

Better...together

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Overview

Better...together is the story of a small internal team who have championed the people and cultural aspects of change during and after HSE's move from a split Headquarters in London (Rose Court) and Bootle to a single HQ in Bootle (Redgrave Court). The vision was for:

An HQ which guides and serves the whole of HSE by being more flexible; better at sharing understanding, establishing common purpose and solving problems; and that thrives on team working and collaboration: in short a unified and more vibrant HQ sitting at the heart of a modern, successful national organisation.

The Better...together team are keen to emphasise that it has not been a 'culture change' programme as such; it hasn't re-examined corporate values for example but it was 'a good time to look at identity'. It has, therefore, played an important role in highlighting the importance of organisational culture at a time when HSE was about to undergo a significant period of change.

Better...together has demonstrated a 'can do' approach to change, recognising that everything isn't always perfect, challenging myths and 'rules', navigating processes and systems that threatened to block progress and working creatively on multiple levels and at speed to generate momentum. It has managed to introduce the 'counter-cultural' and brought humour and fun into an organisation which is traditionally quite serious by virtue of the work it does. At each stage the team has encouraged people to look at themselves, challenged them to take responsibility for making things happen and, importantly, to take pride in what they do in a context which is often an easy target for the press. As a finite programme Better...together was never envisaged to be a permanent fixture, although its life was extended by a year in recognition of its important contribution. Its work has been to support change and be a catalyst for new ways of working and it is now looking to ensure its legacy is well embedded as 'business as usual' before passing the baton to other functions from March 2011.

The germ of an idea

Better...together started life as the culture workstream of the How and Where We Work Programme (HWWW) which was established in 2006 to consider how to foster more collaborative ways of working, provide greater flexibility, improve career structures, improve the working environment and reduce estate costs.

The idea for a workstream focussing on culture emerged from a discussion in August 2007 between senior managers about 'how' the move to a single HQ would be achieved. Although Rose Court would bear the brunt of the impact for staff, at this stage Redgrave Court was still itself relatively new with staff having relocated in 2006 from various local offices. There was still a tendency for Directorates to work in silos in the new building and little sense of collaboration or taking full advantage of being part of a diverse organisation.

Although HSE was very good at responding to a major incident and was well-organised vertically, it was less successful in sharing learning across the organisation. An additional factor was the influx of some 200 new recruits into Redgrave Court from other parts of the Civil Service and the private sector. It was clear that the new knowledge-sharing culture, identified in the strategy for a single HQ, was not going to emerge simply by putting everyone into the same building.



Redgrave Court, Bootle

This early discussion led to a session at the SCS conference in September, where delegates took part in an exercise to describe the different cultures of Redgrave Court and Rose Court. The exercise surfaced some real divides between the two sites and the important question it posed was 'what culture would they aspire to when Redgrave Court became the single HQ?' The gap between existing and aspired culture was so great that it was obvious this would need to be tackled in some way.

In October 2007 the culture workstream became a formal part of the HWWW programme with the overall aim 'to identify some cultural enablers that would help to foster a more positive working climate'. It linked directly with the benefits outlined in the HWWW business case:

- developing closer working relationships between staff and the new governing body
- supporting more joined up policy and delivery
- creating a strong common identity for HSE's HQ staff
- creating wider development opportunities
- and with the two non financial targets identified in November 2007 to HSC:
- making optimal use of collective experience and knowledge both in the interests of HSE as a whole and in support of individual colleagues
- addressing the divide between policy and operational functions.

There was agreement to repeat the SCS culture exercise across the organisation through a series of workshops held between February and June 08 mainly at Redgrave Court although they were attended by a few people from Rose Court and the Regions. Attendance by the CE at the first session was a clear endorsement of the importance of this work. The sessions again identified both the culture people aspired to and also what they themselves were prepared to commit to do

to support change. Results were published in June 08 and the SCS were updated. With the CE's support, learning from the sessions and proposals were brought to the SMT where it was agreed to fund a small team to support staff aspirations and take the culture work forwards.

Softly, softly

'If we had badged it as a change programme it would have failed' (Better...together team member)

HSE had a history of 'big bang' approaches to change and there was a good degree of cynicism of its ability to manage and embed change successfully. Some of this legacy is still reflected in the People Survey and the low turnover at HSE means that memories are long. It was therefore particularly important for the



SMT, having gathered feedback on culture from staff, to respond in a genuine way. The Better...together team's approach therefore, has been 'to do things quietly and well' and the initiative was positioned as improvement rather than change, the team 'acting as catalysts to stimulate actions'.

That is not to say that the programme was not 'different' and one senior manager describes it as 'time and resources to

Chief Executive
Geoffrey Podger attends
one of the focus groups

think of counter-cultural activities', the key principles being to challenge existing practices and processes and be innovative and creative in delivering value for money outcomes. Better...together was underpinned by a clear action plan designed to involve staff in generating ideas, translating ideas into action, keeping senior managers updated and acting as champions, collecting evidence for evaluation and with a strong focus on delivery. This included:

- Focus groups with staff
- Agreeing priorities for action
- Getting top management to sign up to an action plan
- Setting up a team with key skills
- Organising some 'quick wins'
- Setting up an intranet site and other regular communications/publicity
- Clear plan, deliverables, timelines
- Evaluating after each initiative
- Clear links to HSE's strategy and business plans
- Continually seeking feedback and adapting the forward plan
- Involving both the HSE Board and SMT
- Securing funding
- Having a senior champion
- Collaboration across the business in getting things done
- Trying out new ideas.

Developing the brand

'If Better...together is involved you know it will be done well' (Senior manager, Bootle)

*better...together
making the connection*



By the time Better...together was branded as a work programme at the end of 2008 it had already completed some of the preparatory work and had data to show the gaps between future aspirations and current perceptions and some idea of the task ahead. The name itself was chosen through a small competition and Better...together started to be used to badge events and establish its own identity on the intranet site where people could find priority areas, feedback from various sessions and event details. The look and feel of the brand is deliberately very different from the HSE identity and it provided a distinctive focus. The three dots after Better... indicate whatever is needed, such as better communications together, better leadership together, etc.

People now associate the brand with success.

Getting the right team

'They knew how to measure the size of the steps that could be taken at any given point in time and when it was appropriate to take the next step' (Chair)

The HSE approach is a good example of finding organisational development (OD) skills within the workforce without buying in expensive consultancy. The team were hand picked from various organisational levels. Heather Bolton led the Programme from the SCS and had an HR background. She was supported by Janice Martin a full time Band 2 with some experience in change management, Jane



The Better...together team

Rheinheimer, a Band 5 with an extensive network of contacts across HSE and a full time external communications resource Jan Halligan who also had some cultural change experience. Together the team brought an important combination of skills such as an in depth knowledge of the organisation and operational Directorates, communications skills, some HR and change experience. They describe their key attribute as a *'focus on delivery'* but with a healthy dose of realism.

A key technique was to 'test ideas', gathering evidence and collecting feedback. They were always able to confirm that people were on board or that ideas had been generated by staff.

A senior colleague felt that it was beneficial to have an internal team in that they showed respect for the culture and were *'good at taking the temperature of the organisation'*.

Their advice and expertise have often been sought to help with other activities such as producing a DVD to be used as part of the SMT presentation to regional offices and the planning and delivery of communications to staff around the results of the People Survey.

Senior level support

'It is not about management. It is about creating a better environment and ensuring people feel appreciated' (Chief Executive)

One of the key success factors has been senior level support for Better...together. The business case for a single HQ had aspirations to change the culture but no specifics on how it was to be achieved in practice. The CE, however, is clear that Better...together is not a 'management tool' and will not allow it to be used as a vehicle for doing 'more with less'. Even the staff suggestion scheme is not seen as instrumental to saving costs but as a vehicle for individuals to get their ideas into practice. Senior managers have been there to support rather than drive Better...together. They have been generous with their time and many staff commented that they have been 'surprisingly honest and open' in the 'Coffee and Cake' sessions.

Involving others

'The Better...together team has modelled the behaviours they have tried to get others to follow, breaking down barriers of roles and responsibilities. They have operated at a cross-organisational level...it has humanised the organisation' (Chair)

One of the advantages of a small team is that it has had to work through others to get things done and Better...together has been highly successful in mobilising support across the organisation. A key attribute of the team was knowing who to contact to make things happen and how to challenge barriers and blockers. They knew who would be receptive, provide support and act as informal champions. It helped, of course, to have the strong backing of the CE and the SMT.

One of the principles has always been to transfer ownership and for some things the team have simply acted as a catalyst to inspire new ways of working in small ways.

The Estates Management Team have been a key partner in making the physical surroundings more attractive and conducive to sharing and networking.

Communication has also been a key part of the strategy and each month a summary report of the Better...together programme is produced with a forward look to what is planned. The team has worked closely with the Communications Directorate to publicise activities widely. The team have also consulted with the HR Directorate to co-ordinate and deliver joint activities. Both the Communications and HR Directors are members of the Better...together Steering Group.

Trade Union colleagues have been regularly consulted and updated on activity via 'keep in touch' meetings with the Programme Director. A representative was also invited to an early pilot workshop in February 2008 and the TU hosted a trade stand at HSE Live.

Highlights of Better...together

If you had asked someone before this if it was possible, they would have said 'no' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)

The Better...together 'brand' comprised a multi-faceted range of activities and initiatives, generated by listening to staff. These ranged from the physical use of the building and helping people find their way around more easily, to social events, fund raising, learning events and the ambitious large scale event, HSE live. They have generated a format that has been translated successfully to other activities in the organisation. For example the informal coffee and cake sessions demonstrate how small changes can have a large impact on how people respond.

The two phases of Better...together indicate a sense of progression to the next stage rather than a simple repetition of activities.

Phase 1 – 'making the connection'

'Some people who felt they were 'employed to get their head down' started to go out to meet people from other teams and find out what they do' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)

The first phase of Better...together was about encouraging people to get to know other colleagues in the building, starting to share knowledge and making connections between areas of work. A lot of the early work was about improving communications and the new Better...together intranet site encouraged people to keep abreast of developments, widen participation to the regions and engage with the events and activities. The latter included:

Coffee and Cake

Coffee and cake attendees networking prior to the event

'Having leaders make themselves available to talk to and be questioned by people at all levels is a real culture shift for this organisation' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)



The 'coffee and cake' sessions were an early suggestion put to the SMT for getting senior staff and Board members to talk about issues of the day with staff in a relaxed



setting. A regular programme of Senior Management Team visits to all HSE locations was already in place. These sessions were designed to be much more informal, involve more of HSE's senior staff and give the opportunity for senior managers to talk a little more personally about themselves and how they got involved with HSE. Cakes baked on the premises and a half hour networking session have added a human touch and a sense of genuine hospitality. One employee set herself the challenge of meeting two new people at each event. The sessions became an instant success, with 99% positive feedback ratings in the first year, and have been consistently over-subscribed. As one person said, *'unless you were there when the email invite came through you didn't have a chance of getting in'*. These events provided further opportunities to ask staff for suggestions about future events.

The format has also been successfully transferred to other existing events such as the way the Chief Scientists' lunchtime seminars are advertised. These have seen a dramatic increase in attendance and are taken out to the regions.

Social activities

'Social and fundraising activities have built a sense of community and camaraderie... it is about humanising the organisation' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)

Some of the feedback from the staff workshops related to the need for more social interaction. The Sports and Social Club Committee had disbanded with the move to Redgrave Court. In July 2008, the SMT agreed the team should look for ways to revive and stimulate interest. Plans were taken forward to re-vitalise the Club led by the HR Director, Gaynor Coldrick, and a new committee was set up. In its first year it delivered a range of new activities: a seasonal children's party; Children in Need activities and pantomime at Redgrave Court and various social outings and quizzes. The children's party was oversubscribed and all organised events had a good take up.

Chief Executive
Geoffrey Podger presenting
a cheque to the
Lord Mayor of Sefton



Better...together seasonal celebrations included a Christmas tree in 'the street' and a 'thank you' event which provided a networking opportunity and another chance to get to know SMT members informally as they served as bartenders. Feedback from staff showed that this event was very much appreciated. Regional offices also had the opportunity to hold similar events.

Charitable and fundraising events have also provided a sense of Community and Chief Executive, Geoffrey Podger, presented a cheque to the Lord Mayor of Sefton from fundraising activities at HSE Live. He was in turn invited, with several staff members from the local area, for tea at the Town Hall.

Physical aspects

'Sometimes it's just the really simple idea that makes the difference and people notice it's different immediately' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)

A key part of Better...together has been to ensure that best use is made of the Bootle premises, Redgrave Court, which offers a large central space known as 'the street'. Apart from the Deli area at one end, its appearance was somewhat stark but it had the potential to become the heart of Redgrave Court and a central meeting place for social and business needs.

Art

'It's not hierarchical, we are all a community together' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)

In 2009 a 'street' mural was commissioned and unveiled in December to celebrate HSE's role in creating safer, healthier workplaces and features people over the



*The Street mural in
Redgrave Court*

years who have contributed to this mission. The final panel of the triptych bears the Better...together brand as a permanent legacy. Other activities in 'the street' include a display of finalists in the HSE photo competition and enlargements of the top three entries were made to display in other parts of the building. Further artwork is being considered, possibly in collaboration with Sefton Council to display local art.

Seating

In order to soften the look and encourage staff to make better use of 'the street' people had suggested some soft seating. Clusters of sofas and tables are now situated down the length of this area and are regularly used along with the adjacent coffee area, 'the Deli', for both formal and informal meetings.

Sign-posting

Redgrave Court is a large building and some of the Better...together activity was simply about making it easier for people to find others who may be helpful to them. Name cards and desk numbers displayed on desks was a simple addition and done in house at little cost.

The Better...together team were able to work with HRD business partners to improve E-HR. Helping to improve the quality of information in E-HR and adding a photograph to the staff database all contributed to lowering the barriers between Directorates.

Band 1 conference

'Feedback clearly shows that staff want to be part of the solution' (Better...together team member)

The idea for a Band 1 conference came from the staff workshops and was put to the SMT at the end of July 2008 as 'an opportunity to invest more in our senior staff and help to generate commitment to work together towards real improvements'.

The first HSE wide Band 1 Conference was held in May 2009 with 75% attendance. Following this event 90% of delegates felt it should be held regularly with 70% saying it should be annual. There was an increased uptake in mentoring and management training following the event.



The guest speaker encouraging audience participation at the Band 1 conference

The second Band 1 conference took place in June 2010 and provided an opportunity to prepare for some of the difficult issues ahead and to speak openly with the SMT.

There was a clear commitment by many delegates to many of the Better...together behaviours. Some of the things they said they would do differently, for example, were:



Actively manage to all levels of staff a 'can do' approach that provides solutions

Re-focus on my role as 'ambassador' between my staff and senior management

Personally demonstrate the values/behaviours of a resilient organisation

Meet up with colleagues to take forward the resilient organisation

Communicate better with my staff on key corporate issues

Capturing and sharing good news and how we achieved it with others

HSE Live

'The place felt different, it wasn't just a jolly it was genuinely effective' (Manager, Redgrave Court)



The Street in Redgrave Court burst into life in October as HSE Live came to town. This two-day internal exhibition saw people from more than 30 different divisions taking part to showcase their work and the services they offer. There were plenty of fringe activities, too, designed to inform as well as entertain. So how did it all come about, and where do we go from here? **Heather Bolton** from the Better... Together Team was one of the driving forces behind HSE Live...

HSE goes Live!

When we merged the Bootle and London HQs, we knew it wasn't simply a matter of moving people into one building. Consulting with staff helped us identify a number of issues that would contribute to the establishment of our single HQ and help us develop a more collaborative, sharing organisation. We also wanted to look for ways to improve that collaboration right across the organisation.

Our own people often don't know the breadth of what we do, the skills and talents within HSE and the amazing wealth of knowledge across the organisation. A huge amount of time and effort can be saved by learning from other people's expertise. So we worked closely with colleagues in Communications Directorate, Human Resources and Business Services Division to pull the event together.

HSE Live was a chance for people to network, learn about other divisions and services, as well as have fun watching the results of the Lions' Den competition (a sort of staff suggestion scheme based on the *Dragon's Den* TV programme) and deciding on the winning for a mock health and safety trial, staged by the Legal Adviser's Office. Other activities included coffee/lunch with some of the Board members, as well as 'teach-ins' on e-HR, COIN and with the Online Team.

Colleagues in Analytical Services Division are now helping devise ways of measuring the impact of HSE Live, in conjunction with a brief intranet survey. We also received some fantastic feedback at the event itself.

The vast majority of people would like to see us run a similar event, and we're working on how that might look and who should be involved, before asking the Senior Management Team to consider our proposals. We're also considering ways to involve more people who don't work in Bootle. Paul Scollard (FOD Director in Scotland) has already adopted the Better... Together theme, and is holding a one-day event in Edinburgh during November (see next month's issue).

The online survey is still open, and we look forward to hearing from everyone who came along to HSE Live (see <http://www.bettertogether/hselive09.htm>).

And if you have any comments/suggestions for the Better... Together team, please get in touch via the 'better together' e-mail account.

It's a fact...

- There were 43 stalls staffed by hundreds of colleagues.
- More than 2,300 people had the opportunity to visit HSE Live over the two days.
- Sam Hepworth was probably the youngest contributor to the event. The nine-year-old son of Dawn (Work Environment, Radiation and Gas Division) and Colin (Infoline Support Team) prepared the word search that appeared on the back page of the Information Management Unit newsletter.
- Martyn Sime ('Gay Fawkes' on our front cover) and colleagues from Specialised Industries Division organised a 'penalty for the guy' and associated raffle to raise money for Help for Heroes (the final figure stands at £90.75). The prize – to go on an inspection with the specialised industries team of your choice – was won by Andy Oxley from Chemical Industries Strategy Unit, who'll be spending the day with colleagues from the Explosives Inspectorate.

Barbara Proctor
Information Management Unit
(e-Share)

Information, it can't be bettered. You get to know the people you work with a bit better at these kinds of events (often you pass the same colleagues day in, day out without really knowing what they do).

There's so much going on here. In fact, it could be a case of information overload, but if you're interested in working out specific information, it's perfect.

I haven't had a chance to get around to every stall, and the Knowledge Centre where I'm based has a pretty good overview, but I'll be looking to engage with some of those divisions I'm less familiar with.

Margaret Jones
Business Efficiency Unit
(IT Services)

I've really enjoyed looking at the scientific stalls, and I'm determined to have a go at some of the activities later. In my mind, they do the real health and safety stuff – it's so different from administration.

There are so many staff and divisions within HSE, it's hard to know what everyone does, so days like this are a perfect way to get some insight.

There's definitely scope to stage such an event again, and we should look into that. Events like these make us more visible, and that can only be a good thing.

Mark Lawton
Cross-Cutting Interventions
(Lorry Licensing) stall

HSE Live is a rare opportunity for us to literally see what's going on elsewhere and find out more about what all the people do here in Redgrave and beyond. It's a great chance to find out loads of interesting stuff and, besides, who can say 'no' to all the freebies?

I'd be disappointed if it was a one-off. Judging by the positive reactions of those attending today, something similar in the future would be welcomed, I feel.

I've personally liked the practical stalls such as the one with the model extraction booth and the disposable glove challenge – they've been great!

Jan Stocks
Visual Presentation Services stall
(Health and Safety Laboratory)

It's very important for parts of the organisation such as HSE Live to use events like this as a showcase to get their messages across.

I've particularly enjoyed the talks by Chief Scientific Adviser Patrick McDonald and Eddie Morland, our own Chief Exec, who both made very interesting contributions.

Now I'm just going to check out the stands. I can't wait – I've heard great things.

Andrea Wheale
Occupational Hygiene Unit

I think HSE Live is making others aware of important issues across the organisation, and definitely promotes closer working.

I really liked the interactive stalls, especially the operation game explaining the work of Corporate Medical Unit, and the vibration seat which imitates the conditions inside the cab of a digger or other construction vehicle.

They should think about running something like this every three years or so, but next time we could invite more of our partners from government and business.

HSE's internal magazine covers HSE Live

'The buzz in this building was amazing during those two days' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)



Working better...together starts with your own team!

HSE Live developed into a two-day internal trade fair organised by Better...together in collaboration with the Communications Directorate. Its objectives were:

- to broaden people's horizons of what HSE does on a day to day basis
- to provide opportunities for people to network
- to share ideas
- to build pride in the organisation on both an individual and corporate level.

Perhaps the highlight of the first phase of Better...together has been HSE Live. There had been a suggestion from the early workshops to hold an open day in Redgrave Court to bring people together in the new single HQ, create a sense of community and showcase some of the HSE's work.



On 14th/15th October 2009, 30 different divisions with 43 exhibition stands took part in HSE Live in 'the street' which was organised into different zones. The scientific zone, for example showed various experiments, technical expertise and ways of assessing risk.

Over half the stands had representatives attending from the regions. There were various fringe events organised with other Directorates to engage and inform people in a relaxed and humorous way, such as DVD showings of the Lions Den competition, communications workshops, IT and HR surgeries, 'You be the judge' mock trial sessions by the Legal Advisors Office, 'coffee with' various Board members and others. A barbeque was organised in the garden area and a share of the proceeds donated to a local charity.

An immediate story of knowledge sharing was the exhibition by HSL of a microdrone which is able to fly remotely into damaged buildings. This was seen by a manager from one of the Directorates and used immediately in an investigation where there had been an explosion in a factory. He hadn't previously known that this equipment was available through HSL.

A maximum of £50 per stand was allocated for promotional items. This generated a huge amount of creativity, competitiveness and fun from shooting galleries to small things to give away. People generally express amazement at



the creativity of the displays and ways in which the various stalls engaged their audiences. *'It was just an eye opener to see the range of things that go on and the expertise in the organisation'.*

In an on-line evaluation of the event, 89% agreed they had learned



something new about HSE and open questions showed that people had learned a lot about the various IT systems, made new connections and found it enjoyable. For the new starters it was immensely helpful and there was a clear demonstration of cross-directorate collaboration in both organising and delivering the event.



Lions Den and Creative Solutions

'Very imaginative yet achieving a great business outcome. I would hope that it shows that it isn't too scary to put suggestions forward' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)



Members of HSE's Senior Management Team were 'the Lions'



A member of HSE's Board talks informally to a group of staff

Lions Den was developed as part of HSE Live but was an initiative to revive and stimulate the staff suggestion scheme, 'Creative Solutions', which had been little used since its launch. Submissions were invited to be put to the Lions Den (based on the well known Dragons Den TV series). Finalists from across HSE were invited to be filmed in the well-suited Redgrave Court basement, for a DVD which was shown several times during HSE Live and then put on the Intranet. Thirty four ideas were generated for improvements across HSE and each was considered by a senior manager. Some have already been implemented such as the resolution of a long-standing issue with evidence bags resulting in savings on cost and waste and change to an ICC account resulting in greater efficiency for a regional team. The Better...together team are now supporting a review of Creative Solutions to stimulate innovation.



Masterclasses

A new series of master classes was launched in April 2010, the first of which was hosted by the London FOD Construction Division. The event entitled 'Getting the HSE message across to hard to reach groups' is an example of the relevance of sharing learning across the organisation. The masterclasses are designed to complement the more formal learning and development activities and help to build on feedback from the liP reassessment on communications and development issues.

Phase 2 – 'collaborate and innovate'

'It is important that we take advantage of the different parts of an organisation like HSE, we get to know and trust each other, and we get to improve things' (Regional manager)

In September 2009 the SMT agreed new governance arrangements for Better...together following the closure of HWWW. It was agreed that a small working group comprising the Better...together Programme Director and Directors of CD and HR would continue to meet every two to three months to oversee progress, with the Programme Director updating the CE regularly. The SMT also agreed further funding until March 2011.

Phase 2 "Collaborate and Innovate" was officially launched at the second Band 1 Conference in June 2010 to maintain momentum generated in Phase 1. The second phase is about embedding the new behaviours that have started to emerge and actually doing things differently. For the team it also means planning an exit strategy before the baton is eventually handed over to the Communications Directorate, HR and general line management.

Better...together has continued to evolve using regular temperature checks through surveys and informal feedback. The results of the HSE-wide People Survey published earlier in the year have given them further data to work with and identify new areas of focus, developing a work plan using the results.

The business environment is also an important backdrop for activity and the team recognised that they needed to stimulate innovation to help HSE meet the challenges that lie ahead for all public sector organisations. New initiatives include the staff suggestion scheme.

Creative solutions

'It's not just about money, it's about making the organisation a better place to work' (Senior manager)

The Better...together team, along with the Business Efficiency Unit, are taking forward a review of Creative Solutions, the current staff suggestion scheme. Creative Solutions has been a good example of how change has been stimulated from doing something differently in Lions' Den and harnessing that energy to find a simpler and more efficient solution for the future.

The aim is to develop a different approach for involving and engaging staff, with a view to launching a new scheme that is relevant and effective.

To ensure buy-in from the top down, the team held an open forum with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive together with senior managers to discuss and suggest what needs to be done differently.

The government spending review has added a further challenge and the aim is initially to engage the senior forum in considering early ideas for helping HSE cope in this age of austerity and to gather ideas for how to engage staff through the difficult times ahead.

From this feedback the team will start to develop ideas for a new staff suggestion scheme.

The government spending review has added a further challenge that people may feel they are asked to make suggestions which might ultimately reduce jobs. It helps that the Better...together team are 'well-tuned' in to the organisation, understand these pressures and can adapt how they communicate.

Legacy

'Legacies in the Civil Service disappear very quickly' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)

'It should be retained within the culture of the organisation and that starts at the top and cascades through all the management chain who have responsibility to encourage people working better together and reminding staff constantly of that' (Senior manager, Redgrave Court)

In March 2011 the Better...together team will disband and go on to other roles and have asked the SMT to consider how the legacy might be maintained. The team has suggested the continuation of various activities:

- Retaining the Better...together brand to break the perception that improvement programmes have a short life and no lasting benefit. At the same time it would send a strong message about the SMT's commitment to change
- An annual Band 1 Conference
- Senior management coffee and cake events, master classes and working with sessions
- Seasonal thank you events in Redgrave Court and regionally
- The new staff suggestion scheme.

All of these activities had received excellent feedback and feel well established and were also recognised positively in the liP assessment and the HWWW programme evaluation.

People generally express concern that the benefits will fade once the Better...together programme is closed. Above all people fear that there will not be the time, funding or indeed the skill and understanding to take it forward. The loss of the brand is an additional concern as people have identified strongly with the brand and the team.

People have already started to suggest ways of reducing costs. For example the 'coffee and cake' sessions were so popular that they would remain so even without the coffee and the cake, using staff's own lunch hour.

Embedding through the line

*'I have built into my own performance agreement the requirement to communicate and engage better with staff and others in the organisation'.
(Regional manager)*

As in many organisations, no matter how committed the SMT are, it is the managers both in the field and in Bootle who will have to really embody Better...together in order to carry it forwards.

The Band 1 conference has been an important vehicle to engage managers with the Better...together message and it is significant that Phase 2 was launched at their second conference.

The regions

'The concept goes all the way down to the local level and can be used locally as well as the national level' (Regional Manager)

While Better...together's original focus was the single HQ at Redgrave Court, it is acknowledged that it is easy for the organisation to be seen as Bootle-centric although half of the organisation is based elsewhere. Bootle also feels geographically remote to many of the field offices. From the regional perspective it is important that people don't see Redgrave Court as irrelevant and a senior regional manager believes it is imperative that Better...together shouldn't create a gulf.

There have been suggestions that there should be more 'road' events but cost is an issue. Where possible Better...together has tried to be inclusive but as travel budgets are likely to get even tighter this will need more creativity.

Better...together has inevitably received a few negative comments from the regions about non-inclusion or the lack of opportunity to engage. These have been discussed with Directors of HR and Communications and with FOD and HID to identify ways to extend the reach and benefits of Better...together. Ready solutions are difficult to find with constraints of travel, location, local infrastructure to cope with regional events. The Band 1 senior management group is also being enlisted to find ways to generate positive activity in the regions.

Localisation

'There are now regular days when people get together across disciplines and simply talk across grades and activities about the key issues as an open forum between inspectors, admin and others to work better together' (Regional manager)

Scotland has already held its own Better...together event to bring people from all the Scottish regions to learn about each others' work. The Better...together branding and publicity material was helpful in engaging people with the event and has built on the learning from HSE Live.

In the South East the Better...together concept has been 'localised' to allow people across the region to share and understand issues. There are also variations on this type of meeting across the S East such as forums for people to raise concerns, women's network and the Head of Operations sees a place for a similar format dealing with well being for all staff. Staff are also encouraged to share learning by giving lunchtime seminars about their work.

Evidence and evaluation

Better...together activity has been guided by:

- supporting the cultural vision
- its own principles of involvement
- data gathering from staff and continual feedback and evaluation of activities

The continual feedback has helped Better...together remain relevant and build on its early successes rather than just repeat what has worked well. While both formal

and informal feedback and engagement in the activities indicated that Better...together was having a positive impact, the team felt that genuine culture change would require at least another two years to achieve.

The Intranet evaluation of HSE Live and the more detailed study carried out by CSAG provides strong evidence of collaborative working between directorates and that the event delivered a sense of pride in HSE's work.

Value for money

'Better...together seemed 'a small investment' for a lot of benefit' (Manager, Redgrave Court)

Better...together was not allocated its own budget and has been funded mostly through other directorates such as Communications, BSD and HRD. This has meant that the team have had to negotiate and demonstrate need and value for these directorates although behaviour change is difficult to measure.

Certain initiatives were more time intensive than others and some staff questioned the opportunity costs incurred by HSE live. Again some also question whether it is politically acceptable to spend money on another Band 1 event.

At the same time it is recognised that behaviour change requires a long term investment to sustain any gains and that simply re-locating people into a single HQ had not on its own prevented the silo mentality from persisting.

The Chair, Judith Hackitt, believes that it was both '*essential and enormously valuable given the amount of change*', enabling people to buy into organisational strategy and developing trust with senior managers and a sense of belonging.

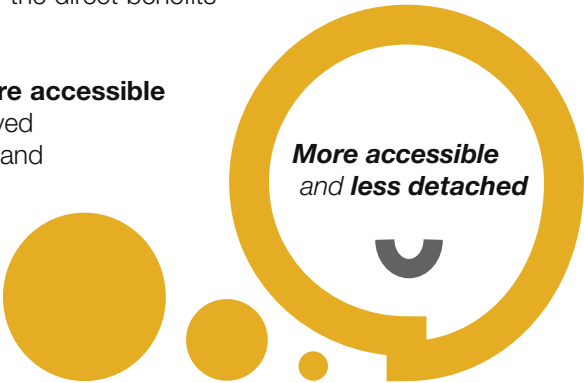
Another senior manager believes its contribution is to 'quality and innovation' rather than 'efficiency' but this has been less easy to quantify and audit.

Benefits

'Better...together has never been 'over-sold'. It has been in tune with networks and worked where there is a pull.' (Manager, Redgrave Court)


It is recognised that there are many factors contributing to behaviour change. Impact has to be understood from the organisation's own starting point. Nevertheless HSE's Chair, Judith Hackitt believes that Better...together has played its part in contributing to the improvement in staff commitment and job satisfaction since the last People Survey. Some of the direct benefits identified by staff are:

- Senior managers are seen as **more accessible** and **less detached**. People enjoyed learning about their backgrounds and particularly valued their giving time to talk to groups in an entertaining but honest and informative way. It also changed perceptions about some individuals.



**More accessible
and less detached**

- It has **promoted leadership** further down the organisation. The Band 1 conference was an opportunity to bring together a large group of managers to network, share the same corporate messages and realise that they also have an important leadership role. They were asked in turn to share messages with their own teams.
- **Networking** is now seen not only as nice thing to do to get to know other people but as a vital activity for sharing learning and resources. People who do not enjoy mixing still get the chance to hear about sessions through others in their team.



Buiding bridges
'humanise the organisation'

- Better...together activities gave people tools and innovative ways of **building bridges**, some of which they could replicate in smaller ways. It has also introduced a sense of humour and helped to *'humanise the organisation'*.

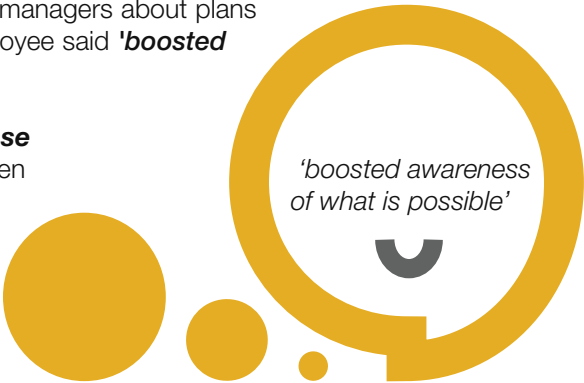
- Better...together has started to **break down barriers** while acknowledging there can be sensitivities when suggestions stray into departmental territory. It has done this by involving the people concerned and enabling them to become part of the solution.

- It has helped to **build confidence** and self esteem in those who took part in HSE live or the coffee and cake events. One presenter felt that delivering a session encouraged him to rethink his own role and the value of his team to others and receiving feedback was very valuable.

- **Innovation** has been encouraged in a creative way through Lions Den and there is now energy behind finding a staff suggestion scheme that works.

- People heard directly from senior managers about plans for the future, which, as one employee said *'boosted awareness of what is possible'*.

- Better...together promoted *'a sense of belonging'* which has now been built into a proposed new on-line strategy. This aims to promote vibrant on-line work and non-work related communities which will encourage a sense of belonging for all parts of HSE.



'boosted awareness of what is possible'

- **Practical learning** was encouraged through technology sessions. It generated interest and better use of IT systems particularly TRIM and COIN. On-line service teams reported an increase in inquiries following HSE Live and were able to monitor attendance and people subsequently getting in touch.
- It **boosted morale** in a time of change, generating a sense of real interest and pride. The HSE Live event surprised many for its breadth and depth in showcasing the work of HSE. The 'buzz' described in the building *'made the place feel different'* and was described as *'genuinely effective'*. The staff survey results are now starting to show the impact of Better...together.



■ Better...together activities provided an **excellent induction** for new staff. Over 200 joined HSE from various backgrounds because of the move to a single HQ. HSE Live, in particular, was an ideal opportunity for them to get an overview of what other parts of the organisation did and meet new colleagues.

■ The Better...together brand has the potential to be an enduring legacy and people recognised that this would be a positive achievement as they feel that in the Civil Service things are quickly forgotten.

Better...together in tough times

'The message should be that we are keeping the best but not being profligate' (Senior manager, Redgrave Court)

'I hope it doesn't go the way of everything else in HSE where it goes for so long then at the first sign of trouble its gone and all that good work is lost' (Staff member, Redgrave Court)

There is concern that the spending review will 'cause people to retrench' and go back to old behaviours but most feel that motivation and resilience will be even more important for the future.

The feeling at Redgrave Court is that the organisation is now better placed to go into uncertain times than it was a few years ago. The Chair, Judith Hackitt, believes that people understand better the contributions of various parts of the organisation and also have more confidence in the leadership to fight their corner. The SMT is fully committed to Better...together and ensuring that it becomes strongly embedded as business as usual.

The challenge is to sustain those benefits. People expressed concern about presentational issues of seeming to spend money on events and time networking and this will need re-affirming by senior managers. Opinion is divided, for example, as to whether the Band 1 conferences should continue in order to manage staff perceptions of unnecessary expense. Others believe that the commitment to leadership is vital and that investment in this group is central to engaging HSE as a whole in Better...together behaviours.

At the same time there is a recognition that the Better...together initiative will need to be refreshed and taken forward in different ways. For those who have seen it as more than just a programme of events, the essence has been to challenge and innovate. It was designed to respond to a changing environment which has itself changed significantly since the launch of HWWW. While the brand has the potential to provide a sense of continuity its objectives have developed over the two phases of the programme and should continue to do so against a background of what is affordable.

Promoting well being

'We should not be 'hair-shirted' about allowing small local events to promote well being and communication as that will be a critical thing for us as an organisation. We need to keep communicating and talking and keep the well being of our staff at the forefront' (Regional manager)

One senior manager believes that over the next five years a key role for Better...together will be in promoting staff well being during a difficult time. He feels that staff will be able to cope better if they are well looked after and feel valued.

Summary

It is recognised that Better...together is only one of a number of activities and changes that have contributed to the cultural development at HSE. Others include the HWWW Programme, the development of the single HQ, movement of senior staff into Redgrave Court, the launch of the new Strategy, various organisational and structural changes, improved learning and development/leadership training provision and changes in the structure and management of the SMT.

The strengths of Better...together have been that it has been built around staff concerns and suggestions and recognises *'that the whole person comes to work'*. It has used 'pull' techniques rather than 'push' and recognised that where there is no energy or enthusiasm change is less likely to be sustainable, which is important feedback in itself. They have, therefore, made use of 'quick wins' to build support and confidence for the bigger challenges.

It is a programme that has taken risks: would people come to the events?; doing things that couldn't be done because of rules that people couldn't remember the origin of; that success couldn't be guaranteed in advance; that things might be seen to cost too much; or that expectations would be raised too high. By doing so they have demonstrated a 'can do' approach which has surprised many in the organisation. Having the CE's support has undoubtedly opened doors but the team's persistence has also been important.

The team are aware that the journey is not over and that there are blockers in every organisation. The message that something is different and that they are a team that delivers quality results, however, is spreading and they have already been contacted by another organisation undertaking a similar move that is keen to learn more about Better...together.

It is hoped that the legacy in HSE will be as strong and individuals will feel that it is their responsibility to make things happen and continue to build the HQ they aspire to. Better...together has provided tools and techniques, some of which are inexpensive and others which are more ambitious. Above all it has shown what is possible when people are prepared to work with colleagues to try something new.