

Sector plan for health and safety: **Public services**

This sector covers a range of services, across health and social care, education, local and central government, the emergency services and the military. Over 9 million people work in the sector, representing around 30% of the GB workforce,

and it contributes around £300 billion to the economy.

A common factor across the sector is the interface with members of the public who could be affected by work activities.

Current position

Because of the breadth of the sector, and the different health and safety issues that apply in different sub-sectors, quoting overall rates has limited value. Nevertheless, broad statements can be made in terms of statistical significance.

Around 400 000 workers suffer an illness they believe to be work-related each year, with the largest proportions due to work-related stress and musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). This is not significantly higher than the all-industry rate.

On average, five workers are killed each year in public services, a markedly lower rate than the all-industry one.

Around 170 000 work-related, non-fatal injuries occur in the sector each year, which is not significantly different from the all-industry rate. Main causes include slips, trips and falls, and physical assault.

This sector has the ability to influence public safety, but there needs to be awareness that disproportionate precautions can undermine sensible risk approaches.

HSE's main means of engagement is to work with interested and influential stakeholder groups.

Outcomes and priorities

Public services will remain a priority sector for HSE, given the number of workers and the range

of hazards they can encounter. Our ambition is to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduce the high levels of ill health from work-related stress and MSDs
- Address safety issues in high-hazard activities, eg realistic training in the military
- Improve awareness of existing standards as service provision becomes fragmented and new forms of delivery emerge



What HSE will do to #HelpGBworkwell

We will lead and engage with others to improve workplace health and safety by:

- applying the Stress Management Standards through carrying out pilot exercises in healthcare, education, prisons and other parts of the public sector;
- re-energising the control measures for tackling MSDs in healthcare and identifying any emerging issues and solutions;
- challenging, at a strategic level, ambulance services' performance in reducing MSDs;
- providing direction and guidance to key stakeholders in health and social care on the management of violence and aggression in the workplace;
- maintaining existing relationships with influential stakeholders and groups and making new ones where this can improve our understanding of and influence on the sector, particularly in relation to changing structures of service provision.

We will secure effective management and control of risk by:

- addressing specific high-risk areas in public services, including:
 - supporting and helping further develop the Ministry of Defence's internal regulatory capacity by engaging both on strategic and tactical issues;
 - carrying out management inspections of the prison service's policies and arrangements for managing violence and aggression.

We will provide an effective regulatory framework by:

- continuing to promote sensible and proportionate approaches to applying health and safety legislation to the public, to properly balance the Health and Safety at Work Act's protective and enabling aspects, including updating guidance with relevant additional situational examples;
- updating HSE's position on the increasingly wide spectrum of 'volunteering' activities, particularly high-risk activities organised by employers.