
The Principles of Workplace Health & Wellbeing Leadership

Case for Change (HSE)

The impact of ill health is wider than just the worker – we have a strong moral duty to prevent work-related ill-health, but it also impacts productivity and introduces a cost to businesses and the GB economy. In 2023-24 the Labour Force Survey (LFS) showed that 1.7 million workers had suffered from work-related ill health with 0.8 million suffering work-related stress, anxiety or depression. Half a million workers were suffering from work-related musculoskeletal disorders. The overall annual cost of work-related ill health for the period was estimated to be £14.5 billion. Clearly, we need to reduce these figures and businesses need to understand the health risks their workers face so they can implement appropriate controls. HSE encourages businesses to focus on leading indicators to gain a true understanding of the risks and the introduction of preventive measures before exposure turns into ill health or disease. Businesses can achieve greater impact by working together and sharing data to understand the broader challenges and develop creative and effective solutions. HSE encourages businesses to work together in relevant sectors to meet this challenge.

Principles

- Clear and positive workplace health and wellbeing leadership is at the core of managing people, assets and infrastructure within any business. This is integral to ensuring that ill-health from being at work is prevented and potential workplace health risks are effectively managed.
- Workplace health and wellbeing leadership requires board level involvement and competence. For companies with boards located outside the UK, the responsibility to show this leadership rests with the most senior UK managers.
- Good workplace health and wellbeing management does not happen by chance and requires constant proactive engagement.
- Board-level visibility and promotion of workplace health leadership is essential to reinforce a positive health culture throughout the organisation. This will help ensure a proactive environment where individuals are encouraged to report any health concerns, with a competent management who can address these issues.
- Active engagement of the workforce is needed in the promotion and achievement of good workplace health and wellbeing management.
- Setting, auditing, monitoring and acting upon key performance indicators based on both leading and lagging aspects is central to ensuring business risks are being effectively managed.
- Publication of workplace health and wellbeing performance information provides important public and workplace assurance about the value placed on workforce health & wellbeing, and the management of risks by an organisation.
- Sharing best practice across industry sectors, as well as learning and implementing lessons from relevant workplace health and wellbeing issues in other organisations, are important to maintain the level of corporate knowledge and competence.

Organisation and Resources

- Workplace health and wellbeing accountabilities should be defined and championed at board level. Board members, senior executives, managers and operators should be held accountable for workplace health & wellbeing, leadership, and performance.
- At least one board member and/or senior manager should be fully conversant in workplace health and wellbeing management to advise the board of the benefits of effective workplace health management within the organisation and of the health implications of board decisions.
- Appropriate resources should be made available to ensure workplace health and wellbeing responsibilities and the required competencies to fulfil these are communicated and fulfilled across all levels of the organisation.
- Organisations should develop a programme for the promotion of workplace health and wellbeing by active senior management engagement with the workforce, including both direct and contract staff, to underline the importance of workplace health leadership and to support a positive health culture within the organisation.
- Systems and arrangements should be in place to ensure the active involvement of the workforce in shaping and delivering the workplace health and wellbeing programme and in the review of workplace health and wellbeing performance.
- Business impacts relating to workplace health and wellbeing should be identified, assessed and reviewed regularly using an appropriate risk analysis methodology.
- Effective leading and lagging key performance indicators should be set for the organisation and periodically reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate for the needs of the business.
- Information on the performance of the health and wellbeing programme should be routinely reviewed at board level, and performance in the management of workplace health risk should be published and communicated to all workers and stakeholders within annual reports and other ways as appropriate.
- Companies should actively engage with others within their sector and elsewhere to share good practice and information on workplace health and wellbeing management and learnings that may benefit others. Companies should have mechanisms and arrangements in place to incorporate learning from others within their health and safety management system.
- A robust system for the regular review and auditing of the workplace health and wellbeing management system should be established to ensure its effectiveness, compliance, and continuous improvement. Audits should be conducted periodically, with findings shared at all levels, and corrective actions implemented where necessary to address any gaps or weaknesses identified in the system. This will also ensure a retention of corporate knowledge relating to workplace health and wellbeing management.

Signed



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