

## The need for closer OSH and HR collaboration

**One of the most valued relationships IOSH members have is with our human resources (HR) colleagues. Yet it can often become difficult, more so if there is a subordinate relationship that can compromise assistance provided by one profession to the other.**

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Safety and health practitioners have expressed concern that in some organisations the role and function of the competent safety and health professional is not understood by HR professionals or is undervalued.

After discussion at IOSH Council in late 2015 it was agreed to engage with members about the HR profession's influence and involvement with OSH practitioners.

Effective safety and health management in organisations depends on engaging the workforce, and this is an area where HR and OSH professionals can work in partnership. This is especially true of efforts to improve employee wellbeing; both professions have much to contribute from different perspectives.

Around 2,000 IOSH members participated in a survey by email to explore safety and health professionals' perceptions about the level of OSH training received by HR professionals, their understanding of OSH management and their involvement in providing OSH advice.

The results suggest that there are some difficulties in communication between H&S and HR professionals and this may be due partly to differing priorities. Construction industry responses highlight particular issues around ill health and poor HR engagement, with OSH practitioners leading on wellbeing issues.

Suggestions for collaboration with the CIPD include agreeing a definition of wellbeing

One area where closer working could be promoted is the Health and Safety Executive's Stress Management Standards, which some HR leaders have been uncomfortable adopting; anecdotally, this is due to the standards' focusing on the organisation rather than on staff and HR practitioners not understanding that risk assessment tools are intended to identify and manage risk before the onset of harm. Respondents cited some cases where HR managers' actions might inadvertently have put them at risk of breaching s 36 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, which covers offences due to the fault of another person.

The survey results suggest the topic has been an issue of concern and interest to many OSH professionals. IOSH has engaged with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to try to improve the influence of both professions, meeting the commitment in IOSH's new strategy to build strategic partnerships with other bodies.

Suggestions for collaboration include agreeing a definition of wellbeing, co-operating to raise understanding of the health risk assessment process and surveillance requirements and how they inform OH provision, working to influence and "cross award" continuing professional development recognition between the CIPD and IOSH, and engaging with HR professionals in construction to promote and improve wellbeing.

Broader communication at executive level might ensure that full benefits offered by practitioners from both professions are understood and lead to a reduction in silo working and each valuing the other's contribution to the business.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the survey and let's hope we can look forward to a more joined-up future.

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