

creating a healthier UK plc

IOSH health and safety manifesto



Creating a healthier UK plc: IOSH health and safety manifesto

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health is the world's biggest professional health and safety organisation and the Chartered body for health and safety.

In this, our first manifesto, we focus on four areas we believe are vital to improving people's health and safety, quality of life, and future performance – health, education, small businesses and good advice. We lay down the challenge, explain the IOSH commitment, and invite others to join us.

The IOSH health agenda

The challenge: getting better health through better work

Last year in the UK, 28 million working days were lost through work-related ill health and over 2 million people suffered an illness they put down to work. Thousands more died from occupational cancers. We believe workplace health badly needs rescuing for the 21st century.

Add to this our ageing population and the drive to create a more inclusive workforce – where people aren't simply written off because they're not 100 per cent fit – and it's clearly time for a sea change in approach.

We need better access to high quality occupational health services and more use of health and safety professionals. We need better management to stop

workers getting ill and we need better support to help workers with health problems stay at or return to work. And we should be using the workplace to promote good health and wellbeing. This is because we know that 'good work' is good for health – and there's evidence that positive workplace perceptions are linked to higher productivity, profitability and staff retention.

What IOSH is already doing:

- > Running our Back to Health, Back to Work campaign, raising awareness of health and return-to-work issues
- > Offering a free course to extend our members' skills in occupational health support and rehabilitation
- > Staging professional development courses on health issues including air monitoring, stress and musculoskeletal problems
- > Running free courses to tackle workplace air contaminants – thousands of workers suffer occupational asthma and other lung diseases every year
- > Offering the Occupational Health Toolkit – a free online resource at www.oh toolkit.co.uk – giving easy access to information on stress, musculoskeletal and skin conditions and inhalation hazards

- > Providing guides on rehabilitating people at work and health and wellbeing – free at www.iosh.co.uk/techguide
- > Maintaining the UK's first health and safety research database on what research is being done, by who and where at www.oshresearch.co.uk
- > Commissioning new research into health issues including workplace violence and voice health for call centre operators

What we want others to commit to:

- > Supporting our Back to Health, Back to Work campaign
- > Promoting and continuing to fund the IOSH/Department for Work and Pensions course on occupational health support and rehabilitation
- > Supporting the new role for health and safety professionals and multidisciplinary working on health issues
- > Promoting the business case for healthier workplaces and a healthier workforce
- > Giving tax relief to employers providing certain therapies for injuries and illnesses that happen outside work
- > Making sure any successful pilots set up under Professor Dame Carol Black's 'Working for a healthier tomorrow' review are rolled out
- > Providing England and Northern Ireland with equivalents to Healthy Working Lives Scotland and Workboost Wales, giving small businesses free workplace visits and advice
- > Making Health and Safety Executive guidance on health issues free to download

Making health and safety part of the education system

The challenge: creating a risk intelligent society

Two hundred and twenty-nine people were killed at work and around 299,000 were seriously injured last year. In the last decade, 61 of the people killed at work were under 19. Over 14,000 teenagers suffered major injuries. This is a tragic waste of life. But there isn't just a human cost. It's estimated that workplace accidents and ill health cost society up to £31 billion every year.

Making sure that health and safety issues are well understood from the start is the way forward. Our education

and training system should cover health and safety in national, vocational and professional curricula. Not only school students, but professionals such as architects, planners, designers, engineers, managers, doctors and teachers need to get to grips with health and safety challenges as part of their general training.

Helping people to develop risk management skills will be valuable in all aspects of life, informing decision-making and improving the quality of people's lives. It will also help business, because having a 'risk intelligent' workforce will help protect and grow

their skill base, encourage sensible and safe behaviours, prevent accidents and ill health, and cut down absences and losses. And it will ultimately benefit society, as better risk management will help reduce the massive costs, both human and financial, from health and safety failures.

Tackling health and safety in education supports the vision of the National Director for Health and Work, Professor Dame Carol Black: "Healthy workplaces need to become the expected norm ... schools, further education and higher education have a role in embedding these expectations in the next generation."

What IOSH is already doing:

- > Running the Putting Young Workers First campaign, calling for health and safety training for teachers, young people and placement officers
- > Offering the free Workplace Hazard Awareness Course for schools and an award-winning website for youth workers, employers and teachers at www.wiseup2work.co.uk
- > Supporting the Health and Safety (Education and Training) Bill, a private member's Bill introduced by George Howarth MP, calling for health and safety to be integrated into Britain's education and training system

- > Contributing to consultations on GP and medical student curricula, highlighting the need to include work health issues
- > Commissioning research into how effective pictograms are for training non-English speakers
- > Offering a guide to help employers understand the right training and competence standards for staff, from shop floor to boardroom – free at www.iosh.co.uk/techguide
- > Working with the Child Safety Education Coalition on a joined up approach to enabling children and young people to confidently take part in practical activities in and out of school
- > Working with EuroSafe on health and safety education in schools across Europe

What we want others to commit to:

- > Supporting our Putting Young Workers First campaign
- > Getting the Health and Safety (Education and Training) Bill on the statute book
- > Promoting our Workplace Hazard Awareness Course to all UK schools and colleges
- > Supporting plans to introduce statutory personal, social and health education in 2011
- > Working with all professional bodies to make sure health and safety is part of their curricula
- > Making sure training, guidance and practice are based on the evidence of what works best
- > Getting health and safety messages to people with literacy or language problems

Health and safety support for small businesses

The challenge: helping small firms manage their risks

Good health and safety should be seen as enabling enterprise, not stifling it. There were over 4.7 million businesses in the UK at the start of 2007. Most – 99 per cent – were small firms with fewer than 50 employees. They provided nearly 48 per cent of employment in the private sector and

over 37 per cent of turnover. This is an important sector to reach if we want to cut accidents and ill health.

It's a popular misconception that small businesses automatically mean low risk. They operate in all sectors and in some cases, their accident rates are higher than in large operations. Recent research for the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory

Reform found that in practice, current levels of health and safety compliance are "not seen as overly burdensome", but that businesses aren't clear about what's needed by law. Cost and lack of time are issues too. Other research has shown that decision-makers believe the top two solutions to over-cautious risk decisions are "definitive guidance" and "professional health and safety advice".

What IOSH is already doing:

- > Offering the Risk Assessment Routefinder – an online tool to help small firms assess and tackle risks at www.ioshroutefinder.co.uk
- > Running www.safestartup.org, an award-winning website giving simple, basic information to business start-ups and small firms on health, safety and environment
- > Maintaining the Occupational Health Toolkit – a free online resource at www.ohtoolkit.co.uk – providing easy access to information on health issues, including how to rehabilitate staff who have been off after a serious injury or illness

- > Offering a free guide to help businesses get the best from a health and safety consultant service
- > Staging more than 300 free and low-cost health and safety events across the UK every year, with local businesses welcome to attend
- > Running the Stop Taking the Myth! campaign, targeting the media stories that trivialise health and safety and divert attention from the real issues

What we want others to commit to:

- > Providing more resources to the HSE for advisory visits
- > Making HSE guidance for small businesses free to download
- > Giving tax relief to employers who provide certain therapies for injuries and illnesses that happen outside work
- > Providing England and Northern Ireland with equivalents to Healthy Working Lives Scotland and Workboost Wales, giving small businesses free workplace visits and advice
- > Supporting our Stop Taking the Myth! campaign

Accrediting health and safety consultants

The challenge: helping people get the best health and safety advice

Under official guidance to the law, businesses must get a “competent assistant ... at an appropriate level”. But employers and recruiters are left in the dark over what ‘competence’ means in reality. Right now, anyone can claim to be a health and safety ‘adviser’, without any qualifications or experience. Even if they’ve been convicted of a health and safety offence, there’s nothing to stop them.

Poor advice could be damaging to people, whose lives and long term health can be put at risk, to businesses, wasting time and money, and to the public, whose perceptions are tainted by negative media stories about daft decisions made in the name of health and safety. We also believe it can damage national prosperity and productivity and put greater demands on health and social services.

After we’d made our case, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform recently recommended further clarity for employers on the meaning of ‘competent advice’. And the government now supports our call for health and safety consultants to be accredited. We think this will go some way to assure the quality and value of consultant services and help protect employers and workers.

What IOSH is already doing:

- > Running the Get the Best campaign, highlighting the benefits of competent health and safety advice
- > Maintaining a competence-based membership structure, requiring Initial and Continuing Professional Development
- > Offering professional development courses
- > Enforcing a Code of Conduct that commits all 35,000 IOSH members to good standards of professional behaviour

- > Responding to public demand by maintaining an online register of around 300 Chartered Safety and Health Practitioners offering consultancy services
- > Offering a free good practice guide on working as a competent health and safety consultant
- > Exploring accreditation of health and safety consultants, in discussion with others

What we want others to commit to:

- > Supporting our Get the Best campaign
- > Backing the introduction of government-recognised accreditation
- > Promoting the value of good quality health and safety advice to business, workers and society
- > Encouraging health and safety enforcers to become Chartered Members of IOSH
- > Using accredited consultants for government contracts

Get involved

If you'd like to find out more about our work, or would like to support one of our campaigns, please contact Richard Jones, Policy and Technical Director, at richard.jones@iosh.co.uk

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IOSH is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. With more than 35,000 members in 85 countries, we're the world's biggest professional health and safety organisation.

We set standards, and support, develop and connect our members with resources, guidance, events and training. We're the voice of the profession, and campaign on issues that affect millions of working people.

IOSH was founded in 1945 and is a registered charity with international NGO status.

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