



## **HSE guidance - get competent Health & Safety Advice**

As an employer, you must appoint someone competent to help you meet your health and safety duties. A competent person is someone with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to manage health and safety.

You could appoint (one or a combination of):

- yourself
- one or more of your workers
- someone from outside your business

You probably manage most aspects of your business yourself, or with help from your staff. But if you are not confident of your ability to manage all health and safety in-house, you may need some external help or advice.

There are a number of different sources of advice. These include:

- trade associations
- safety groups
- trade unions
- consultants registered on the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register (OSHCR)
- local councils
- health and safety training providers
- health and safety equipment suppliers

Deciding what help you need is very important. Unless you are clear about what you want, you probably won't get the help you need.

## Things to consider when using external help

- Make sure you clearly explain what you need and check that they understand you. Ask them to explain what they understand the work to be and what they will do, when they will do it and what they will charge you.
- Check for evidence of relevant training/knowledge, such as formal qualifications or practical experience of providing advice in your industry/area of work. Can they explain why they are competent to advise you on your particular problem? Are they a member of OSHCR?
- Shop around to find the right help at the right price. If you were buying equipment or another service for your business, you wouldn't always accept the first offer, so do the same with health and safety advice.
- Check that the person you choose is adequately insured.
- Consider whether you have received the help you needed. Do you have a practical, sensible solution to your problem? Or have you ended up with something completely 'over the top' or a mountain of useless paperwork? If you are not happy with the solution, ask for an explanation and whether there may be a simpler alternative.

Try to make sure that you get a good follow-up service and are able to get further advice on any issues that arise from implementing their recommendations.

The OSHCR provides an up-to-date list of general health and safety advisers who have a qualification recognised by the professional bodies participating in the scheme. If you require general external health and safety advice, you can search the register for a consultant by industry, topic, county or keyword(s).

HSE and a network of professional bodies and stakeholders have been working in partnership to develop this register. Together, this partnership has agreed that a minimum standard should be set for consultants to join the register. This will reassure employers that those consultants on the register have been assessed and meet the minimum standard set by the professional bodies they belong to.

This minimum standard has been set at a degree level qualification, at least two years' experience and active engagement in a continuing professional development scheme. All consultants who join the register are bound by their professional body/ bodies code of conduct and are committed to providing sensible and proportionate advice. For further details, see:



• [The Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register \(OSHCR\)](#) 

## Examples

- [Examples of Bad, Poor and Good External Health and Safety Advice](#)

## Free leaflets

- [Getting specialist help with health and safety INDG420](#)  
Guidance for employers on when and how to get advice on health and safety
- [HSE statement to the external providers of health and safety assistance](#) 

## Resources

-  [Health and safety made simple](#)
-  [The health and safety toolbox: How to control risks at work](#)
-  [Getting specialist help with health and safety \(INDG420\)](#)