

# ENSURING HEALTH IN HEALTH & SAFETY (Part 1)

## LSBU's Occupational Health Nursing Program Mini Lecture Series

Welcome to this information sheet on ensuring health in health and safety, which accompanies the mini-lecture presented by Jo Kitney for the London South Bank University's Occupational Health Nursing Degree Program. Jo Kitney is a Visiting Teaching Fellow for the London South Bank University and Managing Director of Kitney Occupational Health and Safety.

The subject of ensuring health in health and safety is large and has been split across two mini-lectures and information sheets. This is Part 1, which focuses on explaining what health in health and safety means and the importance of goal setting to lay down how health and safety will be managed in an organisation or business.

### HEALTH IN HEALTH & SAFETY

- Part 1:
  - What does health in health and safety mean?
  - The importance of goal setting



The 2nd video and information sheet of Ensuring Health in Health and Safety looks at the more practical side of how to fit health into health and safety and business management. To see the mini-lectures on Ensuring Health in Health and Safety and other lectures by Jo Kitney in this series, go to: <http://vimeopro.com/kitney/lbsu>

## Introduction

A quick search on the internet shows us that the theme of putting – or how to put – health in health and safety is commonly found. There are articles written on the subject and it's often included as a topic item within conferences and seminars, not just in the UK but overseas also.

Having worked in health and safety for over twenty years now, I can tell you that this topic is not new. As a newly graduated occupational health nurse in the mid-1990's attending one of my first conferences, I recall listening to a presentation on the subject.

What has perhaps changed in the last 20 years is the context of how health in health and safety is discussed. There's been a shift from occupational health practitioners asking where it is and proposing that it should be included, to the discussion across industry on its importance and the debate on how it can be included and health managed at work.

A look back at the history of health and safety gives us insights into why it's taken a while for health at work to find its place. In the early days of health and safety legislation, regulators, unions and worker representatives

were mainly concerned with securing a safe work place to prevent the fatalities and significant injuries that workers experienced. The health of workers was mainly managed by doctors and nurses and so the separation of 'occupational health' and 'safety' began, particularly with health references in health and safety legislation aimed at managing health hazards and monitoring workers health.

The health of workers was mainly managed by doctors and nurses and health references in health and safety legislation were aimed primarily at managing health hazards and monitoring workers health – and so the separation of 'occupational health' and 'safety' and the focus on compliance began.

### CHANGING TIMES

- Historical focus on:
  - Securing a safe place of work
  - Preventing fatalities and significant injuries
  - Workers health managed by Dr's and nurses
- More recent focus on 'health'



However, as workplaces have become safer, knowledge of health effects at work and the importance on employees being fit for work has grown, the attention on managing health at work has increased. And so Part 1 of Ensuring Health in Health and Safety looks at what we mean by the 'health in health and safety' and the importance of goal setting for managing health and safety at work.

## What is 'Health' in Health and Safety?

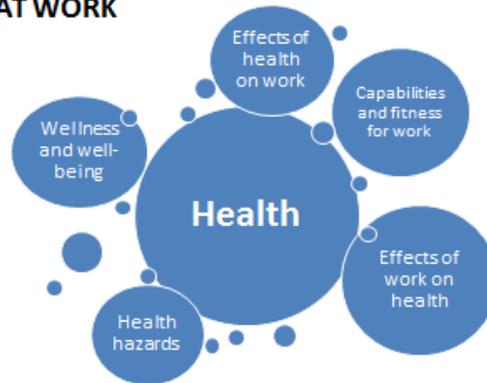
So what do we mean by health in health and safety? The slide below shows this is in its simplest form – 'health' plus 'safety' equals 'health and safety'.

### WHAT IS 'HEALTH' IN HEALTH AND SAFETY



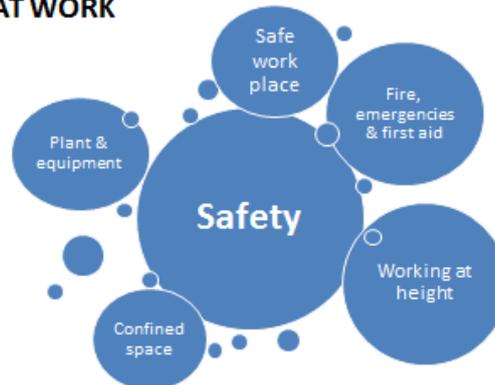
Taking a closer look at this, we can see on this slide the types of areas that health is concerned with.

### HEALTH AT WORK



For health, this is very much focussed on people and includes managing health hazards and the effects of work on health, fitness and capabilities for work, on managing the effects of workers health in the workplace and on promoting wellness and wellbeing at work.

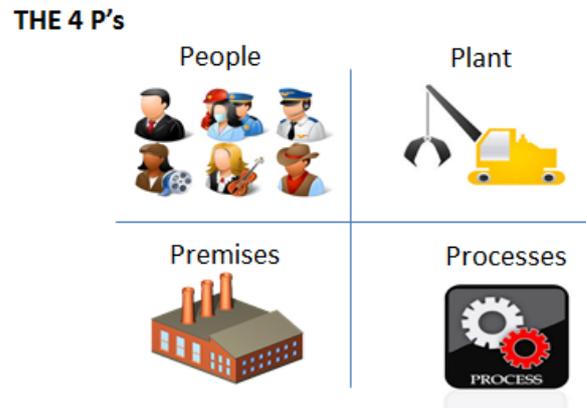
### SAFETY AT WORK



For safety, this tends to focus on the workplace, plant and equipment and processes of work, for example ensuring plant and equipment is suitable and in good working order, electrical safety, fire and emergency equipment and arrangements and storage of chemicals and dangerous goods.

Of course health and safety shouldn't be separated from each other, they are after all trying to achieve the common goal of a safe workplace, though health extends this focus out to look at how people and their health is managed at work. To be effective and give the best advantage to the workplace, each must work with the other.

A model that was introduced in my occupational health degree back in the mid-1990's is the 4Ps, which is still a useful and very simple prompt to ensuring that health and safety is considered. On the slide you can see the 4Ps as people, plant, process and premises. These are the 4 main areas that health and safety needs to focus on in the workplace.



An example of how the 4Ps work together would be chemicals at work – they need to be safely stored and used and, if hazardous to health, workers health may need to be monitored. Similarly, for noise management and hearing protection this may involve purchasing quieter equipment, isolating or securing noisy areas, preventative maintenance to keep plant and equipment in good order, workers using hearing protection and having hearing tests to check that noise controls are working effectively.

You can see just from these two examples that health and safety must be looked at as an overall approach to management - within which different actions are needed and different people may have different roles.

A WHS manager or officer may be responsible for general health and safety, with an occupational physician or nurse responsible for health monitoring and surveillance. From a company perspective, these two need to work towards the common goals of managing hazards and risks and preventing ill health and injury.

## Goal Setting

When we think about ensuring health in health and safety, there are a few ways to look at this. We can look at how to get health into a company's health and safety management system and we can look at the type of services that may be offered, programs or initiatives that may be run. From experience, one of the most important areas to agree on are the organisation's or company's goals for health and safety.

Goals are used by organisations to focus on the outcome that is needed – be it meeting business goals, ensuring legal compliance, preventing ill health and injury, raising awareness and developing a good culture. By agreeing on a goal or a number of goals, it brings the organisation to a common understanding of what it wants to achieve and gives direction to those working in the organisation on what they need to do to help achieve this.

### GOAL SETTING

- Focus on the outcome needed:
  - Meeting business goals
  - Ensuring legal compliance
  - Preventing ill health and injury
  - Raising awareness
  - Developing a good culture



Organisational goals are generally set by top management, from which departmental or section areas goals can be set. The aim of the goal is to reflect what the organisation or work area wants to achieve. From this all action plans, services and programs should be aimed at achieving that goal.

From a health and safety perspective, agreeing a goal or a number of goals is really important. This would ideally be an organisational goal that is signed off by top management; something that defines an outcome and gives direction to actions that will be taken to achieve the outcomes needed.

There will usually be some rationale or reason for the goal, which fits with other organisational goals. It's the agreement on this that ensures health and safety will contribute to the wider organisational goals and targets. The goal will define actions and plans.

There is no one-size fits all for goal setting and it's really up to an organisation or business to decide on what best suits what they want to achieve. If there is a goal that focuses on safety – such as 'securing a safe and healthy workplace' then the chances are there will be a higher focus on safety. If the goal is to 'meet legal obligations and prevent accidents and ill health', the focus will again be on compliance and with health included where its legally required (such as for health surveillance).

If a goal is set that reflects the wider reasons for managing health at work, it is more likely that the organisation will manage health as a part of its health and safety. An example of a goal that talks to both health and safety would be 'securing a safe and healthy workplace and workforce'. This reference to a healthy workforce goes beyond compliance and looks at the importance of having a healthy workforce.

#### **GOAL SETTING**

- No one-size fits all
- Goals include 'health' as well as 'safety':
  - Securing a safety and healthy workplace and workforce'.
- Not always easy, but important



Given that workers are one of a company's greatest assets – and at times greatest costs – having a healthy workforce will significantly contribute to HR capability and productivity, which links well with people and HR management.

Setting goals isn't always easy – managers may disagree, but it's important. It forms the basis for future discussions about budgets, services and where attention will be focussed. So once the goals have been set, agreed and approved, its then much easier to understand the purpose of managing health at work and how this will happen.

## **Ensuring Health in Health and Safety**

Following goal setting, we can then look at how we take these goals and use them as the basis for putting health management in place. This may mean adding health into the organisation's health and safety

management system or manual, it may mean establishing a health management service and, importantly linking health and safety across other areas of an organisation, such as HR and people management.

Part 2 of this mini-lecture looks at how health can fit within an organisation's health and safety management system or manual, where a separate occupational health service may be used, the spectrum of health and ill health and the opportunities within the cycle of employment to manage health and ill health at work.

To see Part 2 of this Information Sheet go to [www.kitney.com](http://www.kitney.com) and to see Part 2 of the mini-lecture go to <http://vimeo.com/pro/kitney/lbsu>.

## Further Information

For information on London South Bank University's Occupational Health Nursing Degree Program go to: <http://www.lbsu.ac.uk/courses>

For information on Kitney Occupational Health and Safety and to read other information sheets and articles written by Jo Kitney, go to [www.kitney.com](http://www.kitney.com)

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