

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Business Support Project team consisting of Mr. Clement Kennedy, Principal Environmental Health Officer (Health & Safety-Western Group), Mrs. Lynda Fitzsimmons, Principal Environmental Health Officer (Health & Safety-Southern Group) and Ms. Orla Daly (Business Support Advisor) wishes to extend their appreciation to all the businesses who participated in the Business Support Project.

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1.0 Executive Summary

Further efforts were made during the year to build on the success of the earlier pilot Western Group Business Support Partnership which sought to improve health & safety and occupational health standards in local businesses. Western Group successfully secured further funding through Investing for Health in conjunction with Southern Group Environmental Health Service. Due to funding policies, the project delivery was primarily aimed at businesses in the northern sector of the Western Group and in the Southern Group area. Over 30 businesses were involved and the project impacted on hundreds of employees by improving management policies and the understanding of both business management and staff of those factors that might adversely affect their health and safety. The project also provided information on systems that can be utilised to improve safety. Orla Daly, an EHO employed in Strabane DC, applied for and was appointed as a secondee to manage this project and carried out the task with dedication and ability.

In addition to the clear benefits these projects bring to the businesses involved, there was a wider gain in that the community become more aware that the environmental health service is willing within its resources, to provide advice and assistance to businesses to help them comply with legal requirements and therefore avoid unforeseen costs. This can only help future communication and confidence and will therefore be a further step to improved compliance generally.

2.0 Introduction & Background

The aim of the Business Support Project was to carry out a research project into the current standards of workplace health and safety within businesses. This was carried out by working in partnership to achieve and maintain good environments and lifestyle patterns that will have a beneficial effect upon the health and well-being of the population in the Western and Southern Group area. This was carried out through partnership working with other agencies in both these areas which themselves have an impact on the health and well-being of the population. These agencies included both Western and Southern Group Environmental Service, its constituent councils, Investing for Health, Health Trusts and Health Promotion.

Under Article 20 of the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, District Council's have to make arrangements for the enforcement of the relevant statutory provisions. In Northern Ireland District Councils through the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations (NI) 1999 undertake compliance inspections and enforcement in work sectors such as builders merchants, banks, offices, catering and hotels.

The Business Support Project identified a number of objectives for the project which involved engaging a number of local businesses in the project, to offer everyone the opportunity to live and work in a healthy environment and to live in a decent affordable home, to reduce accidental injuries and deaths in the home and workplace, promote dental health in children and to target the issue of obesity.

Workplace health promotion may be defined as the application of the concepts, principles and strategies enshrined by the Ottawa Charter to both the "community" of employees and managers, and to the organizational and environmental aspects of the workplace itself [World Health Organisation (WHO,1991)]. Workplaces are an excellent site for health promotion as time spent at the workplace exceeds that spent in other locations (Capra and Williams, 1993). In addition, the workplace is convenient for participants, a large percentage of the population can be reached, environmental support can reinforce health education messages, social networks

support behavioural change and opportunities exist for follow-up, monitoring and reinforcing messages (Glanz and SeewaldKlein, 1986).

3.0 Statistics Relating to Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland economy is dominated by small businesses with some 84, 620 in total, with only 830 of these businesses employing 50 people or more. In the Western Group area, the five district councils are responsible for the enforcement of Health and Safety in over 5000 businesses. In the Southern Group area, the five district councils are responsible for the enforcement of Health and Safety on over 6200 premises.

In recent times there have been a number of reports published that indicate that a society that fails to manage health and safety at work effectively carries a heavy burden in both human and financial terms. These reports include:

- World Health Organisations report “ A Global Strategy on Occupational Health for All “ (1994),
- EU Statistics report “Work Related Health Problems in the EU” (1998-1999)
- HSE (GB) report “The costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill-health in 1995/96”
- HSENI report “The cost of work related injuries, ill health and non-injury accidents to the NI economy (2002)
- HSENI report “2001 Small Firms Project by Price Waterhouse Coopers”.
- HELANI Strategic Plan 2005-2008

In its report published in 2002 Investing for Health identified one of its objectives was to “reduce work-related accidents”. This was attributed to findings indicating that although the number of work related accidents had decreased in recent years, the proportion of those accidents classified as ‘major’ has risen from 35% to 57% between 1994/95 and 2000/01. This compares to an average of 42% in Britain (Investing for Health, 2002). Investing for Health also recognizes the importance of developing health-promoting workplaces through partnership working.

In March 2003, the Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland published “A long-term Workplace Health Strategy for Northern Ireland” which indicated that every year in Northern Ireland some 70,000 people suffer some form of work-related health problem which prevents them from doing their normal jobs. Many of these people will be out of work for very long periods and some will never return to work. In addition to this there is the estimated monetary costs of approximately £330 million per annum to employers along with the major impact on individuals and families through loss of earnings, self-esteem and social contact. It was against this backdrop that a Long Term Workplace Health Strategy for Northern Ireland was launched in 2003. The aim of this strategy is to adopt a holistic approach to improving the health and well being of the working population. Statistics provided by the HSE indicate that in 2003/04 there were a total of 3297 accidents reported under the Reporting of Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NI) 1997, 675 major injuries and 2622 over 3 day injuries. It is evident from these reports that the workplace is an excellent setting for delivering the key messages of health.

Research carried out by the HSENI through the Small Firms Project undertaken by Price Waterhouse Coopers identified a number of barriers that hindered small to medium sized enterprises (SME's) from implementing health and safety in the workplace. These barriers included:

- **INADEQUATE RESOURCES**: Due to a lack of time, staff and the cost of implementing health and safety measures
- **TRAINING/INFORMATION & EDUCATION**: Lacking due to technical and cumbersome legislation, gaps in the knowledge required and the volume of information which left the businesses feeling overwhelmed.
- **UNSURE WHERE TO START**
- **MINDSET**: A fear of contacting the enforcer in case that act would open a can of worms.

The previous Business Support Project carried out from January 2004-April 2004 in the Western Group between Omagh and Fermanagh District Councils, identified the private sector as a valued partner in the Investing for Health strategy, from this the

new research project in Workplace Health and Safety sought to build upon the success of its predecessor by:

- Ascertaining current standards of workplace health and safety
- Identifying methods to overcome barriers to implementing workplace health and safety activity
- Raising the profile of the benefits of improving workplace health and safety
- Providing a workplace Health and Safety advice model based on
 - Workplace Health and Safety Audit
 - Workplace Environmental Audit
 - Personal Health Checks for employees

4.0 Partners Involved

The Business Support Partnership involved a partnership between a number of organizations including Western Group Environmental Health Service, its constituent councils, Western Investing for Health Partnership, Westcare Health Promotion Department, Foyle Health at Work, Sperrin Lakeland Trust, 10 local businesses, Southern Group Environmental Health Service and its constituent councils, Southern Investing for Health Partnership, Armagh & Dungannon Trust, Craigavon & Banbridge Trust, Newry & Mourne Trust, Health Promotion and 20 businesses.

The Business Support advisory project is complementary to the work of Belfast City Councils First Stop Shop Business advisory service in that it provides a free on site health and safety audit and report to those businesses participating in the project, it provides company specific information to assist them with documentation, it provides health checks for employees and signposts the businesses towards other agencies who may be able to benefit the company such as Enviro-wise and STEM.

5.0 Methodology

This is the second phase of the Business Support Partnership in the Western Group area and the pilot stage in the Southern Group area.

Stage 1 Management Team/Strategic Committee

This group consisting of Mr. Clement Kennedy (Principal E.H.O Health & Safety-Western Group), Mrs. Lynda Fitzsimmons (Principal E.H.O Health & Safety-Southern Group), Mr. Seamus Mullen (Western Investing for Health) and Mrs Lyn Donnelly (Southern Investing for Health) was set up at the initial stage in order to pilot a multi-agency approach to improvement of health and safety in micro-businesses in the Western and Southern Group area.

Stage 2 Appointment of Business Support Advisor

The next stage of the project involved the appointment of a Business Support Advisor-Miss Orla Daly, a District Environmental Health Officer who was seconded from Strabane District Council.

Stage 3 Engagement of Stakeholders

The third stage of the project involved engaging with and achieving the support of the councils within the Western and Southern Group, the environmental project STEM and the recruitment of businesses within these areas.

Stage 4 Participating Councils

Within this second business support project there were a number of councils who were involved, these included in the Western Group:- Derry City Council, Limavady Borough Council and Strabane District Council.

In the Southern Group area: - Armagh City & District Council, Banbridge District Council, Craigavon Borough Council, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council and Newry and Mourne District Council.

Stage 5 Recruiting Businesses

Western Group

10 Business were recruited in the Western Group area, a number of these businesses were selected by Foyle Health at Work and the remainder were selected by the Environmental Health Officers from the representative council. (See Appendix 1 for businesses recruited) All 10 businesses were involved in the Business Support Partnership.

Southern Group

In the Southern Group each District Environmental Health Department contacted a range of business sector owners in order to obtain official expressions of interest. Each business was assured that the advice would be hands-on and practical to each business. A total of 20 businesses expressed an interest in being involved in the project- 4 from each district council. Out of the 20 businesses, 18 participated.

Stage 6 Launch of Business Support Partnership in the Southern & Western Group

In the Southern Group, two information seminars were held to launch the Business Support Partnership and to outline the Terms of Reference for the project, one in Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council on 15th February 2005 and the other in Banbridge District Council on 1st March 2005. (See Appendix 2) All businesses were invited to these launches and a presentation given on the benefits of participating in the research project.

In the Western Group area, a number of the businesses selected were apart of the Foyle Health at Work Project so the Business Support Partnership was launched in the Foyle at Work magazine (See Appendix 3).

Stage 7 Workplace Audits

The main stage of the project involved Health & Safety and Environmental Workplace Audits by the Business Support Advisor. In the Southern Group the Workplace Health Assessment Tool was introduced into each business as a means of ascertaining what health and safety documentation and arrangements are currently in place within the business.

A number of ongoing revisits were made by the Business Support Advisor with specific audit reports being compiled which were tailored to each business and discussed individually with each employer. The Business Support Advisor made a number of presentations to representatives from councils in each of the areas and Investing for Health.

Stage 8 Workplace Training

Another aspect of the project was a two-day intensive basic Health & Safety training programme, which was offered by the Business Support Advisor to the businesses who had participated in the pilot project the previous year. The Course is an accredited qualification by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. In total 8 people availed of this offer with all 8 completing the course successfully.

Stage 9 Workplace Health Fairs

The latter part of the project in the Southern Group involved organizing health fairs in each of the trust areas in relation to employee health checks. These health fairs were organized by a series of meetings consisting of Investing for Health Manager, Investing for Health Officer, Business Support Advisor, Health Promotion Manager. Two health fairs were organized, one in Craigavon leisure centre on the Date May 2005 attended by over 70 people and the other in Orchard Leisure Centre, Armagh on Date June 2005 attended by over 55 people (See appendix 3). A third health fair was not organized in the Newry & Mourne Trust due to the wide geographical location of the businesses and the small number of businesses participating in this area. However a questionnaire was sent to businesses who had participated asking them what areas of health that they would like addressed for employees in the businesses. This was to be forwarded to the Health Promotion Manager for Newry & Mourne Trust so that any area identified as needing addressed would be done so for the businesses.

In the Western Group, those businesses who were selected by Foyle Health at Work, first of all went through a needs assessment questionnaire. This determined what aspects the business were interested in receiving more assistance with. Foyle Health at Work would provide the Health Fairs for the businesses, which were participating in both programmes. Currently Foyle Health at Work is in the process of organizing these.

Stage 10 Evaluation of Business Support Questionnaire

The final stage of the project involved a telephone survey to a representative number of businesses-15, in order to ascertain what they thought of the service, how they would like to see it improved, and what recommendations they would make. (See Appendix 4)

6.0 Summary of Findings

The key findings of the Business Support Project include:

In total 28 out of the 30 businesses were visited. Attempts had been made on several occasions to visit the premises, however on arrival the manager was not available to carry out the audit. As the time frame for the Business Support was limited, efforts were directed to those businesses who were committed to the visits.

A total of 1183 employees were impacted upon over the 28 businesses. On inspection of the premises under Health and Safety legislation the Business Support Advisor found that 14.8% of businesses had a health and safety policy with the remainder 85.2% having either none or an inadequate health and safety policy.

Audits also found that 88.8% of businesses audited had either no or inadequate risk assessments. 74.2% of businesses had either no system for recording/reporting of accidents in the workplace. Employers were unaware of their duties to maintain electrical systems and work equipment.

Workplaces are an ideal setting to target improvements in the workplace “Health” and “Safety” as they are a captive audience.

6.1 Evaluation of Health Fair

Two successful health fairs were held in Craigavon and the Orchard Leisure Centre in May and June 2005. In total over 120 were impacted, with stands including archery demonstrations, fitness testing, blood pressure checks, body mass index checks, sexual health, oral health, action cancer, break-thru, smoking cessation, physiotherapy, Health Action Zone, Mental Health and Yoga demonstrations. Over the two health fairs there were 20 G.P referrals. Although a high number of people were impacted, a high proportion of these were from outside organizations who were invited to the event. This may be explained by the fact that only one health fair was held in each trust area and therefore in the majority of instances did not suit the businesses to attend outside their district. It must be noted that only one health fair

was felt needed in each trust area due to the small number of participating businesses i.e. 4, therefore not making it practical to run two in such close proximity and also due to difficulty in obtaining the expertise of individuals to attend an event.

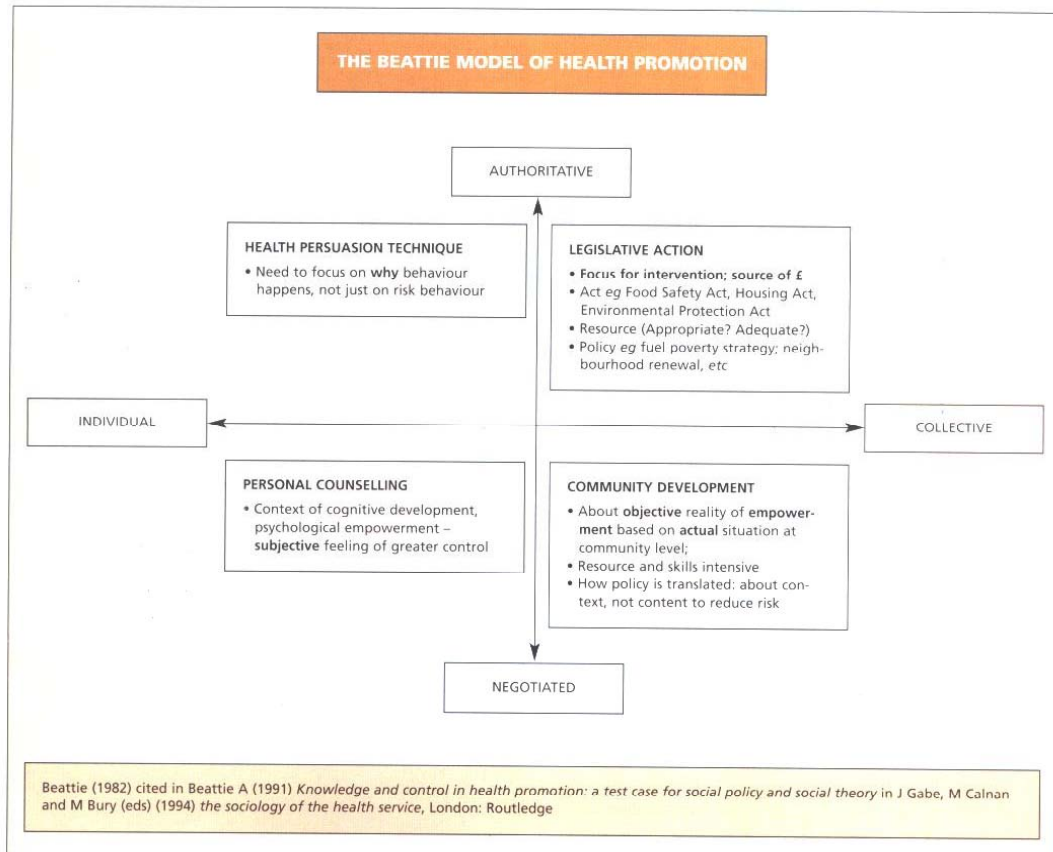
Feedback from the health fairs revealed 20% of participants found the event useful with the remainder 80% finding the health fair very useful. Aspects that people were most concerned with included cancer, blood pressure and exercise and diet, all of which was covered in the health fair (See Appendix 5)

6.2 Evaluation of Questionnaire

Of all the businesses surveyed, the response rate to date has indicated that 100% of businesses found the service to be valuable and worthwhile, 71% of businesses found the time period too short with the remainder 29% felt it was just right. 85% of businesses said they would avail of the service should it become more permanent with only 15% replying “No”, however this response was explained in the suggestions in that they would like more assistance in implementing the information provided which would be should more time be given.

6.3 Evaluation of Project

The Business Support Partnership project has the added benefits over the others in that it recognizes that it is not just about stopping people being made ill by work but also about using the workplace as a setting for the promotion of health and safety in the Western and Southern Group area. The Beattie Model of Health Promotion identified that for a public health initiative to be effective it must be active in all four areas of persuasion as described overleaf.



The beauty of the Beattie model is that it fits well with current government policy on health promotion. The model shows the importance of sound partnership working, with government setting the legislative, resource and policy framework, with individuals and communities also playing an active role. If activities do not occur across each of the boxes (above), they are unlikely to yield sustainable health promotion.

The Business Support Project is effective as it is active in each of the four areas of persuasion. Legislative action for health attempts to redirect behaviour towards healthiness at a macro level and is a top down method to improving health, the Business Support Project assists the businesses with health and safety enforcement, signposts them to environmental issues which closely aligns environmental condition with health impact. Community development for health is tackled by the business support project by the fact that it works together with everyone in the organization from bottom up in order to shift the pattern of thought to one which promotes workplace health and safety. Persuasion for health is fulfilled by the project as it requires the employees and managers to change from damaging to safe health

behaviours e.g. substituting a hazardous chemical likely to cause dermatitis to a more safer chemical. The final area of persuasion Personal counseling for health has been carried out by the project in the form of health fairs which had a range of health professionals present such as health action zone, action cancer, mental health nurses, diabetes nurses, dieticians etc. which give the employees from the businesses who attended the opportunity to make more genuine choices to improve their health.

The initial pilot project in the Western Group had already formed partnerships with Westcare and Western Investing for Health. This proved beneficial to the second phase of the project as these partnerships had been formed and so it was much easier to gauge what was needed to progress to the second phase of the project. It also proved beneficial as it meant that those businesses that were selected were immediately brought onto the project and received assistance with health and safety.

7.0 Conclusions

Throughout the six months of this research project the business support advisor has worked in partnership with a number of agencies in order to make a success of the project. Through these partnerships the desired aims and targets set by Western and Southern Investing for Health has been met.

It can be seen from the feedback both in the questionnaires and verbally to the Business Support Advisor that all businesses found the service invaluable in terms of health and safety advice and assistance and employee health and well-being. The reasoning behind this was that it was a “hands on” approach, it provided a “mentoring service” was “free” and “linked to health”. Businesses were also able to contact the advisor with any queries without fear of enforcement action being taken against them.

In terms of where we should go from here it is quite evident from the report that there is a need for a more sustainable health and safety advisory service for the business community in Northern Ireland in the local authority setting. This has been demonstrated through the accident statistics for Northern Ireland and in my own research through the lack of documentation and awareness regarding health and safety among the businesses that were visited.

The four areas of persuasion needed to make the Beattie model effective are all in place within the Business Support research project making it an effective public health initiative that should be sustained.

The Business Support Partnership project is an ideal mechanism to overcome barriers that currently exist to inhibit employers implementing workplace health and safety arrangements.

The workplace Health & Safety advice model, if it is to remain a sustainable project, requires additional funding on a more permanent basis in the local authority setting. This is needed to tie in with the results from the businesses as when asked they found the main recommendation to be a longer timeframe to assist in making policies and procedures “live” documents within their workplace.

It may be worthwhile to extend the project not only across the North of Ireland but to the Republic of Ireland in order to assist businesses in the South in complying with health and safety standards. This would not only promote good practice but would allow local authorities in both areas the opportunity to learn from each other as both areas enforce the same E. U. Health and Safety directives.

8.0 Recommendations

From carrying out the project the main recommendations that the Business Support Advisor would make would be to extend the period of time given to each business and to consider a fewer number of premises within the timeframe. Another possibility would be to focus on specific target areas in the business in line with the HELANI Strategic plan such as Stress, Workplace Transport or Musculoskeletal disorders. Both of these possible mechanisms would allow the businesses to manage their health and safety function more efficiently.

It would be an additional benefit to develop a tailored health and safety manual for the businesses which would utilize time and prove worthwhile for the businesses. Along with this future projects carried out should consider offering free training to the management of businesses as it would assist them with implementing health and safety in their own businesses.

It would be also worthwhile to work with Insurance Companies in order to reduce insurance premiums for companies in the project who are improving health & safety.

9.0 Action Plan

Activity	Time Span
Source additional funding to extend the BSP in the Southern and Western Group Area. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on specific target areas• Develop a tailored health & safety manual• Offer free training• Work with Insurance companies to reduce insurance premiums for companies participating in the project	6-12 Months
Source mainstream funding to extend the BSP permanently throughout the province in each Environmental Health Group area	1-2 Years

9.0 References

World Health Organisations report “A Global Strategy on Occupational Health for All”(1994).

EU Statistics report “Work related health problems in the EU” (1998-1999)

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Appendix 1
Business Support Businesses

APPENDIX 2

LAUNCH OF BUSINESS

SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP

PRESS RELEASE & PHOTO'S

APPENDIX 3

HEALTH FAIR LEAFLET

APPENDIX 4

HEALTH FAIR PHOTO'S
& PRESS RELEASES

APPENDIX 5

Evaluation Questionnaire

APPENDIX 6

Expenditure of Budget