



18 August 2009

To whom it may concern.

This is an open letter,

for those who have an interest in Emergency First Aid and Natural Therapies.

Dear Therapists and Natural Therapy Organization Committee Members,

## **An Understanding of First Aid Training 2009**

In August 2006 there was a need to look into the First Aid Training situation for Complementary Therapists. At that time, a number of Health & Safety Executive (HSE) approved Training Organizations were advertising one day courses as 'Approved by HSE', which was in breach of their HSE approval status. The suggestion being that Therapists should take an 'Approved Course'. As a result of investigating the facts, the article of 11 August 2006 was published.

<http://www.backtowork.co.uk/docs/AnObservationOfFirstAidTraining20060811.pdf>

For 2006 the Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK) changed the guidelines for Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). This coincided with changes HSE made to the content of their 4 day First Aid at Work (FAW) courses. There has been a considerable reduction in the content to be taught on the FAW courses over recent years, but when considering the target audience, this is a sensible progression. The HSE 'Approved' FAW courses are for organizations whose employee numbers require them to have a number of persons who may have to give first aid in their workplace. Many of these will be lay persons; initially having little anatomy & physiology knowledge, no experience in examination and assessment skills, or therapist/patient training. Restricting the amount of knowledge they have to absorb over a 4 day course makes their learning and the likelihood of their retaining the knowledge easier.

Following a review by the HSE, October 2009 will see the introduction of an additional approved course, the Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW). At the same time, due to its reduced content, the 4 day (24 hour) FAW course will be reduced to a 3 day (18 hour) course. Both of these courses may be presented by HSE approved training providers, with the EFAW courses also being presented by any training providers approved by appropriate authorizing bodies. Approval is not difficult. It simply requires trainers to strictly comply with the laid down requirements of the HSE for the courses presented. Depending on the employer's first aid needs assessment, employers will then be able to send employees to either course to become a workplace first aider. Please note that as 'approved' the content is strictly limited.

Unfortunately, some HSE approved providers are already spreading rumours that therapists will be required to take an approved EFAW course. The following extract is copied from an email received by a Complementary Therapies School principal, sent by an HSE approved training organization:

*... from the 1st October (2009), 1 day courses will come under the HSE directives and you will need to be approved by them at that time. Without their accreditation, our understanding is that you will not be abiding by the IFPA guidance on cover and the insurance requirement may be in question.*

It is regrettable that such marketing tactics are being used when they are so far from the truth. Although the previous HSE discussion documents mention that the EFAW course may eventually take the place of Appointed Persons training, on one of their FAQs pages, the HSE website clearly states :

Taken from: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/review/trainingfaq.htm> 18 August 2009.

### **Will the EFAW course take over from appointed person training?**

For regulatory purposes, successfully completing an EFAW course will enable the student to act as a first aider in the workplace. The role of the appointed person will remain and there will continue to be no regulatory requirement for such personnel to undertake first aid training. However, employers will still be able to send appointed persons on basic first aid training and organisations would not need HSE approval to offer such training. Some employers may choose instead to send individuals on EFAW courses, in which case they would become first aiders in regulatory terms.

Many first aid training courses currently offered to Therapists are also suitable for Appointed Persons. There are HSE recommendations on both the content and teaching time (4 hours+). However, there is no restriction on any additional useful information and discussion that can be included, over and above that which is specified for the EFAW courses. This additional information, that a Therapist can easily absorb and find very helpful, can add to any knowledge and skills that their particular therapy may have for acute conditions (or first aid). This continues their professional development in natural medicine.

The question facing the Complementary Therapist Organizations is – Should the EFAW course be compulsory? Or should the Therapist be able to choose between attending an EFAW course, or an Emergency First Aid (EFA) course that can also include Complementary Emergency Medicine subjects?

The main difference is content. The FAW course is reducing to 3 days, as its content has been reduced. The EFAW course contains less, the syllabus does not mention poisoning or anaphylaxis. EFAW courses must be held over a minimum of 6 contact hours that do not include any refreshment breaks (=1 day). Complementary Emergency Medicine (CEM) would not be a permitted discussion topic on EFAW courses. Any course can only be 'Approved' if it strictly limits the content to the syllabus prescribed by the approver. The EFAW courses are designed for a specific target audience of lay people in workplaces covered by legislation.

Syllabi - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web41.pdf> Appendix 2 & Appendix 3.

The Complementary Therapy organizations, with the help of their members, have spent many years defending their right to practice their safe and natural therapies, including remedies and traditional emergency treatments. It seems that some HSE approved trainers would like to have these organizations believe that, a complementary therapist should be restricted to only learning the minimum syllabus of the new EFAW course.

Would it be a wise decision to restrict qualified Complementary Therapist members and prevent them from discussing evidence based, proven, natural remedies, during their required first aid training? Any First Aid training organization (HSE approved or not) can provide a tailored day programme for therapists that is likely to be more beneficial to them than an EFAW course.

Should qualified therapists have a choice?

Yours sincerely

David Tagg  
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