



Our vision is to gain recognition of health and safety as a cornerstone of a civilised society and, with that, to achieve a record of workplace health and safety that leads the world.

A Strategy for Workplace Health and Safety in Great Britain to 2010 and beyond

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

This strategy is designed to promote our vision, which is to see health and safety as a cornerstone of a civilised society and, with that, to achieve a record of workplace health and safety that leads the world.

This is a strategy, not a plan. This document sets out what we want to achieve, our particular contribution and the contributions of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local authorities (LAs) who enforce health and safety law. Our business plans will describe in more detail how we aim to go about this, and when. This strategy should energise Great Britain's approach to improving workplace health and safety for the future. The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) will own the vision, promote it and make sure it happens. We will debate with others how the system might be strengthened, where there are gaps and limitations, how to fill them and how HSC, HSE and LAs might add value to it.

HSC, HSE or LAs should not do this solely through their own actions. This strategy confirms our intention to understand and value more the contributions of others to improving health and safety - not just employers, large and small, but everyone including workers, their representative organisations and professional bodies. To achieve that, we must engage everyone who can contribute to its success. This document is the starting point. It also makes clear that we are prepared to change our existing institutions if they get in the way of progress. As a start, we will review the governance arrangements for HSC and HSE and our relations with LAs to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of this evolving strategy.

For us, and for HSE and LAs, this is a strategy about finite resources, hard choices and priorities. More of the same, even with increased resources and efficiency, will not deal with emerging health issues or the changing world of work and the demands of our stakeholders. This means HSE and LAs concentrating on the things that they alone are best placed to do, including inspection and enforcement, and to do them where they have the greatest impact. HSE's contribution will be delivered through well-resourced efficient programmes of activity. We will ask LAs to do the same.

This is also a strategy about change. It is about doing things differently, getting others involved or even saying no in some cases. When we have delivered this strategy, we expect the world to look different from how it does today and these ideas are built upon in the strategy.

Last, but by no means least, my thanks to the many people who have contributed so far to this strategy. Together we can make it happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Callaghan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B" and "C".

Bill Callaghan
Chair HSC

Introduction

Health and safety framework and institutions

The 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act placed general duties on all employers for health, safety and welfare and its goal setting approach provide that those who create risks are best able to manage them. Employee consultation is a key ingredient in this approach. The Act led to the setting up of HSC, HSE and a provision for LAs to enforce health and safety law in certain premises.

HSC currently conducts and sponsors research, promotes training, provides and information and advisory service and submits proposals for new or revised regulations and approved codes of practice. HSE supports HSC in this endeavour and, with LAs, enforces the law. Our work is underpinned by sound science, technology and evidence. Our knowledge and information are open and available.

This regime has helped cut workplace fatalities by around two-thirds since the 1970s.

Context for the developing strategy

The key challenge for this strategy is how to make risk management relevant to the modern and changing world of work. Since 1974, the workplace and the world around it have changed significantly. There are fewer large firms and far more small ones – over 90% of the 3.5 million or so businesses employ less than 10 people but nearly a half work in large organisations. Part time working has risen and women now constitute half the workforce. The manufacturing sector is exposed to intense international competition. The service sector has become more important. Public attitudes to risk and redress, blame and compensation, have changed. The new challenges in health and safety are almost all health rather than safety. Much of the pressure for change in our legislation comes from Europe rather than from home. And crucially, the rate of improvement in safety has now slowed.

Key drivers for change

- Currently, there is no coherent direction to the overall health and safety system. HSC, HSE and LAs cannot/should not do it all. There is agreement that boundaries and direction need to be set.
- HSE and LAs are spread too thinly and need to be targeted to where they can have the most impact.
- HSC, HSE and LAs have done a great job on safety but there is still a huge job to do on health. 40 million working days were lost to occupational ill health and injury in 2001/2. 33 million were attributable to ill health. Our traditional interventions are less effective when dealing with health than when dealing with safety.
- Our research shows that many firms fear contact with HSE and LAs. This fear motivates some to take action on health and safety but deters them from turning to HSE or LAs for advice.
- If we want long-term gains, we need hearts and minds not grudging acceptance.

Vision, Mission and High Level Aims

Our **vision** is to gain recognition of health and safety as a cornerstone of a civilised society and, with that, to achieve a record of workplace health and safety that leads the world.

The **mission** is for HSC and HSE, working with LAs, to protect people's health and safety by ensuring that risks in the changing workplace are properly controlled.

HSC and HSE's **continuing aims**:

- protect people by providing information and advice; promoting and assuring a goal-setting system of regulation; undertaking and encouraging research and enforcing the law where necessary;
- influence organisations to embrace high standards of health and safety and to recognise the social and economic benefits;
- work with business to prevent catastrophic failures in major hazard industries; and
- seek to optimise the use of resources to deliver our mission and vision.

HSC and HSE's **new aims**:

- develop new ways to establish and maintain an effective health and safety culture in a changing economy, so that all employers take their responsibilities seriously, the workforce is fully involved and risks are properly managed;
- do more to address the new and emerging work-related health issues;
- achieve higher levels of recognition and respect for health and safety as an integral part of a modern, competitive business and public sector and as a contribution to social justice and inclusion; and
- exemplify public sector best practice in managing our resources.

OUR FOUR POINT STRATEGY

1. Working in partnership

Working with and through others

In the past, we have not given full recognition to the contribution of a properly designed and executed health and safety system to the broader agenda. Nor have we fully utilised the contribution of other agendas to our aims.

- We will examine our institutions and ways of working and change them where they militate against effective partnership working.
- We will develop strategic partnerships to improve our contribution to:
 - Employment and productivity – by keeping those at work healthy and in work;
 - Education – by instilling an appropriate understanding of risk management from an early age and how that that understanding benefits other walks of life;
 - Health and rehabilitation – by contributing to the nation’s health and well being and dealing with health inequalities;
 - Public service reform – by reducing sickness in the public sector and enhancing public sector delivery.

The challenge of occupational health

Significant advances have been made in pressing down on the causes of safety failures using existing tools and methods. But results have slowed and we still need real leverage on health issues and to use new and innovative methods. Among all of our challenges, occupational health demands a more strategic and partnership based approach.

- We will strengthen the role of health and safety in getting people back to work through a much greater emphasis on rehabilitation as a contribution to the wider government employment agenda. We will use our links with our sponsor department, DWP, for this purpose and will work with others – employers, insurers and health professionals - to bring it about.
- We will seek out new strategic partnerships to develop and test new ways of managing health at work.

HSE and LAs working together

We have looked closely at the current division of enforcement responsibility between LAs and HSE and their ways of working. We believe it is right for major hazard industries to remain with HSE. But, for the rest, we believe there is no lasting logic to the current arrangements. They are complex, confusing and based on boundaries and approaches that suit more the convenience of the regulator than the needs of business or workforce.

- We wish to see HSE and LAs move to a genuine coherent partnership based on a mutual understanding of the value of local versus central interventions. Specific sectors and certain

large firms would benefit from a coordinated national approach, delivered through centrally coordinated programmes. An LA contribution to the HSE led construction programme or the national coordination of LAs' approach to large retailers with national networks would be examples. The remaining sectors, and all of the issues within them, would be addressed by local joint planning, joint decision-making and joint action with LAs and HSE working to more sensible and well understood divisions of enforcement and agreed targets.

- This partnership should be expressed in a high level document endorsed by LA political leaders.
- The partnership will only prosper if there is a change in attitudes and culture. To exemplify this new partnership approach, HSE and LAs will build on current examples of best practice, and develop systems for sharing training and intelligence and access to specialist resources.
- We will revisit the effectiveness and value of the HSE and LA Enforcement Liaison Committee (HELA), to ensure that they are fit for purpose to deliver our new aspirations.

2. Developing new methods to help people benefit from effective health and safety management and a sensible health and safety culture.

Understanding the benefits of health and safety

Some businesses, particularly small businesses, perceive HSE as an organisation of experts, talking to experts in big firms and devising approaches and guidance for the same experts. We recognise the need to do more to make the benefits of health and safety more widely understood and accepted.

- We will find ways to be more effective in demonstrating the moral and business cases for health and safety. Appropriate health and safety management is an integral part of effective business management and, as such, is an enabler and not a hindrance.
- We will find ways to simplify the concept of risk assessment to make it relevant and available to all and to ensure sensible risk management.
- While goal-setting standards are more flexible and promote innovation, HSE and LAs will use a more prescriptive approach as a relevant tool where businesses respond better to it. This will grow confidence and competence so that effective self-regulation can follow.
- We will make greater use of the role of Government as an employer to demonstrate the benefits of successful health and safety management to the private sector.

Involving the workforce

An organisation's greatest asset is its workforce. Employees are often best able to spot issues and bring about real improvements. We recognize the valuable contribution of safety representatives, but they cannot do it all. We need to expand the base of those involved to cover the whole workforce. Workplace health and safety representatives operating in partnership with management are an important part of realizing health and safety benefits.

- We will use the Department of Work and Pensions' 'Challenge Fund' to extend workplace safety advice into small firms.

- We will promote greater worker involvement in health and safety in the workplace.
- We will encourage a voluntary expansion of workplace health and safety representatives across all sectors of business and the public sector.

Providing advice and support

Further health and safety gains will require new directions, innovative approaches and a clear understanding of the evidence to demonstrate their benefit. In particular, our consultations show that some firms, particularly small firms, say they want to comply with health and safety standards but are fearful of the regulator and approaching HSE or LAs for advice. Such firms, particularly in their very early stages, present a potentially willing, if untapped, market for significant health and safety improvements. We want to develop channels of support and advice that can be accessed without fear of enforcement action while allowing the regulators to continue to be tough on those who wilfully disregard the law. These are not easy issues. We have asked HSE for an interim report by June 2004 so we can take a decision in principle by the end of that year

- We will explore ways to promote greater access to authoritative health and safety advice.
- Building on initiatives such as the one in Scotland, we will press for the provision of nationally available advice and support focussed primarily on occupational health. This should be active in preventing ill health, promoting rehabilitation and getting people back to work more quickly.
- If needed, we will extend that provision to cover more comprehensive advice and support on safety related issues in due course.
- HSE will continue to produce authoritative independent written guidance whenever that is necessary and consistent with our priorities. But we accept that others may be better placed to produce good practice guidance for particular industries or topics and we will encourage that wherever we can.
- HSE and LA inspectors will continue to offer advice in the course of their other activities because this is generally welcomed by employers.

3. Focussing on our core business and the right interventions where we are best placed to reduce work place injury and ill health

Being clear about our priorities

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (HSWA) can be construed very broadly and, as our consultations have showed, stakeholders frequently want us to do more than we are able to. Even with increased efficiency, HSE and LAs will not meet these demands and they must manage their priorities rigorously.

- Where the proper management of risks can be assured, HSE and LAs will not intervene proactively. This means we will discourage HSE and LAs from putting resources into issues where the risks are of low significance, well understood and properly managed. This process needs to be open and transparent to the regulator, business and the workforce. We are asking HSE and LAs to work closely together in consultation with stakeholders to devise suitable

criteria to identify those areas where HSE and LAs will not intervene proactively. Initial proposals will be published in the autumn of 2004.

- HSE will determinedly move away from areas that are better regulated by others or by other means – including civil law. For example, outside of the major hazards industries, it will not be proactive in enforcing in those areas of work-related public safety where others have regulatory responsibilities or where legal remedies under HSWA have been used in the absence of more specific legislation.
- We will promote a debate involving other government departments about the appropriate contribution of workplace health and safety law to the wider public and consumer safety regimes. We want to ensure a coherent overall approach to public safety and to identify where gaps need to be filled by others and by other means.

An Interventions Strategy

Acceptable health and safety standards can be achieved in many ways and much of this strategy focuses on new ways of securing compliance voluntarily. But the regulator also has a part to play. HSE and LAs must do better to identify their impact, to gather and use evidence to inform their own activities and to persuade others.

- HSE, working with LAs, will concentrate on activities directly related to work where it has the skills, expertise and evidence and where it, rather than others, can be the principal driver for change. This includes investigation and enforcement.
- HSE and LAs will develop a clear evidence based interventions strategy. It will reduce duplication and fully recognise the contributions of workplace safety representatives, insurance, guidance, design, the training and competence of managers, the supply chain, support and inspection and enforcement.
- We do not see new regulation as the automatic response to new issues or changing circumstances but will seek to maintain a level playing field in health and safety across Europe as the basis of proportionate law implemented consistently.
- HSE will ensure that its scientific, technological and research capabilities remain relevant to our interventions strategy. It will work in partnership with others on science and technology issues wherever there are mutual benefits from doing so.
- HSE will review its major hazards regimes to ensure that its interventions continue to remain relevant and proportionate to the changing nature of the major hazards industries in Great Britain. This work has already started by seeking the views of stakeholders.

Continuing to enforce where necessary

Enforcement or the fear of enforcement is the only thing that will motivate some employers. Our evidence confirms there are circumstances where the public still expects HSE and LAs to take appropriate, proportionate enforcement action.

- HSE and LAs will work in partnership to secure proportionate compliance with the law and to ensure that those who have duties under it may be held to account for failures to safeguard health, safety and welfare. The scope of these activities will be evidence based and clearly set out in our enforcement policy statement.

4.Communicating the vision.

Communicating effectively

Our goal is not to have a risk free society but one where risk is properly appreciated, understood, and managed. To do this we must move from the stronghold of giving out information to more mature, strategic communication with strong and productive new links with stakeholders. We want open, transparent, inclusive communications with a wide range of stakeholders reflecting the diversity of our public. This will improve the quality of our decision-making and help confirm trust and achieve higher levels of recognition and respect for health and safety.

- HSE must become more adept at dealing with different audiences in different ways to ensure that sensible and appropriate health and safety messages are received and understood. We will become a strong, proactive communicator and influencer, aiming to ensure that the business and societal benefits of health and safety, and the roles of the regulators and others, are better understood.
- We will become more robust in defending the reputation of the health and safety system against its detractors and be more proactive as its champion.
- We will make clear that effective health and safety management is a collective responsibility in which individuals too must play their part.

Where we want to be in 10 years time

A world in which health and safety is a cornerstone of a civilised society. This means:

- the '*Revitalising*' targets have been met and a culture of continuous improvement is more widespread;
- the contribution of health and safety management to society is better understood. There is broad agreement about the economic and moral case for occupational health and safety among both the social partners and public at large;
- risk assessment, and employee involvement and consultation, are more widespread and so the regulators are no longer the principal drivers for improvement;
- high quality channels for business support and advice are well used and highly regarded.

What this might look like for key stakeholders

HSC – the trusted voice of health and safety, a facilitator for action, an advocate of sensible risk management based on everyday examples, with a more complex approach reserved for those who can benefit from the 'tolerability of risk framework'.

HSE – developing and responding to a public debate about the role of a regulator in a changing world and changing economy. And, as a matter of choice, focussing its efforts on interventions where they can achieve the greatest impact.

LAs - competent, consistent, committed, enforcement partners with HSE, developing a range of services to deal with small firms.

Ministers –the window to Whitehall, championing health and safety among their colleagues as a contributor to the wider agenda and the development of improved public services.

The devolved administrations – supporting the GB framework for health and safety and identifying the links and dependencies with their devolved responsibilities.

Employers – routinely reporting health and safety performance information as part of their commitment to corporate social responsibility and engaging with safety representatives who have a leading role in local health and safety management.

Employees – well informed and taking responsibility for the health and safety of others as well as their own.

The public – understand and supporting the role of HSC, HSE and LAs.

Trade unions – working with others to develop guidance outside of the HSE framework and to support a national framework of safety representatives.

Safety Representatives – their involvement in local health and safety management is the norm.

Trade associations - working with employee representatives to develop, agree and communicate industry specific advice and guidance and promoting common standards among their membership.

Insurance industry - an active partner in regulating business risks through more involvement in the system and by promoting financial incentives.

Media – informed commentators.

Occupational health professionals – fully integrated and engaged in developing the system for occupational health and safety.

Health and safety professionals – taking the debate outside of mainstream health and safety forums and helping to demystify it.

HSE and LA staff – clear about what they are doing, and not doing, and why.

Delivering priority outcomes through strategic programme working

HSE will concentrate on the areas that need tackling most and deliver these with LAs through well-resourced, efficient programmes of activity with publicised goals and milestones. Within these Strategic Programmes, priority will still be given to a suite of targeted programmes. These will include: agriculture; construction; health services; falls from a height; slips and trips; workplace transport; musculoskeletal disorders; work related stress; and establishing government as an exemplar of good health and safety standards.

- We will deliver the '*Revitalising Health and Safety*' targets by 2010 to cut deaths and major injury accidents by 10%; reduce the rate of work related ill-health by 20%; and cut working days lost due to health and safety failure by 30%.
- HSE will develop a business improvement programme to ensure a culture of continuous improvement

Early Deliverables