

**PLUMBING AND HEATING INDUSTRY ALLIANCE
KEY ISSUES DOCUMENT 2004/2005**

AIMS OF THE PLUMBING AND HEATING INDUSTRY ALLIANCE

Supporting the activities of and facilitating co-operation amongst the plumbing and domestic heating industry organisations in:

- 0 To act as a representative organisation for the plumbing and heating industry, providing a forum for the co-operation and formulation of strategic policy.
- 0 To provide a mechanism for the plumbing and domestic heating industry organisations to respond to government initiatives and other issues with a single voice.
- 0 To develop industry wide initiatives that seek to raise the image and status of the Industry

To facilitate co-operation between existing industry organisations to improve the efficiency of the Industry.

The Alliance is unique in that it covers all aspects of the Supply Chain ie: Manufacturers, Suppliers, Professional Institutes, Research, Installers, Water Authorities, the Unions, Government and other related organisations.

Through this wide and diverse membership, the Alliance has the opportunity to reach many of the SME organisations within the sector.

The five active Working Groups have the following terms of reference:

1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

“To promote recruitment and address skills shortages in the plumbing and heating industry”

2. INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

“To consider all aspects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its impact on the plumbing and heating industry with particular regard to the Internet, www wireless applications and the IT training of personnel in order that the plumbing and heating industry can improve its efficiency and effectiveness and image for the benefit of both the industry and public”.

3. IMAGE AND PROMOTION

“To consider all aspects of the image and promotion of the plumbing and heating industry with particular regard to consumer’s perception in order that the industry’s image can be firmly positive and the status raised to the material benefit of the public and the industry

4. REPRESENTATION TO GOVERNMENT

“To provide a means by which the PHIA can respond to Government issues and also to provide a vehicle to lobby Government on the Alliance’s Key Issues in a practical, effective and speedy process”.

5. SUPPLY CHAIN

“To act as a sounding board representing the whole industry; to facilitate communication of matters affecting the whole supply chain and to design and implement the process of communication”.

August 2004.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Big books and CD Rom for primary school (key stages one and two) pupils

Launched in February 2003, these provide very basic involvement in plumbing and heating through characters Peter the Plumber and Hanif the Fitter. A second reprint is being arranged.

StudyCard project for secondary schools

These were distributed to 5000 secondary schools and encouraged pupils to undertake a school project involving some form of heating and/or plumbing. This was an endeavour to create a link with business and encourage recruitment by this award scheme. The first winners were both girls. This project is currently being revised for re-issue.

Work experience programme and CD Rom

A learning programme for 14-16 year olds to provide support for the Careers Service and schools in promoting an exciting hands on experience of working in the sector. So far 142 colleges are participating.

Formation of the All Party Parliamentary Plumbing and Heating Industry Group

Formed in November 2003. John Cryer MP for Hornchurch is Chairman and Sir Teddy Taylor MP for Rochford and Southend is Secretary.

A number of well supported meetings with members from both houses have been arranged including a recent meeting with the Skills Minister Ivan Lewis MP.

Establishment of the PHIA Website: www.phia.org.uk

Publication and advice of the “Sale and Supply of Goods to Consumer Regulations 2002”

This document produced by the Supply Chain task group has been approved by the DTI and has a foreword by Nigel Griffiths MP the Construction Minister.

Adoption of Lifelong Learning Logo: “THERE’S ALWAYS MORE TO LEARN”

Adoption of report on “Barriers to Recruitment”

Articles on IT and formation of Computer Helpline

Regular press releases

These have included, “Who can you trust?”, “Consumer Regulations” and “No fast track plumbing training”

Creation of Key Issues document

Representation on the Small Firms Advisory Group of the HSE

These eight priority Key issue subjects provide a “Hymn Sheet’ for members to respond to the issues that affect them. They have been produced by the Working and Task groups responsible for action and development.

These groups and the executive are the “Engine rooms” of the Alliance and allow an action agenda.

KEY ISSUE 1

TRAINING FOR MATURE ENTRANT STUDENTS

(Education and Training Working Group)

KEY POINTS

Following a period in which significant skill shortages were reported in many parts of the sector, there has been an increase in interest in training for older applicants including those seeking a career change.

In addition, there has been an increase in the number of organisations offering short training courses for adults. Whilst superficially such commercial courses might appear attractive to older entrants (as they are generally shorter than more traditional training routes) few of them will lead to achievement of a recognised industry qualification.

There is still a general lack of clarity nationwide and considerable regional variations about the support available from public funding bodies.

Employers interested in training mature people frequently find the cost is greater than is the case for school leavers.

ACTION

Continue to lobby National Government and the devolved administrations to seek further improvements in the level of funding support to help older entrants achieve N/SVQ level 2 and 3 qualifications.

Co-ordinate an awareness campaign warning individuals of the dangers of undertaking training courses which do not lead to the achievement of an appropriate recognised industry qualification and seek to ensure that public funding is not directed towards such courses.

Co-operate with partner organisations, including SummitSkills to promote a clear and consistent message on these issues.

CONTACTS

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KEY ISSUE 2

ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS TO RECRUIT TRAINEES AND APPRENTICES

(Education and Training Working Group)

“THE PLUMBING AND HEATING INDUSTRY OFFERS A VARIETY OF CAREER PATHWAYS FOR TRAINEES TO ASPIRE TO BEYOND THE BASIC CRAFT SKILL”

KEY POINTS

The very essence of training at all levels is to provide practical experience on site. Recently, colleges have provided training courses to completion with trainees unable to find employment.

One barrier to taking on trainees is a perception that it is costly to do so and in some cases a concern when training is completed that trainees leave and take up employment with competitors – many of whom do not train.

The lack of provision of legitimate site experience and the need for placements is likely to act as a deterrent to the more able and encourage the unscrupulous to add to the cowboy army.

ACTION

Promote the fact that “The Plumbing and Heating Industry offers a variety of career pathways beyond basic craft skills to which trainees can aspire

Identify the measures currently being undertaken by PHIA member bodies in the area of training and the funding of training.

Through SummitSkills promote a better understanding between colleges and employers of the industry’s skill needs.

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KEY ISSUE 3

IDENTIFY COMMON AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(Education and Training Working Group)

KEY POINTS

Education and training remains a key and priority issue for the sector and there is still considerable confusion over issues such as grants, courses, trainees, diversity of employment, funding (and the inadequacy of it) and career pathways.

The PHIA believes that all parts of the sector must play an active part in providing clarity on these issues so that there is better understanding of the industry's needs and requirements both within the industry and within primary and secondary education, careers, and further and higher education systems.

The Alliance wishes to see a significant reduction in duplication of effort and fragmentation.

ACTION

Co-operate with all appropriate bodies, including SummitSkills, (the Sector Skills Council for building services engineering), to seek ways of improving awareness and reducing confusion/duplication which currently exists.

Seek partnership activities with organisations at all levels of the supply chain to improve awareness of education and training issues.

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KEY ISSUE 4

CAMPAIGN FOR FISCAL INCENTIVES TO STIMULATE BUSINESS ACTIVITY

(Representation to Government Working Group)

KEY POINTS

The Alliance believes that:

1. The 17.5% current VAT levy is encouraging the growth of the black economy and the problems associated with “Rogue Traders”.
2. The imposition of the current level of VAT on repair, maintenance and improvement is not stimulating actions to promote the use of sustainable systems, materials and practices.
3. The current level of VAT is constraining housing supply and regeneration from the existing stock.

Measures undertaken in some other European countries have achieved such reform.

ACTION

Co-operate with the newly formed Federation of Master Builders’ VAT “Coalition Group” comprising such organisations as English Heritage, Civic Trust, RIBA, RICS, CABE, CPA, Trading Standards Institute and the NHIC.

Promote the case across all political parties in the build up to the impending general Election

Continue actively to lobby the Treasury and the DTI over the case for a reduction in VAT.

Actively to support the initiatives of the member bodies.

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KEY ISSUE 5

RESPOND TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND RELATED LEGISLATION

(Image and Promotion Working Group)
(Representation to Government Working Group)

KEY POINTS

The UK is committed to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases and to the efficient use of water resources.

Responsibility rests with the end user, but the plumbing and heating sector can make a significant contribution by:

- Complying with appropriate Regulations and Legislation e.g. Gas Safety Regulations, Water Regulations and Building Regulations
- Ensuring that knowledge and skills are delivered through training and assessment
- Providing guidance to the industry and offering services to end users to achieve these environmental requirements

There is also a growing amount of environmental legislation and regulation that members need to be aware of such headings as:

- Fly-tipping, Dangerous Materials, Discharges and Waste

ACTION

- Encourage Alliance Members to support statutory and voluntary issues in this area
- Seek Government support to re-define “competent persons” as required in the UK regulations relating to environmental issues and encourage industry support.
- Ensure comprehensive and positive communications are available to Alliance Members and encourage dissemination throughout the supply chain
- Recognise the value of improving knowledge and skills, and actively promote the provision of specific training throughout the sector

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KEY ISSUE 6

CAMPAIGN AGAINST 'ROGUE TRADERS' AND PROMOTE SERVICES OF ALLIANCE MEMBERS

(Image and promotion Working Group)

KEY POINTS

Articles in the press and television programmes have drawn public attention to the rogue and unscrupulous element in the industry and to certain organisations that are little more than a sham and a façade, often giving members of the public a false sense of security.

ACTION

The current media interest in such matters should be turned into opportunities to promote skilled and experienced businesses and operatives employed in the industry, and to positively inform the public how to avoid the rogue elements.

- Talk to media writers and programme makers to get our positive message across. Obtain air time after such programmes to respond positively
- Promote schemes which provide consumer assurance and inspire confidence
- Support Government and Industry initiatives including the publication by Government of a list of the bona fide industry bodies
- Campaign to reduce the 'rogue trader' economy by reducing VAT on home improvements undertaken by 'competent persons'
- Advise the consumer where reputable companies and skilled craftsmen can be found. Market the Alliance trade organisations
- Heed current schemes and take necessary action to promote Members if there are changes

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KEY ISSUE 7

CREATE GREATER AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) TO IMPROVE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND PEOPLE SKILLS

(Information, Communication and Technology Working Group)

KEY POINTS

Plumbing and heating sector professionals need to keep abreast of ICT.

As equipment manufacturers and distributors adopt ICT, micro SME's and sole proprietors must not be left behind.

Equipment, components and installations are becoming more sophisticated technically. The "Smart House" will become a reality in the 21st century.

The roll-out of broadband high speed internet connections brings greater possibilities for distance learning and professional development at home and on site, including access to information via hand held devices.

ACTION

The PHIA ICT Working Group will act as a forum for the distribution and dissemination of information relating to key issues and points identified above.

The Working Group will meet as and when required.

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KEY ISSUE 8

ENCOURAGE MEASURES TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY

(Supply Chain Task Group)

KEY POINTS

BSRIA in its research project entitled “Uptake of Productivity Improvements” identified six headings for improvement covering:

1. Better procurement to contract stage.
2. Better management of site works.
3. Improved use of tools, plant and equipment (especially working closer with manufacturers).
4. Wider use of innovative products, again with closer ties with manufacturers
5. Standardisation of fixings and components working with wholesalers
6. Improvements in installation methods, including off site prefabrication.

The PHIA believes that there is a need to liaise with suppliers and wholesalers to encourage more practical methods of stock distribution and to assist in areas of congestion charges to aid distribution.

All with a view to enhancing productivity.

ACTION

Profitability must be increased in order to invest in equipment, staff and training. For example: It has been proved that for every successful tender bid/quotation the price could have been increased by at least 2.5% without affecting the status of the bid made.

The supply chain task group to consider methods and means to achieve this, and to disseminate information and guidance throughout the Industry.

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MEMBERS OF PHIA

AMICUS
BATHROOM MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION OF PLUMBING AND HEATING CONTRACTORS
BRITISH PLUMBING EMPLOYERS COUNCIL
BRITISH PLASTICS FEDERATION
BUILDERS MERCHANTS FEDERATION
COUNCIL OF GAS DETECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING
CONSTRUCTION CONFEDERATION
CHARTERED INSTITUTION OF BUILDING SERVICES ENGINEERS
HEATING AND HOT WATER INFORMATION COUNCIL
HEATING AND VENTILATING CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION
THE INSTITUTE OF DOMESTIC HEATING AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERS
THE INSTITUTE OF PLUMBING AND HEATING ENGINEERING
JOINT INDUSTRY BOARD FOR PLUMBING MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
SERVICES
LEAD CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
MANUFACTURERS OF DOMESTIC UNVENTED SYSTEMS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PLUMBING TEACHERS
SCOTTISH AND NORTHERN IRELAND PLUMBING EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION
UK COPPER BOARD
THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF PLUMBERS
WATER HEATERS MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION

OBSERVERS

BUILDING RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT
BUILDING SERVICES RESEARCH AND INFORMATION ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL HOME IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL
WATER REGULATIONS ADVISORY SCHEME
THE ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY