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**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

**HSE - Workplace Health Expert Committee (WHEC) On-Line 'Free' Seminar – 'Work Related Suicide, An Evidence Review'**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Chief Scientific Advisor has informed the CWU Health, Safety and Environment Department of an on-line 'free' to attend seminar – organised by the HSE's Workplace Health Expert Committee (WHEC) on the subject of 'Work Related Suicide, An Evidence Review.' HSE invite CWU Representatives to join this lunchtime seminar to hear two of the authors discuss the findings of the WHEC Evidence Review on Work Related Suicide.

**The seminar will take place online on Wednesday 16 November 2022, 1pm – 2pm.**

**Seminar Speakers:**

**Dr. Emma Donaldson-Feilder** is a Registered Occupational Psychologist with a particular focus on the role of leadership and line management on employee health and wellbeing, who aims to support the development of kinder, wiser workplaces, with more relational leadership and people management, and improved employee health and wellbeing. Emma is a founding director of Affinity Health at Work, a niche research and consultancy provider, using an evidence-based approach to help employers and managers improve employee health, wellbeing and engagement. Emma has been a member of WHEC since it was created in 2015.

**Dr. Paul Litchfield** CBE FRCP FFOM is a British physician. He is Independent Chief Medical Adviser to ITV & Compass Group and visiting Professor to Coventry University. Paul was Chief Medical Officer for BT Group plc from 2001 to 2018. He reviewed the Work Capability Assessment run by Atos for the Department for Work and Pensions in 2013 and 2014 and he is an advisor to the UK Government on the relationship between mental ill-health, absence from work and the take up of out-of-work sickness benefits. He was awarded the OBE in 2007. In 2018 he was created a CBE for services to workplace wellbeing.

The HSE Workplace Health Expert Committee (WHEC) was asked to consider the occupational factors that may contribute to the risk of work-related suicide.

**The HSE WHEC found that;**

*Suicide risk varies strongly between occupational groups in the UK, with the highest risks chiefly in workers in low skilled, and some skilled, positions. The likely links between suicide*

*and these occupations are precarious employment with episodes of unemployment, a largely male workforce, relatively high incidence of workplace accidents and lack of consistent social support. High rates of alcohol and drug misuse are also associated with increased risk of suicide.*

*In the UK, there are no systematic methods of taking an overview of employee suicides in an organisation or workplace. It would be beneficial to establish a way of recording instances of suicide where the contribution made by work may have been material. The HSE WHEC recommends that HSE consider whether the existing Memorandum of Understanding with the Chief Coroner of England and Wales, together with a similar arrangement with Scotland, could provide the basis for acquiring such information.*

*"While there are clear differences in risks of suicide between occupational groups in the UK, current means to identify high risk organisations and workplaces are weak."*

**The Full HSE WHEC Evidence Review paper is available here:**

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/research/assets/docs/work-related-suicide.pdf>

**Register for the free HSE WHEC seminar here:**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/seminar-by-whec-work-related-suicides-an-evidence-review-tickets-439654748187>

### **HSE WHEC history;**

The HSE formed the WHEC to provide independent expert advice on:

- new and emerging workplace health issues
- new and emerging evidence relating to existing workplace health issues
- the quality and relevance of the evidence base on workplace health issues

The HSE Board decided it is important that HSE's work is built on sound science and informed by the best available evidence. To this end, HSE appointed the Workplace Health Expert Committee (WHEC) to provide independent, authoritative, impartial and timely expertise on workplace health.

WHEC is a scientific and medical expert committee whose purpose is to consider the evidence linking workplace hazards to ill health. Working under the leadership of an independent expert Chair, it considers chemical and physical hazards, and human, behavioural or organisational factors in the workplace (for example shift work) leading to physiological and psychological ill health. It does not consider wellbeing, sickness absence management or rehabilitation as these issues are dealt with elsewhere in Government. Nor is it able to consider individual cases of ill health.

WHEC will assess the evidence base concerning health issues within its remit and will seek to effectively and appropriately communicate the resultant health risk.

The Committee membership is as follows:

- Chair: Professor Sir Anthony Newman-Taylor
- Professor Peter Buckle
- Professor John Cherrie
- Professor Paul Cullinan
- Dr. Emma Donaldson-Feilder

- Professor Len Levy
- Professor Martie van Tongeren
- Dr. Joanna Wilde
- Dr. Paul Litchfield

WHEC's reports cover evidence reviews and position papers giving their independent expert opinion on key topics for workplace health. The contents of WHEC reports, including any opinions and/or conclusions expressed, are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect HSE policy.

**For further information:**



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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Joyce', written over a light blue horizontal line.

**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**