

# Ensuring the safety and health of young workers

E.ON UK

G&J Seddon

Wolverhampton City PCT & Health Tec Partnership

Rok plc



# About the British Safety Council

The British Safety Council is one of the world's leading health and safety organisations. Our mission is to support a healthier, safer and more sustainable society. Our range of charitable initiatives, such as free health and safety qualifications for school children both in the UK and overseas, is supported by a broad mix of revenue-generating activities centred on membership, training, auditing and qualifications.



# Ensuring the safety and health of young workers

Featuring: E.ON UK, G&J Seddon,  
Wolverhampton City PCT & Health  
Tec Partnership and Rok plc.

This is the second in a series of reports commissioned by the  
British Safety Council examining significant health and safety  
issues facing organisations today.



“ Society needs a much better understanding of the real risk of injury young people face at work.”

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“We are determined to play our part in helping to give young people the confidence to ‘speak up’ when confronted by unsafe working practices and equipment.”

## Foreword

**This report focuses on the health and safety of young workers and is the second in a series of publications by the British Safety Council in 2010. The reports are designed to share best practice and to increase our understanding of the social, economic and personal consequences of workplace injury and ill health, and the sensible and effective actions that would help prevent such harm.**



The publication of this report comes hard on the heels of the launch of our new campaign, *Speak Up, Stay Safe*, which is designed to help young people understand the health and safety risks they are likely to encounter when they enter the world of work.

We are determined to play our part in helping to give young people the confidence to ‘speak up’ when confronted by unsafe working practices and equipment. The consequence of not helping young people ‘stay safe’ will be to perpetuate the 42 major and reportable injuries suffered by young people between the ages of 16-24, on average, each and every day in the United Kingdom. The interview with Mick Murphy, the father of Lewis Murphy aged 18 who died in an explosion at work, brings home powerfully the tragic, and in this case, life ending consequences of employer irresponsibility.

Our *Speak up, Stay Safe* campaign builds on our charitable work over the last three years to enable all young people aged 14-19 in full-time education to obtain an entry level qualification in health and

safety. Although we are delighted to report that 50,000 young people in the United Kingdom have already obtained the qualification, we have some way to go to make our vision a reality – that is, all students leaving school and college having gained the award.

The British Safety Council is immensely proud of its member organisations who, through our revenue-generating services, have enabled us to invest in the entry level qualification. Our member organisations who feature in this report – E.ON, G&J Seddon, Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust and Rok plc – are living proof of the benefits that can be realised by investing in the health and safety of young people. All four case studies demonstrate superbly that, with the necessary encouragement and support, young people will thrive and take responsibility. Giving these young workers competence and confidence will enable them to rise to the challenge of becoming the health and safety champions of tomorrow.

Do please take a moment to let us have your views on this report and your suggestions for topics you would like to see us address in future reports.

**Julie Nerney**  
**Chief executive, British Safety Council**

# Executive Summary

**The British Safety Council's mission is to support a healthier, safer and more sustainable society. This report reflects the British Safety Council's firm belief that there is a strong justification for society to gain a better understanding and wider appreciation of the very real risk of injury facing young people entering the world of work. This is supported by recent statistics from the Health and Safety Executive that reveal an alarming number of major and fatal work-related injuries to young workers in Great Britain today.**

The report highlights the sectors posing the greatest risk to young workers and explores the underlying causes of a selection of recent accidents in the agriculture, construction and motor repair sectors that resulted in the tragic but avoidable deaths of young workers.

The report looks at initiatives put in place by four British Safety Council member organisations that have helped make young people and young workers aware of the risks of injury and ill health that they will face, giving them the knowledge and confidence to play a part in managing those risks. The four case studies feature E.ON, G&J Seddon, Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust and Rok plc. They cover a variety of scenarios including health and safety as a key component of a diploma course in schools, applying the knowledge gained through successful completion of the entry level qualification while on work experience, and training arrangements provided for apprentices and graduates in sectors with a high risk of fatal accidents.

The report concludes with a brief summary of the British Safety Council's continuing commitment to pay for all 14-19 year olds in full-time education



across the UK to gain a nationally-recognised qualification in health and safety before they embark on work experience or their first job. To date, more than 50,000 young people have benefited from this initiative.

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“The British Safety Council strongly believes that there is a clear need for society to have a much better understanding of the very real risk of injury that young people face.”

## Speak Up, Stay Safe

**In May 2010, the British Safety Council launched a new campaign, *Speak Up, Stay Safe*, to help young people understand the health and safety risks they are likely to encounter when entering the world of work. The campaign is designed to give young people the confidence to raise the concerns they may have about unsafe working practices, conditions and equipment with their employer, their family and friends. Employers should be absolutely clear: no young worker should feel pressurised to work in an environment where he or she faces the risk of injury, ill health or even death. Although health and safety law affords young workers extra protection, as the next section of this report demonstrates, there are cases occurring on a daily basis where employers are failing to provide the training and supervision essential to keep young workers healthy and safe.**

The *Speak Up, Stay Safe* campaign will build on the charitable work already being undertaken by the British Safety Council to enable all 14-19 year olds in full-time education in the UK to obtain the Entry Level Award in Workplace Hazard Awareness. To date, 50,000 young people have obtained this qualification. It essential that young people fully understand the legal and moral responsibilities placed on their future employers and on themselves, to ensure that they, and others affected by their work activities, stay healthy and safe.

The British Safety Council strongly believes there is a clear need for society to have a much better understanding of the very real risk of injury young people face, whether as an apprentice, undertaking work experience or a summer job, moving into work after leaving school, or graduating from college or university. This report is intended to show employers, schools, teachers and young people that taking responsibility and having the confidence to raise concerns, are critical to the achievement of a continuous reduction in the incidence and number of fatal, major and over-three-day injuries.



## Young workers, our future

The organisations featured in our best practice case studies have all adopted a consistent approach across the following key areas to help prepare young people for the world of work:

- **Training** – both induction and ongoing, to ensure young workers are familiar with hazards, control measures and procedures;
- **Supervision** – the world of difference between a classroom and a workplace and, as one of our case studies remarks, “you only really learn to drive once you have passed your test”;
- **Communication** – the importance of a two-way dialogue to ensure young workers’ voices are heard and taken note of; and
- **Empowerment** – how to give young workers the confidence to challenge older workers and managers, and also recognise they have responsibilities as well as rights.

Other important learning points are:

- In general, the hazards facing young workers are no different to those facing their older colleagues. The risks, however, can be accentuated due to factors such as inexperience;
- Young workers are as varied in their personalities as other workers and need to be treated as individuals rather than one common group;
- Graduates are also young workers and it is important they are afforded an extra duty of care; and
- Workplace health and safety is best approached within a wider social and health context that includes problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, issues around “growing up” and coping with exams. The transition from school to work is, as one interviewee acknowledged, “daunting”.

It is important to remember that while taking on young workers can present particular health and safety issues that need to be managed, it also offers many benefits to an employer:

- Young workers have been through an education system that is starting to recognise the importance of managing risk, making them more receptive to helping engrain a safe working culture;
- Properly trained young workers will, over time, influence subsequent generations of trainees and apprentices, as well as workers who join from other organisations;
- Relationships with schools and other educational establishments can be highly productive for employers and for young people; and
- Working closely with schools can help employers strengthen their relationship with the local community.

Faced with globalisation and an increasingly competitive labour market, employers need to attract and retain the best young workers. They often invest considerable time and money in training and apprenticeship schemes, to equip their staff for the challenges of the future. Poor health and safety management will undermine all these efforts.

In the end, however, it is not about money or statistics. No one who reads the interview with Mick Murphy can doubt what it means to lose a child in so futile a manner. Last year, tragically, there were 13 other young people who lost their lives at work. There were also thousands of young workers who could have suffered Lewis Murphy’s fate but ended up “only” with a serious injury. For most employers, Mick Murphy’s story is sufficiently compelling for them to take positive action.

It is important to emphasise, however, that neither Mick Murphy nor any of our case study organisations believe in wrapping young people in cotton wool. Their common ethos is to prepare young people for the world of work and to allow them to participate safely, healthily and productively, not shield them from its realities.

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“A priority for the British Safety Council is to help young people understand and play their part in managing the risks they will face at work.”

## The Safety and Health of Young Workers

**On any given day in 2008/09 an average of 42 young people aged between 16 and 24 suffered an injury at work in Great Britain that kept them off work for at least three days. Over the year this added up to 15,376 reportable injuries.**

A priority for the British Safety Council is to help young people understand and play their part in managing the risks they will face at work. The British Safety Council has made a major commitment to pay for all 14-19 year olds in full-time education in the UK to gain an accredited qualification in health and safety before they embark on work experience or their first job (see the final section of this report).

This heightened awareness will count for nothing, however, if young people are not properly protected by employers through appropriate training and supervision when entering the world of work. This section of the report looks both at the statistical data on workplace injuries to young workers, and at the personal, social and legal consequences of three tragic instances when employers got it seriously wrong.



## What the statistics reveal

In Great Britain in 2008/09, there were 3369 non-fatal major accidents in the workplace involving 2273 young men and 1096 young women between the ages of 16-24. This compares with 3648 non-fatal major accidents in 2007/08 involving 2608 young men and 1040 young women. In addition, 23 young people were killed at work in 2007/08, and 13 in 2008/09.

Table 1 shows that the number of fatal and major incidents fell between 2007/08 and 2008/09 as did the incidence rate overall.

Type of injury		2007/08	2008/09
Fatal	16-19 years	7	3
	20-24 years	16	10
Non-fatal major	16-19 years	1199	1059
	20-24 years	2449	2310
Over-three-day	16-19 years	3582	3245
	20-24 years	9217	8749

Table 1: Injuries to young workers, Great Britain 2007/08 and 2008/09.

## Same story abroad

Commenting on the trends concerning workplace injuries to young people drawn from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) noted that “men aged 16-24 have a substantially higher risk of workplace injury than older male workers between the ages of 45-54”.<sup>1</sup> The risk is estimated to be some 40% higher for young workers than their older counterparts. This increased risk of injury is borne out by EU statistics, which show that the incidence rate of non-fatal accidents at work per 100,000 workers was more than 40% higher among those aged 18-24.<sup>2</sup>

In the US, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention surveyed injury trends to young workers over a 10 year period between 1998 and 2007.<sup>3</sup> Although as in Great Britain the fatality rate was lower for younger than older workers (the rate increases with the age of the worker), a staggering 7.9 million young workers were treated in hospital during the study period – double the rate experienced by older workers.

## The young worker:

Adam Gosling, 15 years old, labourer.

## The accident:

In 2007, Adam was working in a trench with his brother on a north London construction site when he was crushed to death by a collapsing wall. The HSE’s investigating inspector described the management and set-up of the construction project as “appalling” and said that, aside from the fact that Adam should not have been working there in the first place, there was no risk assessment, no training, inadequate personal protective equipment and minimal supervision.

## The legal consequences:

On 20 July 2009, builder Colin Holtom was jailed for three years at the Old Bailey for Adam’s manslaughter. Judge Christopher Moss told Holtom that he “adopted a cavalier and irresponsible attitude to safety”. Holtom appealed against the severity of his sentence, but on 29 April 2010, the Court of Appeal ruled that the jail term was “justifiably severe”.

## The family:

As Adam’s mother said: “He hadn’t been given a hard hat; he didn’t have steel toecaps in his boots – he didn’t have any safety equipment. He should never have been there.” When questioned by one employee, it is alleged that Holtom suggested the employees should pay for safety equipment themselves.

The report also noted that public bodies, employer organisations and trade unions should come together “to provide guidance to employers to help them in their responsibilities to provide safer workplaces and should identify steps that employers can take to remove or reduce injury hazards. Employers need to ensure that their younger workers have the requisite training and personal protective equipment to perform their jobs safely.”

1. HSE (2000), “Key messages from the LFS for injury risks: gender and age, job tenure and part-time working”, [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/keyart.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/keyart.pdf)

2. Eurostat (2005), “The European statistics on accidents at work – 2003 data”, [www.av.se/dokument/statistik/english/Accidents2003\\_EU15.pdf](http://www.av.se/dokument/statistik/english/Accidents2003_EU15.pdf)

3. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2010), “Occupational injuries and deaths among younger workers, United States, 1998-2007”, Morbidity and Mortality Report 23 April 2010, [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5915a2.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5915a2.htm)

### **The young worker:**

Darren Hoofe, 20 years old, construction worker.

### **The accident:**

Darren was employed by IC Roofing Ltd when he fell through a skylight in November 2005 on to a factory floor while carrying out roofing repairs. He was not wearing a safety harness and had not received safety training. He died in hospital the following day.

### **The legal consequences:**

On 22 January 2009, a jury at Hove Crown Court convicted IC Roofing Ltd and its owner and director, Colin Cooper, of manslaughter. Five days later, Judge Anthony Scott-Gall imprisoned Cooper for 12 months and fined the company £10,000. Both parties pleaded guilty to breaches of health and safety law, for which the judge did not impose further penalties. He did, however, disqualify Cooper from acting as a director for three years. The judge described Cooper's approach to health and safety as "perfunctory". Sussex Police, which investigated the incident, stated that Cooper "ignored the obvious risks in favour of economic gain" and that his neglect had been "compounded by previous warnings in relation to his working practices from the Health and Safety Executive".

### **The family:**

Darren's parents, John and Jill Hoofe, said: "We cannot resolve the fact there is a large hole within our family that has been created by Darren's death, especially as this was an accident at work that could and should have been avoided."

### **High risk sectors**

In Great Britain and Europe, research shows young male workers in construction and agriculture are at the highest risk. These two sectors account for almost 50% of the fatalities in this age range. Both GB and EU statistics show that agriculture has the highest incident rate of fatal accidents to young workers, and the construction industry accounts for the highest number of fatalities<sup>4</sup>.

Between 2006 and 2008, agriculture and construction accounted for almost as many young worker fatalities as all other industries combined; the sectors' injury rates are also considerably higher. These two sectors are overwhelmingly staffed by male workers.

### **Getting to grips with the causes**

The higher degree of risk faced by young workers arises from a lack of experience, awareness and training, an increased likelihood of undertaking physically demanding work, and a high frequency of irregular working arrangements. There is clear evidence that a significant number of employers do not take these factors into account and fail to provide adequate training and supervision.

There is extensive evidence from Great Britain and other countries that new workers are more likely to suffer a workplace injury during their first 12 months of employment. Research undertaken for the HSE reveals that those in their first six months of work are exposed to a higher risk of injury. Not surprisingly, the converse is true – the risk of workplace injury declines as workers gain experience and develop competence.<sup>5</sup>



The British Safety Council considers the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's recommendations<sup>6</sup> for addressing some of the root causes of injuries to young workers to be an excellent starting point. The Agency's recommendations include targeting sectors where young workers are most at risk, targeting the prevalent risks, and incorporating occupational health and safety into mainstream education.

Despite the wealth of statistics concerning workplace injuries to young workers, we believe we need a far better grasp of the major causes of injuries and the factors contributing to failures in health and safety management. In the coming months and years, the British Safety Council will work with other stakeholders such as employer organisations, trade unions and academic institutions, to build a far more solid evidence base from which to better direct our own, and other organisations' efforts.



#### **The young worker:**

Lee Mason, 17 years old, agricultural worker.

#### **The accident:**

Lee was employed at a farm in Somerset owned by the Hill family. Lee was killed in April 2007 when his neck was crushed by a giant soil-recycling machine after his arm was caught in the tail pulley. The HSE's investigating inspector said there was "no health and safety provision" and that the situation was "absolutely appalling".

#### **The legal consequences:**

The owner of the business, Roy Hill, and his son, Michael Hill, who claimed he ran the business, were fined £5,000 and £2,500 respectively by Bristol Crown Court on 22 January 2009 for breaches of health and safety law. Roy Hill had previously been imprisoned in 1996 for breaching asbestos laws.

#### **The family:**

Lee's mother Jenny said: "I am disgusted. I thought it would be a bigger fine to deter others. People will think it doesn't matter if you haven't got a safety guard on your machine. It is now clear that health and safety was non-existent and we were unaware of this."

“ The British Safety Council will work with other stakeholders, such as employer organisations, trade unions and academic institutions, to build a far more solid evidence base from which to better direct our own, and other organisations' efforts.”

4. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2007), "Young workers – facts and figures. Exposure to risks and health effects", Facts 70, <http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/factsheets/70>, and European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2007), "OSH in figures: Young workers facts and figures", p.124, <http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/7606507/view>.
5. HSE (2001), "Workplace injuries and workforce trends", prepared by the Institute for Employment Research, CRR 281/2001, HSE, [www.hse.gov.uk/RESEARCH/crr\\_pdf/2001/crr01281.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/RESEARCH/crr_pdf/2001/crr01281.pdf)
6. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2009), "Preventing risk to young workers: policy, programmes and workplace practices", <http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/TE3008760ENC/view>

“ The health and safety community must adopt a proactive stance rather than being reactive, sharing a collective responsibility for notifying the authorities of lapses in safety, of workers operating without the correct safety equipment or insufficient training.”

**Striving for excellence**

Examples of bad practice leading to the tragic deaths of young workers are commonplace media stories. Regrettably some of these tragedies are not reported, and the cause and effect of such incidents are not publicised. Most employers try to meet their moral obligations and legal duties to young workers. However, there is a small but significant group of employers who do not take their responsibilities seriously.

A tougher approach is required. Young people are dying and being seriously injured at work. With today’s robust set of health and safety laws and considerable technological competence, there is no reason why a young person, or any worker, should lose his or her life because an employer was neglectful or ill prepared.

Only a minority of employers act irresponsibly towards the safety of their young workers. The question is how do we reach these rogue employers? And how do we reach those employers who care about their young workers but need help and guidance not only to comply with the law but also to go beyond this?

Efforts are being made to educate employers to change their working practices, but if these efforts are unsuccessful, then more forceful action must be taken. Tougher and consistent sentencing would send out a powerful message. The HSE must have the resources it needs in order to fulfil its inspection duties. There also needs to be greater investment and commitment to improve education and training for young workers.

There must be a clear focus on improving conditions for young workers in the agricultural and construction sectors. Employers and trade unions in these sectors need to work together to improve conditions and develop initiatives to protect those at risk. Further research is required in order to improve our understanding of the specific risks faced by young workers in these

industries. If we are to effect a significant change in the incident rate, then these two industries offer the greatest scope for improvement.

The health and safety community must adopt a proactive stance rather than being reactive, sharing a collective responsibility for notifying the authorities of lapses in safety, of workers operating without the correct safety equipment or insufficient training. We must continue to strive to achieve a culture of safety to protect our young workers. If we expect our young people to form the thriving workforce of the future, then we must meet our responsibility to protect them from injury and ill health in the workplace.



# 5

## Every Parent's Nightmare

**In February 2004 apprentice mechanic Lewis Murphy, aged 18, suffered 80% burns as a result of an explosion at a garage in Peacehaven in East Sussex. Lewis, who was engulfed by a fireball caused by the ignition of petrol flames, died three days later. A year after Lewis's tragic and preventable death, garage proprietor Howard Hawkins was found guilty at Lewes Crown Court of failing to ensure the health and safety of his employees.**

Lewis was a car enthusiast and loved his job at the Anchor Garage where he had worked for six months. He was taken on as an apprentice mechanic through a modern apprenticeship scheme, which allowed a day release to Northbrook College in Shoreham.

On the day of the accident, Lewis and his manager, the garage proprietor's son Glen Hawkins, were emptying a mixture of petrol and diesel from a dustbin into a small opening of a waste oil disposal tank, which was attached to a wall of the forecourt. It was a windy day and a large amount of the fuel was splashing on to the two men's overalls.

As they emptied the mixture, fumes were sucked into the flue of a recently installed gas boiler, sparking a massive fireball and engulfing Lewis and Hawkins in flames. Hawkins ran in to the workshop where colleagues used a fire extinguisher to put out the flames. No one realised, however, that Lewis was still on the forecourt, and when they finally did, the fire extinguisher was empty. He suffered 80% burns and died three days later in hospital.



Lewis Murphy



Mick Murphy, the father of Lewis, recalled: "I was working in Southampton at the time and I remember getting a call from Elizabeth my wife saying that the garage had phoned to say there had been an accident involving Lewis and it was quite serious. I made my way to the hospital and was immediately ushered into another room where we were met by a nurse who was a grief counsellor. I didn't understand why they had sent her. It was only afterwards that I realised why."

In January 2005, Glen and Howard Hawkins went on trial at Lewes Crown Court. Mick describes the experience as a rollercoaster ride: "There were a number of issues which came up in court that we didn't know about. For instance, we found out that when Lewis was in the ambulance, he had asked the paramedic if he was going to die. That was a real shock for us."

### Health and safety – "a tiresome intrusion"

Howard Hawkins was fined £10,000 with costs of £15,000 after being convicted of failing to ensure the health and safety of his employees. He told the court that the company did not offer safety training because it was "common sense" and he expected his staff to learn by experience. Passing sentence, Judge Richard Hayward said of Howard Hawkins: "To say that you were complacent about health and safety is an understatement. You regard health and safety as a tiresome intrusion into your business and a matter of common sense that you could leave to the experience of your mechanics. Being a dinosaur can sometimes be endearing but not on health and safety matters."

Glen Hawkins, the garage manager, was found guilty of manslaughter and was sentenced to nine months in prison. He was, however, released three months later after the Court of Appeal ruled that a statement he had made was inadmissible because it was made after the accident while he was under the influence of morphine. His conviction was quashed.

Mick said he felt let down by the courts. "I thought the nine month sentence was fair because he didn't deliberately kill Lewis and it sent out a warning to other employers. But when he was released after three months, I was extremely disappointed because I felt there had been no justice."



**Anchor Garage**

“It only takes a bit of time to teach somebody to do something safely and efficiently and make sure they understand what they are doing. If a company isn't prepared to do anything about health and safety and can't see the advantages, then they should be prepared for the consequences.”



Mick Murphy, father of Lewis

### Work placement problems

With an estimated 350,000 young people on work experience placements every year and the Government having a target of increasing the number of apprentices to 400,000 by 2020, it is vital that any workplace is properly assessed to ensure it is a safe environment for young people. According to Mick, this responsibility should fall to schools, colleges and training providers, as well as employers: “When schools and colleges are searching for firms to send students to, they need to be thorough and have inspectors who are qualified in safety so they know what to look for. If a place doesn't come up to a certain standard, a pupil should not be sent there.”

The then Learning and Skills Council and the Health and Safety Executive carried out an investigation of Shoreham College's work-based learning department responsible for Lewis's placement. They identified shortfalls in the College's procedure for vetting employers/workplaces. The College had a lax approach to assessing the suitability of work placements, with poorly trained assessors who lacked the competence to assess the risks young people are likely to face.

The investigation also revealed a serious lack of engagement between the College and work experience placement employers on health and safety standards generally. Nor was there a system in place for monitoring the College's placement vetting procedures. There were no work-based risk assessments for apprenticeships/work placements with motor vehicle repairers, nor guidelines issued regarding the suitability of workplaces.

Mick believes that safety training should be a priority for every business. “It only takes a bit of time to teach somebody to do something safely and efficiently and make sure they understand what they are doing. If a company isn't prepared to do anything about health and safety and can't see the advantages, then they should be prepared for the consequences.”

He adds: “I think health and safety has a reputation of being a burden for some companies. As far as they're concerned, it costs money and they think they don't need it because they've never had an accident in the past. In my opinion, every organisation should have an in-house safety team to ensure that correct procedures are being followed. It is not just a case of putting up a poster – employers need to have a duty of care for their staff to make sure they are kept safe and understand the risks. New employees should be shown around the premises and given a proper induction whether they are 15 years old or 50.”

### “Children are used to being told what to do”

According to a TUC guide published in 2006, 37% of 15-24 year olds surveyed had not received any health and safety training despite employers having a legal duty to provide it. With no basic health and safety knowledge, young people are dependent on their employer for training and supervision. Managers and supervisors have to recognise that youngsters new to the workplace may well underestimate the risks and that they need to carry out specific risk assessments as required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

“ I think Lewis felt safe in the care of Glen Hawkins and looked up to him. Children are used to being told what to do by parents and teachers without questioning anything because they assume it is safe.”



Lewis Murphy with his mother

“I think Lewis felt safe in the care of Glen Hawkins and looked up to him,” says Mick. “Children are used to being told what to do by parents and teachers without questioning anything because they assume it is safe.”

Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) was launched in 2006 by a group of families of people killed at or by work. It is a national campaigning network set up through the Greater Manchester Hazards Centre, which is part of the Hazards Campaign.

The mission of the Hazards Campaign is to stop workers being killed in preventable incidents and direct bereaved families to sources of legal help and emotional support. Mick is a member of FACK and he says the campaign is about getting justice for families who have lost loved ones due to the negligence and inadequacies of organisations: “I’ve met up with a few families who have lost children in work accidents to tell them who we are and what we do. We often direct them to sources of emotional support and legal help.”

In the six years since Lewis’s death, Mick doesn’t believe anything has changed: “Accidents are always going to happen. I’d rather they didn’t happen and families didn’t have to go through the agony, obviously. However, legislation needs to be enforced to ensure employers don’t get away with poor health and safety standards. Until that legislation is enforced, there is every possibility that what happened to my family could happen to another family.

“What has happened will stay with me for the rest of my life and it never goes away. It is always there but I want to make sure that no other family has to go through what we went through. Lewis was my youngest child and we took it for granted that when he went to work that day he was going to come home again. People want to, and expect to, go to work and come home safely but this doesn’t always happen. Attention is only being drawn to the situation when it’s too late. Only when there is an incident does it become big news.”

### “I will keep fighting”

In terms of action to protect young people at work, Mick says: “The Government needs to be more responsible and look at what they are putting children into, to make sure that the safety measures are implemented and double-checked.”

He adds: “I wouldn’t discourage a young person from going on work experience or doing an apprenticeship because it is all part of growing up. You grow up, you leave school and you go to work – it’s a natural progression. We’d all like to wrap our kids up in cotton wool but we have to face reality. We’d like to know, however, that the people who are providing work placements to our children, have done everything they can to ensure their safety and welfare by carrying out the necessary tests and inspections.”

“I will keep fighting”, Mick Murphy insists, “until I’m satisfied that health and safety at work is no longer something that a parent needs to be worried about for their child. If I can help save just one young person’s life then it is worth it.”

6

Sector: **Energy**

Location: **Nationwide (distribution business covers Central England). E.ON Engineering Academy is based at Ratcliffe, near Nottingham.**

Philosophy: ***Rule one – we don't hurt people.***

**"This statement is at the heart of everything the company does, applying to employees, contractors and customers alike."**

## E.ON UK

**"This is an industry where, if you have an accident, it isn't a cut finger; it can be a matter of life and death," says Paul Smith, head of safety, health and environment at the E.ON Engineering Academy, which is part of E.ON, one of the UK's leading integrated power and gas companies, generating and distributing electricity, and retailing power and gas. Apprentice Matthew Morgan says: "The problem with electricity is that you can't see it and you can't smell it."**

High-voltage electricity is not the only risk facing the apprentice on a daily basis. Working at height, manual handling, road safety and slips, trips and falls are all prime concerns. "There is no escaping the fact that this is a very high hazard industry. If you think about the sort of hazards that you would mention in standard safety training, there aren't really any that we don't have," says Paul.

To combat these hazards, the company has striven to create a safety culture of the very highest standard – one that seeks to afford every protection and support to its young workers. "We have a special duty of care to our young and inexperienced workers," says Paul.

Matthew Morgan worked in farming prior to joining E.ON as an apprentice. "It was a complete contrast," he says, "the safety culture at E.ON is entirely different." Fellow apprentice, 23 year old Matthew Toft, agrees: "The standard of health and safety in my old job wasn't bad but it was nowhere near as intense as it is for E.ON."



There are two distinct groups of young workers at E.ON – apprentices and graduates. The fact that there is a huge skills shortage on the horizon in the energy industry drives the company to place its young workers in the highest regard. E.ON competes with energy providers and other employers as well as other industries for the best graduates and the best craftspeople. "If you look at what is likely to happen in the UK in the next 20 years, there is a huge amount of work to be done, and we have to upskill people to do that work. Our young workers are the future," says Paul.

“After completing their induction, apprentices begin their training at the Engineering Academy. Before starting work each day, the apprentices have to complete a risk assessment of the day’s activities. Each month the apprentices receive an hour-long health and safety briefing where they can discuss the specific aspects of their induction.”

### Training apprentices

The process of raising awareness of health and safety risks among apprentices begins two months before they start work. Each apprentice visits the Engineering Academy where Programme Delivery Leader Rick Murfet talks to them and their parents about the importance of health and safety. At this point, the apprentice is also fitted for personal protective equipment (PPE) so that they are ready from day one.

The general induction for apprentices, which includes employee rights and responsibilities, manual handling, first aid and basic health and safety awareness, is aimed at ensuring that they can work safely from the outset. After completing their induction, apprentices begin their training at the Engineering Academy. Before starting work each day, the apprentices have to complete a risk assessment of the day’s activities. Each month the apprentices receive an hour-long health and safety briefing where they can discuss the specific safety aspects of their role. The aim is to reinforce behaviours by revisiting what the apprentices learned at their induction. “It’s one thing to issue them with PPE; it’s another to make sure that they are wearing it,” says Rick Murfet. “The briefings help to ensure that the correct dress and safety standards are maintained,” he adds.

During the four-year term of their apprenticeship, the young workers spend a considerable amount of time on site. Twenty year old Robert Anderson says: “It really makes a difference being out on site, as opposed to in the classroom, as you see things from a different point of view. As you become more experienced, you do become more



aware and practices become more natural.” Paul Smith agrees: “Young workers haven’t got the experience to understand why something could be dangerous but once they get out there, it starts to drop into place.”

The company uses video reconstructions featuring different hazards and reconstructed accidents to drive home its message. “The videos certainly help,” says Robert. “You can read it on paper, but when you see it for real, although they are reconstructions, it makes much more of an impression.”

Within the past two years, there was a serious road traffic accident involving an apprentice. This occurred off site on a public road, and not while the apprentice was at work, but as a result the company reviewed the road safety training offered to apprentices given that nearly all of them are required to drive in some capacity. All apprentices now complete an online risk assessment to test their understanding of road safety and to determine if further training is required. Some also attend short courses such as those offered by the Institute of Advanced Motorists, or a specific off-road driving course if required.

“ With their initial training completed, graduates begin their placements. They receive site-specific inductions on hazards at each of the placements. An engineering graduate will have a different training path to a finance graduate. All employees receive training that is specific to their role.”



### Training graduates

At their induction, “graduates are sometimes younger than the apprentices”, says Liz Somers, corporate safety policy and projects manager. “They frequently have little work experience on which to base knowledge of health and safety.” To begin with, graduates receive a full induction. They receive a booklet on health and safety with their contract and are given access to a website for new employees containing further health and safety information.

The induction for graduates provides a broad overview of the organisation because the company views them as potential senior managers of the future. “We try to allow them to see the organisation through the eyes of a manager,” says Liz. “For instance, we will present them with a set of health and safety scenarios, and possible management responses. Graduates are asked to judge which response would be the most appropriate in each situation and why. We also emphasise that it makes business sense to manage safety properly. There is a correlation between business success and safety success. We try to put them into a managerial mindset.”

During their induction, graduates are assigned a safety objective that lasts throughout their graduate scheme; they are asked to research a specific topic related to health and safety. Each graduate is asked to come up with recommendations and produce a report that they will later present in front of a group of senior managers. They are given as much help as required to complete this exercise.

With their initial training completed, graduates begin their placements. They receive site-specific inductions on hazards at each of the placements. An engineering graduate will have a different training path to a finance graduate. All employees receive training that is specific to their role. It is not uncommon, however, for graduates to change direction during their career with E.ON. For example, a finance graduate might end up in charge of an area that carries far greater health and safety risks than would be present in a finance department. E.ON wants its entire management structure to be indoctrinated in the safety culture of the organisation.



The induction that graduates undertake includes very little practical safety information. Rather, the approach is to try to get them to understand why health and safety is important, what impact it has, and encourage them to take some personal responsibility.”

Strict processes are in place to ensure that nobody undertakes high-risk activities without being adequately trained, and these apply to graduates as they do to all staff. E.ON’s approach to the health and safety training of graduates as a group is therefore to concentrate on the ethos rather than specific subject areas. “The induction that graduates undertake includes very little practical safety information,” says Liz. “Rather, the approach is to try to get them to understand why health and safety is important, what impact it has, and encourage them to take some personal responsibility. With graduates as a group, it is much more about influencing their attitudes.” She adds, “they will receive training specific to their role, as would any employee; we have an extensive catalogue of safety courses but these are not specific to graduates.”

E.ON’s graduates are very eager to get out and impress. “We try to emphasise to the graduates that how they conduct themselves from a health and safety point of view will impact upon their future career and how they are perceived within the organisation.”

### Supervised core hours

The company attaches great importance to the fact that young workers should receive the appropriate level of supervision. A skills co-ordinator reviews the apprentices’ progress every three months and seeks to capture their views as well as using spot checks and observation.

During their first two years, apprentices only do minimal shift work and normally work from nine to five until they gain more experience. After this time they might do one or two day shifts a week. When their manager decides they are fully equipped, they will be placed on stand-by to support the field-based teams.

In their first two years, apprentices work a 37-hour week. If they do overtime, this is banked and deducted from the following week. This helps to ensure that they don’t suffer from the effects of overwork.

Apprentices insist they feel under no pressure to do a job that they feel is unsafe. The company rules governing working practices state that if its workers feel unsafe doing a task, they should not do it. Matthew Toft says trainers and managers have told him from day one: “If you are unsure, just stop.”

Apprentices are provided with a contact card to tell them who they should contact in the event of an accident. In the first instance, they should telephone the line manager. If they are unable to reach the line manager, they should call an accident hotline. All incidents are investigated and corrective action taken. E.ON also has an online accident reporting system. When an accident is entered it automatically triggers a series of emails to the relevant management personnel. The company also monitors near misses, and this information is fed back to the apprentices via team briefings.

### Focus on health

“Our approach to occupational health is very proactive,” says Liz Somers. Young workers are not singled out but have access to the same services as all employees. The priorities within the company’s occupational health function include musculoskeletal, stress and mental health issues, which are the most common causes of sickness absence.

There is a network of occupational health advisors across the organisation. Employees have access to a range of benefits, including a full-body MOT covering aspects such as blood pressure, cholesterol and posture. The company runs periodic campaigns to raise awareness of certain issues; a recent campaign, for example, highlighted cardio-vascular risks. The Engineering Academy ensures that all apprentices receive regular health surveillance checks.



The company has a mental health programme that looks at issues such as work-related stress and encourages employees to recognise, talk about and become more open minded about mental health issues. Plans are afoot to produce an e-learning tool for managers to help them identify when employees might be suffering from mental health problems and advise them on what action to take.

The company recognises the danger of “concentrating on the acute and most immediate hazards while losing sight of the longer-term hazards”. Paul Smith appreciates that it can be more difficult to engage with young workers on occupational health issues. “With older workers you get an immediate response. But if you tell 16 year olds that if they don’t wear ear plugs they might suffer problems in 20 years’ time, this can be an unimaginable timeframe.” The company is working to change these attitudes by involving young workers first-hand. Some of the graduates have chosen to study the potential health implications caused by hot-desking as their safety project and present their recommendations to management.

The company has a drugs and alcohol policy that aims to prevent workers from being at work under the influence. Employees are made to understand the safety consequences of working after having perhaps overindulged the night before and the action that will be taken under the company’s drugs and alcohol policy. But there is also an emphasis upon education – E.ON seeks to support workers if they have a problem, and to help them recognise and deal with their problems. All apprentices are made aware of the policy, and support available, during their induction.

#### **“Our voices are definitely heard”**

E.ON has a number of mechanisms in place to encourage young workers to buy in to the company’s safety culture. Communication forms a large part of the company philosophy. The apprentice magazine provides an excellent means of communicating with young workers across different sites. Safety bulletins are circulated electronically throughout the organisation. Rick Murfet and his colleagues also make use of more innovative means of communication, such as text

“Our voices are definitely heard. This is why we are involved in the apprentice health and safety forums. If something is done about what you say, then you want to continue to be part of it.”

messages, to convey the latest safety information. Rick finds that young workers are particularly receptive to these sorts of communication techniques.

Paul Smith believes the most effective means of communication combine complementary methods. “What works well for one person might not work for another. In a large company like E.ON you have to find different ways of reaching employees because not everyone warms to the same message.”

The company has sought to achieve buy-in to its safety culture by empowering young workers. There are several different forums and workgroups aimed specifically at apprentices. These forums, which include a PPE workgroup and a tool workgroup, have been put in place to improve working practices and make them safer. At these forums, new apprentices can learn from their peers who are able to impart practical advice derived from experience, something vastly different to learning about hazards in the classroom. Representatives of the apprentice forums were invited to attend a national conference of E.ON health and safety representatives.

“Our voices are definitely heard,” says apprentice Robert Anderson. “This is why we are involved in the apprentice health and safety forums. If something is done about what you say, then you want to continue to be a part of it.” Paul Smith says the biggest change is the recognition among apprentices that they have a voice: “They are really warming to the fact their views are being taken on board.”

Paul admits that just a few years ago, the idea of a separate apprentice safety forum would have been unheard of. The company is trying to build on its safety culture all the time. “We try to give the apprentices the tools and the confidence to be able to challenge working practices”, says Rick Murfet.

### **Build in, not bolt on**

“What do we mean by safety training?” asks Paul Smith. “Actually, all of our training is about safety.” More important than giving a health and safety induction is the practical training apprentices receive from their instructors while on site because it is at this point their training becomes integrated with the job. “When you are talking about repairing a transformer at the top of a pole, you cannot separate doing a job from the risk it entails; they are one and the same.”

“We believe in building in health and safety, not bolting it on,” says Paul. This is particularly true when dealing with young workers. “For example, if you are an apprentice meter fixer, you don’t go on a course to learn how to be a meter fixer and then do a safety course at the end. Safety should be embedded at all stages.” Liz Somers echoes this sentiment: “Health and safety is not something separate but it is part and parcel of how we operate on a day to day basis.” Paul says: “At the end of the day we are not interested in only doing the job, we are interested in doing the job safely.”

7

Sector: **Construction services**

Location: **North-west England**

Philosophy: **“It is the company’s policy to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety, health and welfare of its employees... Young people and the inexperienced require special attention.”**

## G&J Seddon

**G&J Seddon is something of a rarity in the modern business world. Two families of its employees, the Holland and Keeley families, have worked for the company for four consecutive generations. The company, one of several in The Seddon Group, which has been running for 113 years, is a family-owned and managed construction services business led by third and fourth generations of the Seddon family: Christopher Seddon, chairman and Jonathan Seddon, managing director.**

As Jonathan says: “We believe that the longevity of the company provides financial strength, and gives customers certainty in delivery of their projects. We are proud of the investment we make in our people, our communities and our environment. We provide sustainable employment from the communities in which we work, demonstrated by four generations of the Holland and Keeley families.”

Health and safety is at the forefront of the company’s philosophy. Roy Cavanagh, labour and training executive, who has responsibility for training across the entire Seddon Group, has worked for G&J Seddon for 43 years. Roy has experienced this safety culture, and has seen it develop and grow, first hand.

G&J Seddon’s commitment to its young workers is obvious. As part of its commitment to provide sustainable employment from local communities, the company wants its young workers to remain with it for the long haul. The company strives to nurture and develop these workers so that a young



worker of today could be the Roy Cavanagh of tomorrow. This is the family philosophy and the traditional values of the Seddon business.

### **Family values**

The Seddon Group business is built upon a combination of traditional values and modern processes. Since its formation over a century ago, it has evolved into a fully integrated group of specialist companies operating in the UK’s construction industry. The company operates throughout the country, with more than a century of experience in regeneration, development, construction and maintenance.



The Seddon Group has a turnover in excess of £240 million, employing 1,700 people. G&J Seddon has on average 50–60 sites operating at any one time, which vary from major construction to refurbishment sites; its work covers the whole spectrum of construction services, including both building and maintenance. The company directly employs a workforce of more than 600, including craftsmen in joinery, brickwork, painting, plumbing and plastering. Health and safety is, says the company, the first consideration in all its activities. The company's policy is structured around leadership, resources, training and competence, which underpin the safety culture.

### **From work placement to apprenticeship**

The Seddon Group employs more than 120 apprentices and provides work experience for many students. On average the group will take on about 50 new apprentices every September.

G&J Seddon employs around 40 of these apprentices and offers an average of 25 work experience placements each year. These are drawn from 15–20 schools in north-west England. The company has forged strong relationships with many of these schools over a number of years. The company's community awareness approach is evident through its provision of health and safety talks to local schools. Young workers from the Prince's Trust and other young peoples' charities are also accepted on short-term work placements.

If students are interested in a particular aspect of the construction industry, the company will strive to place them in the relevant sector. Many former work experience students take up apprenticeships with the company. The apprentices benefit because the company already has a record of their attitudes and behaviour.

Last September, Tom Smith was offered an apprenticeship at G&J Seddon. Tom had excelled during his work experience placement the previous year and had a glowing recommendation from the site manager. Apprentices who have undertaken work experience with the company usually have a better understanding of the hazards on its sites than those who are new to the company.

In its recruitment of young workers, the company has to contend with negative stereotypes of the construction sector, which partly accounts for the fact that the percentage of women on apprenticeships is still too low. A common perception of the construction industry is that it is dirty and dangerous, when in actual fact the industry is, Roy believes, "one of the most vibrant and exciting, and our sites are a safe environment to work in."

### **Training is ongoing**

All apprentices receive a general health and safety induction on their first morning with G&J Seddon. During this induction, they are shown a number of safety videos. After three months the apprentices revisit what they were taught during their induction to see how much they have absorbed. During the course of their apprenticeship, they will receive additional training on specific subjects such as manual handling and first aid. An additional induction is provided every time an apprentice visits a new site. Health and safety is also taught at college as part of their NVQ level 3. All employees, including apprentices, receive occupational health checks.

Apprentices are often school leavers and usually begin work at 16, completing their apprenticeship at 19 or 20 when they achieve their NVQ. At the end of

each year, the company puts two or three of its former apprentices on to a management course with a view to their becoming future site managers. By empowering and rewarding young workers the company hopes to promote the longevity of their careers with G&J Seddon.

Work experience students undertake one or two week placements with the company. Their first experience of health and safety is learning what personal protective equipment must be worn. All students are informed in advance what to wear; if a student arrives in trainers rather than safety boots, they are sent back to school. The training manager, Roy Cavanagh, personally accompanies all onsite students and gives them a full health and safety induction.

### **Supervision is key**

The company believes that correct supervision is a vital instrument to ensure the safety of young workers. The stability of its workforce helps in this regard – G&J Seddon knows its employees and their abilities extremely well.

Working hours for apprentices are 8.00am-4.30pm, to ensure that they always receive the appropriate supervision. No more than two work experience students are allowed on site at any one time so that the company can ensure they are being correctly monitored.

### **Comfortable on site**

Some construction companies choose not to allow workers under 18 on site. G&J Seddon is comfortable with their presence, however, because it makes every effort to ensure that young workers are fully equipped to manage the risks. The Association of British Insurers advises that workers under 18 can be allowed on site as long as companies take the correct precautions to ensure they are aware of the risks and wear the correct PPE.

G&J Seddon is unusual in the construction industry because it is a direct employer. Many of the employees have come through the company's apprenticeship scheme and can offer a supportive and understanding ear to the apprentices.

Seddon treats health and safety as a major aspect of its philosophy, and apprentices respond to this, says Roy Cavanagh: "Health and safety is not a bit part of the philosophy but a major issue." Managing director Jonathan Seddon also holds the post of safety director, which helps to ensure that there is strong leadership and commitment to health and safety from the highest level.

Young workers know not to take risks and are encouraged to say "no" if they are unsure or feel unsafe doing a particular activity. Apprentices are also taught that the happier and healthier they are the more they will get out of the job.

Good communication is an important instrument to promote and embed the safety culture. The health and safety department produces newsletters and staff bulletins providing information and updates. A copy of the newsletter is distributed to all employees with their payslips. There is a health and safety forum and representatives of this forum visit different sites to obtain feedback from the employees.

### **The family way**

The recruitment of both apprentices and work experience students is closely controlled to ensure they attract the right calibre and character of employee. The company seeks to build confidence and awareness in its apprentices by providing them with stability during the early part of their apprenticeship. They will be based at one site and will only move to different sites once they have gained sufficient confidence and awareness.

“The company believes that correct supervision is a vital instrument to ensure the safety of young workers. The stability of its workforce helps in this regard – G&J Seddon knows its employees and their abilities extremely well.”



“Young people, like all people, have different personalities. Some young workers will have total bravado at 16 and others will be quite shy. You have to keep in mind that there will be different characters.”

Roy says that most apprentices have a very good attitude and respond well to the training. But, as he explains, young people, like all people, have different personalities. “Some young workers will have total bravado at 16 and others will be quite shy. You have to keep in mind that there will be different characters.” Roy warns against generalising when discussing young workers. The company believes strongly that it is important to get to know its employees in order to understand, and predict, their attitudes and behaviours. This is where the family ethos and philosophy of Seddon is really beneficial. It is more difficult for construction firms with contract staff to build up the same level of understanding and empathy with their employees.

### **Same hazards, heightened risks**

Most of the hazards facing young workers at Seddon are the same as those facing workers of all ages in construction, including slips trips and falls, working at height and manual handling, but young workers in general have less training and experience to be able to manage these risks.

There are also psychological hazards to consider. The plumbing apprentices are required to complete 13 different sets of exams throughout the year, which might contribute to stress. The company recognises this and is also mindful of external factors such as family bereavements, parental break-up and other domestic pressures that might have an impact upon young workers. “We are a nose-y employer,” says Roy Cavanagh, “we try to understand as much as possible about our employees.” The close bond between employer and employees helps to establish trust.

To help identify and combat these pressures, apprentices receive monthly one-on-ones with the HR manager, training manager or health and safety manager. A young person might not respond well to a particular adult so the company offers them the choice between three different managers.

### **Care in the community**

In the 20 years that the company has taken on work experience students – at an average of 25 students a year – there has been only one reportable accident. This involved an older work experience student from a local college who twisted her knee while lifting an object during the final day of a two-week placement course. The incident was investigated, as is any incident or near miss, and it was determined that no blame could be attached to either party. As Roy Cavanagh says: “You can give people as much health and safety training as you possibly can, but accidents still happen. It is a fact of life.”

The closeness of employees to each other and to their employer and the family nature of the business undoubtedly helps the company to manage health and safety more effectively.

When an employer cares genuinely for its young workers, their families and the community, and when employees buy into the company’s philosophy, demonstrated in this case by the length of time many choose to spend with the company, you have the basic ingredients for a healthy and safe workforce.

8

Sector: **Health care**

Location: **Wolverhampton**

Philosophy: **“Improve health for the people of Wolverhampton and a future where there is less deprivation and disadvantage. Providing good quality services that are equitable, speedy, convenient and treat people with dignity.”**

# Wolverhampton City PCT & Health Tec Partnership

**Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust (PCT) provides community health care and manages primary health care for a local population of some 237,000. The PCT has put in place a groundbreaking initiative in Wolverhampton, designed to prepare young people aged 14-19 in full-time education for the risks that they will face when they start work. The initiative, however, is about far more than risks to health and safety.**

The PCT is delivering the initiative in partnership with resource centre Health Tec and local schools and colleges in Wolverhampton, including Pendeford Business and Enterprise College, Colton Hills Community School and Deansfield High School.

The training delivered by Health Tec to young people in Wolverhampton, with a considerable amount of expert input and resource from Wolverhampton City PCT, extends beyond workplace health and safety to embrace some of the underlying issues that society has often shied away from, such as alcohol, drugs and teenage pregnancy.

The message is clear – most young people thrive when they are empowered, and we often seriously underestimate their ability to take responsibility and take the lead when dealing with the challenges that modern society throws at them.



## **Reducing health inequalities**

Wolverhampton is one of the most densely populated and most deprived areas in England. Unemployment is more than double the national average.

Wolverhampton City PCT has laid down promises to the people of the city on how it plans to improve and develop services. The PCT plans to provide a better quality of life and better access to services for everyone. But the PCT's pledge also challenges people and organisations in the city to work with them to achieve the targeted improvements.

“The PCT is committed to giving local children the best start in life – this is the biggest health concern in the city. Sexual health issues and teenage pregnancies feature high on the target list as do healthy living initiatives aimed at helping people lose weight, quit smoking and cut down on alcohol.”

One of the PCT's promises is to “improve overall health and reduce health inequalities”. Wolverhampton City PCT has made an enormous investment in programmes to improve the diet and physical activity of local people. The PCT is committed to giving local children the best start in life – this is the biggest health concern in the city. Sexual health issues and teenage pregnancies feature high on the target list as do healthy living initiatives aimed at helping people lose weight, quit smoking and cut down on alcohol.

The PCT's chief executive, Jon Crockett says: “The initiative is the most ambitious programme in living memory to improve health services in Wolverhampton. Our pledge is to save more lives and add quality of life for the people of Wolverhampton.”

#### Health Tec link-up

Health Tec is a concept designed to link into the national school curriculum primarily for health and social care. The services provided by Health Tec have been planned and developed by a unique partnership between Wolverhampton City PCT, NHS West Midlands Strategic Health Authority, Wolverhampton City Council's 14-19 Team, the Education Business Partnership, Skills for Health, local employers, schools, colleges and the university.

Health Tec's learning facility, which opened its doors in 2007, gives 14-19 year olds access to “real-life” scenarios aimed at making them more aware of health and social issues such as obesity, teenage pregnancy, food hygiene, smoking and drugs, all of which could affect them and their family members. Learning resources at the centre have recently been expanded to address fire safety and workplace health and safety. Students from Colton Hills Community School were responsible for the layout and decoration of the resource centre, which contains rooms replicating home, work and a hospital.

Health Tec aims to encourage students to explore the wide variety of employment opportunities in the NHS. Schools and colleges pay for the courses provided by Health Tec, which seeks to support young people through the national curriculum and diploma courses to gain the academic and professional qualifications they will need for work.

#### The Trust's guiding hand

Sarah Southall, the PCT's general manager, estate regulation and non clinical risk, explains the background to the incorporation of health and safety into the services provided by Health Tec: “We have been involved with Health Tec in a small and select way over the past 12 months and have had the opportunity to promote health and safety among the young people using the facility. Our involvement has paved the way in introducing them to the workplace and to work experience in a safer and more controlled way so they are better prepared to deal with the risks they will face when they enter the world of work.”

“Health Tec aims to encourage students to explore the wide variety of employment opportunities in the NHS. Schools and colleges pay for the courses provided by Health Tec, which seeks to support young people through the national curriculum and diploma courses to gain the academic and professional qualifications they will need for work.”



Health Tec's initiative is open to all 14–19 year olds in full-time education in Wolverhampton. Sarah is clear that the approach has to come from the school, and says: "This initiative is advertised to all schools. The schools decide whether or not they want to take it up. The main bulk of the work we will be doing over the next twelve months will be with Pendeford Business and Enterprise College – the 14-19 year olds at Pendeford decided that Health Tec was the organisation they wanted to work more closely with. We have also worked with Colton Hills Community School and Deansfield High School. It is important to mention that the diploma students come to the Health Tec facility from schools across the city."

Rebecca Brown, the PCT's estate regulation team co-ordinator, outlines the content of the health and safety training provided to young people undertaking the diploma course who have attended the Health Tec facility: "We cover the basics of health and safety. We go through the legislation. We talk to them about risk assessment. We talk to them about what to expect when they first go to work. Some of them are coming up to work experience and we prepare them for what they should and should not expect and tell them to challenge people when asked to do something they should not be asked to do."

The training for Pendeford Business and Enterprise College diploma students has been designed to be undertaken over a 12 month period. Rebecca Brown emphasises the importance of consolidating the lessons learned from training over the course of the diploma: "We start off slowly and make it relevant to what the young people will do at work on a day-to-day basis. We start with safety in the home, move on to fire safety and then to personal safety working with the police and fire services. We include advice on how to look after themselves when going out at night. Also, how to communicate with people and how to behave with other people. And they finish off by returning once again to health and safety and hopefully success in the British Safety Council's Level 1 qualification."

#### **Emergency services help out**

Local agencies such as the police and fire services have taken on a support role in ensuring high quality, informative, expert and practical training. Sarah Southall describes the fire training that the young people undertake: "We use intelligent equipment which simulates a fire. The young people are equipped with an extinguisher and are given a go at putting it out and we use simulation equipment which is really good. We teach them how to use fire extinguishers but also help give them knowledge about location of fires, sources of

“ If we can help them understand what the basics are, that in itself is an achievement. There are some students that we have taken in the past who came along and did not have a clue what expectations they should have in relation to a work experience placement. That is astonishing.”

fires and the equipment used to extinguish fires. Using the system simulates flame and noise – it is so much more meaningful. They have the opportunity with this system to target the base of the fire. It times them so they can see how long they have actually taken to put out the fire. It also highlights how little an extinguisher contains. It puts fire safety into perspective for them. They can see how quickly fire spreads, how efficient an extinguisher would be on a small fire and the difficulty of bringing a fire under control.”

### **Rights and responsibilities**

But there are far broader goals underlying the courses that Health Tec and other groups provide that go way beyond conventional fire safety and health and safety. What Health Tec and participating schools and colleges are doing is, importantly, helping to drive down health inequalities across the city. Programmes run by Health Tec – not only for healthcare diploma students but diploma students generally – aim to encourage healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health and their own safety but equally importantly know their rights in relation to health and safety in the workplace.

Sarah Southall emphasises the importance of young people taking responsibility: “Some of the young people who on the surface were the ones most difficult to engage with have engaged with us very positively. They want to understand the big issues around health and safety and be given the opportunity that perhaps they have not had before. Their success is a reflection of their own qualities, their willingness to take responsibility and an understanding of what they should reasonably expect in the workplace. They probably would not have that view solely from school – that they should have expectations, they have rights and that there are standards.”

As Sarah observed, there was much to be done to help prepare some of the young people for the world of work: “If we can help them understand what the basics are, that in itself is an achievement. There are some students that we have taken in the past who came along and did not have a clue about what expectations they should have in relation to a work experience placement. That is astonishing.”

### **Managing the “daunting” transition**

The transition that young people have to make moving from school to work is not seamless. The demands that work and society place upon young people are considerable. Time will tell whether young people are better equipped through the skills that they have acquired and the attitudes and behaviours they have adopted to face the range of risks that they will face at work, and in life generally. The early indications are extremely positive.

The final words rest with Sarah Southall. “It is daunting when you think about leaving school and going into a workplace which is very different from what you are used to. There are expectations that are placed upon you. At school you have teachers to rely on and your school friends. At work you are often alone and not having that background knowledge that these students will have is very dangerous. And there is the opportunity through this initiative for us to help these students gain a greater level of knowledge and confidence.”

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Sector: **Construction**Location: **Nationwide**

Philosophy: **“Safeguarding our employees, supply chain and the public is essential for protecting and sustaining our business. There is a strong correlation between safe working environments and satisfied customers.”**

# Rok plc

**Construction services group Rok plc places safety at the top of its list of priorities, and safety is its first key performance indicator. Rok chairman Stephen Pettit says: “We are determined that Rok should be the safest place to work in the industry. It is encouraging to report the success we have had in improving our health and safety record. This was recognised externally in an audit by the British Safety Council, which awarded the group Five Star status.”**

Shaun Davis, the group’s director of safety, health, environment and quality, is cautious about separating out young workers for special attention. While Rok attaches great importance to its young workers, it is an approach that seeks the smooth integration of young people into the business, and where empowering the young worker is paramount. A culture of empowerment offers young people the chance to take responsibility, to be treated as adults and to engage actively in health and safety within the organisation.

Rok employs 258 apprentices. The vast majority work in frontline delivery and most are employed in maintenance and build, plumbing, heating and electrical. Additionally, the company employs 52 management trainees. Apprentices are, on average, 19½ years old and based across the UK with the highest percentage in Scotland. Their apprenticeships usually run for around three years.



Rok aims to be “the nation’s local builder”. To support this goal, the company’s policy is to recruit from the local community where possible. This principle is reinforced by its work experience policy through forging strong relationships with local schools.

### **The School of Rok**

In 2009, Rok apprentices attended 9,600 days of training. This equates to 37 days per apprentice and underlines the importance attached to the high standard of training of its young employees. Every new employee visits “The School of Rok” in Crawley, Sussex. The two-day induction programme, a “Taste of Rok”, includes an address from the CEO. The aim is that all employees receive a consistent message of the Group’s vision



and values, and learn about its commitment to the safety and health of its workers. This programme reached the final of the national Chartered Institute of Personnel Development's People Management Awards in 2009 for employee engagement.

The company operates a three-tier induction process featuring a high-level company induction, a local office induction and a site-specific induction. The local and site-specific inductions include practical safety arrangements such as first aid and fire safety. Apprentices undertake the same induction process as all new employees, and also receive additional health and safety training as part of their college NVQ course. At the start of their apprenticeship, each apprentice will focus on one particular trade. At a later stage, they have the option to move into different areas. The company's training matrix ensures that employees receive the appropriate training for their particular role. The matrix will identify suitable supporting qualifications; Rok is in discussion about providing its apprentices with the British Safety Council Level 1 Certificate in Health and Safety at Work.

Students on work experience receive a broad insight into the different aspects of a construction company; they visit construction sites, where they are closely supervised, but also experience areas such as IT, marketing and sales.

### **Double-edged sword of experience**

Shaun Davis believes that a young person's knowledge and understanding of health and safety risks when they first enter the workplace is "still very desktop". They are aware of hazards and risks, but learning in the classroom and being on site are different scenarios. "You only really learn to drive once you have passed your test," Shaun points out.

"Today's young people are much more aware of the fact that employers have a duty of care to keep them safe," says Shaun, who is a keen supporter of the British Safety Council's initiative to raise the profile of health and safety awareness in schools through the provision of free entry level qualifications for all 14-19 year olds in full-time education, and believes this work is helping to shape attitudes as well as knowledge and understanding. Shaun feels that there has been a noticeable shift in attitudes over the past decade. "Young workers are more likely to question and raise an issue than they would have done 10 years ago."

Problems, however, begin to occur when young workers are placed alongside more experienced colleagues who have a more relaxed attitude to health and safety, which in turn can cause the young workers to become more complacent. To meet this challenge, Rok applauds those who challenge and try to improve established practices with regards to health and safety. There is a very strong emphasis on positive actions and challenging a colleague or superior is viewed in a positive light. "Rok", says Shaun, "has tried to create a culture in which people can both contribute and question."

“ A young person's knowledge and understanding of health and safety risks when they first enter a workplace is 'still very desktop'. They are aware of hazards and risks, but learning in the classroom and being on site are different scenarios. You only really learn to drive once you have passed your test.”

“The company now includes health screening in its recruitment and selection process. But although the hazards are the same, the risks may be accentuated for younger workers. Rok has, for example, restricted the areas in which employees are allowed to use mobile phones.”

Nevertheless, it can be difficult for a young employee to challenge a more experienced worker. Rok’s approach is to instil the young worker with confidence via a culture of empowerment which it tries to create by ensuring their voices can be heard, and by taking on board their ideas.

The company has a number of mechanisms to ensure that a young worker’s voice can be heard – an open door policy (be it of the site manger or the safety manager), a confidential helpline, and a confidential reporting form. Grievances can be pursued through the company’s performance management process, but the goal is that the former mechanisms will be used to resolve any dispute before it gets to that stage.

Should young employees suffer from problems or pressures in their private lives, the company believes it has a culture in which they can feel comfortable in confiding in their employer. Failing that, Shaun says, the company would look for indicators such as poor punctuality, missing deadlines, falling standards of work or looking distracted. Rok also operates a “buddy system”; all apprentices are allocated a ‘buddy’ – a more experienced worker who will act as a mentor. As well as providing tutelage, this provides the young employee with an additional outlet for relaying concerns or ideas.

By setting its stall out early and exposing young workers to a variety of different messaging, Rok seeks to encourage its young workers to buy in to its safety culture. “Citizens’ Forum” is a group-wide employee forum and there are local committees that feed into the national forum. *Rok Citizen* is an employee magazine with news



and views from across the group that the company uses to spread a positive message about its work and the contributions of employees young and old. “But ultimately”, says Shaun, “face-to-face communication remains the most important mechanism for embedding the safety culture.”

**Different ages, same hazards, variable risks**  
Rok employees face safety hazards that are common to the construction industry, including working at height, moving vehicles and slips, trips and falls. Health hazards include dust, vibration and noise. The company now includes health screening in its recruitment and selection process. But although the hazards are the same, the risks may be accentuated for younger workers. Rok has, for example, restricted the areas in which employees are allowed to use mobile phones and other technological distractions, popular with younger employees, to avoid the potential for accidents.



Young workers might suffer anxiety or strain from working and studying at the same time. But Shaun Davis views these as normal teenage pressures as opposed to work-related stress. The need to balance work, study and social life is common to all young people. He feels that these pressures can be best understood, and dealt with, by open and honest communication between employee and employer.

The company strives to raise awareness of the effects of alcohol consumption among its young employees, who are warned that the effects of Saturday night overindulgence can still be felt on Monday morning. These effects can be especially unsafe on a construction site. Pre-employment testing takes place and both alcohol and drugs are covered as topics during induction. The company also plans to introduce random testing across its workforce later this year. Post-incident testing is used if Rok suspects that alcohol or drugs are implicated in an accident.

Rok experienced a 700% improvement in its near-miss reporting when it introduced the Rok Near Miss and Confidential Helpline (the company believes this is because it provides a quick alternative to paperwork). This helps to highlight those issues that require particular attention in the company's efforts to minimise risk. Every incident reported to the helpline is investigated.

A recent example involved an off-site injury to a Rok apprentice. The apprentice suffered a serious cut while using a saw at college as part of his NVQ course. Rok investigated the incident by sending its safety officer, who concluded that the inexperienced individual was not being properly

supervised, and the college's risk assessment and supervision practices were out-of-date. Supervision is regarded as a crucial element of young worker safety. Rok apprentices work regular hours where they will receive adequate supervision; it is very uncommon for apprentices to do shift work or irregular hours where they might receive less supervision and where the potential for accidents increases.

### **Lessons for life**

Employers that adopt an enlightened approach with young workers and embed a positive mindset and attitudes will stand their young employees in good stead throughout their working lives. The culture that Shaun Davis and his team are developing at Rok attempts to do just this.

It is important to remember that many of the hazards facing young workers are not specific to that group alone. Shaun feels that companies should be wary of targeting specific groups at the expense of other employees. Older employees are also a high-risk group. "If you place too much emphasis upon protecting 16-20 year olds," he warns, "it can breed the notion that once you reach 20 you are going to be safe from then on."

In summary, Rok's approach is to immerse young workers in a culture of safety and of empowerment; it gives them the correct training and supervision but treats them as adults; it empowers them, gives them a voice, equips them with the tools they need, but does not single them out.

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“The charity is committing £500,000 each year from its reserves to make the Entry Level Award in Workplace Hazard Awareness a reality for every young person entering the world of work.”

## The British Safety Council Investment

**In the biggest ever drive to protect young workers, the British Safety Council is paying for all 14-19 year olds in full-time education in the UK to gain an accredited qualification in health and safety. The charity is committing £500,000 each year from its reserves to make the Entry Level Award in Workplace Hazard Awareness a reality for every young person entering the world of work.**

Our underlying concern is that, despite the downward trend in the number of fatal and major workplace accidents, there is clear evidence that young people still continue to be exposed to the risk of serious injury. As section four shows, there were 15,376 injuries to workers aged 16-24 reported to the HSE in 2008/09 that resulted in the victims taking at least three days off work. The evidence also shows that these accidents could easily have been prevented; many were attributable to the cavalier attitude or carelessness of a minority of employers who failed to meet their legal duties to train and supervise their young workers.

We are not seeking to push the responsibility for ensuring health and safety on to the shoulders of young workers. Rather, we will continue to campaign for employers to face up to their legal and moral responsibilities and for criminal sanctions to be applied where their neglect leads to the risk of serious injury. But young workers need to have the opportunity to gain the knowledge necessary to help them understand the risks to health and safety they will face at work, know the actions that their employers and work colleagues should take to control those risks, and develop the confidence to raise concerns and help bring an end to unsafe working practices.





### **The Entry Level qualification**

The British Safety Council is committed to working with government, schools, employers and other key stakeholders to make the goal of the Entry Level Award in Workplace Hazard Awareness a reality for every young person entering the world of work. Now in its third year, this pioneering initiative has already seen more than 50,000 young people gain the qualification. But there is still a long way to go.

The qualification is accredited by the UK regulatory authorities in the National Qualifications Framework and provides a formal assessment outcome to the delivery of health and safety in the National Curriculum. It is mapped to the National Occupational Standards for Health and Safety.

Registration is free to schools and colleges, who are provided with a free teacher resource pack, containing everything they need to deliver the qualification.

In order to achieve the qualification, candidates must collate a portfolio of evidence on five topics: health and safety hazards, safety signs, personal protective equipment, fire safety, and the responsibilities of employers and employees. All candidate work is sent to the British Safety Council for marking by external examiners.

For further information on the Entry Level qualification, visit [www.britsafe.org/schools](http://www.britsafe.org/schools)

### **Evaluating the impact**

The British Safety Council is undertaking a survey of young people to assess any changes in their knowledge and understanding, and attitudes and values towards health and safety as a result of completing the Entry Level qualification. Students complete a questionnaire before undertaking the qualification and then again following the completion of their studies. They are also being interviewed following their work experience placements. When published, the findings will help us to better understand the issues facing young people in the workplace.



**SPEAK UP  
STAY SAFE**



The British Safety Council is protecting young people in the workplace through the Speak Up, Stay Safe campaign.

You can do your bit by making sure young people in your care know the facts and who to talk to if they have a problem.

The British Safety Council has developed a series of quick animations to illustrate workplace safety tips directed at young people.

Watch and share them at:

[www.speakupstaysafe.com](http://www.speakupstaysafe.com)



**For further information please contact:**

Neal Stone – Head of policy and public affairs  
E: [neal.stone@britsafe.org](mailto:neal.stone@britsafe.org)  
T: 020 8600 5585

Paul Gordon – Policy and research manager  
E: [paul.gordon@brifsafe.org](mailto:paul.gordon@brifsafe.org)  
T: 020 8600 5548

**This report is also available on our website: [www.britsafe.org](http://www.britsafe.org)**