



## CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE – 17TH JUNE 2013

**SUBJECT: GENERAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH UPDATE**

**REPORT BY: ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

---

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The following report is provided to Elected Members, Union Representatives and Officers as a formal update on Health, Safety and Occupational Health issues/investigations since the last meeting of the Committee.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 It has been a particularly challenging period for Health, Safety and Occupational Health teams. There are a number of health and safety investigations currently ongoing which will be reported to the Committee once completed, however the following report provides an update on progress to date.

### 3. REPORT

#### 3.1 Asbestos – High Risk Schools

Since the closure of Cwmcarn High School in October 2012, the Council has reviewed all high risk schools i.e. schools which are of similar build and construction age as Cwmcarn High School. The review included the inspection of all known heating cabinets in those schools which were similar to the design of heater cabinets in Cwmcarn High School where asbestos debris/dust was found. In addition reassurance air testing was undertaken in several schools, this environmental air testing is ongoing and will be completed in all relevant schools by the end of the summer term. Typical airborne asbestos fibre concentrations in buildings containing asbestos-containing materials (ACM) in good condition is 0.0005 fibres/ml and this is the level which schools are being tested to, using sophisticated analysis methods to identify and count asbestos fibres in low concentrations. This standard has been included in the Corporate Asbestos Management Plan as the environmental level to achieve in all schools.

The background air testing in school environments is particularly important following a report by The Committee on Carcinogenicity, an independent committee that advises the government on cancer, which was asked by the Department for Education to look at the relative vulnerability of children to asbestos compared with adults. The findings of the committee stated that a five-year-old is five times more likely than an adult of 30 to develop mesothelioma, a type of cancer linked to asbestos, if they are exposed to it at the same time. This is because a child will normally live longer and have more time for the disease to develop.

The test results and any remedial action taken will be provided to Corporate Management Team, Members and Union Representatives and an update provided at the next meeting of the Committee in November 2013.

### **3.2 Occupational Health**

The Senior Occupational Health Nurse, left the Authority at the end of 2012. Following this it was decided to undertake a full review of the Occupational Health Service in order to determine what resources were required to deliver modern occupational health services which enhance wellbeing and attendance at work. Following the review Kath Evans was appointed to the post of Occupational Health Manager. Kath brings specific expertise to a key role, which will assist the Authority in moving forward in improving the health and fitness of the workforce.

### **3.3 Care First Service**

Officers are working closely with Care First, the Councils Employee Assistance Providers to promote the services offered to all employees and their direct family members. Information Roadshows were run during the week of 21st May 2013 at corporate buildings and depots. Attendance at the sessions was encouraging, although communication needs to improve for future events to ensure that all staff are aware of such promotional events. However where employees were not able to attend, or were not aware of the events, information leaflets have been left in depots and corporate buildings to provide the same information on the service. Further promotion activities will be held throughout the year to increase awareness of the Care First Services.

### **3.4 Specsavers Service/Eyesight Tests**

The new Specsavers Eye Care Scheme was launched on 1st November which was supported by roadshows in Corporate Offices and Depots over four days. Since the launch of the service 167 VDU vouchers have been issued. Regular reports are provided by Specsavers, the most recent advising that 45 of the 167 vouchers issued have been redeemed. Although staff have 12 months to redeem the voucher, H&S will be writing to Heads of Service to advise details of staff who have been issued but not redeemed their Specsavers voucher. A further update to be provided at the next meeting of the Committee in November 2013.

Under new rules, introduced in February 2013, Police are able to take immediate action against a motorist for failing a roadside eyesight test, by notifying the DVLA electronically with details of eyesight test failure allowing a revocation of the licence to be issued to the motorist within hours. The licence will be revoked by the DVLA until such time as a driver can demonstrate that their eyesight meets the required standard.

Staff have been advised via a communication that they have a responsibility to make sure they are fit to drive every time they get behind the wheel. This includes making sure they meet minimum eyesight standards to enable them to read a number plate from 20 metres.

### **3.5 Flu Vaccination Programme 13/14**

The Authority will be shortly planning flu vaccinations for the Autumn and will be discussing with Heads of Service the requirements for vaccination of employees. The Authority offer vaccinations annually to social care staff, who have direct contact with vulnerable clients, these vaccinations are jointly funded between H&S and Social Services and support the Welsh Government Strategy for flu vaccinations. In addition to this vaccination programme, this year Heads of Service will be offered the option of funding vaccinations for employees within their service areas for business continuity purposes. Service areas will fund the purchase of vaccines and officers will order the required number in the summer for delivery in September/October. Any unused vaccines will be offered on a first come first serve basis to all employees.

### **3.6 Health and Safety Vetting of Construction Contractors**

Over the past 8 months the health and safety division have been reviewing the procedures for the first stage vetting of construction constructors. Current arrangements differ between service areas, however Health and Safety undertake all vetting for contracts tendered through procurement and support Building Consultancy and Housing Technical during busy periods. Currently contractors awarded works under 10K are not vetted for health and safety competence.

CMT have agreed that from 1st January 2014 all construction contractors wishing to work for the Authority must be accredited to one of the 36 registered members of the Safe Systems in Procurement (SSIP) scheme. We are currently working with Constructionline in communicating this policy change with all our construction contractors and letters are being sent out informing contractors of the change.

Two areas will not be covered at the stage 1 vetting, that being the level of asbestos competency of those contractors who will be affecting the fabric of the building and the arrangements in place for assessing the competence of sub-contractors. These two questions would have to be assessed at stage 2 by the contracting officer.

A guidance document has been issued to all contracting officers providing details of how to check if a construction contractor is registered with an SSIP member organisation. The change to vetting arrangements will ensure a level of health and safety competency for contractors undertaking high risk work on behalf of the Authority and will apply irrespective of the value of that contract.

### **3.7 HSE Investigations**

There is currently one HSE investigation ongoing, which relates to an accident involving a primary aged pupil while attending an Educational Visit. The accident resulted in a major injury and is also subject to civil action. HSE and internal investigations into the accident are ongoing and a further update will be provided at the next meeting of the Committee in November.

The Health and Safety Executive have confirmed that they will be providing the Authority with the investigation report into the management of asbestos at Cwmcarn High School, which has been previously requested by the Acting Chief Executive. In order to determine management arrangements going forward and considered use of the Authorities limited resources it is essential that the Authority are aware of the standards the HSE expect in terms of management of asbestos within a school building, particularly given the information provided in 3.1 of this report on the increased vulnerability of children from exposure to asbestos fibres.

## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 For committee Members to note contents of the update report.

Author: Donna Jones, Service Manager, Health, Safety and Welfare  
Consultees: Nigel Barnet, Acting Chief Executive  
Cllr C. Forehead, Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Governance/Business Manager