Advisory Service. The 'Healthy Leeds - Healthy Workplaces' conference was held at the Thackray Medical Museum on May 26th. It was funded by the Leeds Health, Safety and Well-being at work partnership, and sponsored by the Leeds Primary Care Trusts and Leeds City Council.

The conference heard about recent research which shows that unhealthy workplaces in Leeds are costing employers and the state at least £52 million each year, equating to £100 per minute! This is the first time that researchers have looked at identifiable costs to employers and the state in Leeds, and the costs could be even higher, since the figure excludes costs for which there is no identifiable data. The research on the costs of occupational ill health was commissioned by the Leeds health Action Zone, and was carried out by academics at the University of York. A booklet summarising this research is available upon request.

More than 100 delegates from across Leeds and the Yorkshire region attended the conference, including: employers; occupational health and safety professionals; senior PCT managers; trade unionists and academics. The conference was built around the three themes listed below, with the aim of looking at how occupational health practice and standards can be improved:

- √ The National Occupational Health Strategy and what it means for Leeds
- √ Developing Occupational Health in Leeds
- √ The next steps for Leeds

The main conference speakers on the above themes included Dr. Frank Gallagher - senior HSE medical inspector; Dr. Neil Shaw - Occupational Health Physician; Dr. John Shepherd - NHS Occupational Health Consultant; Nick Hooper - Health Researcher from York University; and Gordon MacDonald - Regional HSE Director.

Conference workshops were held on:

- √ The business case for occupational health
- √ The cost of occupational ill-health to Leeds
- √ Occupational health for small and medium enterprises
- √ Occupational health in primary care
- √ Health implications of the 24 hour city
- √ Occupational health in the public sector

The conference hopes to have raised the profile of occupational ill health in Leeds amongst all the important stockholders i.e. local authority, public sector, health services, trade unions and business. It is also hoped to have encouraged the various providers of occupational health services in Leeds to work more closely together, and to have further emphasised the lack of provision of these services in SME's, which currently leads to inequalities.

Occupational health services traditionally provided by large employers are now in decline, with provision of these services in small businesses being virtually nonexistent. Research shows that the number of people made ill by work is increasing, but in the absence of employer's occupational health services the burden of work related ill health is picked up by the NHS and society in general. Members of the workforce are increasingly turning to their GP's with work related ill health problems despite GP's having little knowledge of many work place health issues. Additionally, the lack of time that GP's are able to devote to patients due to their heavy workload is well documented. This combination of factors has created the need for the provision of an independent OH service, ideally based in a primary care setting as this makes the service accessible to everyone.

Leeds OHAS (formerly Leeds Occupational Health Project) was founded in 1989 in response to a perceived lack of adequate occupational health service provision in Leeds. Funded by Leeds City Council and South Leeds Primary care Trust, Leeds OHAS are an independent provider of occupational health advice working mainly in a primary care setting, where a large part of the work is a GP patient referral service. GP's refer patients who are suffering with a work related illness, whereupon Leeds OHAS advisors offer coping strategies and practical solutions. The advisors also interview patients in surgery waiting areas, with the aim of empowering them to prevent work-related ill health by offering them information and advice on workplace hazards, preventative strategies, and health and safety at work. continued on back page.



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(please note the content of this newsletter is true to the best of my knowledge, please let me know if there are any mistakes, Jane)

One of the workshops held at the Healthy Leeds conference highlighted the results of an evaluation of patients referred by their GP to Leeds OHAS over the period September 2001 to November 2002. The evaluation was carried out to determine whether the service was effective in improving the outcome of work related ill health. The results of the evaluation were very positive showing that Leeds OHAS have demonstrated a capacity to reach workers with particular health problems and improve the outcomes. In doing so they are helping government to achieve targets that have been set in 'Securing Health Together' for a reduction in days lost through sickness absence, as well as reducing the costs to society in general. Leeds Metropolitan University also undertook an evaluation of the work carried out by Leeds OHAS in 1999, which also gave very positive results

This role of OH provision is being fulfilled by Occupational Health Projects (OHP's) in other areas of the UK. Advisors from these independent voluntary sector organisations have been providing services in primary care settings in areas of the UK for a number of years. The first OHP was set up in Sheffield over twenty-four years ago in recognition of the fact that work related ill health problems are preventable, with the aim of identifying and preventing them. This was closely followed by the Bradford OHP.

Although different activities are undertaken by each of the organisations depending on the amount of funding given and local needs, they all have the same aim of providing an impartial, independent OH service at a local level. With additional funding these organisations have the potential to improve the health of the workforce nationally, and reduce the cost to society, morally as well as financially.

Karan works for both Leeds Occupational Health Advisory Service and WHAT. Karan is also a new member of the Baohsf Working Group.

Contact: Workers' Health Advice Team (WHAT), UNISON Offices, 2nd Floor, Auburn House, Upper Piccadilly, Bradford, BD1 3NU. Tel: 01274 393949.

[see the Forum website at
www.baohsf.org.uk](http://www.baohsf.org.uk)

Reader's Letter from Martin N Wooff

How many Risk Assessments have you 'done' today? ten, twenty, two hundred, or more? I've done dozens. Did you put your faith in your alarm clock waking you this morning? Was the water in your shower warm? Did the kettle boil water for your tea or coffee? Did the toaster brown the bread, or burn it? Did the car start? etc..

I can guarantee that most, if not all, of you haven't wasted the Earth's resources by recording your assessment of the above risks. If there is no need to record your assessment of such daily, and therefore high risks, what is the point of recording the rest?

The answer, the truth is, that there is not a point. You do so because of fear. Thousands of people write Risk Assessments because they are frightened that a representative of the Health and Safety Executive or local council will become an evil ogre. Etc. etc. providing practical solutions to overcome or reduce risks is far better than risking worldwide famine by wasting vast quantities of the Earth's resources.....

Those of you who have attended health and Safety Seminars and learned of my passion for protecting our planet will realise that because I provide practical solutions I do not write Risk Assessments, nor do I intend to start. When will you have the courage to do the same?

If you have any comments on this letter or any part of Baohsf work please send in your letter to jane@baohsf.org.uk



Interest in the Securing Healthy Occupations Together event on the 19th October

(please send this slip to: Baohsf, 13, Scott Street, Keighley BD21 1JH.)

Yes I am interested in attending the event

I would be interested in having some exhibition space/stall at the event

I would be interested in giving a presentation/workshop on _____

Name _____

Organisation _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ **Tel** _____ **E-mail** _____