CIEH Kent Branch – Health and Safety Technical Group

Annual Report for 2007

The AGM took place in February with a change of Chairman. After his valuable work for the group, David Brown (Tunbridge Wells BC) stepped down from the post and was replaced by David Edwards (Ashford BC). Arthur Atkins (Shepway DC) agreed to remain as secretary, but stated that this would be for the last year – setting the group a hard task to find a replacement.

The group took part in a number of partnership projects in association with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) during the year as part of the FIT3 (Fit for Work, Fit for Life, Fit for Tomorrow) strategic delivery programme which aims to reduce the incidence of work-related fatal and major injuries. Across Kent and Medway interventions were planned and delivered in the areas of:-

Moving Goods Safely

The **Thames Gateway Project** consisted of Dartford BC, Gravesham BC, Medway Council, Swale BC and the HSE who wanted to aim resources across an entire supply chain. The project initially looked at 'white goods' then 'flat pack furniture' and finally settling on 'Carpets and Flooring'. The project was successful in reaching many different levels of the industry from warehousing, retail outlets to delivery operatives but also the carpet fitters themselves. The project was also important for not only the inclusion of joint warranting between the Local Authorities (LAs) and HSE but also cross warrants between LAs themselves. The fifty plus visits resulted in a number of notices being served and ongoing discussions with one major national retail chain. It is hoped that the other LAs within the County will be able to benefit directly when visiting their Carpet retailers during 2008.

The HSE initiated a look at a whole supply chain based on only one company. After a number of national companies were approached **Brake Brothers** was chosen. The project involved one central HSE Inspector collating the visits to three depots across the South East (including Kent) which were carried out by joint teams of LA officers and HSE staff. The lead HSE Inspector also looked at a 'vertical slice' through the company to test the delivery of Health and Safety throughout the organisation. The project was delivered by Liz Smith (HSE) and David Edwards (Ashford BC) to Brake Brothers management team where a plan was agreed for the company to move certain aspects of Health and Safety forward.

Working at Height

This particular project included joint working with the HSE and looking mainly at Ladders and their use (or mis-use) It included a Ladder amnesty at certain trade outlets across the County and concentrated inspections of trading and industrial estates to maximise the number of companies that could be visited within a certain timeframe. In Medway this also involved the continuation of a joint warranting programme.

The possibility of a project around Marquee companies and in particular the Kent County Show were discussed for next year.

Smokefree agenda

Although described as a Public Health iniative, the group (along with support from the HSE) supported their colleagues in the Public Health Technical Group in the delivery of the Smokefree message. A number of members of the H&S Technical group also sit on the Public Health Group and/or represent their LA at the Kent Alliance on Smoking and Health (KASH).
From the different groups a Kent wide Enforcement Protocol was submitted to KEHM group during 2007.

Caravan Sites

Concentrating mainly on Health and Safety issues rather than licensing conditions on caravan and mobile home sites Swale BC have highlighted a number of issues. From discussions, would seem likely to affect other LAs that have similar premises. Swale BC shared their findings with the group, and a discussion around a project for those LAs interested is still be looked at for 2008.

Noise and Vibration

Nick Mayne (Canterbury CC) had carried out a project for his MSc looking at Noise and the effect on employees within the entertainment industry. This project had highlighted certain concerns and with the provisions of the Noise at Work Regulations due to come into force for Pubs and Clubs in April 2008 a small sub group started preparing for an intervention based on Nick's project. With Nick leading the group the planning stages were completed during the latter part of 2007, with a stepped delivery agreed to take place across 6 LA districts during the months of January to March 2008.

Other FIT3 interventions

The group considered the issues relating to Dermatitis and in particular hairdressers and beauty salons. As guidance for this industry has been updated and from feedback across the group the initial stages of a project for 2008 were explored.

Training

Another training day was held – again at Ashford and with the assistance of the HSE. These events cover technical as well as procedural aspects of our work and offer a great opportunity to Network. They are also provided Free of Charge to LAs with the Kent CIEH Branch providing Lunch this year.

Other matters

Throughout the year the group continued to be a great support network for those within H&S enforcement across Kent. As usual, exchange of information regarding companies, issues with certain practices and equipment, and generic problems within industry sectors were widely discussed and best practice agreed.

A report has gone to KEHM group regarding flexible warranting, and requesting this being rolled out across Kent.

Conclusion

Across the year the group held meetings throughout the year and provided training, continued to expand joint working and provided advice, guidance and had input into policies such as the Smokefree Enforcement protocol.

The group has demonstrated the real benefits of Joint working with the HSE and other delivery partners along with successfully exploring joint working and cross warranting between Local Authorities. The group continues to have one singular direction – The successful delivery of Health and Safety. This is achieved through consistent education and enforcement, by working in partnership and raising the profile of Health and Safety enforcement with Senior Managers and elected Members within the 13 Local Authorities across the County.

David Edwards , Chairman 29th January 2008.