

# Supporting GB's resource and recycling industry through health and safety - an all-industry strategy for 2021 -2023 supported by WISH

*Only by working together with an integrated approach to stakeholder commitment and activity, aligned communications and regulatory intervention can we continue to improve health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing across the industry*

## Aim

To encourage and develop an integrated approach taken by all stakeholders across the resource and recycling industry to produce a sustained improvement of health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing performance. This approach will focus on key areas of current and potential future risk, and ensuring stakeholders comply with both regulatory requirements and their wider societal and sustainability responsibilities.

## Key strategic objectives:

That all industry stakeholders acknowledge and accept that:

- Good health, safety and wellbeing enables growth, competitiveness, innovation and promotes an engaged workforce
- Everyone, from commercial companies, local authorities and the HSE to SMEs, unions, trade and professional bodies and WISH, has a role to play in improving health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing, and that it is only by working together can sustained improvement be achieved
- The sector should not be frightened, or slow, to change the way it works and to adopt new approaches to improve its health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing performance
- Working together, supporting this strategy and the work of WISH, encouraging, attracting, and rewarding competency and skills that drive high standards, continual improvement, and innovation are the best ways of promoting the sector as a responsible and sustainable employer

## Five strategic themes - what are we asking of our partners and colleagues across the sector?

This strategy is split into five themes to reflect the challenges faced by the industry. These themes support and feed-into achieving our overall strategic objectives. A synopsis of this strategy is available as a simplified 'road map' from the WISH web site at <https://wishforum.org.uk/>. All sector organisations, from companies and local authorities to trade bodies, should look at this strategy and compare it to their own plans for improvement. Only if we are aligned will the industry improve sustainably and consistently. At the end of each theme below an example of what WISH is doing is given. What is your organisation doing?



## Theme 1 - an integrated approach, leading, communicating and working together

**Developing the ownership of health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing by every person in the waste and recycling sector.** *Only by demonstrating effective and visible leadership and working together across the whole industry (including larger organisations, SMEs and micro-enterprises, local authorities, and regulators) can we improve health, safety, and wellbeing.*

### Theme objectives

- 1.1 Develop the ownership of health, safety and wellbeing by everyone, front-line workers, support staff, managers, and executives alike
- 1.2 Ensure that senior leadership takes responsibility for the behavioural example they set, that they drive sensible health and safety solutions, set clear expectations, and that they both positively and directly engage with their front-line colleagues, and respond to and acknowledge feedback from them
- 1.3 Ensure that front-line and supervisory staff are fully engaged in the 'safety message', that they understand and take responsibility for the behavioural example they set, through their acts or inaction, and that they can provide honest feedback to management without fear of reprisal
- 1.4 Promote industry-working with regulators to identify and resolve problems, including through an integrated approach to industry-wide initiatives, contractor management, duty holder compliance, inspection and regulator engagement
- 1.5 Achieve an all-industry approach to communicating key health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing messages, including sharing of successes and good innovative practice aimed at enabling others to find and adopt solutions to their own health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing challenges - health and safety is an area where co-operation benefits everyone
- 1.6 Tackle the criminal and irresponsible elements of the industry through a combined regulatory approach supported by freely given information from the sector
- 1.7 Promote the active support of the initiatives and work of WISH and its members to help achieve this strategic theme

**Example.** *Employee engagement and visible leadership are essential components of good health, safety and wellbeing performance. However, a question asked by many organisations is 'how do I assess and measure these intangible components?' In 2015, WISH published its safety leadership self-assessment tool, aimed at allowing organisations to assess their performance in this area. In 2019, WISH launched its employee engagement self-assessment tool. Companies and other organisations can use these two tools to assess where they are currently, then reassess periodically to see if their engagement and leadership performance has improved.*

## Theme 2 - driving innovation – anticipating and keeping pace with change

**Ensuring that health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing are properly addressed when there are changes in technology, equipment, and ways of working. Keeping pace with change and anticipating the challenges of tomorrow are responsible investments to achieve better risk management and higher standards of health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing.**

### Theme objectives

- 2.1 Ensure everyone keeps pace with change by anticipating the challenges of tomorrow through improved design, planning and implementation of new equipment, technologies and ways of working
- 2.2 Enable preparation for future risks by supporting combined research to identify emergent and potential health, safety and wellbeing issues and develop effective responses to them
- 2.3 Make health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing a core consideration when contemplating and planning any change, rather than a 'bolt-on' afterthought applied at the end of a process
- 2.4 Review ways of working and communicating to keep pace with societal developments, such as increased use of social media, video and 'apps', to ensure these remain relevant and are delivered by the most effective method and medium
- 2.5 Develop responses including the identification, assessment and management of emerging threats, such as those posed by high energy content batteries in the waste and recycling streams and other changes in waste content and composition
- 2.6 Share and communicate effective responses to change that avoid others having to 'reinvent the wheel' when faced with new equipment, technologies, and ways of working
- 2.7 Promote the active support of the initiatives and work of WISH and its members to help achieve this strategic theme
- 2.8 Industry health and safety groups should look at their guidance and ways of working to ensure they meet the needs of members and others in a changing industry and seek opportunities to collaborate to improve health and safety, including horizon-scanning for new technologies and emerging risks

**Example.** *The use of lithium, and other high-energy concentration batteries, is becoming increasingly common, in applications from portable communications devices and hand-tools to e-bicycles and similar. When incorrectly disposed of these pose distinct health and safety risks when 'rogue' batteries occur in wastes at recycling sites. Working with ESA (Environmental Services Association), in 2020 WISH released guidance for the industry on how to mitigate these risks. Industry guidance and information needs to keep-up with changes in society and technology and the risks posed by such changes.*

## Theme 3 - managing risk well – creating and maintaining healthier and safer workplaces

**Managing risk well and driving through the plan-do-check-act process to achieve sustainable solutions and improvement.** *Managing risk well supports growth and protects an organisation's most vital asset – their people*

### Theme objectives

- 3.1 Support the development of guidance, information and training tools which assist the industry in the identification and management of workplace risk
- 3.2 Support the development of guidance, information and training which supports the adoption of risk standards that are effective, shared across the sector continually improved, and play a positive role in the sharing of such knowledge
- 3.3 Enable the further development of methods to measure the true level of work-related ill health in the industry, and promote the investigation, development, and communication of ways in which ill health can be avoided, reduced, and mitigated
- 3.4 Promote and support combined research into emerging health, safety and wellbeing issues that assist in the revision and definition of key sector priorities, standards, and practices
- 3.5 Support the development, implementation and monitoring of effective action plans which address and control the risks faced by organisations, their workforces, and others
- 3.6 Promote the active support of the initiatives and work of WISH and its members to help achieve this strategic theme

**Example.** *Guidance and information need to be based on sound and practical knowledge. In 2013, WISH started to look at the issue of fire risk at waste and recycling sites, and quickly realised that this was an area where knowledge and research was lacking. Between 2015 and 2018, WISH managed a series of extensive tests on how wastes burn and how waste fires might be best managed. This research was funded by the National Fire Chiefs Council and some of the major resource and recycling companies and, to date, has cost in excess of £175,000. The resultant WISH waste fires guidance is now on its third revision, keeping pace with developments in research and knowledge to remain relevant and useful.*

## Theme 4 - supporting SMEs and micro-businesses

**Developing, adapting, and customising focussed approaches to help SMEs understand how to comply with their health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing obligations.** *Supporting SMEs and micro-businesses by providing the tools and information required for them to understand their duties and ways to meet these, so improving working conditions for many, producing productive relationships, and creating a fair playing field.*

### Theme objectives

- 4.1 Improve SME and micro-business understanding, and awareness of the standards required by all in the sector, their own responsibilities as duty holders, and the positive and tangible benefits of good standards of health, safety, and wellbeing no matter the size of an organisation
- 4.2 Improve awareness in SMEs and micro-businesses of the health and safety guidance, information and resources that are available to support them
- 4.3 Develop new pathways to communicate with SMEs and micro-businesses which are complimentary to their needs and preferences, including through the use of new media and methods and the involvement of associations that represent them
- 4.4 Improve the availability and quality of health and safety advice and guidance to SMEs and micro-businesses. This should be clear, simple, and accessible, and the advised control measures should be proportionate to the risks.
- 4.5 Promote the sharing of knowledge and experience between larger organisations and SMEs and micro-businesses
- 4.6 Promote the active support of the initiatives and work of WISH and its members to help achieve this strategic theme

**Example.** *SMEs and micro-businesses do not typically have in-house health and safety advice resources. They also frequently do not have the resources in terms of people and time to attend traditional seminars and training courses. Over the past three years, WISH has organised and carried-out a series of roadshow type events for SMEs and micro-businesses, held in the early evening to avoid clashing with the working day and conducted in straightforward and focussed language. What works with larger organisations often does not work with SMEs and micro-businesses, which require a different communications approach.*

## Theme 5 - building skills and competence

**Improving skills and competence across the industry.** *In a fast-moving, changing industry developing skills and competence helps reduce accident rates and ill health. Just as importantly, it increases efficiency, maintains a core skilled workforce, and makes the sector more attractive for employment.*

### Theme objectives

- 5.1 Ensure that everyone, from training providers and bodies to operational organisations, are fully aware of their responsibilities and that they all play their role in the achievement and maintenance of a competent and well-trained industry
- 5.2 Focus on increasing the skills and competency of front-line supervisors who monitor performance and supervise day-to-day activities, both in terms of the hard and soft skills required
- 5.3 Develop and share training tools and resources utilising the full range of appropriate media and methods that enable engaged and learning employees are all levels
- 5.4 Investigate the potential to work with other sectors, develop within the resource and recycling sector common industry-recognised training systems, awards and qualifications which reward good practice and celebrate success
- 5.5 Develop guidance and support materials that differentiate between training and competence and which enable the competency of individuals and organisations to be measured, monitored, and managed
- 5.6 Support the development and promotion of learning cultures at all levels within organisations.
- 5.7 Find and share new and innovative ways of training to engage the workforce to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow
- 5.8 Promote the active support of the initiatives and work of WISH and its members to help achieve this strategic theme

**Example.** *One of WISH's longest-standing guidance documents is 'WASTE 21 health and safety training in waste and recycling'. This guidance has recently been revised to keep it up-to-date and gives an overview of general training requirements. However, training and competence at the frontline supervisory level is known to be critical and WISH is now seeking to produce more information on this specific aspect.*