

HSE pushes rehab and sickness action

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) is urging manufacturing firms to take action on sickness absence and rehabilitation. HSE's Terry Aston said: "Long-term sickness absence costs UK businesses over £3.8 billion each year. Organisations that have implemented effective management programmes have reaped huge rewards in terms of having a healthy workforce, reducing costs, improving competitiveness, improving workplace relationships and holding on to valued staff." He added that one company "reduced musculoskeletal disorders by 90 per cent and through that, saved not only considerable human suffering, but also £0.5 million in the first year of their programme alone. Other businesses can learn from this experience." This example will be featured at an HSE 'best practice' conference in March. HSE says the event is aimed at "key intermediaries involved in manufacturing industries, such as trade associations, employer associations, trade unions and training organisations." Unions have urged companies to provide supportive sickness absence approaches combined with effective prevention and rehabilitation efforts. They have warned, however, that punitive sickness absence approaches to hound workers back to work are damaging and counterproductive ([Risks 189](#)).

- [HSE news release](#) and [sickness absence webpages](#). HSE conference, 9 March 2006, North Staffordshire Medical Institute, Hartshill Road, Stoke-On-Trent. Organisations and individuals interested in attending should forward their details, including the organisation they represent to: [Tracey Oliva](#), HSE, Manufacturing Sector (Stakeholder Engagement Section), Lyme Vale Court, Parklands Business Park, Newcastle Road, Trent Vale, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 6NW. Telephone 01782 602340.