

worked hard to counteract the claims that health and safety is over the top complex and burdensome. Our independent Mythbusters challenge panel has been kept very busy over the last 18 months and its popularity continues to grow with the public and with the press.

In all this work, we have tried hard to involve and consult a lot of different interests and stakeholder groups. This is to make sure that we understand the issues from their perspective, and that what we are producing is useful and fit for purpose. I know that SGUK have been actively involved in a number of these projects and provided helpful comments and input. Many thanks for this – your help really is appreciated and adds value to the work.

But, just as we thought we were starting to see clear water ahead we found we were in the midst of another review – this time a Triennial Review of HSE itself for Ministers.

Martin Temple of the EEF headed the review panel and their report was published earlier this month. Reassuringly for all of us at the HSE, the review found that all of our functions remained necessary and that HSE should continue to operate as an executive non-Departmental Public Body.

The review team also found a lot of support and praise for the work of HSE by the many stakeholders who responded to the review. But, and there is always a but, the review does make a number of recommendations as to how we might improve and be even more effective.

I do not have time today to go into all of these, and I do not know yet how or when the Government intends to respond formally to the review's findings and recommendations. But, I thought it might be of particular interest to the all of you here today if I say a little about the Triennial Review's consideration of HSE's work to tackle work-related ill health.

3 Occupational Health

Personally, I was particularly heartened by Martin Temple's endorsement of the work HSE has been doing to reinvigorate our approach to tackling work-related ill health and to ensure it is not seen as the poor relation to safety issues. Also his acknowledgement that we have worked with key players to promote and encourage new and innovative ideas for activity particularly around occupational cancers and respiratory disease.

His specific recommendation is that

HSE continues to seek new and innovative ideas for interventions that maximise its impact on the continuing high levels of work related ill health. This will include opportunities to use all forms of media, including social media to reach the relevant audiences.

So what have we been doing that has earned his praise and what do we have planned going forward?

HSE has already initiated work to engage others to work in partnership with the common aim of preventing occupational disease. Following a stakeholder event in March 2013, HSE has taken forward a number of work strands to continue to promote and encourage further activity to tackle occupational disease.

First – Engaging others: we have a programme of Bilateral meetings with a number of organisations who have expressed willingness to do more to tackle occupational disease in the workplace. We are now actively engaging with the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union (RMT), the Royal College of Nursing, Crossrail and, I'm pleased to say, Safety Groups UK, to discuss plans for future activity including what work can be done in partnership and what is best taken forward individually.

Second - Promoting the activities and interventions of others in order to share ideas, encourage further action and promote innovation. We are doing this through building pages for HSE's website that will outline the priority topics (namely cancer and respiratory disease) and provide an overview of the diseases and industries involved. We will also encourage readers to visit a new community site that promotes the work and initiatives that organisations, HSE and others, are undertaking to tackle occupational disease. The site will be a focal point for promoting on-going activity and a place where others can read and learn about different types of approaches and interventions. The site is due to be launched this spring and we are putting together a detailed communications plan to raise awareness and encourage further contributions to the site.

The Third Strand - Refreshing HSE's partnership working model. Currently, HSE has established working partnership groups for tackling occupational disease particularly in relation to cancer and respiratory disease within the construction, quarries, stone working and welding sectors. A review of this model found that partnership activity now tends to be about persuading the partners to be more actively involved in determining/developing key messages and helping to raise awareness through disseminating them.

We have concluded that in future we will focus on some key partners and encourage broader networks to grow organically through mutual interests. Possible subjects for developing further stakeholder relationships in the future include breast cancer associated with shift work (night work), health risks to painters, and work aggravated asthma.

Fourth – carrying out further research into those priorities where we need to develop a better understanding of the exposed populations. We are undertaking specific research to investigate current workplace exposure scenarios and explore the impact of new technology on workplace exposures now and into the future. Examples include new research on diesel engine exhaust emissions; on health risks to painters; and to those working in foundries. We have also developed some long term strategic research programmes with the Health and Safety Laboratory to improve our knowledge and understanding on (1) health surveillance and health impact assessment and (2) exposure and response profiling.

And the Fifth and final strand of work recognises that tackling work related ill-health is an international challenge. So we are engaging particularly in

European events and initiatives. At the end of last year we contributed to the organisation and delivery of an EU wide occupational diseases conference. The event was really well attended and HSE presented the UK perspective, providing details of activities and interventions relating to our priority areas. It was clear from this event that the UK is active on a wider range of occupational disease areas than many other Member States. Looking to the future HSE will continue to lead activity on long latency health risks through our involvement in various European Committees and working groups on chemicals and enforcement. In particular we have proposed activity to reduce exposures to harmful substances through the respiratory route and supply-side interventions relating to noise and vibration.

I hope this short overview gives you some reassurance that HSE is serious about this issue and positioning itself as a catalyst for action by and with others. Perhaps we still need to do more to communicate and provide clarity about this role. At the same time, we do need to reaffirm the expectation from HSE's Strategy, which Martin Temple echoed in his review, **that those who create the risk are the ones best placed to design and carry out the interventions that ultimately will bring about real workplace changes and improvements.**

We know from experience that there are varying levels of engagement and understanding about occupational disease. We also know that the mix of interventions necessary to bring about sustained change within the workplace differs for each occupational disease priority and for each industry or occupation. We also know that this takes time – often a long sustained effort over many years - in order to raise awareness, build understanding and bring about behavioural change.

Clearly, there is more that we can and must do on work-related ill health. And we need to magnify our efforts by working with and through others who are committed to the same agenda so we can help them to have greater impact and build on their successes.

4 This is where the **work of SGUK particularly with small businesses on Health Risks at Work – do you know yours? Is so important.**

We know that we do not have the monopoly on good ideas and innovative approaches and that it is why I do want to recognise the work SGUK has been doing since 2009 on occupational health. In particular your work with small businesses to raise awareness and build understanding. Your material (hold up booklet) is short clear and simple – just what is needed for busy people to access the basics and stimulate them to take action. I will be interested to hear any feedback you have received from businesses on its usefulness.

I am also delighted to know that one of SGUK's priorities for the coming year is to focus on Risks to Breathing. There is no doubt that many, many workers are still exposed to dusts and gases in the workplace that will cause occupational asthma and lung disease if suitable control measures are not in place. Our recent research into COPD and its link to working conditions has shown that this is a real problem that is not well understood by business or those at risk. I know that the Safety Groups are well placed to work with businesses locally and in specific

sectors to raise awareness and promote good practice and so to make a real difference.

5 Conclusion – communication, coordination congratulations

So to conclude – I would like to leave you with three words

Communication -

Martin Temple has challenged HSE to seek out opportunities to use all forms of media including social media to reach the relevant audiences. This is quite a challenge for us all but one which we address.

HSE is planning a new asbestos behaviour change campaign for later this year, seeking to change the behaviour of tradespeople like plumbers and carpenters when they encounter asbestos in the places where they are working. We have done a lot of research recently to find out what information will stimulate action and how they will access it – this shows that the days of our published guidance are numbered, even the website is a bit old hat! We are now working with a generation of the digital age, they tweet and blog and have an app for just about everything on their phones.

So, we need to adapt to this and produce information in new forms and use new media to communicate it. This is a challenge for all of us – in an information rich world there is still a woeful lack awareness of basic health risks in the workplace so we will have to redouble our efforts to fill the gaps.

Which brings me to my second word – coordination. So much to do on these issues, it is imperative we work together and coordinate our efforts. I know that there have been some very useful discussions in the past year about how HSE and SGUK can work more closely to ensure that we amplify each others messages and work better together to help SMEs. There are a lot of other groups out there working on the same issues – Just recently I've personally engaged with the Responsibility Deal's Health and Work Network, the IOSH Health and Safety Groups, and the Federation for Small Businesses. Tackling ill health at work is a major enterprise and we need to coordinate our efforts if we are to succeed. So I really would encourage all the safety groups to look wider, link up with others, and be proactive in seeking out opportunities to work more closely with others including HSE.

Communication coordination And my final word – congratulations. Congratulations to all the winners of awards today. It is super to be here to celebrate to your success and to recognise the value of the work you do and how you do it. I hope you will make every effort to share your ideas and examples of good practice with others. I really do commend your efforts; the work of the groups is so valuable and I hope today's event will stimulate you and encourage you to continue. There is still so much to do to make workplaces safe and health for all.

Thank you for listening – happy to take any questions.

END

After lunch speaking notes

Thank you for the chance to say a few words at this very special occasion. I spoke to the Safety Groups earlier today about the importance of communication and coordination in our work to improve health and safety in the workplace and particularly in relation to tackling health risks at work.

SGUK has such a key role to play here with their links to small businesses in their area or sector. You could help HSE develop a deeper understanding of the audiences we are trying to reach and influence. I think you are also well placed to identify the barriers to bringing about behaviour change and the actions that might influence it; and you can show us how guidance and other communications and engagement activity need to be presented in order to help small businesses in particular understand what they can/have to do.

I commend you for your work to date and in particular for your Health Risks at Work campaign. I congratulate all the winners in particular for their efforts – and for the awards they have won today.

My final challenge to you all is to redouble your efforts – recent news is that growth is going in the right direction and employment figures are rising. HSE's own statistics show that those entering work and new jobs are at more risk in health and safety terms. Therefore, it is important they have the right information and training from the start. The Safety Groups can play such an important role in taking this message to local firms and companies - using your contacts and outreach to communicate how managing the health and safety risks properly is part of managing the business successfully.

Congratulations to you all.

END

