



Good practice in preventing risks to young workers — Summary of a report ⁽¹⁾

Introduction

Young people are more at risk of harm from work for a variety of reasons. They lack experience and maturity, awareness of risks, and skills and training; they may be unaware of their rights and employers' duties regarding health and safety; and they may be reluctant to speak out about problems and keen to please their new employer. They therefore need to be placed in safe and suitable jobs that are matched to their skills and mental and physical abilities and given adequate training and supervision.

However, the majority of occupational safety and health (OSH) risks are preventable, whether they involve young or older workers, by applying the principles of risk assessment and putting in place the necessary preventive measures. In addition, by keeping young workers safe and by training and educating them properly, employers can benefit from their energy and motivation, while at the same time promoting a prevention culture. To support information exchange on best practice, the Agency has produced a report about good practices in preventing risks to young workers.

Strategy to protect young workers

A model of OSH for young workers suggesting a two-way strategy to combat OSH risks to them is shown in Figure 1. A prevention culture needs to be promoted among new recruits, but also at all levels of education. In addition to regulatory measures to improve jobs and workplaces, the Member States are drawing up and implementing educational policies and practices to mainstream risk education and OSH into education and vocational training.

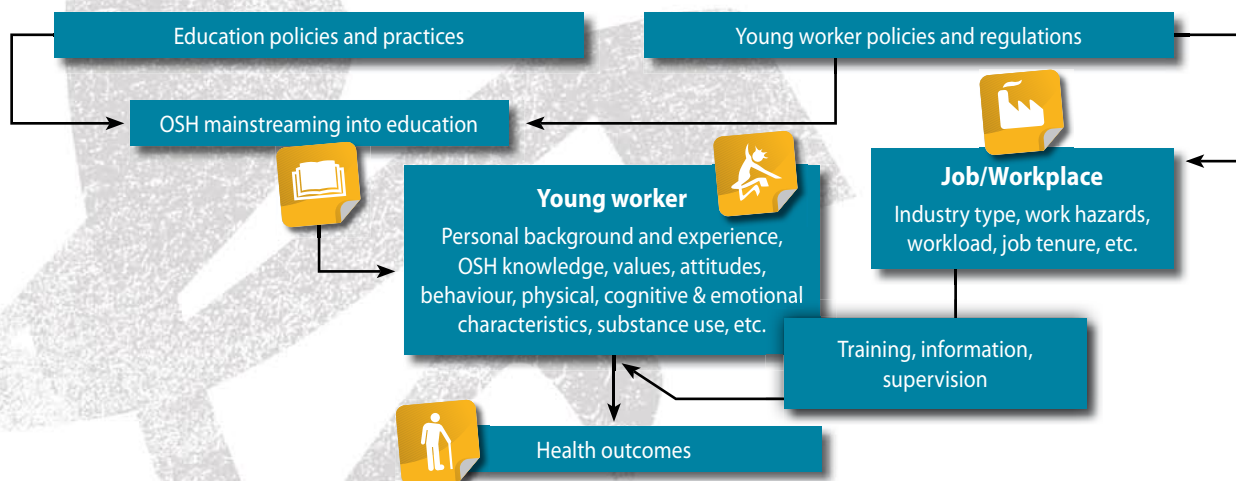


Action at the policy and programme level

The prevention of injuries and ill health in young workers starts at the policy level, which includes legislation and supporting programmes and campaigns. National and European legislation ⁽²⁾ obliges employers to pay special attention to minors and younger workers and underlines the importance of creating a culture of safety; this forms a good basis for minimising OSH risks to young workers.

There are already many innovative programmes and campaigns on young worker safety. These programmes should seek closer cooperation with sectors and companies to implement innovations

Figure 1: Model of the occupational safety and health of young workers



⁽¹⁾ Preventing risks to young workers: policy, programmes and workplace practices: <http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/TE3008760ENC/view>

⁽²⁾ Council Directive 94/33/EC applies to workers under 18.

at workplace level more efficiently. It is also important to get the message across to companies that healthy and informed employees are their most important investment for the future. Member States should ensure that OSH programmes and campaigns in sectors with high youth employment, such as hairdressing and call centres, include a youth dimension.

Lessons learned from workplace interventions and vocational training

The report presents cases of successful actions to prevent risks to young workers. Many of the cases are training and mentoring initiatives and it is important to underline the fact that this training took place within organisations that have a good OSH management system in place to prevent the exposure of young workers to hazards. Training is just one part of their OSH management system.

The commitment of other staff in the workplace to the project is seen as vital, as well as cooperation with stakeholders such as educational institutions, labour inspectors and labour unions. Case studies from the workplace also indicate a potential payback on investment in young workers: OSH training not only develops the young workers themselves but may also enhance the perception of OSH risks among the entire workforce.

Success factors in training

There are a number of common success factors that can be identified in the training examples discussed in this report. These success factors include:

- mainstreaming a youth dimension into all prevention actions;
- top-level commitment to OSH measures to protect young people;
- providing workplace training in the context of overall safety management to prevent workplace risks and to ensure that young workers only carry out tasks within their mental and physical capabilities under adequate supervision. Training alone is not effective in reducing risk;
- basing actions and interventions on risk assessment, and ensuring actions are implemented, monitored and reviewed;
- providing training within the context of implementing measures to make the work environment safe and healthy for young workers, providing them with suitable jobs for their age, capabilities and experience, and ensuring proper supervision;
- consultation and active participation of young workers;
- the importance of learning from experiences of mainstreaming OSH into education, as recommendations regarding effective teaching of OSH in education are also valid for the workplace, such as:
 - setting clear learning objectives focused on skills development;
 - using a balance between theory and practice;
 - using suitable teaching resources and methods;
 - the requirement for training for supervisors, mentors and trainers in their role and in OSH;

- making OSH an integral part of other induction training;
- developing partnerships — at workplace level this includes partnerships with temporary employment agencies;
- covering 'female' and 'male' jobs;
- ensuring a close link to working life;
- the effectiveness of using peers, including more experienced young workers, and using older, experienced workers as mentors. This provides a positive experience for new and more senior colleagues alike;
- using active, participatory learning methods, for example where young people learn to recognise hazards and examine and solve real work problems, and where possible do this in real workplaces;
- using videos or virtual reality methods where access to real workplaces is not possible or to demonstrate high-risk situations;
- using competitions or other forms of recognition to motivate work on OSH projects or demonstration of OSH skills;
- feeding the results of such student work back into the real workplace risk assessment and prevention process. This makes the exercise meaningful for youngsters and is of value to employers;
- linking the training to the acquisition of a recognised diploma or other evidence of vocational achievement that trainees can add to their CV and which enhances their employability;
- for programmes, taking a holistic approach combining activities in schools and training colleges with support for improved prevention in companies;
- making OSH an integral part of doing the job right — at work and in vocational training;
- making OSH training and skills development an integral part of lifelong training and development. By law OSH should not be only a 'one-off' training at the start of work.

From policies into practice

Apprentices redesign OSH training materials (SPAR).

The retail chain took advantage of the Austrian Labour Inspectorate's Team4Kids campaign. SPAR's apprentices, their OSH personnel and the Labour Inspectorate worked together to develop the programme on evaluating workplaces, using the results of apprentices' own inspections. These apprentices subsequently taught newer apprentices about OSH, passing on their knowledge and experience gained during the project.

Motivating young workers to take action to improve their safety and health at work (DaimlerChrysler).

Young apprentices were given real workplace health and safety issues and asked to find practical and feasible solutions to them. After approval by senior management, the results of the study were implemented with the aid of experts. The young workers acquired skills in decision-making and product design and were highly motivated to deal with occupational safety and health issues.

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