

# Partnership on Health And Safety in Scotland

## HSE Public Services Programme 2006/07: Proposed programme of workshops

### Issue:

1. To inform PHASS of HSE's plans to host a number of free workshops for the public sector in Scotland on managing sickness absence and work related stress. The workshops will be aimed primarily at HR professionals and health and safety practitioners in the local authority, education, health, and devolved/central Government sectors.

### Background:

2. HSE's Public Services Programme (PSP) is designed to reduce work-related accidents and ill health and the subsequent loss of productivity through sickness absence in the public services, where sickness absence levels are alleged to be higher (10 days per staff pa vs 6.5 days pa in the private sector). Its key objective is to make a major contribution to HSE's Public Service Agreement target for lost days and particularly to reduce the number of working days lost in the public sector, especially those caused by work-related accidents and ill health by 30% by 2010.

3. The main causes of sickness absence in the public sector are MSD and mental ill health, which comprise as much as 80% of the total. The proportion of ill health, which is work-related is thought to vary from 15-40%, depending on occupation. The sector's prevalence of work-related stress is one of the highest, and the bulk of HSE's work on stress management is in the public services. HSE is therefore promoting better stress management in the public sector to both reduce the number of days lost and the number of new cases arising from work-related stress.

### The PSP/Stress Workshops Project:

4. This project forms a large part of the PSP for 06/07. The target sectors are: health; education; local authorities; and central/devolved Government. The first stage of the project comprises a high level influencing strategy aimed at Chief Executives and HR Directors across the Public Services sector to persuade them of the business case for managing sickness absence generally and managing the main causes of work related absence.

5. This high level engagement stage will be followed by a number of free workshops (over 50 across GB – the precise number for Scotland has yet to be determined) with three objectives:

- to persuade managers of the business case for managing sickness absence and return to work, and the links to the public efficiency and wellbeing agendas in Scotland and GB;
- to provide relevant information and case studies on managing sickness absence/ work related injuries and ill health, and access to useful guidance/tools; and

- to enable key HR professionals and practitioners to tackle work related stress in their organisation; in particular how to use the HSE Management Standards for Work Related Stress to assess their activity.

6. The workshops are likely to take place in Autumn 2006 and delegates who attend will be offered follow on support to help them. This will include a dedicated telephone help line; further events to support training and information about specific aspects of the approach; and local support from HSE as appropriate.

7. The workshops will offer practical help and advice, including step by step guidance on how to introduce the HSE Management Standards approach to tackle work related stress. In developing the Scottish workshops, HSE will take into account that a number of public sector organisations in Scotland are already progressing this issue and hope to involve these organisations in sharing examples of good practice amongst their public sector colleagues.

8. Further information can be obtained from June Cairns, Public Services Programme Co-ordinator, Scotland, HSE, Edinburgh Tel 0131 247 2063

23 March 2006