



Out of Sight and Out of Mind? Occupational Safety and Health for Distributed Workers

Background: this research project is sponsored by the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) to examine management of occupational health and safety for distributed workers. Distributed or remote working - where workers work autonomously away from the organisation's main location for some or all of the time - is an increasingly popular way of organising work. However, models of occupational safety and health (OSH) leadership have been developed for more traditional ways of working.

Purpose of the research: to establish the parameters of OSH leadership behaviours in work contexts characterised by distributed working. This encompasses OSH leadership provided to line managers by OSH practitioners, and the OSH leadership provided by line managers to distributed workers.

Plan: the research project comprises three stages.

Stage 1 - March-June 2015. Interviews with OSH experts and OSH practitioners in direct contact with line managers of distributed workers, to explore what they consider to be key OSH leadership skills, behaviours and competencies for facilitating OSH practices in distributed workers. The interviews will also seek to understand OSH issues facing distributed workers across a range of organisational contexts.

Stage 2 - from January 2016. Survey questionnaire to be completed by around 600 people from over 15 participating organisations, including distributed workers, their line managers and OSH practitioners. This survey will examine how OSH is managed in distributed workers and assessments of OSH performance.

Stage 3 - from May 2016. The research team will develop guidance materials, a report for IOSH and tailored feedback for participating organisations.

The Research Team: Professor Karina Nielsen, Professor Kevin Daniels and Rachel Nayani (all University of East Anglia), Emma Donaldson-Feilder (Affinity Health at Work) and Dr Rachel Lewis (Kingston University and Affinity Health at Work). The team offer substantial world-class expertise in occupational health and safety research and practice and have also made considerable contributions to OSH policy.

The study also benefits from the knowledge and experience of subject matter experts on the Research Steering Committee, and members of the IOSH Research Committee.

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