



Workplace representatives: a review of their facilities and facility time

IOSH response to the DTI consultation document

Consultation
response
29.03.07

About IOSH

Founded in 1945, the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) is Europe's largest OSH professional body with 29,000+ members in over 50 countries, including around 8,000 Chartered Safety and Health Practitioners. Incorporated by Royal Charter, a registered charity, and an ILO international NGO, IOSH is the guardian of standards of competence and provides professional development and awareness training.

The Institution regulates and steers the profession, providing impartial, authoritative, free guidance. Regularly consulted by government and other bodies, IOSH is the founding member and secretariat to UK, European and International professional body networks. The Institution also has a research and development fund, which is developing the evidence-base for OSH policy and practice.

IOSH has 27 Branches in the UK and worldwide including the Caribbean, Hong Kong, Middle East and the Republic of Ireland, 16 special interest groups covering communications and media; construction; consultancy; education; environment; fire risk management; food, drink and hospitality; healthcare; international; hazardous industries; offshore; public services; railways; retail and distribution; rural industries; and safety sciences. IOSH members work at both strategic and operational levels across all employment sectors and our vision is:

A world of work which is safe, healthy and sustainable

IOSH welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) consultation on Workplace representatives: a review of their facilities and facility time. We feel improved worker involvement in health and safety is potentially beneficial for both individuals and employers, helping to create a positive health and safety culture and that techniques for engaging the workforce in health and safety issues may have wider applicability and extend to other areas of representation.

For further information about IOSH, its members and its work, please visit our website at www.iosh.co.uk

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Comments

IOSH believes that employers, working in partnership with employees and employee representatives, represents an effective model for addressing a wide range of workplace issues, including but not limited to, occupational health and safety. IOSH believe that all workers should be encouraged to become involved in health and safety and other issues in their workplaces and should be made aware of the opportunities for becoming a representative. Below we outline some thoughts on encouraging more people to become health and safety representatives; however, such techniques may have wider applicability and extend to other areas of representation.

The 2005 research report 'Obstacles preventing worker involvement in health and safety' we note that one of the recommendations was:

"Promote incentives such as accreditation, salary awards, progression or time-off for training to encourage involvement. Employees, who might be interested in taking a more active role, perhaps as safety representatives, have a number of hurdles to overcome, not least the attitude of their peers and fitting in the responsibilities alongside their existing job. Financial incentives provide tangible recognition of the value being placed on the role, but smaller employers also need to be convinced of the business benefits of such incentives."

(Ecotec Ltd, 2005: p5)

So, remuneration such as that often paid to first-aiders, could be paid to health and safety representatives (and off-set against tax) or perhaps additional leave entitlement by prior arrangement e.g. one or two days per year.

In addition, provision of multi-lingual information on the role, function and opportunities of employee representation could be helpful in sectors where there are a high proportion of ethnic groupings.

With respect to increasing the representation amongst younger workers, IOSH believe that raising awareness of occupational health and safety issues amongst young workers before they enter the workplace is essential. IOSH has produced a free online teaching resource at www.wiseup2work.co.uk and is working with the Health and Safety Executive to provide a workplace hazard awareness course for year 10 pupils.

We acknowledge the complexities of the representative role in the changing world of work. Changing work patterns, including increased modern apprenticeships; home and teleworking; agency and short-term contract work; migrant and non-English speaking workers; part-time working; voluntary workers; people who have more than one job; and movement towards 24/7

working all present challenges to full worker consultation and representation, and we suggest these work areas would benefit from the provision of specific case studies and guidance.

Additionally, we think the business benefits of a workforce with representation need to be highlighted and a link made to an existing quality standard e.g. European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). This standard focuses on organisations meeting the needs of their customers, employees, financial stakeholders and community at large. The Investors in People (IIP) standard may also be appropriate as it includes an 'ownership and involvement in decision making' indicator. In terms of legislation, the Information and Consultation with Employees (ICE) Regulations that currently apply to organisations with 100 plus employees will be applicable to organisations with 50 plus employees in 2008 and this may encourage the development of better arrangements for informing and consulting employees and bring business benefits.

We feel the suggestions about rationalisation of information and guidance are helpful, although we are uncertain of the benefits of a portal providing access to the main pieces of separate guidance if the rationalisation significantly reduces the guidance available.

We note the suggestion that multi-role representatives might be a consideration for the future. While this may be feasible, the wide range of competences required and demands that would be placed on an individual should not be overlooked.

The research by McKay et al. (annex A) identifies that representatives did not feel adequately equipped in dealing with their members' stress and mental health problems. This suggests a particular training need for educational programmes for representatives. IOSH has developed a freely available web-based occupational health toolkit (www.ohtoolkit.co.uk) which provides a one-stop shop for a wide range of resources to help non-medical practitioners tackle work-related ill-health, including stress. In the IOSH view, improved worker involvement in health and safety is potentially beneficial for both individuals and employers, helping to create a positive health and safety culture.

References

Ecotec Ltd (2005) *Obstacles preventing worker involvement in health and safety*. RR296, HSE Books, Sudbury. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr296.pdf>

European Foundation for Quality Management EFQM
<http://www.grc.cf.ac.uk/lrn/resources/briefings/PDFs/EFQMmodel.pdf>

IOSH wiseup2work <http://www.wiseup2work.co.uk/>

IOSH Occupational health toolkit <http://www.ohtoolkit.co.uk/>