



Worker engagement and participation

Businesses should have planned, well known ways to engage with workers and support their participation in health and safety. Things are likely to work better when you have a mix of formal and informal ways for workers to contribute.

KEY POINTS

- > Everyone has a role to play in making sure workplaces are healthy and safe.
- > Workplaces have better health and safety outcomes when workers have a say about health and safety matters.
- > Workplace commitment to improving health and safety is an essential first step.

- > have clear, effective and ongoing ways for workers to suggest improvements or raise concerns on a day-to-day basis.

Together with your workers, you can determine the best way to meet these two related duties. What is reasonable and practicable will depend on workers' views and needs, the size of your business and the nature of its risks. The law enables flexibility and innovation: the focus is on effectiveness rather than whether any particular system is in place.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR DUTIES

Businesses, directors and workers have their own responsibilities to keep people healthy and safe at work. The Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) requires everyone to work together to improve health and safety.

Under HSWA businesses have two related duties to engage with workers and enable them to participate in improving health and safety.

You must:

- > make sure that workers' views on health and safety matters are asked for and taken into account

ENGAGEMENT

When workers are engaged in workplace health and safety, then everyone benefits. Your business is a healthier and safer place for everyone, and performance and productivity increases.

The HSWA sets out the key steps in the health and safety engagement process but, in short, you must:

- > **share information** on matters relating to health and safety (this includes specific issues that you need to engage with workers on)
- > give your workers **time** to consider the issues

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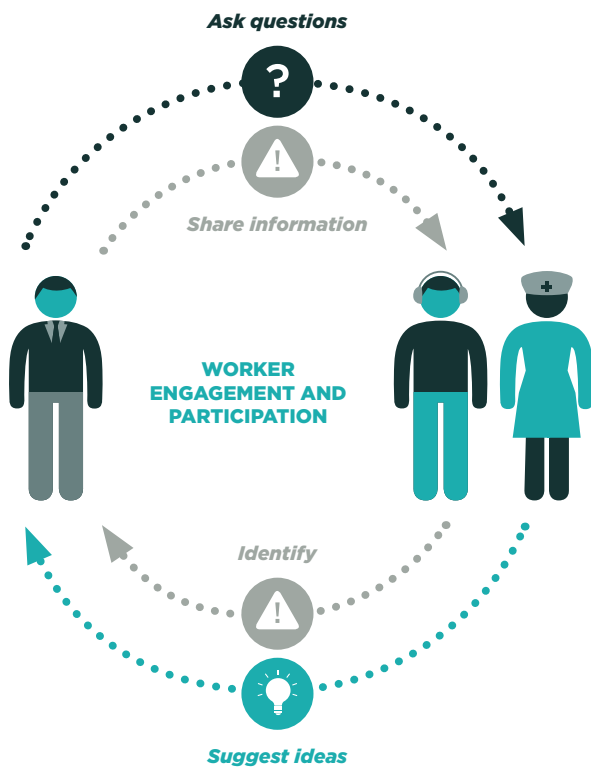
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- > give your workers a **reasonable opportunity** to
 - **express** their views and raise work health or safety concerns, and
 - **contribute** to the decision-making process
- > take into account the **views** of your workers
- > advise your workers of the **outcomes** in a timely way.

All businesses should engage regularly with their workers.



WHEN IS ENGAGEMENT REQUIRED BY LAW?

You need to engage and consult with workers who are directly affected by a matter relating to health and safety. This includes when:

- > hazards are identified and assessed
- > making decisions about
 - addressing risks
 - the adequacy of staff welfare facilities

- monitoring worker health, exposure levels and work conditions
 - providing information and training to workers
 - procedures for resolving work health or safety issues
- > determining work groups, and
 - > proposing changes which may affect the health and safety of workers.

You must also engage with your workers when developing ways for workers to participate in improving work health and safety on a day-to-day basis.

PARTICIPATION

Workers are on the frontline every day and know where the health and safety pressure points are. When your workers are involved in shaping safer work systems, they can suggest practical, cost-effective solutions, and are more likely to make them happen in practise. All businesses should have planned, well-known ways for workers to participate in health and safety matters on a day-to-day basis. Worker participation can be done in a number of ways – it all depends on what works best for your business and the workers. Things are likely to work better when you have a mix of formal and informal ways for workers to contribute.

If health and safety representatives and/or health and safety committees are part of your worker participation practice(s), the HSWA sets out requirements for how they will work.

If you already have engagement and participation practices that are effective and consistent with the HSWA, then that's great – the focus is on effectiveness rather than what systems you have in place.

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