HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPETENCIES
FOR NHS MANAGERS

THE NHS STAFF COUNCIL
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP
HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING
PARTNERSHIP GROUP
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INTRODUCTION

This guidance aims to help NHS health and safety (H&S) professionals and representatives review their competency programmes to assess whether managers have the right skills to address health and safety issues effectively.

Managers (particularly front-line managers) play a key role in health and safety. They need to have the right competencies to manage health and safety effectively including:

- completing risk assessments
- implementing and monitoring procedures
- investigating incidents
- providing appropriate support to staff as required.

Formal training is only part of the process for a manager to be competent in health and safety. Competency is about the balance of training, experience, skill, aptitude, attitude, knowledge and its application.

“The essence of competence is relevance to the workplace. What matters is that there is a proper focus on both the risks that occur most often and those with serious consequences.

Competence is the ability for every director, manager and worker to recognise the risks in operational activities and then apply the right measures to control and manage those risks.”

Judith Hackitt, Chair, Health and Safety Executive

The competence of managers should not be confused with the legal requirement to appoint a competent person to help you carry out your health and safety duties.

For further information, visit the Health and Safety Executive website: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/decide.htm
KEY COMPETENCY AREAS

The table below illustrates the required key competency areas for managers at each level. We have also included the competencies required for employees.

We have used the structure from the Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE’s) *Managing for Health and Safety HS(G)65* – plan, do, check, act.

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Competency 1: Understanding of personal accountabilities

- All staff have health and safety (H&S) personal accountabilities. This tends to be the focus of training and development at the employee and operational management level.
- An understanding of the law and how it relates to individuals, managers, assistant directors and directors is essential, but should also be balanced with a view of the moral and cost arguments for H&S.
- The message that tends to resonate with managers is the moral association that every employee has a right to work in a healthy and safe environment without the risk of injury.
- Senior managers need to lead on health and safety. They need to ensure that:
  - there is a safety culture in their organisation
  - staff are engaged on health and safety issues
  - health and safety is seen as essential to how work is done and not something that gets in the way.
- Training senior managers in carrying out safety tours and expecting these to be done is a good first step to ensuring H&S leadership is visible and matters.

The knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) requires every employee to assist in maintaining a healthy, safe and secure working environment. This is part of the Agenda for Change contract of employment.
Competency 2: Suitable health and safety management system

The health and safety management system is the means by which an organisation controls risk through the management process (Health and Safety Executive). This needs to be proportional to the risk and ideally embedded in the organisation’s management quality system.

Directors and assistant directors need to understand the organisational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing and achieving, reviewing and maintaining the organisation’s Occupational Health and Safety Policy (BSI).

Health and safety is like any other management process and should follow the plan, do, check, act process which directors and assistant directors should be familiar with. Specific awareness of how this relates to H&S management should be covered with directors and assistant directors so that they understand how it fits together.

Line managers need to know how the health and safety management system relates to them.

Required for:

- Director
- Assistant director
- Line manager
Competency 3: Determining your policy

- NHS organisations tend to be very policy driven. Directors and assistant directors need to be directly involved in H&S policy development to show leadership and commitment to H&S.
- Policy groups must have health and safety professionals and staff side engagement. Directors and assistant directors must be involved in the process to effectively set the H&S standard within the organisation and sign-off policy.
- Competency is gained by involvement in the process rather than any specific formal training course.

Competency 4: Planning for implementation

- Assistant directors and managers need to be competent planners. This should be a key core skill for any one in these posts.
- Training can be directed to asking managers to identify where they think their department is in regards to H&S using maturity matrices, safety culture climate tools or review against internal policies. Ask them to produce an action plan to increase performance or address the issues found.
- It is important that any exercises to develop H&S plans are real, followed up, monitored centrally at H&S committees or policy groups by the use of a scorecard system.
- Sometimes the best training can be the production and use of a plan so that it is accepted and shown to be of benefit.
- Directors will not be involved in detailed implementation planning, but they will need to ensure that adequate plans for implementation are in place.
- Some examples of culture climate tools are The Safety Maturity Model and the Safety Culture Maturity Model.
DO

Competency 5: Profiling your health and safety risks

Required for:
- Director
- Assistant director
- Line manager

- Understand the level and nature of risk and how this fits into the overall risk management and governance structure of the organisation.
- Be aware of how risks are defined and escalated through the organisation to the place where appropriate resources and or decisions can be made.
- Managers need to understand the importance of working with employees and their H&S representatives to understand risks in their areas.

5.1 Assessing the risks

Required for:
- Line manager
- Supervisor
- Employee

- Risk assessors need to be trained in the organisation’s risk process that should include the HSE’s 5 steps to risk assessment but managers also need to be aware of their role in this process.
- Managers need to have enough knowledge and understanding of the risk system so that they can make informed decisions about risk in their areas and sign off risk assessments. They also need to know how and who to escalate risk to when they are unable to action them, for example, due to resource issues.
- Supervisors also need to know how to interpret risk assessments and communicate the hazard, risks and controls in their area.
- Employees may also need training in carrying out dynamic risk assessments, for example, in manual handling and lone working situations. They will need to understand the principles of risk assessment and how to apply them in these circumstances.
Competency 6: Organising for health and safety

Required for:
✓ Director

• Need to have awareness of how the H&S management system is set up and resourced so that they can have a view of whether it is adequate and effective.
• Experience of leadership in H&S in previous roles would be expected but no formal training required.
• Assistant directors/functional managers will only need to be aware of and involved in the collection of information for directors.

6.1 Control

Required for:
✓ Assistant director ✓ Line manager ✓ Supervisor

• All need to have proportional knowledge and understanding of the role of supervision.
• Anyone who procures and oversees contractors needs to know the H&S implications and the risks that they import into the organisation, with an understanding of method statements, risk assessments and vetting procedures.
• For supervision, inspection as a safety skill should be understood so that supervisors and managers can follow the work being done to ensure processes are validated.
• Assistant directors need to be competent in safety tours.
• Managers and supervisors must understand issues regarding emergency preparedness and the concept of serious and imminent danger, all staff must know when to stop work and how to move to a safe place.
• Evacuation procedures must be tested and periodically practiced, with those in charge receiving extra training and drills.
6.2 Cooperation

Required for:
- ✔ Assistant director
- ✔ Line manager
- ✔ Supervisor
- ✔ Employee

- Assistant directors and managers need to understand the benefits of working in partnership with staff and union representatives.
- Where staff are engaged in H&S they tend to have a better understanding of the hazards and risk in their workplaces with greater acceptance of control measures necessary to mitigate the risk. These workplaces tend to have lower accident rates and are therefore more productive.
- An understanding of the basic requirements for facilitation of the role of a safety representative should be enhanced by active involvement in safety committees and day-to-day working.
- Managers and employees need to understand the role and function of H&S representatives so that they can be successfully included when in consultation when needed.

6.3 Communication

Required for:
- ✔ Director
- ✔ Assistant director
- ✔ Line manager
- ✔ Supervisor
- ✔ Employee

- Two-way communication from the top and bottom of an organisation is vital for H&S, and as such must be understood by all managers.
- The recognition of the importance of behaviours, written communications and face-to-face interaction as a safety skill should form part of all management training.
- Effective communication is when all employees receive, understand and pass on the correct message. How things are perceived is as important as what is said, for example, a weak H&S message is “do this job safely but I want it done tonight” as opposed to a strong H&S message which is “I want this job done tonight but I want it done safely”.
6.4 Competence

- All levels within an organisation need to show competence in the work that they do. This includes staff being trained to procedures so that they can use the equipment provided in the right way.
- How people gain competency is a mixture of skills, knowledge, and experience gained through a combination of training, practise, coaching and supervision.
- Competency must be demonstrated and assessed.
- H&S training needs to have objectives, measures and feedback to ensure the learning outcome has been delivered. This can be done through tests but also through practical demonstrations, for example, production of H&S plans, risk assessments or inspection and the associated report.
- Competence starts with the correct selection, recruitment, assessment and training of individuals for jobs and tasks.
- Managers who carry out selection and recruitment should understand how H&S relates to the job in hand and be proficient at identifying knowledge and skills in others.

Competency 7: Implementing your plan

- It’s important to ensure that assistant directors and managers know how to implement their plan. They should put in place the correct controls, ensuring resources, equipment and the maintenance of it is carried out, whilst staff are trained, competent, instructed and supervised.
- Coaching and mentoring managers and reviewing their performance is key to ensure that they develop the right skills rather relying on fixed training courses.
- Progress against the plan should be documented and may be contained in a quality system or by reference to an H&S standard, such as the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partnership Group Workplace standards or the Occupational Health and Safety Standard OHSAS18001.
- Documentation must be suitable and sufficient in that it is proportionate to the risk faced, and must be concise, easy to follow and use.
- Training in documentation writing may be required depending on the assessment of the development needs of the individual manager.
7.1 Implementing risk controls

Risk controls will be proportionate to the hazard in terms of likelihood and severity. Safe systems of work will need to be understood by all who carry out the tasks and supervise them for their hazard, risk and controls and may be formally recorded in written procedures.

- If high hazard then a knowledge and understanding of safety systems, such as permit to work, may be required by managers and staff.
- All staff need to know how to escalate their concerns if risk processes are not followed which could lead to serious and imminent danger.

Required for:
- ✔ Employee
- ✔ Line manager
- ✔ Supervisor
CHECK

**Competency 8: Measuring performance and monitoring**

- Directors, assistant directors and managers need to know what monitoring system is in place at their organisation and how they receive information and feed back into it.
- Board level contact is important and emphasis must be on timely information as with any business performance metric.
- Active and reactive monitoring needs to be provided to managers with any definitions and gaps in data clearly understood.
- Active monitoring methods need to be balanced against reactive information on injuries and work-related ill health, such as, information on risk assessment completion, inspection reports, other information from H&S representatives and mandatory training completion.
- Managers and supervisors will also need to know how to feed into monitoring systems for H&S, what the escalation routes are and when to use them.

**Competency 9: Reporting and investigating accidents and incidents**

- Staff need to be trained in reporting accidents correctly and in a timely fashion.
- The reporting of healthcare sharps injuries is now a legal duty and this must be brought to the attention of all staff.
- Managers must be trained in accident investigation to gather information, analyse data to identify failures, for example when doing root cause analysis how to use ‘the 5 whys’ technique as a means to identify them.
- Managers need training on how to identify further control measures or more effective ones.
- Managers need to know how to access specialist advice and help, for example from their H&S or risk departments.
- Managers must be aware of what internal escalation processes are required, for example never events* and how to correctly report incidents to the HSE where required by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations. This may be done by an internal H&S department or be delegated to responsible departmental managers.

*Never events are serious, largely preventable patient safety incidents that should not occur if the available preventative measures have been implemented.
ACT

Competency 10: Reviewing performance and learning lessons

The review must cover outputs which are improvements to the H&S management system that then feed back into the H&S plan.

- Practical experience of involvement in H&S review at senior level is best. Allow managers as part of their development to attend as observers to H&S committees, or senior management reviews is key.
- The review must cover outputs which are improvements to the H&S management system that then feed back into the H&S plan.
- Learning lessons and sharing information with H&S representatives in partnership must be understood as beneficial to the H&S management system.

Required for:

- Director
- Assistant director
- Line manager
FURTHER INFORMATION

The following guidance may also be useful:

- The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partnership Group (HSWPG) ‘Workplace health and safety standards’. The standards provide advice on the training and qualifications required for health and safety managers and advisors.
  www.nhsemployers.org/HSWPG

- HSE guidance – ‘What is competence?’
  www.hse.gov.uk/competence/what-is-competence.htm

- HSE/IOD guidance – ‘Leading health and safety at work’ –
  www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg417.pdf

- National Skills Academy (NSA) Health E-learning platform [previously named Skills for Health e-learning]

ABOUT THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP GROUP

This document was produced by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partnership Group (HSWPG), a national sub-group of the NHS Staff Council made up of employer and staff side representatives. The overall purpose of the group is to raise standards of workplace health, safety and wellbeing in healthcare organisations and to promote a safer working environment for all health care staff.
**NHS Employers**

The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients.

We help employers make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues to ensure that their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice. We keep them up to date with the latest workforce thinking and expert opinion, providing practical advice and information, and generating opportunities to network and share knowledge and best practice.

We work with employers in the NHS to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

The NHS Employers organisation is part of the NHS Confederation.

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**Contact us**

For more information on how to get involved in our work, email comms@nhsemployers.org

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