

Andy Cathro, H & S Officer, Dundee & Angus College.

Presented on the work of the Health & Safety Development Network and in particular two projects that are running at present: LOcHER and Health & Safety Verification for Scotland's Colleges

Andy has worked in the College for almost 30 years. He has had a variety of roles, technician, lecturer and estates but for the last 10 years his job role has been Health and Safety Officer at Dundee & Angus College.

Andy described the many changes he had experienced in particular college mergers which reshaped the college landscape in Scotland.

He is also involved with a number of external partners one of which is the College Development Network. <http://www.collegedevelopmentnetwork.ac.uk/networks-projects/health-safety/>

In 2004 the Scottish Funding Council commissioned a project called CHASTE: Coordinating Health And Safety in Tertiary Education. The project was run by Edinburgh University and a final report was issued in 2011. During the project it was decided that it would be beneficial to the college sector if there was a health and safety group formed. Andy was approached in April 2010 to be part of a working group. The group formally met in June of that year.

The steering group has nine members - five College H & S practitioners and a HSE, HWL, CDN, Colleges Scotland representative. Andy has chaired the group since 2012. All the members are passionate of the CDN ethos of Leading, Creating and Sharing.

The group has organised, to date, 13 health & safety events for the college sector, set up an e mailing facility to allow college practitioners to ask questions/promote good practice to their peers, developed a document resource library with FE Sussex and carried out accident benchmarking. All these things have helped break the feeling of isolation as a College Health & Safety practitioner.

Two projects that are currently running are LOcHER and Health & Safety Verification

LOcHER Project

LOcHER stands for Learning Occupational Health by Experiencing Risk. It's about Learning, Discovering and Engaging with Learners by putting them at the heart of their occupational health education. It is very much an Interactive approach to engage students and help them learn about managing health risks and protecting their health in the workplace. Andy described how he worked with a group of Prince's Trust students to produce a short film on the dangers of Asbestos.

The students researched the subject and involved construction apprentices. Visits were organised to an asbestos removal company, a lab that analyses samples and a charity organisation that supports people suffering from an asbestos-related illness. During this visit they met a gentleman who was dying from an asbestos-related disease. The students carried out interviews, designed posters and filmed the project. The footage has been edited and a short film on the dangers of asbestos has been produced, made by students for students. The Prince's Trust College programme is for 13 to 30 year olds who are unemployed or struggling at school to transform their lives with the aim to try and get them in to jobs, education and training. This project has not just enhanced their knowledge and produced a film on the subject of asbestos but it has helped them develop a number of transferable skills: communication, team working and leadership. College programmes are tighter now and less time available, however Andy has seen the benefit of LOcHER and hopes that we can encourage other Colleges to get involved with this project.

The film will soon be on a variety of web sites and Andy had an 'ask' - that the students' film and project is shared some way through the CPG.

H & S Verification Pilot for Scotland's Colleges

A paper on the pilot was circulated to those in attendance.

During feedback at one of the College Network events there was an appetite for peer assessment in terms of H & S compliance. This type of assessment is not new and not new to the sector as it happens through SQA verification to ensure national standards are being applied and maintained to the learners units or course work. There were also some other reasons for the pilot:

- 2011 HSE decided that it would target its resources on higher risk and poor performing workplaces. Education establishments were seen as low risk therefore unlikely to be subject to proactive visits.
- Chaste Final report – “still room for improvement and it would be prudent to regularly audit the effectiveness of H & S”
- Major changes to staffing following regionalisation & mergers
- HSE supports sector – led improvements

Following a number of meetings with the health and safety officers from Fife College and Perth UHI a pilot was arranged with the 3 colleges. This took place in October 2016.

A department was selected and meetings were arranged with the manager, lecturer, and support staff member of the department. Health and safety union reps were also invited. A walk through of the department was also carried out. A report was produced with the focus on good practice, however the report also contained recommendation.

An evaluation of the project has commenced. Some feedback has been received:

- “I feel this could be beneficial to other Colleges”
- “Definitely worthwhile”
- “Good to have an outside view on the department”
- “Pilot allows me to benchmark where the department is with regards H&S”
- “Excellent a great opportunity to share good practice and standardize H & S across the sector”

Feedback so far has been very positive therefore at the next development network meeting or event it is likely that Andy will be recommending that this initiative is extended. For this to happen it will need to be supported – Principals, Boards, Funding council etc

To assist in enabling this to happen Andy asked for the CPG's assistance with an endorsement of the pilot and from the organisations the members represent. He would also like to add the endorsements to the evaluation report of the pilot exercise.

Andy is passionate about this peer assessment. It's a method that will raise standards and moderate health & safety practice and support H & S Practitioners throughout the sector.

Further endorsements would be an enhancement in taking this forward.

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