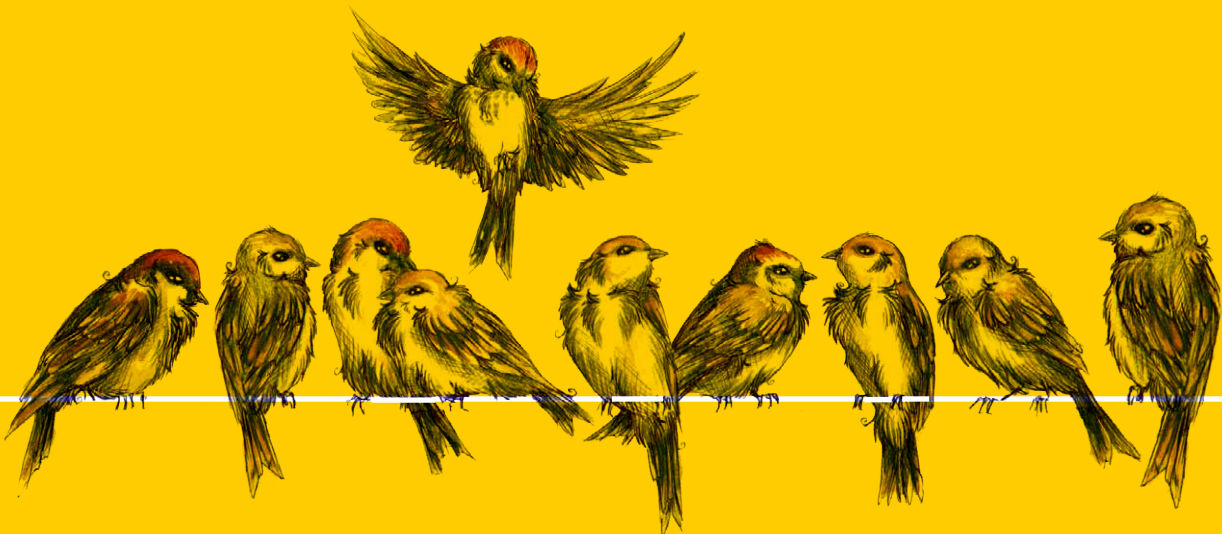


UNIT 4

# health and safety



AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PACK  
FOR USE IN SCHOOLS IN WALES



helping to equip young people  
for the world of work

# UNIT 4: health and safety

a better way to work wales

---

## acknowledgements

The materials were originally written by Julia Fiehn and Andrew Miller, Centre for Education and Industry, University of Warwick and have since been edited by Professor Andrew Miller, Director of Active Learning Research Associates Ltd.

The TUC would like to acknowledge contribution from the trade unions, schools, colleges, teachers and students who helped with the production of the first edition of this pack.

Wales TUC would particularly like to thank the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS, Welsh Assembly Government) and Robert Goddard (Youth Organiser, Wales TUC) for their assistance with this revised edition for use in Wales.

© Trades Union Congress 1997, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2009.

Copyright is lifted on student materials only. These may be photocopied for use in schools, colleges, youth clubs and other educational institutions for the purpose of education and training.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

a better way to work wales

---

## GROUP LEADERS' NOTES

The aims of this unit are to:

- » raise the awareness of young people about health and safety at work
- » encourage young people to think through the consequences of actions on their own and others' health and safety
- » provide an opportunity for young people to work with trade unionists in the classroom.

The unit consists of eight activities:

- » *accidents at work* – two introductory activities which ask young people to examine real cases of accidents to work experience students and to other people at work.
- » *working hazards* – a discussion exercise about the extent of risks which people face at work.
- » *global health and safety* – a citizenship investigation where students research the issue of child labour and prepare for a debate and campaign.
- » *what would you do?* – a decision-making exercise which places students on work experience in various settings. They must decide how to react to potentially hazardous situations.
- » *in court* – four real case studies of health and safety issues.
- » *issues now* – an activity examining rights and responsibilities around contemporary health and safety issues.
- » *health and safety investigation* – an assignment involving investigations at a work organisation which students can use to produce evidence of key skills.
- » *goodlife superstore* – a simulation of a health and safety committee in a major food retailer.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

a better way to work wales

---

## GROUP LEADERS' NOTES

### background information

**Health and safety at work covers a wide range of issues including noise, handling chemicals, accidents, protective clothing and the use of new technology. Every year, four million people are hurt at work. Workplace injuries and ill health cost Britain around £16 billion a year and are often caused by dangerous conditions in the workplace. The economy loses 30 million working days in sickness because of work-related illness.**

*The Health and Safety At Work Act, 1974*, imposes a range of duties on employers. These are summarised in the students' notes, *Health and safety law: what you should know*, accompanying the assignment. The law is designed to ensure that people can work in a safe and healthy working environment and that anyone coming into contact with the workplace can do so without risk to their health. By law, employers must consult with their employees about health and safety and, where a union is recognised, with the union representatives who have been trained in health and safety matters. It is advisable to work on these activities with a trained health and safety representative. Briefing notes for trade unionists are provided at the end of this unit.

It is important for students to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to their own, and other people's, health and safety before they go on work experience. In 1999, Regulations made under the 1974 Act required employers to assess the risks for all employees and non-employees (including work experience students) at the workplace, and inform them of these risks and any control measures put in place.

**Additional information is available** from the TUC at [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) and from the Health and Safety Executive at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

The HSE website provides links to other sites giving information about more specific health and safety issues.

OSH World ([www.sheilapantry.com/oshworld](http://www.sheilapantry.com/oshworld)) has several websites which contain useful information drawn from their journal articles.

The TUC's Worksmart website has FAQs about health and safety at work and useful links ([www.worksmart.org.uk](http://www.worksmart.org.uk)).

These are available free on the TUC 'Know Your Rights' Line: 0870 600 4882

Guidance on health and safety and work experience is available in *Work Experience and the Law* (Third Edition) by Anthony Johns with Andrew Miller, available from Simulus Education ([tonyjohns@enterprise.net](mailto:tonyjohns@enterprise.net)).

### accidents at work 1 and 2

#### DESCRIPTION

This activity aims to raise students' awareness of accidents that can occur at work. The first set of accidents all happened to work experience students during the recent years and are drawn from the *Health and Safety Executive* files. Students work in groups to identify what lessons can be learned. In the case studies, students are often doing things which are not allowed for young people of their age and level of experience. Other accidents result from students being left unsupervised or not wearing appropriate safety clothing. The second set of accidents resulted in industrial injuries to workers who were members of trade unions. In each case, the union helped the person concerned win compensation.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » Young people learn about the kinds of accidents that can happen at work and on work experience.
- » Young people consider ways in which accidents at work can be avoided and how membership of a union can help protect employees.

#### METHOD

Introduce the aim of the exercise and ask the students to work in small groups. Distribute the work experience case studies and ask groups to discuss the first two questions:

Who, if anybody, was at fault? How could the accident have been avoided?

When the groups have worked through the eight case studies, ask them to discuss the third question:

What can be learned from the case studies about health and safety at work?

Ask each group to produce a checklist of do's and don'ts.

Ask each group in turn to give one example of a do or don't from their checklist using examples from the case studies to explain their health and safety point.

Distribute the second set of eight case studies of accidents at work. Explain that they all resulted in compensation claims for workplace injuries. Ask students in the same groups to tackle the three questions:

Who, if anybody, was at fault?

What can be learned from the case studies about health and safety at work?

How can membership of a union help people when they suffer workplace injuries?

Many trade unionists have a health and safety brief and may be able to raise students' awareness of such issues at work. If a trade unionist is present, ask him/her to comment on the case studies of accidents at work and to explain how such accidents can be avoided. The trade unionist can be asked to draw on his/her own experience of accidents and their causes and to say how the protection provided by membership of a trade union can benefit all working people.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

## accidents at work 1

Read the case studies which describe accidents on work experience in the recent past.

Who, if anybody, was at fault?

How could the accident have been avoided?

What can be learned from the case studies about health and safety at work?

### DOWN ON THE FARM

A work experience student on a farm was asked by the farmer to climb a two-section aluminium ladder to fetch a hay bale from the loft in a barn. The farmer went away while the student climbed the ladder. On his way down, the student fell 2.4 metres on to a concrete floor, fracturing a wrist and two ribs.

### IN THE SHOP

A work experience student working in a shop selling electrical equipment was helping to lift a washing machine into a van. The back of the washing machine was loose and it came off slicing into the student's finger. The student was not wearing gloves and had been given no safety training on lifting techniques. Tendon damage was caused to the little finger of the right hand.

### AT THE LEISURE CENTRE

Two students on placement at a leisure centre were asked to carry out cleaning duties. They had not been given adequate training and were left unsupervised. They mixed cleaning fluid with bleach and were exposed to toxic chlorine gas as a result.

### IN THE FACTORY

A work experience student was working in a factory and was operating a rubber-cutting guillotine. The machine became blocked and the student opened the rear guard, which did not have a time delay, and reached inside. The blade severed the top of a finger before coming to rest. No one from the school had visited the placement for a health and safety check beforehand.

### IN THE GARAGE WORKSHOP

A work experience student working with car mechanics in a garage was asked to clean some car parts using a hose. There was some horseplay and the student's overalls became soaked with solvents. When the student went outside for a cigarette the overalls caught fire, causing burns.

### ON THE LAWN

A work experience student on a horticultural placement was told to mow a lawn area which had a steep bank around it. The student, who was wearing trainers, was left unsupervised with the hover-type mowing machine. The student mowed the flat area as instructed, and then continued to cut the grass on the steep bank. The student slipped and the machine passed over a foot causing severe injuries.

### IN THE WAREHOUSE

A work experience student sat on the end of a side-loading lorry in a warehouse doorway. Behind the student was a stack of packaged insulation boards. When the driver moved the truck forward a foot to enable a car to get past, the start-stop movement toppled the packs onto the student, breaking his arm and pelvis.

### ON THE BUILDING SITE

A work experience student was employed by an electrical sub-contractor on a building which was being refurbished. The student was left unsupervised and helped some joiners working on an alloy scaffold tower. While climbing up the outside of the tower the student fell off, although why this happened was unclear and was disputed. The building contractor did not know a student was on site and no health and safety instruction had been given.

## accidents at work 2

Read the eight case studies of various accidents at work.

Who, if anybody, was at fault?

What can be learned from the case studies about health and safety at work?

How can membership of a union help people when they suffer workplace injuries?

### **FOLDING CHAIR INJURY**

A Customs and Excise official was sitting on a chair in the office when it collapsed under him. He crashed into a wall causing severe damage to his spine. Despite regular visits to neurosurgeons and orthopaedic specialists, he has been unable to return to work. His union, PCS (Public and Commercial Services), helped him win £225,000 in compensation.

### **DISABILITY AND DEBT**

A Post Office motor mechanic was carrying a toolbox along a walkway at a Royal Mail workshop. He tripped over a trailing line and injured his back, shoulder and elbow. His union, the Communication Workers' Union had objected to the air lines when they were first introduced. He was permanently disabled and had to give up his job to become a low paid pools collector. The union helped him win £101,176 which enabled him to pay off the debts which had built up since he was forced to change jobs.

### **CHECKOUT OPERATOR SLIPS UP**

A checkout operator slipped on a wet floor and fell heavily at work. She fractured a small bone at the base of her spine and her employer offered £2,500 in compensation. Her Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, investigated her medical condition and the shop premises, and pushed for a court hearing on the case. The employers increased their offer to £69,860.

### **FINGERS CRUSHED**

A music teacher suffered crushed fingers and a thumb when the upper frame of a sash window fell heavily onto his hand as he was opening it. In the past he had made several complaints about the lack of maintenance of the window. After a night in hospital the teacher recovered and his union, the National Association of

Schoolmasters / Union of Women Teachers helped to win him £2,000 compensation.

### **TERMINAL INJURY**

A duty officer working at an airport was knocked over by roller skating youths during a police chase. A few weeks later he was assaulted by a fellow worker. He then suffered a heart attack and had to give up his job early. His union, the PCS (Public and Commercial Services), helped to win him a £20,000 award from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

### **OFF-LICENCE INJURY**

An off-licence manager was unloading a cage full of drink when it slid down a ramp and pinned her against the wall. She injured her arm, neck and shoulder in the accident. She commented "I can look back now and laugh at the accident. At the time I was pinned against the wall and couldn't even reach the brandy bottle!". The area organiser for her union, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, helped her win Invalidity Benefit and a legal settlement of £65,000.

### **WARDROBES**

A stage manager with a ballet company was instructed to lift and carry wardrobe skips at a theatre. There were several boxes on the floor in her path and while manoeuvring around them, she injured her back. Her union, British Actors' Equity, helped win her £75,000 in compensation.

### **DOUBLE VICTIM**

A bank worker experienced two raids at his branch in the space of three months. In the first raid the manager was held at knife point and the staff were forced to the floor. After the second raid, he became unwell through stress. His union helped to win him an award of £1,250 for the stress suffered.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

a better way to work wales

---

## DISCUSSION EXERCISE

### working hazards

#### DESCRIPTION

The health and safety of people at work is essential as is the health and safety of young people. Schools have a duty to make sure that young people have their awareness raised about health and safety hazards as preparation for work experience and their careers education. The Health and Safety Executive's *2005 Worker Survey* ([www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/pdf/whass1.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/pdf/whass1.pdf)) gives an interesting overview of the kinds of hazards that people face at work everyday and the extent to which they are concerned about those hazards.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » Young people will be aware of the main categories of hazard faced by people at work and the anxiety that can cause.
- » Young people will become more aware of the control measures that could reduce the risk of people's health being damaged by these hazards.

#### METHOD

Put the class into groups of four or five. Ask each group to make a list of the different hazards that people are exposed to in different jobs. It will make the task more concrete if you give them a small number of jobs to think about, e.g. a nurse, construction worker, office worker, factory worker, transport worker. Give each group a different type of worker to focus on.

Ask groups to feedback the hazards one at a time. As general hazards are mentioned write them up on the board/flipchart. The list should be similar to the 12 common issues listed on the handout *working hazards*. Add to the list any that have not been mentioned by students to produce a standard list.

Next ask groups to identify the three most common hazards that affect people at work and the three least common hazards. Feedback by placing a tick against each most common hazard (one tick per group) and a cross against the least common hazards.

Distribute the handout *working hazards* and give students time to read it through. Ask them to identify the hazards that would most worry them if they were exposed to them in their working lives. Then ask them to consider how these risks could be reduced or controlled by employers working with trade unions and employees. Ask students to feedback their control measures and write these alongside each hazard on the board/flipchart.

### working hazards

Before you enter a workplace of work experience or start work you would be well advised to be aware of what risks you might face. The *Health and Safety Executive survey* of workers in 2005 lists the most common hazards. It shows what proportion of workers face the hazard and how concerned those people are that their health might suffer.

**PC or laptop use.** 62% of workers used a desktop PC or a laptop in their job every day. 11% of those were concerned that using their PC or laptop might cause them harm.

**Chemicals that could cause skin problems.** 50% of all workers come into regular contact with substances known to cause skin problems. 12% of these were concerned about the risk involved.

**Slip or trip.** 30% of workers in an average week walk across floors which present a risk from slipping or tripping (e.g. slippery, obstructed, badly lit). 30% of those people exposed to the hazard were concerned that they might be injured.

**Lifting or carrying.** 28% of workers have a job which involves lifting or carrying heavy loads by hand on their own every day. One third of these people were worried that manual handling might cause them harm.

**Dusts or fumes that could cause respiratory problems.** 29% of workers are in jobs where they are regularly exposed to dusts, fumes, gases or vapours. One third were concerned that this might harm their health.

**Driving or working around vehicles.** 28% of workers drive a vehicle in the course of their job. 20% of workers are in a workplace where vehicles are driven around them. 17% of these two groups were concerned that either driving or working near to vehicles could harm them.

**Physical attacks or threats at work.** 21% of workers had experienced threat or attack (so more would be at risk from this hazard). 34% of those were concerned that this would cause them harm. 20% of workers felt intimidated or had been threatened by a member of the public or customer.

**Noise.** 19% of people work in an environment where they have to raise their voice to talk to people or where their work left them with ringing in their ears or a temporary feeling of deafness. A quarter were concerned about potential damage to their hearing.

**Work at height.** 15% of workers have jobs that involve working at height, i.e. working where they could fall a distance that would cause injury. 27% of these workers were concerned that this would cause harm to them.

**Hand-arm vibration.** 8% of workers use power tools or machines for at least one hour a week that make their hands vibrate. A quarter of these people were concerned that such vibrations would cause them harm.

**Whole body vibration.** 6% of workers have jobs that involve riding or standing on vehicles or machines that cause their bodies to vibrate or jolt. Over a quarter were worried that the vibrations would injure them.

**Stress.** 12% of employees found their jobs very or extremely stressful and a further third found their jobs moderately stressful.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

a better way to work wales

---

## INVESTIGATION

### global health and safety

#### DESCRIPTION

In this activity students are made aware of the global dimension of health and safety issues through the presentation of various alarming statistics from the International Labour Organisation. The focus of the activity is upon child labour where children are engaged in work which negatively affects their health and interferes with their education. Students in groups undertake some research on child labour in a particular product area: stitched footballs, chocolate/cocoa, rugs/carpets and tobacco. They take part in a debate and plan a campaign in their school or college.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » Young people will be made aware of some of the health and safety effects of globalisation and of the issues of child labour.
- » Young people will understand what actions can be taken to eliminate or reduce the negative effects of child labour.
- » Young people will consider the issues involved in planning a local awareness-raising campaign on a global issue.

#### METHOD

Introduce the topic by asking students how many of them have a football (which is stitched as opposed to plastic) or eat chocolate? Do they know where the footballs were made or where the cocoa in the chocolate came from? What would they feel if they thought that young children were being badly exploited to produce these goods?

Give out copies of the handout *global health and safety*. Ask students to work in groups and to choose a product to research. There are four examples given but they can use the internet to find other examples, such as trainers and items of clothing. The first task is to investigate the issue using the websites provided as a starting point.

Once the task is completed you can ask each group to prepare and deliver a presentation on what they have found out about the problem and how it is being tackled (they can use PowerPoint to illustrate the issue by downloading some images from the relevant websites).

Hold a classroom debate on the statement provided or develop your own statement, making sure that you have students who will speak both for and against.

The final suggestion is to ask students in their groups to plan a campaign to raise awareness of child labour in their school or college. This is a planning task and students should present their ideas to the rest of the group. You can take a vote on the best idea and the final stage would be for the students to put the plan into practice as part of active citizenship.

### global health and safety

Products we buy and consume from other countries may have been produced by people – and often young children – working in hazardous conditions. This is something that we should be concerned about and – as active citizens – should do something about.

Here are some global health and safety facts from the International Labour Organisation:

Every day 5,000 people die because of accidents at work and diseases contracted through work.

There are 270 million accidents at work each year and half of all deaths from accidents are in agriculture.

Hazardous substances kill 440,000 workers annually with asbestos claiming 100,000 of those lives.

Global health and safety has become an important issue for trade unions:

Multinational enterprises can have different standards of health and safety in different countries. One way of reducing costs is by exposing workers in poorer countries to greater risks.

In some countries there are special regions involved in exports (Export Processing Zones) where trade unions are banned. Often work schedules are exhausting and health and safety conditions are poor.

Hazards can cross boundaries from one country to another, e.g. nuclear power plants, toxic waste and the use of pesticides.

One of the most worrying issues is child labour:

352 million children are engaged in economic activity (called child work which as long as it does not affect their health or prevent their education is permitted) and one in every six children aged 5-17 are involved in child labour. Child labour means children under 12 years of age working and those between 12 and 14 engaged in harmful work.

8 million children work in the worst forms of uncontrolled child labour including being enslaved, forcibly recruited, prostituted, trafficked, forced into illegal activities or exposed to hazardous work.

171 million work in hazardous child labour, i.e. working in dangerous conditions where they could be killed or injured or made ill.

Child labour is involved in producing everyday products that we all might use.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

a better way to work wales

---

## INVESTIGATION

### global health and safety

#### TASK ONE

Research child labour and what action has been taken to combat it. Focus on one of the following products.

Football: see the Sialkot example on [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

Chocolate/cocoa: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

Rugs and carpets: [www.rugmark.org](http://www.rugmark.org)

Tobacco: [www.eclt.org](http://www.eclt.org)

General sites worth visiting for research include:

[www.stopchildlabor.org](http://www.stopchildlabor.org)

[www.hrw.org/children/labor.htm](http://www.hrw.org/children/labor.htm)

[www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

#### TASK TWO

Prepare to speak in a classroom debate either for or against the motion:

*'Child work and child labour are necessary evils in a globally competitive world.'*

#### TASK THREE

As a group of active citizens plan a campaign in your school or college to draw attention to the issue of child labour. How would you get across the idea that we are all responsible for supporting child labour through the choices we make as consumers?

Develop an idea for a one off event or a campaign over a period of time to raise the awareness of other students, teachers and parents. Be prepared to present your idea to the rest of the class.

### what would you do?

#### DESCRIPTION

This activity provides 12 situations which are sometimes encountered in various working environments. In groups, students read through the situations and decide what is wrong and what they should do if they were put in that situation. The activity should raise students' awareness of health and safety and what action they can take to avoid problems.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » Young people learn about the kinds of accidents that can happen at work and on work experience.
- » Young people learn appropriate responses to potentially dangerous situations.

#### METHOD

In advance of the session, reproduce the *Situation* cards, one set for each group. Ask students to form groups of four and explain the purpose of the activity. They should appoint one student as a scribe to record the thoughts of their group. This person should also be prepared to say what the group decided during debriefing.

Give each group a set of cards. Explain that such incidents are not common on work experience but that everyone should be aware of health and safety issues. Ask them to turn over one card at a time. One student should read out the situation and the group should then discuss the two questions at the bottom of each card. What's wrong? What should you do? Allow 15/20 minutes to complete the task.

Pick on one group at random to give you their responses to the first situation. Ask if any other groups disagree or had a different response. Use the commentary to add any further points. Then move on to the next situation, choosing a different group to start each time.

If there is a visitor present in the lesson, ask for his/her comments on the students' responses.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### WORK EXPERIENCE PREPARATION

## what would you do?

### COMMENTARY FOR GROUP LEADERS

**SITUATION 1:** Students should receive training in how to lift and should not be lifting patients, if it is beyond their physical capacity. If they have back pain they should stop lifting immediately and tell their supervisor. They should also inform their school work experience coordinator.

**SITUATION 2:** Although the student received training they should not have to strain themselves in lifting and carrying. The student should tell their supervisor if certain items are too heavy to carry and ask if trolleys can be used, or if items can be broken down into smaller units to make them easier to handle.

**SITUATION 3:** The student should have mentioned the eczema when applying to this placement. The student should mention the dermatitis to the manager and either ask not to shampoo, or request plastic gloves for use when shampooing hair.

**SITUATION 4:** The student should not be using a circular saw, which is very dangerous, and prohibited for work experience students. The coworker should not have left the student unsupervised. Accidents often occur with clothing being pulled into saws and severed fingers are not uncommon.

**SITUATION 5:** Placements in leisure centres usually require general cleaning duties. The student should receive instruction in using various cleaning materials and be supervised when using hazardous materials, which can combine to give off toxic chlorine gas.

**SITUATION 6:** The company has not set a good example of housekeeping by allowing the store area to become filthy. The scenario also suggests that the company is exploiting the student by using him/her as a 'dogsboddy'. A health and safety visit may have ruled that this placement was unsuitable for a student with asthma.

The student should tell the coworker about the asthma and the likelihood that such a job might trigger an attack. Schools should be told by the employer about the substances likely to be used by the student and the tasks they will undertake.

**SITUATION 7:** The student should not use a dough-making machine and the coworker has been negligent in leaving the student unsupervised to look after the machine. The student should ask someone else in the bakery to watch the machine and/or to turn it off.

**SITUATION 8:** The student should not be working more than two metres above the ground. The student should paint the ground floor and tell the supervisor that he/she should not work off the ladder.

**SITUATION 9:** The student should not be using the bacon-slicing machine. The student should ask the customer to return later when there will be some ham ready, or suggest some alternative meat which is ready sliced or some pre-packed ham.

**SITUATION 10:** The student should tie up his/her hair or put it under a hat when working anywhere near moving machinery. Trailing hair can easily be pulled into machines with horrible results.

**SITUATION 11:** The company should supply safety boots to fit people with smaller feet, if they are offering work experience. It could be seen as discriminating against female students, who tend to have smaller feet. The health and safety visit should check that there is a supply of boots of smaller sizes to fit students.

**SITUATION 12:** The student should not be left unsupervised to move dangerous dogs from their pens and schools should discuss supervision with the employer. The student should ask the supervisor if he/she can work with an experienced member of staff on this task.

### what would you do?

#### SITUATION 1

Your work experience is in a home for the elderly. During the mornings the home is rather short of staff and you are asked to lift patients while someone else makes the bed. This means leaning over the bed and after two days you are having pain in your lower back.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 2

Your work experience is in a supermarket. On your first day you were shown how to lift and carry boxes of goods. You have been shelf-stacking in the cereals section, but now you have been put onto soft drinks. You are not very big or strong and are finding it difficult to pick up and carry trays of bottled and canned drinks.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 3

Your work experience is in a hairdressing salon. You suffer from a mild form of eczema, but this was not mentioned on your work experience application form. You are asked to help by washing customers' hair and find that the shampoos and conditioners used give you dermatitis.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 4

Your work experience is with a company making wooden window frames. You are keen to learn new skills. During the second week the person you are working with shows you how to use the circular saw for cutting timber. You are given eye goggles for protection and left to cut some lengths of timber.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 5

Your work experience is in a leisure centre. Your placement description said that you would carry out general cleaning duties. Your supervisor gives you a bucket containing various cleaning products. You are asked to clean out the changing room toilets. This includes using a caustic powder to descale the toilets.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 6

Your work experience is in workshop making picture frames. You wrote on your application form that you have asthma. One day when the manager is away from the workshop the person you are working with gives you a dustpan and brush. They explain that good housekeeping is an important aspect of work. They ask you to clean out the store area which is filthy.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### WORK EXPERIENCE PREPARATION

## what would you do? /2

#### SITUATION 7

Your work experience is in a supermarket which has its own bakery. You are spending two days working in the bakery, which makes fresh bread and cakes everyday. The person you are working with asks you to look after the dough-making machine while they pop outside for a moment.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 8

Your work experience is with a small company which builds houses and does general building work. You enjoy painting and your supervisor asks you to paint the window frames on the ground floor and first floor of the house. They show you how to use the ladder stay. This allows you to tie the ladder to the house and to hang your paint pot.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 9

Your work experience is in a small corner shop. You enjoy working on the deli counter where various cold meats and cheeses are sold. You are left on your own while the owner pops out. A customer comes in and asks for some freshly sliced ham. The sliced ham has run out and you need to cut some more using the bacon-slicing machine.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 10

Your work experience is in a workshop at a garage. You have long hair. Today the mechanic is working on a car that has a squealing fan belt. They ask you to help diagnose the fault by looking under the bonnet while the engine is revved.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 11

You are working in an engineering workshop making valves. Although safety boots are supposed to be worn, your feet are size five and none will fit you. Your supervisor says that the trainers you are wearing will do.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

#### SITUATION 12

You are working in a kennels where people leave their dogs while they are away. One of your jobs is cleaning out the pens having removed the dogs first. Most of the dogs are passive, but you are worried about an Alsatian and a Doberman.

*What's wrong? What should you do?*

### in court

#### DESCRIPTION

Employers have particular responsibilities for the management of health and safety at work. Where a hazard has been identified as likely to affect employees, they must assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees and members of the public. They have a responsibility to take action to control these risks. Employers also have a responsibility to provide their workers with information and training on health and safety issues.

The case studies illustrate what can result from negligence or a failure to carry out risk assessments and take necessary actions. Three examples from court cases describe what happened when the Health and Safety Executive prosecuted employers. The final case study shows how a responsible employer took action to prevent problems from occurring - in this case Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). Students read the case studies and discuss the issues raised by them.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » Young people will raise their awareness of the causes of accidents at work and the duties of employers.
- » Young people will understand the role of the Health and Safety Executive in enforcing the law.
- » Young people will understand the meaning of 'hazards', 'risks' and 'negligence' in the context of health and safety.

#### METHOD

Introduce the case studies by explaining the meaning of hazards and risks at work. 'Hazard' is anything which can cause illness or injury. 'Risk' is the likelihood that this will happen. Risks are assessed according to the severity of the consequences (from a cut finger to death) and the frequency at which they are likely to occur (daily to every few years). The cases which ended in court were the result of human error and a failure to either assess risks properly or to take action to control the risks. Ask young people, working in groups of four or five, to read one or all, depending on the time available, of the three court cases followed by the LOOT/RSI case study. The court cases are taken from the pages of *Safety Management* journal.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### CASE STUDIES

## in court /2

Ask groups to consider the following questions in relation to each of three court case studies:

- » What was the cause of the accident?
- » To what extent was it the result of human error?
- » Who was at fault?
- » Was the company negligent?
- » What were the risks that should have been identified?
- » What actions should have been taken to make sure these risks were controlled?
- » What kind of compensation or fine is appropriate? (see below for results of court cases)

Questions raised by the LOOT case study include:

- » What risks were identified by the management at LOOT and what actions did they take to control these risks?
- » In what way is the attitude to health and safety shown by LOOT different to that of the companies who landed up in court?

Ask groups to feed back their answers and generate a whole-group discussion. Students may like to know the results of the court cases.

#### CASE 1

South Glamorgan Health Authority was fined £3,000 under the *Health and Safety at Work Act* and ordered to pay costs of £836.

#### CASE 2

A J Wilson was fined £9,000 under the *Health and Safety at Work Act* and ordered to pay £3,500 compensation to Dent. It was also ordered to pay costs of £1,531.

#### CASE 3

Gott Foods Limited was fined £14,000 under the *Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992*:

£2,500 for two offences of failing to ensure that the bandsaws were suitable in design and construction for the work;

£3,000 for two offences of failing to ensure that bandsaw operators were provided with adequate information;

£6,000 for three offences of failing to train the three operators properly.

They were also ordered to pay the HSE's prosecution costs of £1,567.93.

# **‘Inexcusable death’ of Downs Syndrome patient from scalding**

A 57-year-old Downs syndrome patient died after being severely scalded in a bath at a hospital, Cardiff Magistrates Court heard.

Michael Williams, a patient at Ely Hospital in Cardiff died after he got into a bath containing water that was 12 degrees Celsius hotter than the temperature recommended by the Department of Health.

Williams was found up to his waist in scalding hot water at the hospital, and died ten hours later at the burns unit of Morriston Hospital in Swansea, said Wayne Miles, prosecuting Health and Safety Executive Inspector.

Williams had been a patient at the hospital for 13 years and was bathed daily with the help of care assistants. He was in the habit of lowering himself into the bath from a wheeled chair, after the water had been run for him by care assistants. At the time of the scalding he had run a bath without the knowledge of the five care assistants who were on duty.

*‘He was discovered by nurses in the bath. They could see he was badly scalded and used wet towels and sheets to cool his lower body,’* Miles told the court.

He added that readings from the water tank serving the bath showed that the water in the tank was 60 degrees Celsius - a common practice in hospitals to avoid the spread of Legionnaire’s Disease.

The court heard that prior to the accident, the hospital’s health and safety officer had attended an HSE seminar at which the dangers of scalding had been highlighted, and the precautions that needed to be taken to prevent scalding incidents had been explained.

The risks and control measures had been clearly spelled out to hospital management by the health and safety officer, said Miles. However, simple interim precautions to prevent scalding incidents - such as locking doors to bathrooms and taking the tops off hot water taps - had not been carried out.

‘South Glamorgan Health Authority failed to ensure the safety of the patient,’ said Miles.

Speaking in mitigation for South Glamorgan Health Authority, David Greensmith said that Williams’ death was an ‘inexcusable tragedy’, and that safety measures had been taken since the accident - including the introduction of thermostatic controls and mixer valves.

He added that any fine and costs imposed would have to be paid out of the budget for patient care.

CASE STUDY 2

## LACK OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS IN STACK OF TILES FALLING ON PASSER-BY

A 62-year-old woman had to have eight stitches in her head after a stack of tiles fell from a building undergoing refurbishment, West Hampstead Magistrates Court heard.

Prosecuting Health and Safety Inspector, Neil Martin, said that the company, A J Wilson, had not undertaken a risk assessment which would have spotted the hazard of tiles falling from a parapet at the front of the building.

*'Shirley Dent had to spend 24 hours in casualty,' said Martin. 'The doctor told her she was lucky to be alive. If the tiles had hit her with their pointed edges she may have been killed.'*

Dent needed eight stitches to the head and was unable to work for six weeks as a result of the accident.

Martin added that there were no barriers or toe-boards to prevent anything falling onto the pavement below the parapet while the company was undertaking tiling work. Although there had previously been a scaffold in front of the building in Heath Street, Hampstead, it was removed a month before the accident happened, he added.

Plastic sheeting had been laid on top of the plyboard sheeting at the front of the building to prevent the plyboard becoming damaged in bad weather.

Despite the fact that the narrow street pavement was only eight metres below the parapet, the risks of securing the sheeting had not been properly considered by the site manager, said Martin.

*'This dangerous situation should have been avoided. The builders allowed an accident to happen which could have caused a fatality,'* added Martin.

The leading hand was aware of the risk of objects blowing off the parapet, said Martin, because six months before the accident some wooden plyboard gates had blown over the hoarding during windy weather.

Speaking in mitigation for A J Wilson, Derek O'Sullivan said that the incident was a combination of *'foolish error, lack of supervision and unusual weather conditions.'*

## **Three workers at food firm suffer serious cuts to fingers and hands**

Lancaster Magistrates Court heard that three employees of a food factory lost parts of their hands and suffered serious cuts when using bandsaws at its premises.

John Batty, prosecuting for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) told the court that the accidents happened when employees at Gott Foods Ltd in Lancashire were using bandsaws - six foot high machines with rotating saw blades - to cut cooked chicken carcasses in half.

Employee Dean Walker lost the tip of his little finger and his ring down to the knuckle when he was feeding one of the carcasses into a bandsaw.

Two other employees aged between 18 and 22 also suffered injuries to their hands, said Batty - including Greg Markham who lost three quarters of an inch from his thumb in a similar accident.

All of the accidents occurred shortly after the men had started work with the bandsaws, said Batty.

HSE inspectors began an investigation at the company following complaints from the Royal Lancaster Infirmary which was concerned about the number of injuries that it was having to deal with from the factory.

'These accidents took place within a few weeks of the workers starting,' Batty told the court. 'In one case it was within a few hours of the employee starting work. It appears that there was inadequate training.'

When HSE inspectors investigated the incidents they were told by supervisors that they had received no formal training on how to use the machines and had to learn how to use them by a process of 'trial and error'.

There was total confusion said Batty over who was responsible for the training.

Speaking in mitigation for the company, which pleaded guilty, David Kelly told the court that £50,000 had been spent on automated equipment which meant that workers no longer have to manually feed carcasses into the machine.

## CASE STUDY 4

# LOOT and the management of work-related upper limb disorders

*LOOT is the leading Free Ads paper in the United Kingdom employing in the region of 625 employees. The company is at the cutting edge of technology and, as a consequence, all employees spend considerable time in front of a VDU screen. This is particularly true of our Ad Takers (who comprise more than 50% of the total workforce) and production staff all of whom work to tight publishing deadlines. At LOOT, therefore, health, safety and ergonomic issues are of paramount importance.*

LOOT's approach to the management of repetitive strain injury (RSI) is part of the company's general management of health and safety.

The company has always provided fresh fruit for employees on a daily basis. In 1989 neck and shoulder massage for Ad Takers was introduced to alleviate stress. Ad taking is an intensive inputting task and, as a result, Ad Takers tend to adopt a static posture.

In 1992, LOOT employed someone who looked at ways of improving the working environment to make an assessment and recommendations. The offices are now all ergonomically designed. Workstations have height-adjustable desks, adjustable keyboards, screens and chairs. Footrests, armrests and anti-glare screens are provided and when needed, and lighting and ventilation are carefully controlled.

There is a full-time Health and Safety Officer and a team of massage therapists. All potential employees complete a pre-employment health questionnaire as part of health monitoring.

In addition all employees are provided with health and safety induction, which includes individual workstation assessment. There is a written health and safety policy and written guidelines on safe working practices.

A monthly RSI checklist is distributed to all employees to enable them to report symptoms of any kind at an early stage. This encourages staff to take an active part in the management of their own health whilst at work. An occupational health nurse visits once a month to assess those reporting symptoms.

The importance of correct posture, regular exercises and work breaks is regularly stressed by the company's therapists and supervisors. Employees are shown a series of exercises which stretch particular parts of the upper limbs and are encouraged to exercise their hands and eyes at regular intervals.

Over the past two years, the company has witnessed a steady decline in the number of employees reporting symptoms.

### issues now

#### DESCRIPTION

This activity aims to give students an understanding of the range of contemporary issues in health and safety at work. The eight extracts are drawn from articles published in *Risks*, the TUC's e-magazine, which deals with health and safety at work ([www.tuc.org.uk/h\\_and\\_s](http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s)). Health and safety is often narrowly interpreted in schools and the aim of the exercise is to broaden discussion to include such live issues as: corporate killing, drugs testing, passive smoking, overheating at work, attacks on public service workers, farm accidents and children, and stress-linked heart disease.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » Young people will understand the wide range of issues included under the broad heading of health and safety.
- » Young people will be more aware of how the work they do may adversely affect their health.

#### METHOD

Ask students to work in groups of four. Give out the handout with the eight articles drawn from *Risks* e-magazine.

Ask students to read through the cases and to make a note of the main issue in each case.

They should discuss and agree what they think the rights of employees should be in each case. They should then consider what responsibilities employees should have in each situation.

They should then discuss what action they think (a) employers and (b) government could take on each of these issues.

Invite a visitor with health and safety responsibilities to comment on the issues and on students' reports.

## ISSUES NOW ACTIVITY

### issues now

.....

ARTICLE 1 **Row looms over working hours**

Unions want an end to the situation where British employees work the longest hours, have the shortest lunch breaks and fewest holidays in Europe. A survey this week by Mercer Human Resource Consulting confirmed workers in the UK have less paid holiday than employees in any

other country in the EU, and have the fewest public holidays within the EU, with only eight a year. TUC revealed last week that overwork was leading to early deaths from heart disease and strokes.

.....

ARTICLE 2 **Acas helpline hots up in the heatwave**

Soaring temperatures have caused a flurry of workers and employers to call the Acas helpline for advice on 'heated' workplace issues. Callers have been asking about maximum temperatures in the workplace and how to deal with sudden absences and lateness arising from travel disruption. The Acas helplines are giving the following advice: *'To help the situation employers should try to improve the environment by providing, for*

*example, fans, mobile air conditioning and cool drinks dispensers. They can also let staff take more breaks for drinks or go somewhere cooler.'* A study this week suggests employers are warming to a TUC call for heatwave legislation - a poll of 650 employers found more than 90 per cent agreed that the government should introduce a maximum temperature above which their employees do not have to work.

.....

ARTICLE 3 **You're not healthy any more**

A study has revealed that one in three football managers has heart trouble. The illnesses suffered in recent seasons by such high-profile managers as Gérard Houllier, Graeme Souness and Glenn Roeder were a dramatic indication of the stress of modern day football. Now a survey of more than half of the managers of the 92 professional clubs has confirmed just how bad

for your health it is. Dr Dorian Dugmore, the heart specialist who has run the 'Fit to manage' programme since it was launched a year ago, believes football managers suffer stress levels higher than their counterparts in industry because they are constantly in the public eye and in even more danger of the sack.

issues now

ARTICLE 4

**Holiday farm warning**

The Transport and General Workers Union is stepping up its campaign to stop under 16s driving tractors and to ensure that all children are kept away from dangerous working areas on farms. 'Sunny summer months, especially when the weather is so good, as it has been recently, mean children spend lots of time outside,' said Peter Allenson, the TGWU national secretary for agriculture. Allenson added: 'We are demanding

that the government acts to change the 50-year old law and makes it illegal to put children at risk by allowing them to drive tractors and operate machinery.' TGWU says the campaign has public backing. The union's survey this year showed that nearly 20 per cent of people thought there should be a total ban on children working on farms and 65 per cent said children should not be able to use farm equipment.

ARTICLE 5

**Boss jailed for workers' deaths**

The head of a Midlands paint stripping firm has been sentenced to nine months in jail for the manslaughter of two of his workers. Mumtaz Hussain, 43, and 22-year-old Ghulum Sarwar died four years ago after being overcome by toxic fumes at ENG engineering, in West Bromwich. The firm's boss, 49-year-old Ian

Morris was found guilty of manslaughter at an earlier hearing. Sentencing Mr Morris at Birmingham Crown Court on 30 July, Justice Beatson reminded him that the jury had agreed he had been grossly negligent and had failed to ensure the factory had been properly ventilated.

ARTICLE 6

**Move towards work drug testing**

Four out of five employers would be prepared to drug test their employees if they thought productivity was at stake, a survey found. The research for the *Independent Inquiry into Drug Testing at Work* found that very few firms at present test their workers for banned substances. Unions have said workplace drug testing is a costly waste of time and an infringement of privacy that does not spot

impairment, just evidence of exposure to drugs up to months previously. They warn the tests regularly turns up false positives and serve to divert attention from real health and safety concerns, like poor safety systems, under-staffing, fatigue and overwork. Studies have show that union run initiatives are most effective at dealing with any workplace drug or alcohol problems.

ARTICLE 7

**NHS attacks must be stopped**

Action must be taken to curb the 'shocking' levels of violence experienced by NHS staff, MPs have said. Latest figures show there are around 260 attacks on health workers each day. There were over 95,000 reported incidents of violence against NHS staff in 2001 to 2002. Edward Leigh, chair of the Public Accounts Committee, said:

*'It is shocking that nurses and other NHS staff, who care for others, should be subject to such high, and rising, levels of violence and aggression.'* The government says it will be introducing 'conflict resolution training' for frontline NHS staff, which will teach workers how to spot a potentially dangerous situation and defuse it.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

a better way to work wales

---

## ASSIGNMENT

### health and safety investigation

Employers have a responsibility for ensuring that employees and visiting members of the public, enjoy a safe working environment (see attached handout: *Health and Safety Law: What You Should Know*). However, employees also have a responsibility to look after their own and colleagues' health and safety. This assignment requires you to investigate health and safety at a workplace and to produce a report on your findings.

The research for this assignment can be carried out either during your work experience or during a workplace visit. You could also collect information at your part-time job, if you get permission from your supervisor. It is important that you explain carefully why you are carrying out research and make sure that your supervisor is happy for you to do so.

The evidence from this assignment can be used to illustrate your use of the Key Skills listed in the box. It could also form part of your portfolio of evidence for a qualification.

#### KEY SKILLS

**Application of Number:** Interpret information from different sources

**Application of Number:** Interpret results and present findings

**Communication:** Contribute to discussions

**Information and Communication Technology:** Develop information

**Information and Communication Technology:** Present information

# health and safety investigation

## TASK ONE

All work experience students and new employees should be given basic health and safety information about their workplace. What health and safety issues were mentioned to you during your induction to the workplace by the employer or supervisor? Make sure that you record the main risks that you notice. During your tour of the workplace make a note of areas, processes or equipment which carry a health and safety risk. Note, there will often be signs marking hazards.

## TASK TWO

Ask other employees what the main risks at the workplace are. Find out what actions the employer takes to reduce or eliminate these risks. Interview the safety officer and/or the trade union health and safety representative.

## TASK THREE

Ask if you can see the statistics on workplace accidents or the accident record book for the past three years. Keep a note of the main trends and use IT to prepare a chart which shows the trend in workplace accidents.

## TASK FOUR

Prepare a short report on health and safety at your workplace. Your report should include the following headings.

- 1) *Background to the company* (number of employees, type of business, description of the workplace)
- 2) *Main health and safety risks/charts on workplace safety*
- 3) *Action taken by the employer to reduce/eliminate risks*
- 4) *Role of staff with a health and safety brief*
- 5) *Particular risks for young people - recommendations for health and safety induction programme.*

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### ASSIGNMENT

## HEALTH AND SAFETY LAW: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Your health, safety and welfare at work are protected by law. Under the law both the employer and the employee have duties. Your employer has a duty to look after your health, safety and welfare at work, so far as is reasonably practicable.

In general, the **employer's duties** include:

- » making your workplace safe and without risks to health
- » keeping dust, fume and noise under control
- » ensuring plant and machinery are safe and that safe systems of work are set and followed
- » ensuring articles and substances are moved, stored and used safely
- » providing adequate welfare facilities
- » giving you the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary for your health and safety.

Your **employer must also**:

- » draw up a health and safety policy statement if there are five or more employees, including the health and safety organisation and arrangements in force, and bring it to your attention
- » provide free, any protective clothing or equipment specifically required by health and safety law
- » report certain injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences to the enforcing authority
- » provide adequate first-aid facilities
- » consult a safety representative, if one is appointed by a recognised trade union, about matters affecting your health and safety
- » set up a safety committee if asked in writing by two or more safety representatives.

As an **employee, you have legal duties too**. They include:

- » taking reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what you do or do not do
- » co-operating with your employer on health and safety
- » not interfering with or misusing anything provided for your health, safety or welfare.

If you think there is a health and safety problem in your workplace you should first discuss it with your employer, supervisor or manager. You may also wish to discuss it with your safety representative, if there is one.

The law also covers you during part-time jobs and while you are on work experience. The employer has a duty to advise you of the main risks at the placement and what control measures have been put in place to manage those risks.

## briefing notes for trade unionists and other visitors

This unit of work is part of a set of materials developed by the TUC for use with young people in schools and youth centres. The materials aim to help young people acquire knowledge and understanding about the changing nature of work and careers, employment rights and the role of trade unions, and to develop skills to manage their own careers and negotiate decisions throughout their working lives.

**The specific aims of the unit on health and safety are to:**

- » introduce young people to their legal position in relation to rights at work.
- » raise a number of discussion questions about rights and responsibilities both at work and on work experience.
- » provide opportunities for young people to work with trade unionists in the classroom.

The unit consists of eight sections. These brief notes give suggestions about the role of trade unionists and other visitors in supporting each of these sections.

### accidents at work

In this introductory activity, students are given short descriptions of accidents which have happened at the workplace. In the first set, the accidents happened to young people on work experience. Students discuss who was at fault and how the accidents could have been avoided. In the second set, the injuries happened to employees who were members of trade unions. Students discuss the same issues. The role of the visitor in this activity is to listen in on the students' discussions and to contribute to the whole class discussion at the end. Students would be particularly interested in any cases with which the visitor is familiar.

### working hazards

This is an activity to raise awareness of the range of accidents and occurrences that can affect the health and safety of employees. A trade union visitor could draw on their experience of their own sector to highlight hazards, the associated risks and what control measures are generally used. They could also comment on students' thoughts about most common risks and control measures.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### BRIEFING NOTES

#### global health and safety

This is a citizenship investigation where students research the issue of child labour and prepare for a debate and campaign. The session draws on material from the International Labour Organisation's actions on global health and safety and specifically child labour. The TUC's *International Health and Safety Workbook* is also a useful source. The visitor's role could be to help brief students on global health and safety issues which unions are helping to tackle. They could chair the debate and act as an adviser to groups planning their campaign.

#### what would you do?

As preparation for work experience placements, students need to consider how to avoid accidents and injury. They are provided with a range of scenarios which could lead to injury and they are encouraged to think about how they could avoid it. Some of the scenarios involve the students being assertive on work experience - a difficult thing to do. A visiting trade unionist could help students understand their own role in health and safety. It would help students gain confidence if they had the chance to role play some of the situations.

#### in court

Four case studies describe situations, three of which ended in court. Students discuss the cause of each accident and the actions which could have been taken to reduce the risks. It would be helpful to the group leader if the visitor had given some thought to these questions and could provide other examples from his/her own experience. The group leader will ask the visitor to sit in on some of the discussions and to add his/her own comments at the end.

#### issues now

Students discuss seven articles from the TUC's online health and safety e-magazine, *Risks*, which covers contemporary issues such as: drugs testing, assaults on public service workers, excessive working hours and stress-related illness. The role of the visitor is to discuss examples of these kinds of issues, and to comment on student thoughts on the rights and responsibilities of employers, employees and possible actions for government to take.

#### health and safety investigation

The assignments in this set of materials provide young people with investigative work that they can carry out either during work experience or during part-time jobs. The assignments aim to help them build up evidence of their Key Skills for their portfolios. The assignment on a Health and Safety Investigation requires the students to carry out some research at their work placement or at their part-time workplace. It may be difficult for them to get permission to do the research and they would be glad of help from a trade unionist at the workplace. They then make a presentation of their findings with recommendations. As a visitor, you could take part in the panel to which students present their findings.

#### goodlife superstore

This is a role play of a health and safety committee for a supermarket chain called Goodlife. There are five issues to be discussed by the committee: stress at work; personal protective equipment; injuries caused by tripping and slipping; poorly designed checkout seating causing work-related upper limb disorders; and violence against staff and customers. Young people in role consider the problems and decide on action points to improve the situation. The role of the trade union visitor can include briefing the Trade Union Safety Representative and commenting on the situations, the committee discussions and proposed action points.

### goodlife superstore

written by Andrew Miller; acknowledgements to Doug Russell, Health and Safety Officer, Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

#### DESCRIPTION

In *goodlife superstore*, young people take on the roles of members of a health and safety committee of a major food retailer called Goodlife\*. There are five roles in this committee simulation which covers a number of health and safety issues: stress at work; personal protective equipment; safe practices; trips; poorly designed seating causing work-related upper limb disorders; and violence against staff and customers. Young people consider problems and decide on appropriate action points from lists of possibilities which are provided.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- » Young people will be more aware of hazards they might encounter when working in familiar environments, such as a food superstore.
- » Young people will be more aware of the control measures and actions that can be taken to reduce the risk of workplace injury.
- » Young people will understand the role that trade union representatives can play in promoting the health and safety of employees and customers.

#### METHOD

It would be helpful if you could approach a safety representative from a trade union to support you in the classroom. USDAW produces a useful, free leaflet, *Checking Out Health and Safety in Shops* (download from [www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk)), which provides background on many of the main hazards in retailing. The simulation can be run within a double period of 70-90 minutes. It could also be run over two lessons with preparation in the first lesson.

For a group of 25, arrange the room into five tables with five chairs around each. Explain the aims of the simulation. Distribute the scenario and read it through with the group.

Allocate participants to roles and give out the role cards. This is a multiple role-play, so the number of committees will be determined by the number of students in the class (25 students = five committees). When there is an odd number of students, ask additional students to act as scribes, noting down the action points on each agenda item (e.g. 27 students - two committees have a scribe, three do not).

#### The roles are:

Goodlife Safety Officer - Joe/Joanne  
Trade union safety representative - Jim/Jane  
Warehouse Manager - Bill/Brenda  
Sales Manager (Chair of the GHSC) - Richard/Renee  
Store Manager - Nitin/Misha

\*'Goodlife' is a fictitious name and bears no resemblance to any real supermarket or superstore.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### **SIMULATION**

*The simulation is in two parts*

#### **PART 1 PREPARATION**

In the first part, students are at role tables. This means that all the students playing the role of Store Manager are together, all those playing the role of Sales Manager are together and so on.

Tell the students that, in their role groups, they are going to discuss the items on the health and safety committee agenda from the point of view of their role. Give them:

- » an agenda
- » three background information sheets on the agenda items.

Explain that they have two main aims:

1. To focus on the agenda item they have to introduce, as set out on the role cards.
2. To discuss the position their role might take on the other agenda items and identify the course of action their role might support.

They do not have to agree on all points or courses of action.

Allow 15 minutes for this preparatory stage. This will give you and the trade union visitor time to visit groups to make sure that they understand their roles and what they have to do.

At the end of the first stage, tell the groups that each member of the role group must give themselves a letter starting from 'A'. So there will be:

- » Store Manager A, Store Manager B, Store Manager C, Store Manager D... and so on
- » Safety Officer A, Safety Officer B, Safety Officer C, Safety Officer D... and so on.

### PART 2 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Ask the students to form health and safety committees by asking all those allocated the letter A to go to one table, all Bs to another and so on. Each committee should then have a:

Store Manager (Chair)  
Safety Officer  
Trade Union Safety Representative  
Warehouse Manager  
Sales Manager

The committees should then work through the agenda. This should take about 30 minutes.

The store managers may require advice on how to chair the meeting. For example, you could advise them to spend no more than six minutes on each item before reaching a decision. You might also tell them to make sure that everybody has a chance to say their piece by going around all five characters on each item. Decisions should be reached by consensus or simple majority if there is a disagreement.

You and the visitor can act as observers during this stage. Make a note of any points you wish to raise during the debriefing.

When you think the time is right, call an end to the committee meetings and debrief the whole group. Possible debriefing questions include:

- » What actions did the groups decide upon for each agenda item?
- » What were the points of conflict, if any?
- » To what extent did the interests of managers and union representatives coincide or conflict?
- » Is more money the answer to better health and safety?
- » Is the problem more a question of staff attitudes and following correct procedures?
- » Which of the health and safety problems at Goodlife are also a problem in schools?
- » From the students' experience of part-time, Saturday and holiday jobs what other health and safety problems occur in retailing?

When a trade union visitor is present, ask them to comment on the students' chosen action points. The trade unionist should also comment on the students' responses to each question. This should be managed by the group leader, so that the trade unionist's input is broken into smaller focused contributions, rather than being delivered in one large block at the end of the session.

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

---

### SIMULATION

# goodlife superstore

## SCENARIO

Goodlife\* is a major chain of supermarkets and superstores selling food and household goods. There are four main areas of the store:

- » the store itself with a checkout area
- » the storage/warehouse area which receives goods from lorries
- » the office/administrative area
- » the car parking area including the petrol station.

The Grantchester store employs 400 staff, the majority of whom are part-time workers. The company has a committee which meets regularly to discuss health and safety problems and how they can be solved. This is called the Goodlife Health and Safety Committee (GHSC). The company has a Safety Officer who is an expert on health and safety and who looks after a number of stores, including the Grantchester superstore.

About half of the workers are members of a trade union which represents them. Goodlife recognises the trade union in negotiations over terms and conditions. The union has a health and safety representative. Members of the union tell them about issues they would like to raise at the GHSC.

There are several managers at the store who have responsibility for health and safety in their areas, including the Warehouse Manager and the Sales Manager. Although they are concerned about health and safety, their main responsibility is increasing efficiency in their area. The Store Manager is new and has an overall responsibility for health and safety. S/he is also chair of the GHSC and must take forward any action points from the meeting.

The next meeting of the GHSC has been called to discuss a number of health and safety problems and what to do about them. The staff attending are:

- » Goodlife Safety Officer - Joe/Joanne
- » Trade Union Safety Representative - Jim/Jane
- » Warehouse Manager - Bill/Brenda
- » Sales Manager - Richard/Renee
- » Store Manager (Chair of the GHSC) - Nitin/Misha

There is an agenda for the meeting and each member is expected to contribute to the discussions. Often one person will introduce the item and then the others will chip in their views. It is usual for the meeting to agree action points which will tackle the problems that are raised. The store manager is in the chair, but it is up to everybody to try to gain agreement on actions and to finish the meeting on time.

\* Goodlife is a fictitious name and bears no resemblance to any real supermarket or store

## GOODLIFE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE: **AGENDA**

<p><b>1) Staff sickness and stress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» stress among managers</li><li>» stress among checkout staff</li></ul>	<p><b>Action points:</b></p>
<p><b>2) Health and safety in the warehouse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» freezer and personal protective equipment</li><li>» injuries caused by tripping and slipping and safe practices to prevent these</li></ul>	<p><b>Action points:</b></p>
<p><b>3) Checkout seating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» injuries to staff caused by poor seating design</li></ul>	<p><b>Action points:</b></p>
<p><b>4) Violence to staff and customers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» skateboarding in the car park</li><li>» violence to staff and customers in the car park</li></ul>	<p><b>Action points:</b></p>

# UNIT 4: health and safety

## a better way to work wales

### SIMULATION

#### **GOODLIFE SAFETY OFFICER - JOE/JOANNE**

*GOODLIFE ROLE CARD*

You are the Goodlife Safety Officer. You are responsible for making sure that the company follows the laws on health and safety at work. You look after four stores in the area, including the Grantchester Superstore. There is an annual budget allocated to health and safety at this store of £5,000. You have to make recommendations to Head Office about how the money should be spent.

The purpose of the GHSC is to discuss problems and how they might be put right. You are concerned about the causes of a recent increase in staff absence due to sickness. On an inspection of the warehouse area you found a number of unsafe practices which need to be put right. The Health & Safety Executive has shown that 80% of accidents at work can be prevented by better management of health and safety. Untidiness and poor housekeeping is the responsibility of all staff who work in the warehouse. But it is the Warehouse Manager's responsibility to supervise staff and to make sure they follow safe practices.

**YOU are going to introduce the agenda item on health and safety in the warehouse. You should also work out your views on other agenda items.**

#### **TRADE UNION SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE - JIM/JANE**

*GOODLIFE ROLE CARD*

You are the safety representative of the trade union representing the workers in this store. Your job is to represent Goodlife employees and ensure that their health and safety has a high priority. People bring issues to you which you then take to the GHSC. You are particularly worried about aggressive and violent customers. This is one cause of stress among checkout staff. They also suffer back and arm pain from poorly designed checkouts.

**YOU are going to introduce the item on violence against staff. You should also work out your views on other agenda items.**

#### **WAREHOUSE MANAGER - BILL/BRENDA**

*GOODLIFE ROLE CARD*

You are the Warehouse Manager at the Goodlife Superstore with responsibility for the warehouse area and all deliveries. All goods are stored on pallets, which are stacked on high shelving units. Staff who stack shelves come into the warehouse area to load roll cages, which they then wheel onto the sales floor. There is also a larger freezer area where all frozen goods are kept. You are particularly worried about accidents in the warehouse area. Last week, Jill Savage, a part-time worker, fell over a box left on the floor. You are concerned about such sloppy behaviour by members of staff. You do not have the time to follow staff around and watch them because of pressure of work.

**YOU have been asked to answer criticisms about health and safety in the warehouse. You should also work out your views on other agenda items.**

## SIMULATION

### **SALES MANAGER - RICHARD/RENEE**

*GOODLIFE ROLE CARD*

You are the Sales Manager of Goodlife's Grantchester Superstore. You are responsible for the sales area and checkout staff. You find yourself working 80-90 hours a week at the store, but you want to gain promotion to become a store manager.

You are particularly concerned about the checkout areas, which have not been improved for some time. Head Office put in some checkouts three years ago that were badly designed and staff are often complaining about them. There are also very long checkout queues at the weekends.

**YOU are going to introduce the item on checkout seating. You should also work out your views on other agenda items.**

### **STORE MANAGER - MISHA/NITIN**

*GOODLIFE ROLE CARD*

You are the newly appointed Store Manager of Goodlife's Grantchester Superstore. You are responsible for the store and for chairing the GHSC. It is also your responsibility to record the main action points that the committee is agreed upon. There is a small annual budget of £5,000 which you can spend on health and safety items. However, all major items of spending must be referred to Head Office. You want to keep a good record of action on health and safety matters. You wish to develop a positive relationship with the trade union. You are concerned about the issue of increasing staff sickness.

**YOU are going to introduce the item on sickness and stress. You should also work out your views on other agenda items.**

## SIMULATION

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION 1

#### ITEM 1: STAFF SICKNESS AND STRESS

The pattern of staff sickness has shown a steady increase over the past six months. The table below shows the numbers of days lost through sickness. The total days lost of 385 compares with a total of 200 for the previous six months.

MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6	TOTAL
40	45	50	70	80	100	385

There are a number of factors which help to explain the rise in staff absence. Probably the most important cause is stress.

#### Managers' stress

Several managers at Goodlife are working as many as 80 hours a week. This follows the cuts in staff of last year when two managers were made redundant. The long hours are placing a strain on family relationships. It also often makes them irritable at work causing friction with other staff.

##### Possible action points

1. Ask Head Office to limit managers' hours to 60 per week.
2. Ask Head Office to appoint an additional sales manager to ease the burden.
3. Send managers on a training course to help them manage stress.
4. Increase the pay of managers who work longer hours.

#### Checkout problems

At weekends long queues at the checkouts are common and customers are often abusive to staff. This also causes stress when checkout staff are on duty for four hours at a time. Checkout staff are requesting more help with packing to speed up the flow of customers. The staffing levels are the responsibility of the Store Manager, but within a tight budget. The manager has the limited power to recruit more checkout staff at busy times and to take on school students as packers.

##### Possible action points

1. Appoint more checkout staff or make sure that all checkouts are staffed at busy periods.
2. Introduce rest periods for checkout staff after two hours.
3. Provide staff with training on dealing with abusive customers.
4. Ask security staff to get the names of abusive customers and ban them from the store.
5. Recruit part-time school students to act as packers on the checkouts during peak periods.

## SIMULATION

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION 2

#### ITEM 2: HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WAREHOUSE

##### Freezer

Goodlife has a very large freezer for its wide range of frozen products. Part-time staff working on the nightshift are mainly responsible for re-stocking the freezer cabinets on the sales floor. Staff have complained that there is a lack of personal protective equipment, in particular, jackets and gloves. There is a locker, where such items are supposed to be kept, but gloves and jackets have gone missing.

Staff can become very cold when entering the freezer. Their hands can stick to the boxes damaging their skin. Goodlife supplies these items of personal protective equipment, but they must be ordered from Head Office. The warehouse manager says that the equipment is provided, but that staff do not like wearing gloves that others might have worn before.

##### Possible actions

1. The Warehouse Manager should order adequate supplies of personal protective equipment.
2. Each member of staff using the freezer should have their own pair of gloves.
3. The Warehouse Manager should make sure that staff use the equipment provided and return items to the locker provided.
4. Staff training should be given in the use and storage of personal protective equipment.

##### Trips

Last week Jill Savage, a part-timer, fell over some boxes that were left on the floor in an area of the warehouse. A spot inspection by the Safety Officer showed a number of problems.

After spillages had been mopped up the floor was still wet, but there were no signs up to warn people.

Empty and full boxes were found on the floor in several areas.

Some of the lighting was poor as blown lights had not been replaced.

##### Possible actions

1. The Warehouse Manager should make regular inspections to make sure that warning signs were being used and that boxes were correctly replaced after use.
2. The safety officer should make regular spot inspections every week until things improve.
3. Staff found leaving boxes in dangerous positions should receive a verbal warning.
4. Blown fluorescent lights to be reported and replaced immediately by the maintenance staff.

## SIMULATION

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION 3

#### ITEM 3: CHECKOUT SEATING

The checkouts at Goodlife were put in three years ago. The design caused trouble from the start. Staff complained about back and shoulder pain from the seating positions they were in. The maximum time to be spent on the checkout without a break was cut from five hours to four hours two years ago. Even so staff are still complaining.

In a busy supermarket, several tonnes of goods pass through a single checkout on an average day. The physical effort for staff can cause strain injuries to the back, shoulders and arms. On the Goodlife checkouts staff have to stretch to reach customers' goods. Weighing machines also require staff to twist into an awkward position. The seating is also hard to adjust to suit staff of different shapes and sizes.

#### Possible actions

1. Ask Head Office to replace all checkouts with a new design which causes less problems for staff.
2. Provide exercise periods for staff so that they can keep fit enough to work on the checkout.
3. Keep staff on the same checkout each day so that they can adjust seating to suit them.
4. Reduce the amount of time spent on the checkout before a rest period to two hours.

#### ITEM 4: VIOLENCE AGAINST STAFF

Last week, following an argument at the checkout, a member of staff was assaulted as they went to their car in the Goodlife car park. There is no CCTV covering the car park and members of the public have also complained about school children skateboarding. There has been some minor damage to cars and children have been abusive to customers. Problems in the car park are particularly difficult during the hours of darkness in winter. Last year there were a number of muggings as customers loaded their cars.

#### Possible actions

1. Appoint more uniformed security staff and have regular patrols of the car park.
2. Ask Head Office to bring in CCTV to monitor the car parking area.
3. Get in touch with the local secondary school to make sure that students hear the message about no skateboarding in the car park.
4. Ask Head Office to install better lighting into the car parking area.