

HEALTH & SAFETY ACTION PLAN 2004

Background

Inter-Authority Auditing

Local authorities in Hampshire have agreed to participate in an inter-authority auditing programme. It is essentially a peer review to identify best practice and to highlight areas where there is room for improvement and the feedback from the initial assessments has been very positive. The assessment looks at the management of the internal occupational health safety and welfare service as the organisational structure, strategic planning and delivery of the service is the key to effective performance.

The assessment consists of a desktop exercise whereby the submitted documentation is judged against a 52 point management efficiency checklist, and interviews with key personnel identified therefrom to validate the findings. The process can be extended to assess specific services.

Recognised best practice

The assessment is based on the model of good health and safety management that is set out in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publication HS (G) 65 'Successful Health and Safety Management'. Setting objectives that are specific, measurable, agreed with those who deliver them, realistic and set against a suitable time scale is seen as one of the cornerstones of successful management. This mirrors recognised business planning best practice as would be applied to most other aspects of service delivery. The HSE support the auditing initiative and have requested information on the process and the question set used for the pre-audit desktop exercise.

Current arrangements

As a consequence, organisations will be expected to have an action plan in place and an annual report to monitor the implementation thereof. To date, annual objectives are discussed and implemented, primarily safety issues with associated training requirements, but there is no formal plan or monitoring mechanism. It is also recognised that HR issues such as stress, and corporate issues such as managing asbestos in buildings, have a significant occupational health element but do not currently form part of the work programme. It is recognised that a broader approach needs to be taken. It should also be noted that under the Government's revitalising health and safety strategy, local authorities have been given the status of exemplars in health and safety management.

Annual Action Plan

The proposal is to draw up an annual health and safety action plan that will list the key proactive objectives, an agreed time frame for implementation, the nominated lead officer and the identification of cross cutting issues such as training. Some health and safety issues by their very nature will be cyclic, particularly in areas such as health and safety training for staff in 'at risk work activities'.

The programme will be developed over the coming months and the key activities / initiatives are listed below. A number of which are already progressing but require a more formalised approach in the form of a written strategy:

- The identification and effective management of asbestos containing materials in non-domestic premises owned or occupied by the Council.
- Review and updating corporate health and safety policies, procedures and guidance notes.
- Liaison with the tenants of Athelstan House to ensure that all joint health safety and welfare issues have been identified and effectively addressed.
- Implementation of the Health and Safety Executive's new standards for the identification and effective management of stress in the workplace.
- Participation in the Hampshire Safety Officers' Group inter-authority auditing programme.
- Annual compilation and review of accident statistics, incidents of aggressive behaviour in the form of verbal abuse and threats against members of staff, occupational health referrals and work related sickness absence.
- Develop the role of departmental safety co-ordinators to ensure a more robust approach to health and safety management within departments and to provide an effective forum for raising safety issues.
- Identification of potential occupational health, safety and welfare issues arising from the proposed Customer Service Centre.
- Draw up a corporate vaccination policy for Council employs and to identify an occupational health provider to administer vaccination and health screening to support the policy.
- Review the corporate strategy to the identification of water systems susceptible to legionella and the control measures in place to prevent colonisation and the risk to susceptible groups in the community of contracting legionnaires' disease.
- Ensure that health and safety roles and responsibilities have been identified, are written into job descriptions where appropriate and are subject to the appraisal process.
- Evaluate the claims profile for business road traffic accidents, administrative licence, insurance and competence checks and assess the business case for introducing driver training for high mileage drivers and those who use corporate vehicles.
- Re – evaluate the fire risk assessments for corporate premises in line with proposed changes in fire safety legislation.