

**ESSENTIAL
STANDARD
no.22**

Managing Occupational Health & Wellbeing



KEY MESSAGES

- Tier 1 companies to have an occupational health approach that at least meets the minimum standards of our Health and Wellbeing Maturity Model and they constantly improve their position through recorded action plans
- There should be specific objectives related to mental health in the workplace
- All supply chain and delivery partners have a legally-compliant approach to health surveillance to ensure fitness for work
- Safety, health and wellbeing must all be equally promoted within the organisation

1. Introduction

Occupational illness accounts for more lost time days than workplace injury incidents, however, it's given less attention due to illnesses or diseases only showing effects at a much later stage.

The Thames Water health and wellbeing strategy helps ensure we meet our legal obligations to health, safety and welfare, as well as improve our employees' fitness for work and home lives.



2. Ill Health Prevention

All Thames Water partners must have processes and procedures that aim to:

- Eliminate health hazards during design, planning and implementation of work
- Mitigate workplace risk
- Achieve healthy behaviour
- Train managers in risk management for health and safety
- Engage the workforce about health (similar as with safety)
- Share good practices and celebrate success



3. Health and Wellbeing Maturity Model

In order for companies to work on our behalf, and meet the minimum health and wellbeing requirements, they must complete a **self-assessment** as set out in our Health and Wellbeing Maturity Model.

The easy-to-complete tool will help the organisation to see what's already in place and what improvements still need to be done.

Businesses are expected to achieve a minimum standard, which consists largely of normal legal requirements under health and safety law, before we consider working with them.

Thames Water Health & Wellbeing Maturity Model						Zero incidents Zero harm Zero compromise <small>keeping you healthy and safe, every day at work</small>	Thames Water
Category	Infancy	Developing	Evident	Established	Integrated	Percentage Score (%)	
Health Performance Indicator (HPI)	Minimum number of OH risk management and ill health reports reduced to number of zero	Health compliance recognised health risk management and ill health reports to achieve minimum standards	Compliance full compliance with minimum OH risk management and ill health	Evidence of OH risk management in all levels of the business through OH risk	Evidence of strategic OH management in all levels of the business through OH risk		
	Limited awareness of practical health risk management	Meeting minimum standards in most areas	Health is considered in all aspects of safety	All health prevention, protection and control measures implemented and regularly reviewed	Evidence of an explicit health and well-being strategy throughout the culture and management practice of the business		
WORKPLACE	1 Health Risk Assessment	Health risks are regularly identified in risk assessments including COSHH, Hazardous Waste, etc.	Health risks included in all risk assessments including COSHH and controls implemented for health risks with clear, accessible, understandable and effective control measures	Physical and chemical risks are identified in risk assessments and effective control measures	Physical and chemical risks are identified in all risk assessments and effective control measures are in place	7%	
	2 Hierarchy of control (collective or personal)	Individuals assessed using PPE in health risk assessments	Individuals assessed using the hierarchy of control in health risk assessments	Individuals assessed using the hierarchy of control in health risk assessments	Clear evidence of the hierarchy of control in health risk assessments	3%	
	3 Health Surveillance	Health surveillance for high risk workers implemented	Health surveillance for high risk workers implemented	Occupational health surveillance for high risk workers implemented	Occupational health surveillance for high risk workers implemented	7%	
	4 Health Auditing	OH audits to assess health risks	OH audits to assess health risks	OH audits to assess health risks	OH audits to assess health risks	3%	
WORKERS	5 Fitness to Work	No assessment of fitness to work	Developing fitness to work processes	Clear evidence of 'fitness to work' programme	Clear evidence of an established 'fitness to work' programme	7%	
	6 Absence Management and Return to Work	No absence management or return to work processes	Absence management and return to work processes	Absence management and return to work processes	Absence management and return to work processes	3%	
	7 Management of Health	Health risks to be managed and controlled	Health risks to be managed and controlled	Health risks to be managed and controlled	Health risks to be managed and controlled	10%	
8 Health Promotion	Low level of health promotion	Developing health promotion	Evidence of regular health promotion	Health promotion available to all employees	Health promotion available to all employees	10%	



4. Worker

Employees who experience ill health must be supported to help manage their condition and recovery, so they can remain at work or return early from time off. This needs to be provided through an Occupational Health service and managers trained in supporting those with common health issues. There needs to be a consideration for supporting those with both physical and mental health through:



Mental Health

- The **mental health strategy** for all Tier 1 contractors should be accredited to an appropriate body that demonstrates the credibility of their approach. E.g. Time to Change or similar.
- Tier 1 contractors should be able to demonstrate meeting the core standards and working towards meeting the enhanced standards as laid out in the **Thriving at Work** report. Tier 2 and other should be working towards achieving the same standard.
- For perceived **work-related illness**, day 1 referral to occupational health services and completion of the HSE stress risk assessment is desired.
- Operational sites should be considering mental health within first aid needs assessments and be aiming for **1:10 mental health first aiders**.
- **Mental health awareness training** should be available for all managers to improve confidence and competence in managing employees with poor mental health.
- An **Employee Assistance Programme** or counselling service should be accessible to support employee mental wellbeing at work
- **Open engagement forums** to remove the stigma around mental at work should be available.



Physical Health

- All Tier 1 contractors should be able to demonstrate initiatives to reduce risk of injury at work through **manual handling training**.
- For work related injuries, **day 1 referral** to physiotherapy or occupational health services is desired.
- **Early intervention to physiotherapy** should be available for at minimum work-related injuries.
- Managers should have suitable **training and support** in managing employees with physical health issues with particular emphasis on offering adjustments in the workplace to facilitate early return to work.
- Consideration should be given to the use of **vehicle assessments** and **functional capacity assessments** for those with chronic physical health issues.

5. Workplace



To help prevent employees becoming ill, as a result of their work, provide:

- **Health surveillance** programmes to monitor employees exposed to specific workplace hazards such as noise, vibration, chemicals, etc.
- Periodic **medical assessments** to ensure employees are fit to perform specified job roles
- **Employee training** on managing moving and handling risks associated with their role and using display screen equipment (DSE).
- **Tools to support stress management** should be available and the importance of reporting any symptoms of ill health early should be encouraged
- Opportunities to **enhance physical fitness** in the workplace should be available through the use of activity areas, exercise equipment or gym memberships
- **Wellbeing initiatives** to support positive mental health in the workplace should be available including opportunities to exercise, choose healthy food and work flexibly.

6. Wellbeing

Actively encourage employees to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing. For example:

- Provide and **promote good workplace practices** – such as when working with hazardous substances or processes (noise, vibration, manual handling, etc.)
- Provide **regular health promotion campaigns** that follow government initiatives on topics such as obesity, heart disease, strokes, etc.
- Create opportunities to support positive **mental health** and resilience at work.
- Develop a cohort of wellbeing champions to undertake local initiatives.
- Utilise **mobile technology** and **open engagement** forums to enhance wellbeing.



7. Wider Community

Initiatives should benefit our employees and their friends and families, the wider community and other organisations directly or indirectly connected to the work we do. We can do this by:

- Engaging in the Thames Water **health and safety forums** that aim to improve workplace conditions and worker wellbeing
- **Sharing information** about our own initiatives and making materials available to use or follow on the Health and Safety Hub
- Enabling **family members** to utilise the wellbeing initiatives offered to employees
- Encouraging our workforce to support charities involved in promoting health and wellbeing

