



South Cumbria &
North Lancashire Branch

Joint meeting 19th June 2020



South Cumbria Occupational
Health & Safety Group

Venue: Zoom meeting

Topic: *Corvid-19: Work Management Question Time*

Chair: Elsa Mason, Director, *DMA Safety Management Ltd* (Inspire Safety)

PANEL:

Carol Stearne CFIOSH, BAE Systems, Preston

Gary McAteer, Safety Advisor, Management Control & Oversight of Contractors & Leaseholders, *Sellafield Sites Ltd*, and Consultant, *Energy Coast Safety Health and Environmental* –

Dave Wilson, HSQE Manager, *Playdale Playgrounds Ltd*, Haverthwaite.

After welcoming attendees to the joint meeting of *South Cumbria & North Lancashire IOSH Branch* and *South Cumbria Occupational Health & Safety Group* Elsa explained that the session would start with a brief introduction from each panel member followed by a mixture of questions that had been submitted before the meeting and questions typed into the chat panel by members during the meeting. She then introduced Carol.

Carol summarised some key Corvid-19 risk assessment requirements and possible control measures covering employees and workplaces. She also highlighted the need for employee induction training for the ‘new normal’ and to have protocols for managing contractors on site.

Elsa then asked Dave to give a summary of his work experience since the beginning of lockdown. Dave explained that he worked for *Playdale*, a SME with 105 employees on three sites, who manufacture and install children’s playground equipment. He said that their customer base includes more than 50 countries as well as the UK.

He explained that, after lockdown, *Playdale*’s orders ‘dried up’ and customers’ sites closed. The factory was mothballed and 95 staff, including him, were furloughed within a few days. Ten staff remained at work multi-tasking. On the 11 May 2020, the factory reopened with 70% output and by the 19 June 2020 60% of employees are back at work, including producing *Play Clean* - an innovative automatic outdoor hand sanitiser station that was designed and developed in four weeks.

He then summarised the Corvid-19 protocols that he and the management team had needed to develop including – Corvid-19 Risk Assessments , Safe Systems of Work, First Aid protocols, physical distancing, mental health and wellbeing on furlough and communication. He stressed that he thought that good communication was the key to implementing new procedures successfully and in maintaining staff morale.

Elsa then asked Dave the following question that was typed into the chat column:

“...I note Dave has furloughed some but not all staff. Are there any issues with perhaps jealousy amongst those who kept working while others had an extended holiday, mostly in very good weather, and conversely have some of those furloughed perhaps had issues of spending so much time locked in with partners, creating strain in relationships?...”

Dave agreed that as Phil suggested staff had had different reactions to being furloughed – some loved it, some were worried that they might lose their jobs. He reiterated that the best

way to deal with these problems was through communication such as WhatsApp Groups, regular management contacts and information about what was likely to happen.

Elsa then asked Gary to give his short presentation before posing further questions for the panel to discuss. Gary explained he was Safety Advisor, Management Control & Oversight of Contractors & Leaseholders, *Sellafield Sites Ltd*. He said that before lockdown the Sellafield site had 10,000 direct employees on site, 2,000 employed in satellite offices and up to 5,000 contractors whereas during lockdown this was reduced to 1,000 direct employees on site, minimal (10s) in the satellite offices and 200 contractors.

He explained that the changes in working practices led to some significant challenges due to: the size of the site, car sharing protocols, use of public transport, reorganisation of site internal site transport, the need to maintain Nuclear Safety, and new build safety, balancing the legal safety requirements with Covid-19 requirements, security protocols, managing home working, managing annual leave and managing a wide range of staff worries. He then looked at the problems facing SMEs including managing furloughed workers, an orderly return to work, redundant workers, cross border workers and the role of health and safety consultants during these strange times.

Elsa then put some of the attendees' questions to the panellists that led to some interesting discussions amongst the panellists and in the Zoom chat panel. Topics discussed included communication, managing home workers, managing potential resentments between furloughed workers whose pay was made up to 100% and those employees who were expected to carry on working for the same amount of pay. The impact of home working on employees, especially women, who are also home schooling their children.

Elsa then thanked our three panel members Carol, David and Gary for their contributions, as well as Zoom attendees, who had asked some worthwhile questions and generated some interesting discussions with the panel and in the chat panel.

Related HSE web site links:

Coronavirus Covid-19 latest information and advice:

https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/index.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_content=home-page-banner

Risk assessment – working safely: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/risk-assessment.htm>

Protecting home workers: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm>

Cleaning and hygiene: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/cleaning.htm>

Social distancing in the workplace: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/social-distancing/index.htm>