

# Partnership on Health And Safety in Scotland

Scottish Action Plan on Health and Safety Letter – building on a good experience – letter to Shona Robison MSP, Minister for Public Health

## Issue

1. A draft letter for the Chair of PHASS to send to the Scottish Minister for Public Health – for discussion and agreement.

## Background

2. In July and August, PHASS members were consulted on the content of a final report to Scottish Ministers at the end of the HSE secondment to co-ordinate the Scottish Action Plan on Health and Safety. Some comments were received and a submission was made to Shona Robison's office at the end of August.

3. The Minister was invited to:

- note the breadth of the work completed or continuing as a result of the Action Plan, and its relevance to the Government's objectives such as Equally Well;
- note that partnerships and joint working have been strengthened across the health and safety system in Scotland as a result of the Action Plan;
- agree that work should continue under existing partnership arrangements, for example, on the emerging issues; and
- agree to consider as part of the funding bid for 2009 – 2011 to support continuing work within the remit of the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives.

Ms Robison was to content to accept these recommendations.

4. At their last meeting, PHASS members agreed that it would also be useful for the Chair to write a follow up letter to the Minister given the role of PHASS in implementation of the Action Plan.

## Action

5. Members are invited to agree the attached draft which emphasises the conclusions in the earlier submission to the Minister – but from the PHASS perspective.

September 2008

Annex 1

## **Draft letter to the Minister for Public Health**

Dear Ms Robison

### **SCOTTISH ACTION PLAN ON HEALTH AND SAFETY – BUILDING ON A GOOD EXPERIENCE**

We met at the end of last year to discuss common interests across devolved and reserved responsibilities including the delivery of the Action Plan on Health and Safety.

I am writing to you as Chair of the Partnership on Health and Safety in Scotland (PHASS) to follow up the report you recently received on the implementation of the Action Plan.

Our experience of working as a group of stakeholders together with the Scottish Government has been a positive one. The Action Plan has provided a better focus for joint working which is continuing beyond the life time of the initial Action Plan funding. Initiatives are being embedded within policy and service provision via a range of stakeholders.

When we met you highlighted the links between safe and healthy work and reducing health inequalities. Work under the Action Plan has certainly emphasised the policy and operational continuum between managing workplace health and safety, reducing health inequalities and improving public health overall. I know that this is gaining momentum in discussion of plans to implement *Equally Well*, and as part of the Scottish Government's response to Dame Carol Black's review of the health of working age people.

From the PHASS perspective, in terms of joining up effort, there are however still some gaps in Scotland's repertoire that need to be addressed.

The extent to which employers are meeting their responsibility to provide, or to access, health and safety support and occupational health services still varies widely. This is despite the Scottish Government's investment in additional free health and safety advisory services and rehabilitation support through the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives. The outcome of improving health and safety at, and through, work needs to be integrated with the remit of enterprise, development and business support organisations and to be placed firmly on the agenda of business leaders.

As Single Outcome Agreements evolve and develop, it should be possible to integrate health and safety outcomes with health outcomes, more explicitly recognising the contribution that interventions in the workplace can make to reducing health inequalities.

For example, Local Authorities have a clear role in supporting employers to play their full part under *Equally Well* – both through securing compliance with statutory requirements and by promoting participation in the Healthy Working Lives scheme. A more integrated approach to health and work could also inform Local Authorities' role within Community Planning Partnerships and the delivery of Business Gateway services.

Workers, too, need to be engaged and involved to support improvements in health and safety performance. The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives is in preliminary discussion with Scottish Hazards and the STUC about developing a model for direct

support to workers which would complement their services for employers. HSE is about to launch new guidance on worker involvement which should provide additional support for making the case with employers.

Occupational health and safety practitioners have already played a major role in delivering the Action Plan. Their expertise has been deployed in a number of on-going initiatives with employers. Like GPs and healthcare workers, they are in the frontline of preventing people falling out of work through injury and ill health and should be viewed as key players in the goal of achieving safe and healthy work for more people who are currently out of work.

I hope you agree that work under the Action Plan has already facilitated better understanding and communication across the diverse range of players within Scotland's health and safety system. There is further potential for this community of interest to support joined-up thinking and action under the auspices of the Partnership on Health and Safety in Scotland and the National Advisory and Advocacy Group for Healthy Working Lives. Together they provide the infrastructure to support close working across reserved and devolved government interests.

PHASS is very pleased to have been involved in developing and helping to deliver the Action Plan. We will continue to play our part in joining-up initiatives with knowledge and expertise to act on its legacy.

As envisaged a while ago, I hope it will be possible for you to attend a meeting of PHASS in the near future, perhaps for us to hear your perspective on these overlapping agendas.

Yours sincerely,

**Danny Carrigan OBE**

HSE Board member and Chair of the Partnership on Health and Safety in Scotland