

POLICY INTERVENTIONS IN HEALTH AND SAFETY: WHAT WORKS AND WHEN – EVIDENCE FROM THE UK

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The study to be presented is a qualitative case-study analysis which aims to elicit a more in-depth understanding of the development, implementation and impact of various legislative (i.e. hard) and non-legislative (i.e. soft) occupational safety and health (OSH) policy-level interventions.

Interventions were identified through a literature and policy review. This investigated and mapped the different sources of OSH authority and actors (e.g.: government and its agencies; employer associations; trade unions; trade associations; insurers) and the types of hard (e.g.: legislation) and soft (e.g.: standards and certification; guidance) interventions they had developed. To be considered for analysis interventions had to meet seven inclusion criteria and were subsequently mapped onto a policy-level intervention matrix grid.

Circa 50 interventions met the inclusion criteria, and of these 15 were chosen for in-depth analysis, with semi-structured interviews conducted with the actor(s) responsible for their development. A thematic analysis of the data yielded six main themes: drivers behind the initiative; influences on the initiative type; constraints on the initiative; challenges around the initiative; success facilitators; and success indicators.

Five key elements were identified as being critical to interventions success. The intervention had to have legitimacy (e.g. being promoted by the European Commission or having an empirical evidence base) in meeting a recognised need. For longer term success intellectual and behavioural ownership from a balanced range of stakeholders (e.g. government, trade bodies, sectoral bodies) who adhered to a systematic, structured and transparent consultation process was required. Continuity of resource was also critical to success in terms of finance, personnel and time. When interventions included evaluation methods that allowed learning, knowledge transfer and future initiative development, the chances of success were much higher.

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