South Holland District Council (SHDC) is located in South Lincolnshire, a rural area with strong links to the flower, bulb and food industry.

The Problem: Work-related contact dermatitis is a significant problem and has been an area of focus for a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) campaign. The business benefits for managing contact dermatitis within florists included:

- reduced sickness absence
- improved staff morale
- compliance with Health & Safety Law
- reduced staff turnover
- improved job satisfaction

What We Did: A reasonable proportion of South Holland’s workforce are employed in the flower industry within packhouses, fields, and also in a small number of florists. These individuals are at potential risk of contact dermatitis. The florists in the area were identified by a district survey and a press release. An Information Sheet and checklist were written to explain about dermatitis and its causes relating to floristry. The sheet explained in jargon-free ‘plain English’ about the following:

- what is dermatitis
- how exposure can occur
- how to identify hazardous agents
- the truth about health surveillance
- how to manage sickness absence
- how to limit exposure

The checklist helped businesses to assess whether their systems/controls were effective. It was linked to the risk assessment and aided the employers with suggested hazards and possible controls. The pack was sent to all florists along with HSE posters on skin checks for dermatitis, hand washing and applying hand cream and feedback questionnaires. The recipient was also offered an advisory visit from an SHDC officer.

Outcome/Benefits: The publicity proved to be a success and attracted interest from within and outside of the SHDC area, generating numerous requests for advisory visits and telephone enquiries. The advice focused on how to prevent or reduce dermatitis.

- 88% of the florists rated the information pack as good to very good
- Re-visits to all premises a year later found that all florists had completed the check list and implemented controls, which included active monitoring to ensure that gloves were worn and moisturisers provided
- All florists were displaying the HSE posters and using them as a way of checking for the early signs of dermatitis.
- The florists requested further information packs to be written to help them in other areas such as slips and trips and manual handling.