

**COI LIVE EVENTS AND BROADCAST FACILITIES
TRANSCRIPT OF GOOD JOBS, GOOD HEALTH CONFERENCE
HELD AT THE INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS
IN LONDON
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Bill, Judith, Ladies and Gentlemen, it really is a great pleasure to be here. This is an extremely important conference and I am just delighted to be taking part.

My 'brief' is to set the scene for the day. What I hope to do in the next quarter of an hour is to give an overview of where we are and what we need to do. I want to talk about some of the realities and the problems that we have got to face, the cost to both the economy and to the NHS, and then discuss whose business is health and safety really is, and lastly how should we approach it.

So let's look at the stark realities first, and these are awful. 2.7 million cases of occupational ill-health claim incapacity benefit. 50% are over 50 years old. Now remember, at 50 years you are experienced and have got 10 – 15 years of future work, so quite an investment and a huge cost to the economy. But also 1 in 13 of working –age people are out of work, and that is a huge amount to think about in terms of the economy and what they are delivering. 35 million working days lost per year due to direct effects of health and safety. And really the total cost to the economy is £12 billion, of which a lot is avoidable.

So the 'challenge' we have is that overall 116 million working days are lost to sickness absence. Much of this is sickness absence, not really work-related, it could be flu and various other ailments, but out of that 35 million are related to work and injury. And if you look at them and divide them down again, 40% of these are due to stress, anxiety and depression, and 33% due to musculoskeletal problems –both avoidable!

My next slide or two are pictures giving scenarios where things could so easily go wrong. The 'near misses' - so to speak. Now here is a scenario where if you look at it from outside it looks fine, but just look and see what is going on: this chap is handing coal over a shovel, 3 of them are precariously poised on very dangerous ground, so they could easily fall down. This slide has 3 different scenarios. On the left hand side you can see a crane working on top of a building, the scaffolding doesn't look robust but, even worse, what is this washing hanging up here (obscuring the work) doing? On the right hand side, this electricity post, you just wonder where all these electric wires are going, - rife for an accident to happen. I hasten to add this wasn't in England, but was taken by my daughter in Cusco just recently. And at the bottom of this slide we have the typists probably developing repetitive strain injuries, the stress of workload and so on.

The next slide shows some of the obvious ones, which, if they won't so dangerous, look absolutely hilarious! If you look at the top left hand one here is a whole load of cases ton top of each other ready to fall down, the centre of gravity is far too high andthis is in an airport! The chap on the top right obviously will have future problems with his back, but if he does drop those pipes can you imagine what he damage he may cause as they went down the hill. The one on the left is a fork lift truck lifting another one, which is lifting another one, trying to get something to the top and can you just imagine how something in that little triad would actually collapse and hurt all the people around. And this last one on the right, really beggars belief, this guy is putting some lights up into the ceiling with an electric drill, he has got a metal ladder in the water and he has got no shoes on and the wire is lying actually lying in the water! Now that is really just ripe for something to happen. I hasten to add that most of these were taken abroad, not England, so you can relax, Judith!

So let's just look at the NHS costs which are really high. 1 million report sick each week. Now out of those who claim benefit, 3,000 will remain off work for 6 months, a substantial number, and 80% will probably still be off in 5 years and the likelihood of them getting back is actually totally negligible.

Now if you look at what happens in general practice and GP consultations, 1 in 6 people actually report to their GPs for work-related problems. And if you looked at a particular primary care Trust, 67,000 GP visits were actually for 'certification', people asking for certificates to go off work.

Now the question is why? Why should there be such a high number of people wanting to go off sick? I think we have three players here. First of all we have the environment, and obviously that includes the working conditions, the safety of what is happening around you, and I have put in there unhappiness because there is no doubt that if you are unhappy at work you don't really adhere to any sort of guidelines.

Then we have the employers - and there are good and bad employers. What the employers also need is some support and mentoring, there needs to be good communication from the top down to the bottom, and then, obviously, one also needs to put into place the appropriate protocols and guidelines.

And then the employees - they also have a huge part to play. It appears to me that we tend to blame just about everything on the state. We have got to take responsibility for ourselves, and I think that really needs to be highlighted somewhere.

Now how do we actually reduce these risks and problems, and this is really where the Commission comes in. Well obviously if you have somebody starting a job we need to give them good induction, which means taking time out of the work schedule - but it is just so important, and all the way through in that job, employees will need both education and training and it has got to be continuous, it cannot just be a one off. And then the protocols and guidelines, which are great if they are appropriately used and if people remember what they are! But, at the end of the day, all these things could be in place but you have to continuously go back, monitor, audit and change the practices and the way you practise, otherwise you will be left behind with further problems.

I was talking to one of my nurses in the clinic the other day and I asked her if they have any guidelines. She went off — and brought me back the core policies downloaded from the intranet at Barts and the London. Now each of these is a policy heading and each heading will have several pages on the policy. As an example this slide shows a large number of policies - you are not meant to read this, but I just thought I would let you know the number of policies that are instituted in our Trusts – health and safety policy, risk management and strategy policy, fire policy, disposal policy, missing patients guidelines policy, patients’ property, electrical appliances, car parking, and so it goes on and on. My perpetual problem is who reads them and how often?.

And then when you actually look at the courses that all our people go on, and I am now concentrating on the NHS, there are about a million courses, I have just put a few up here – controls of substance which are hazardous to health, display screen equipment, obviously they have got to go off and have their eyes tested, fire safety, food, and I love this one, conflict resolution, which clearly if you are managing a small group of people you must act appropriately. These are the sort of attributes that I always thought we managed and knew how to do ourselves, but nowadays, of course, you have to go on a course and learn how to do it so that you can tick a box. No bad thing – as long as you remember to put it into action! I think they are in a different age but everyone has to be able to work as a team.

Now guidelines, and I have used that slide I had earlier, and the reason that I did this was because my son-in-law came along and said: “I have just started my new job at a hospital and I was given a book of guidelines several inches thick. Now when am I going to read it? Which of the guidelines are important? Which are really essential?” And really if you have a whole host of guidelines, like in this slide, you might as well forget it because people are not going to adhere to them. You somehow need to produce the appropriate guideline at the appropriate time. And with the huge number of guidelines, protocols and rules, one feels totally straitjacketed. Am I doing the right thing ? With so many guidelines you really wonder which direction you are going in. We need to highlight the really important guideline that might help in ‘life and death’ actions,

So whose business is it anyway? Well I think it is everybody's business. The employers clearly have to be the people in charge. If you can get a good working force you will increase your productivity, and there is no doubt a happy workforce does actually help productivity. Secondly, the employees, and I think that it is about time that we all, ourselves, took ownership of our own responsibilities, there is just too much of that 'blame' culture. If you fall down a hole in the street well - you have to blame somebody, but in fact you fell down that hole because you were not watching where you were going.

Now here is a slide of a mouse looking at a piece of cheese in a mouse trap. I just want to talk to you about this little mouse. This mouse has been employed to scavenge and take the bits of food that fall off your table. Now the employer has been very good, he has actually given this lovely little mouse a helmet, just in case he did encounter a mousetrap and so might at least protect his head. But of course it is totally ineffective because this mousetrap will catch much more of the mouse than just his head. Now you could argue that the employer should have put perhaps put a fender up so that he didn't actually get to the mousetrap, or the mousetrap should have been removed in the first place. Now you can see this mouse is actually very carefully working out the risk-harm benefit of whether to get that piece of cheese or not. Now he has got to decide. Clearly that cheese looks gorgeous and he would love to have it, but I think he has an idea that this contraption might do him some harm, so it is his responsibility to decide whether he goes for it or not!

Here is another example of 'non-joined up thinking' – so to speak! Two ambulance men giving resuscitation to a body on the street. Each rescuer adhering to protocols and guidelines, one breathing twice into the mouth and the other doing chest compressions. The problem is that the head is not joined up to the body – I hasten to add this is a model, not a real human being, so please relax, those of you who are squeamish. But there is no point in having protocols and guidelines without joined-up thinking.

Now the 'feel good factor' – a happy workforce is essential. Increased productivity if employees are given a better environment, better working conditions and some incentives for them to work harder. All these three facts will actually increase your productivity. Now there must be ownership of this because if there isn't ownership from both the employers and the employees they don't regard it as their own and they will not do it, so you have to really build it up from down up. I have been working in the NHS for 40 years and I still love getting out of bed to go to work but I have a great job with wonderful patients and colleagues. And of course the other thing is pride in one's job, if you don't have pride in your job, forget it, you can't get anywhere.

So let's end with the successes of the HSE, because there have been many. Fatal injuries to employees has fallen by 76% since 1974; reported non-fatal injuries have fallen by 67%; there has been a reduction in injury rates and the numbers in all main industry sectors; but sadly, the rate of self-reported work-related stress and other conditions has increased. This may be because the employers are trying to push an agenda, the employees trying to follow it but just falling down with far too much work so they cannot cope. And I think the corollary of the 67% reduced rate, is what is happening to the rest of them and how can we improve this? We really need to try and get it as near 100% as possible and really there is a huge amount of work to do.

I have just really run through a few of the problems and I hope set the scene appropriately for our discussions later on, and I am very much looking forward to the rest of the conference. Thank you very much.