

### SEEDA Social Dialogue Forum

11 June 2007

1. The membership of the Social Dialogue Forum (SDF) includes representatives from employer and employee organisations. By generating dialogue between senior trade unionists and employers, the SDF offers a unique perspective on a broad range of regional issues and can contribute to the development of SEEDA's policy and effective delivery of its programme of work.
2. SEEDA is committed to promoting flexible working as part of its 'smart growth' agenda and to help deliver the Regional Economic Strategy (RES); similarly, flexible working is important to delivering the South East Plan's priorities. To help deliver this agenda, the SDF has proposed developing a small toolkit for South East businesses. The toolkit will feature examples from a range of perspectives, including small and large enterprises and the public and private sector, and will consider the benefits for both employers and employees. Implementing flexible working requires cultural change and changes to management techniques; the toolkit will recognise the need to support managers. The delivery of Work Wise in the South East is being developed; four partners have so far been identified (BT, Regional Assembly, NHS South East and SEEDA). The importance of union representation to reflect the employee perspective was highlighted.
3. The RES recognises the links between well-being and the workplace. NHS partners worked closely with SEEDA in the development of the RES and, similarly, SEEDA helped NHS and public health colleagues to develop the 'employment and health' theme in the new draft Regional Health Strategy. The Regional Health Strategy proposes a healthy workplace code to encourage employers to improve health in the workplace. Some members suggested that partners should work to strengthen the validity of existing standards rather than developing new ones. A number of good examples, including BT's Work Fit programme, already exist to demonstrate the benefit of promoting workplace health.
4. Robert Nolan, SEEDA's Head of Policy, gave a presentation on the twelve-week RES Implementation Plan consultation. The consultation will agree lead partners' roles and responsibilities; identify suitable milestones to monitor progress; and identify how partners will integrate activities into their business and corporate planning cycles. The agreed Implementation Plan will be published at SEEDA's annual open public meeting in October, along with an evaluation of progress in the first year. SEEDA and the Assembly continue to work towards a joint Regional Delivery Plan for the RES and Plan.
5. The SDF agreed their 2007/08 business plan, which focuses on three key activities:
  - Enabling employer/employee representatives to make an effective contribution to regional policy development and delivery;
  - Identify good practice in workforce management and ensure it is effectively disseminated to an appropriate audience;
  - Acting as a catalyst for the development of innovative pilot projects which address needs identified in the RES

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