

A FIRST YEAR OF FIRSTS

As I complete my first year as Chair of the HSE, I have an overriding feeling of pride in the people and achievements of the whole organisation. Our resilience, flexibility and determination to deliver on our mission, values and business plans during these testing times continues to be an inspiration.

HSE stepped up and continues to contribute to the national response to the global pandemic. At the same time, colleagues are taking on significant new responsibilities and expanding others so that we enable more people to be safe and feel safe in their homes, whether houses, apartments or high-rise buildings as well as protecting people and the environment from harmful exposure to chemicals and explosives.

Behind the scenes colleagues have enabled new ways of working, including the continuity of our helplines and an extraordinary growth in our online advice and information communications reach. Right across the organisation there is much learning that is valuable and will inform our new strategy and future business plans.

Many of our partnerships are deeper and stronger than before. The British Occupational Health Society (BOHS) has recognised HSE's efforts in putting together a unique team of specialists to assist the Government in their efforts in providing frontline health care workers with life-saving personal protective equipment (PPE), as a part of the pandemic response.

The Peter Isaac award recognises "an outstanding initiative that has contributed to the reduction of ill health at work." The HSE PPE technical team was assembled to respond to unprecedented global demand for equipment, not only to provide NHS workers with access to high-quality PPE, but also to conduct research, provide expertise, and support policy making and practical guidelines across a whole variety of workplaces.

The celebrated team comprised of experts in occupational hygiene, science, microbiology and infection prevention, as well as policy-making experts and support staff, who combined their skills and knowledge across a wide range of interrelated disciplines.

Working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Public

Health England (PHE), Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the NHS and other government bodies, the HSE team evaluated materials and specifications against relevant PPE requirements, to rapidly provide agreement that new and novel sources of supply had been properly assessed and could be deployed to frontline workers without unnecessary delay.

At the same time, colleagues developed the new Spot Check service that has enabled HSE to support local authorities across GB to support workplaces to be to as Covid secure as possible. Colleagues have completed some complex and significant prosecutions including an NHS Trust, National Gas Grid and an Adventure Theme Park operator. While we remain focused on prevention, it is also essential that we also hold people to account and secure justice.

I am one of many colleagues who joined HSE during the pandemic and while I have valued participating in our virtual events, I am very much looking forward to meeting as many colleagues as possible during the forthcoming 'One HSE' events this autumn. These events will provide us all with a good opportunity to appreciate the breadth and depth of our work and think about our shared purpose, values and direction of travel. I am confident and positive about the year ahead and the contribution that HSE will make during these challenging times.



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