

Safety, Health & Wellbeing *LIVE*

How should we strategically plan and focus 2023 budgets to deliver the most effective worker safety and productivity.



With recession looming ever closer, IOM wanted to shine a light on the issue of health and safety budgets and how these could be strategically focused to keep workers safe and productivity high. So that when the inevitable squeeze happens, high value activities remain relatively unaffected.

To do this they gathered data from conversations held with over 100 professionals attending **Safety, Health and Wellbeing Live 2022** in Farnborough.

This report presents these

findings and in so doing, gives an insight into the concerns and views of people from across a variety of occupations within Health and Safety.

The aim is to give those

working in the field a deeper understanding of which areas of Health and Safety their peers are focused so that they have wider context for their decision making and spend.

TRAINING

The most consistently mentioned theme over the duration of the conference. Training was viewed by the majority as easy to deploy, cost effective and measurable.

The challenge was ensuring that behaviours changed as a result with high standards

maintained, and that was why many teams were exploring on the job training. With the onus on delivery by experienced colleagues, it was seen to allow for a greater level of ownership, encouraging them to revisit their knowledge. For more junior

members of staff, the practical application gave greater context to the skills they were learning. In support of this, toolbox talks were viewed as essential. A way to remind everyone of core issues and the risks faced if they weren't followed.

“Making training as relevant as possible to individuals embeds the learning. Delivering virtually might be more cost effective but often means that the skills aren’t deployed in the right way. We found from the Facefit training we deliver that it is so much more powerful on site, and in person so that grey areas can be quickly identified and clarity given.” Ross Clark, Head of Workplace Protection, IOM



How should we strategically plan and focus 2023 budgets to deliver the most effective worker safety and productivity.



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

In looking at the subject of productivity it was no surprise to see mental health and wellbeing appear as a common theme.

Creating supportive working cultures where people feel able to talk about the issue was a frequent comment from

attendees. So too was ensuring that when issues of mental health and wellbeing were raised managers and staff have the guidance to handle these conversations appropriately.

It was found that by having a degree of knowledge and

understanding around the topic, and a level of openness where people could speak freely, there was a greater sense of trust. This in turn helps to create a safety first culture where working practices could be improved to both develop staff and keep them safe.

“Getting culture right is hard but by looking after the whole worker the productivity gains can be significant. 80% of UK employees believe that stress around their financial wellbeing can negatively impact their performance at work – with the figure rising to 88% among those who live in households with childrenⁱ. By talking, exploring and working with your staff the gains for them and the business are there for the taking.” Nathan Baker



WOMEN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

Improper PPE, lack of understanding and ineffective processes. These are the issues women face in today's workplace.

When asked about their top priority many cited the adoption of health and safety systems

and processes which adapt to the needs of the individual. In particular, those which lead to a greater understanding of the health and physical challenges women face in the workplace.

Menopause for example affects everyone differently. For some

it means there is a requirement for work tasks to be broken up allowing for rest, whilst others require different solutions. In all cases being adaptable and working with individuals helps to create a more inclusive workplace.

“There's a strong desire from event attendees across the sector to learn more about wellbeing as well as their responsibilities as employers. So many are curious to understand how they can improve practice to deliver better overall worker health. It's encouraging to see this as it demonstrates that the industry is changing for the better.”

Tim Else, Organiser, SHW Live



ⁱ Survey published by YouGov and YuLife April 2022

How should we strategically plan and focus 2023 budgets to deliver the most effective worker safety and productivity.



DUST AND CHROMIUM VI EXPOSURE BECOMING A CORE CONCERN

Two threats consistently on the minds of health and safety professionals were that of dust (Respirable Crystalline Silica(RCS)) and Chromium VI (CrVI).

RCS has been in HSE's sights as it relates to the construction industry for some time, and it is clear other industries have heard the warning too. Jolted by the significant rise in cases of occupational silicosis more investment is being made in RCS control equipment. In addition, many organisations are

investing in awareness raising exercises amongst staff to ensure they wear the appropriate RPE and follow the HSE guidelines. Shifting their safety culture and mindset from reactive to proactive.

Similarly increased recognition of Chromium VI and how this carcinogen affects the workforce has led to greater investigation of the issue by health and safety professionals. Sources of exposure of this fine powder which can appear on heavy machinery,

engines, and ventilation outlets are being identified with control measures implemented to ensure COSHH compliance. The driver is to act now and protect staff with a robust process before this issue becomes a far bigger and more mainstream threat.



“We’re seeing more and more people come to us for advice and sampling about RCS and CrVI as the industry is realising that a tailored approach is needed to mitigate them properly. The lack of education around identification and appropriate action is concerning and is the main reason IOM are regularly brought in. This knowledge goes on to inform plans, reassure senior leaders and ensure that fines from HSE are avoided.”
Mark Cornforth, Head of Engineering Development, IOM

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

It's important to note that the challenges outlined in this report are not solely the responsibility of those working in health and safety. Those spoken to expressed a need for everyone to play their part in creating cultures and working practices which protect staff and improve health.

Leaders of organisations have a clear responsibility to hold people

accountable and role model standards. Doing so sets the tone of the organisation and shows that no-one is exempt. So critical is this issue that HSE lists it within one of the eight responsibilities managing directors have with regards to safety.

Whilst it is not a budgetary focus it is clearly an area that Health and Safety needs to

invest in. The benefits for leaders are huge not only in reducing accident numbers and ensuring there is effective risk control but as people feel able to raise concerns they experience less stress. Less stress, as we know, improves wellbeing, productivity and reduces absenteeism as this study in miners shows.

“Our advice would be to focus on effective communication with senior leadership around initiatives and the role they can play. By getting them on board early and then showing the impact their involvement is having it both supports their decision making and encourages everyone across the organisation to make a change.”
David Flower, Senior Occupational Hygienist, IOM



How should we strategically plan and focus 2023 budgets to deliver the most effective worker safety and productivity.



CONCLUSION

As we conclude it's worth noting that there was a strong feeling around the difficulty of awareness raising when it comes to workplace risks. With some feedback suggesting Health and Safety be introduced as a subject within the education system alongside its repositioning as an enabler of great work rather than as an obstacle. A bigger conversation for another report.

Based on the conversations held at SHW Live as well as information gathered from the comprehensive speaker programme the report highlights the main focuses

when it comes to the budgets of health and safety managers and demonstrates the work that is to be done in terms of evolving organisational leadership and culture.

As budgets tighten these aspects can be positioned as effective ways to reduce accident levels without drastic financial outlays. Whilst in tandem a greater emphasis is put on training, wellbeing, inclusive practices and in addressing the very real threats of RCS and Cr VI.

Health and Safety managers have a challenging road ahead but



in remaining alert to upcoming threats, savvy with their training deployment and proactive regarding senior leadership buy-in they will hopefully navigate a successful path for the benefit of all.

Committed to making the world healthier and safer at work, IOM is a trusted advisor for organisations such as the NHS, HSE and AECOM. We investigate issues, offer independent guidance and provide informed solutions. Talk to IOM and find the solutions to your challenges today.

www.iom-world.org
iom@iom-world.org

IOM Head Office

Research Avenue North,
Riccarton,
Edinburgh,
EH14 4AP

Tel: 0131 449 8000

IOM Stafford

Brookside Business Park,
Cold Meece,
Stone,
Staffordshire, ST15 0RZ

Tel: 01785 333200

IOM Chesterfield

Tapton Park
Innovation Centre,
Brimington Road, Tapton,
Chesterfield, S41 0TZ

Tel: 01246 383110

