



**POWERING IMPROVEMENT PHASE 3
2020-2025**

**2020-2021 Managing Occupational Ill
Health Risks – SHE Review**

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Executive Summary

Powering Improvement (PI) is the strategy designed to promote continuous improvement in the management of health and safety risks within the UK electricity industry and was established in 2010. Although PI is becoming increasingly recognised as a best practice initiative within the UK and beyond, it continues to strive for excellence in health and safety. Progress towards its aim in making the electricity sector the safest and healthiest in the world requires a strategic approach and collaboration between all parts of the industry; this includes all levels of the participating member organisations from senior leaders to front line workers, engagement with industry regulators, principally the Health and Safety Executive, and importantly working closely with the industry Trade Unions, namely GMB, Prospect, Unite, and Unison. The Electricity Industry remains committed to the PI initiative providing a platform for companies, trade unions and the regulators to continually engage, collaborate and share best practice to ensure the impact of these risks are limited.

The third phase was launched on 1st January 2020 and will run until the end of December 2025. 2020 was planned as the year to review the successes of Phase 2 and commence the next phase of the strategy. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry saw a rise in additional direct and indirect risks that required collective and collaborative efforts across the sector to manage the risk posed by the pandemic which consequently ran throughout 2020, 2021 and now into 2022.

During 2020 and 2021, the focus for PI within the UK electricity industry has primarily been on occupational ill health. The annual focus area was decided through consultation and agreement with all PI stakeholders and 'managing occupational ill health risks' became the focus for 2020 and 2021.

This document sets out details of the PI Strategy, its goals, objectives, and achievements to date during its third phase. A delivery plan was established which focussed on six priority areas including:

- COVID-19
- Mental Health
- Fatigue Management
- Occupational Health Management
- Health & Wellbeing
- Communications

Detailed summaries from all member company work initiatives and campaigns that have been delivered during 2020 and 2021 have been summarised into a comprehensive SHE review. The case studies demonstrate the industry's ongoing commitment to improving the management of occupational health for the benefit of all employees and contractors working within the sector. These initiatives not only complement the overall aims and objectives of the PI strategy, but also identify opportunities for future work on occupational health which have been incorporated into the industry's 'Healthy Workplaces Framework' referred to within this SHE Review.

Much of the progress throughout this theme has been driven through ENAs Occupational Health Committee which benefits from input from all PI stakeholders and the committee will continue to work to deliver the outputs as set out within its framework to ensure the management of health and wellbeing remains a key business priority for the industry.

The industry has proactively engaged with its wider stakeholders to both promote the work and achievements on health and similarly learn and glean best practice from others to ensure a consistent and integrated approach is employed in managing occupational health risks. Part of this engagement has involved the coordination of several industry events with a sole focus on health to facilitate this process. A summary of these is provided within this document.

The focus on health has featured strongly within each phase of PI and will continue to be an enduring goal both within the overall strategy and the focus for the next theme on promoting a positive health and safety culture.

Powering Improvement Phase 3 (2020-2025)

Powering Improvement provides an overarching framework of support to individual company programmes and is proving effective in helping achieve the further step change required in the drive towards leading health and safety performance. Governance is provided via the National Electricity Industry Health and Safety Committee (National HESAC), comprising Energy Networks Association (ENA) and Energy UK member organisations alongside HSE and the four industry trade union partners: GMB, Prospect, Unison and Unite. The annual work programmes are driven via a dedicated Powering Improvement Steering Group (PISG).

The UK Electricity Industry launched its Powering Improvement phase one programme in 2010 aiming to achieve a marked reduction in the number of days lost due to work-related injury and ill-health in line with Government targets. A second phase ran between 2015-2020, and the strategy is now into its third phase. The aim continues to be to improve occupational health and safety performance through vision, leadership, direction, and co-ordinated action into the future.

Vision

Powering Improvement will support the UK electricity industry in its drive to have no life changing injuries (zero RIDDOR reportable) or major incidents and to have an engaged and healthier workforce by 2025.

Strategy

ENA and Energy UK member companies will continue to work together in partnership with the trade unions and HSE to ensure our industry has a realistic and inclusive approach to health and safety at work. Powering Improvement (PI) is intended to provide a focus and line of sight between the electricity industry's interventions to deliver a sustained improvement in health and safety performance, and the framework set out in the HSE strategy and utility sector plan.

Throughout the five years we will maintain a focus on managing our priority risks, that include for example *working with electricity, occupational health, working at height and driving*. Although the strategy is focussed on occupational health and safety risks, public safety issues involving both third-party contractors and members of the public, will continue to be addressed as a priority.

Success will be achieved by actively supporting the HSE strategy for health and safety in Great Britain, formerly 'Helping Great Britain Work Well' and the HSE health specific strategy 'Health and Work' and now 'Protecting People and Places', and by building on the successes and lessons learned from the last 10 years of the PI initiative. This will be achieved through a focus on efficiency, sustainability and innovation, and the effective management and control of risk. The safe adoption of technological and commercial developments will contribute to a safer and healthier workforce by 2025.

The strategy will be supported by a detailed action plan together with annual delivery focus areas. Work will evolve over the 5-year period taking into account new information and experiences gained in delivering the earlier objectives.

Overarching themes

The four key overarching themes of the Powering Improvement Strategy are as follows:

Leadership – at all levels. Managers in our industry are genuinely committed to health and safety regarding it as an essential value. Throughout the strategy this commitment will be made clear to front line workers.

Worker Involvement – we will continue to promote effective engagement and consultation. Consultation on health and safety matters is a two-way process where management and workers will:

- Talk to each other about issues;
- Listen to each other's concerns;
- Seek and share views and information;
- Discuss issues in good time; and
- Consider what employees say before decisions are made.

Building Competence (Skills) – workers will be able, aware, and empowered. Skill sets underpinning safe performance will always be in place. There will be a systematic checking of competence against clear and relevant standards. There is a commitment to the timely delivery of all training to avoid skill or competency gaps.

Corporate Memory – we will work together to ensure that, as experienced workers retire and are replaced, lessons are remembered from incidents and accidents and mistakes are not repeated, with a particular focus on high potential impact incidents.

Phase 3 of the PI Strategy was launched virtually on the 25th February 2021. Senior members of the industry expressed their continued support in the strategy and the event also included several presentations from PI Partners on work achieved to date in alignment with the PI initiative and recognition of the future challenges facing the industry from Networks, Generation and Retail sectors. A Report of the event is available on the [PI Website](#).

Further information on the PI Strategy is available at: www.poweringimprovement.org

Annual Focus Area for 2020 & 2021: Managing Occupational Ill Health Risks

The industry working groups, ENAs Occupational Health Committee and the PISG Group along with the Powering Improvement Champion (Mark Patterson, Director of Safety, Health and Environment, SSE) have been engaged throughout 2020 & 2021 to deliver against the aims and outputs set out within the [PI 2021 Delivery Plan](#). Many of the outputs have become enduring goals for the industry to work towards over the course of phase 3.

During 2020 and 2021 a priority for all industries has been to manage the risk of COVID-19, and for the electricity industry there has been no difference. The focus has not only been to ensure the continued security and integrity of supply for energy to customers and vital services across the UK, but importantly to ensure the health and safety of the workforce across the sector.

As a result of COVID-19, the industry saw a rise in additional direct and indirect risks that required collective and collaborative efforts within the sector to ensure the impact of these risks were limited. The commitment from electricity companies, trade unions and the regulators throughout 2020 & 2021 has been exemplary and this engagement continues to progress.

COVID-19 will remain an issue that businesses will need to manage appropriately, and we will ensure this collaboration continues. However, it is also now a time to focus on the ever-prevalent health risks that the industry faces to ensure that the channels created over the last 10 years of PI grow and contribute to measurable improvements in occupational health.

Aims:

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- ▣ *Aspire to reduce work related sickness absence rate within the UK electricity industry by 10% to achieve sector leading performance.*
 - ▣ *Increase awareness of and reduce the number of days lost due to work related mental ill health.*
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Outputs

Implement individual company programmes and share learning and best practice through Industry occupational health forums to support continuous improvement in work related ill health rates.

Outcomes

More specific outputs for occupational health delivered through 2021 and beyond on priority topics such as fatigue management, mental ill health management, MSDs, and ongoing COVID-19 management of risk. Companies will continue to share best practice and aspire to improve the management of traditional industrial health concerns that impact employees within the industry.

Companies will collaborate via the ENA Occupational Health Committee to:

General

- ▣ Improve the PI Occupational Health Road Map developed in previous phases of the strategy.
- ▣ Continue to develop and adopt safe working practices in consultation with colleagues, contractors, and trades unions to keep staff and customers healthy and well.
- ▣ Effectively communicate occupational health messages to all staff through the framework of ENA and Energy UK company HESACs, PI Advocates, and Trade Union Health and Safety representatives. This will include raised awareness of fatigue, manual handling and work-related stress, and other priority areas and protective measures/programmes.

Mental Ill Health Management (Stress, Anxiety and Depression)

- ▣ Ensure all line managers are trained in Mental Health Awareness and set a company target that 3% (ratio) of staff are trained as First Aiders (FA) and Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA).
- ▣ Companies will monitor progress individually on mental health and stress at work to identify and implement interventions based on HSE's management standard principles throughout phase 3, using 2021 as an opportunity at company level to gather data and establish a framework and principles of operation.
- ▣ Develop a collaborative online MHFA/FA refresher tool.

Fatigue

- ▣ Provide a high-level principles document to assist companies in identifying and managing the risks of fatigue in the workplace.
- ▣ Develop a bespoke industry fatigue management risk assessment tool for Electricity Network Operators.

Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

- ▣ Ensure core Health Surveillance and Fitness to Work programmes are functioning effectively and communicated and promoted to staff.
- ▣ Build on company and trade union engagement and partnership working in the management of MSD issues to promote health messages and effective interventions throughout the industry.

PI Delivery Plan Summary – 2020 & 2021

Managing occupational health is a key feature of the PI strategy, and phase 3 again included two years dedicated to this theme. This provided an opportunity to promote health messages at a sector level, not only during 2020 & 2021, but throughout the five-year programme reflecting the commitment to address the long-term causes and risks of occupational health.

The industry working groups set out and managed plans on the industry health issues within the 2020 & 2021 Delivery Plan. Key achievements are reported in this SHE Review highlighting several company initiatives and campaigns as case studies. Additional direction was provided by the ENA Occupational Health Committee 2021 'Healthy Workplaces Framework' overseen by the then Committee Chair, Frank Monaghan (SHE Director, Scottish Power Energy Networks). Industry guidance was also mindful, where appropriate, of HSE priority messages outlined in their 'Health and Work' strategy, including the utility sector focus on MSDs, work-related stress, occupational fatigue, and occupational lung disease.

Six health areas were identified by the PISG and Occupational Health Committee as priorities for collaborative industry work. Specific aspects of these topics warranted a more detailed focus on those issues where collective action was required to benefit employees.

COVID-19

Management of return-to-work issues, transmission routes, ventilation, and long COVID.

Mental Health

Routes to training and raising awareness amongst employees, and commitments to numbers trained.

Fatigue Management

Practical implementation of ENA Position Paper 10 principles, and the adoption of new company practices.

Occupational Health Management

Continued commitment to fitness to work and health surveillance standards, and the collation of health-related data.

Health & Wellbeing

Review of industry guidance, and the sharing of best practice approaches and programmes.

Communications

National health campaigns and messaging, and the promotion of company specific programmes.

Champion

🏆 2020-2021 – Powering Improvement Champion

Mark Patterson – Director of Safety, Health and Environment, Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) and Powering Improvement Champion 2020 & 2021.



“Powering Improvement exemplifies the benefits of partnership working when looking to improve health and safety performance and I was delighted to be asked to be Champion for the 2020/2021 theme on managing occupational ill health. Improving health at work is no easy task and takes a sustained and enduring effort, but the benefit to companies and to their employees is clear. I am pleased that these years have proven to be those of action, not words, on tackling occupational health and wellbeing and importantly on dealing with the biggest pandemic the country has faced in decades. No matter what area of the electricity industry you are in, the last couple of years has reminded us of our sense of purpose. Powering Improvement provides a platform for us to continue to work together to deliver a goal that we can all get behind – keeping people safe and healthy and I’m sure it will continue to deliver improvement for many years to come.”



2021 SHE REVIEW - Managing Occupational Ill Health Risks

COVID-19

The industry has been mindful of and taken learning from reputable bodies including the World Health Organisation, HSE, UK Health Security Agency, and other professional health organisations on the management of COVID-19 risks which has also included regular interaction with the industry regulators and Government departments such as the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and other devolved administrations.

The focus throughout the pandemic has been on ensuring the implementation of necessary control measures to minimise, so far as is reasonably practicable, the transmission of the disease in occupational settings, providing suitable information, instruction, and training for all staff and ensuring the safe return of staff to the workplace. There has been a need to continually interpret evolving guidance to determine the optimum adjustments to working practices, and how best to assist employees in a variety of roles and subject to varying level of exposure and vulnerability. Successful management of COVID issues has required a combination of controlling the physical environment, sensible and pragmatic guidance, efficient testing regimes, effective management of individual employee needs, and the responsibility of staff themselves to practice self-care strategies and behaviours.



In March 2020, through National HESAC, a COVID-19 forum was formed which met initially on a weekly basis and this provided a platform for all PI stakeholders to engage and share best practice on the management of COVID-19. This forum has since continued to meet on a frequent basis. Through the work of this forum, over 140 individual questions have been raised by trade union representatives on behalf of their members with employers on the management of COVID-19, these have all been suitably addressed providing reassurance across the sector that robust precautions and control measures are being consistently implemented by all member companies. As well as introducing COVID-19 risk assessments across all businesses relevant to each specific location, additional measures have been introduced including, increased hygiene controls, social distancing, lower office occupancies and hybrid working measures, isolated and lone working protocols, testing for staff including lateral flow and health and mental health support services.

The forum also provided a platform for communication which increased internal engagement at all levels within each individual member organisation, and in addition enabled all PI stakeholders across the electricity sector to work collaboratively.

Through the collaborative working, several key outputs have been delivered since via the COVID-19 forum, this included five joint statements developed by businesses, trade unions and the regulators providing reassurance to all staff of the importance of their commitment and dedication as they continually adapted to the challenges faced by the sector. By putting in place effective controls and measures to mitigate the risk, they also provided education to members of the public on the importance of key workers across the electricity sector who were necessarily working in all conditions safely to keep electricity flowing for the country. The engagement generated by the joint statements also provided an opportunity for staff at all levels and members of the public to communicate and obtain support and advice from the industry. Examples of the joint statements published can be found below:

- [How the UK's energy networks are preparing for COVID-19](#)
- [Keeping you safe and your energy flowing through COVID-19](#)
- [Continuing to work safely together during COVID-19](#)
- [Measures to support vulnerable people through COVID-19](#)
- [Continuing to work safely during COVID-19](#)
- ['Watch Out, Cables About!' – a reminder to third parties and MOPs as lockdown measures were easing across the UK.](#)

Other examples of outputs that were delivered specifically through the COVID-19 forum included briefing packs which were developed to provide high level overarching guidance for companies to adopt, consider and communicate when producing their own internal policies and procedures and engaging with staff around COVID-19. These included:

- Principles for Work Delivery during the COVID-19 Pandemic for Energy Networks Association (ENA) Member Companies;
- Guidance on Physical Distancing;
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice and Entry to Customer Premises;
- 'We are all in this together' – A briefing document to support companies in their approach to tackling complacency particularly as advice for social settings were beginning to ease, it was important that employers in occupational settings took a much more cautious approach to removing or reducing control measures put in place throughout COVID-19.

All companies have adopted a common and consistent approach to managing the risks of COVID-19 throughout the pandemic and as the nation has gradually reduced its control measures to more of a new 'business as usual' format, the companies have continued to cautiously support Government guidance in this regard as the industry continues to work safely. Electricity Member Companies and trade unions continue to act vigilantly and are mindful of the impact a rise in cases could have, and are prepared to remain agile and able to respond if required. Some specific examples of what the companies were doing in addition to the work coordinated at a national level are outlined below.

An example of some of the initiatives developed during COVID-19 to support staff is from **UK Power Networks (UKPN)** who developed a suite of toolkits available to all staff via a dedicated COVID-19 intranet site. This included such items as an 'Operational Toolkit' providing all field employees access to helpful resources which could be accessed to support operatives to conduct their daily tasks safely and gave access to the most relevant and up to date information in real-time. In addition to this UKPN also developed an 'employee toolkit', 'manager toolkit', 'working well toolkit', a 'working from home toolkit' and 'blended working policy'. The latter was developed to aid employees who were having to work from home or other temporary locations away from



their regular base, providing easy to understand support and advice and access to a formal assessment which needed to be carried out to ensure staff were working in a suitable working environment. This also supported staff as restrictions were easing and a gradual introduction to occupational environments were taking place across the business. In addition to these, a helpline and information section was made available covering a frequently asked questions page (FAQs), a position on caring responsibilities, equality impact, escalation processes and COVID-19 response plans.



Most of this work involved frequent and consistent engagement with employees at all levels to provide support and advice wherever necessary. The engagement was for all levels of staff including regular updates from the Chief Executive Officer, Basil Scarcella, who conducted 'weekly video updates' involving individual discussions with staff across the business through the 'Basil Chats' initiative.

During the pandemic, colleagues needing to work from home on a semi-permanent basis often involved looking after children who were also away from their school environments. UKPN supported staff in these scenarios with the flexibility to conduct their work to suit their personal needs, and created channels to communicate and share best practice with other colleagues within the business such as setting up a 'Home Schooling Support Group' via Yammer.

Like many companies during the pandemic, crisis management response groups were set up and coordinated to facilitate the management of change throughout the pandemic as guidance across the UK changed frequently and rapidly. In order to support these changes, companies were developing road maps and response or recovery plans that were provided staff with a sense of direction of what to expect for the coming weeks or months across the business. Northern Ireland Electricity Networks (NIEN) were no different as their internal Crisis Management Team (CMT) met on a frequent basis. Based on best available guidance and advice throughout the sector and the nation, including feedback from internal audits, risk assessments and reviewing community inaction rates, COVID Recovery Plans were introduced and communicated to staff on a frequent basis. These plans set out a guide for controls, mitigations, restrictions, and phases that were being implemented or removed across the business in a simple, timebound, step by step style, which enabled all staff to monitor and maintain a level of consistency.



To complement this, a summary of the approach was also developed for each step to provide further detail and guidance including regular briefing packs and updates available online, communicated over email and briefed out to staff.

Examples of these are provided below.



COVID RECOVERY PLAN
EMPLOYEE UPDATE
APRIL 2021

PROPOSED TIMEFRAMES*
*At each step CMT will review infection rates, levels of customer complaints and current restrictions in force

✓	Week commencing 29th March	ALL OFFICE LOCATIONS AUDITED to confirm existing Covid-19 control measures	✓
✓	Week commencing 12th April	Restrictions relaxed on SAN OUTAGES & OHL REFURBISHMENTS Review of approach to METER READING	✓
	Week commencing 19th April	RETURN TO OFFICE one day per week (at least) in line with your local office rota MASK WEARING ENCOURAGED when away from desk	
	Week commencing 26th April	Following positive feedback so far, the TRIAL OF INDOOR METER READING WILL BE EXPANDED FURTHER	
	Week commencing 3rd May	AWARE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT COURSES BEGIN 'Living Life to the Full' and 'Mood Matters'	
	Week commencing 10th May	Removal of all restrictions on OUTAGES METER READING approach reviewed again	
	Week commencing 17th May	Return to the full OFFICE ROTA system Guidance on FACE MASKS will be reviewed AGILE HOME WORKING POLICY pilot rolled out Focus in May & ongoing support for MENTAL HEALTH	

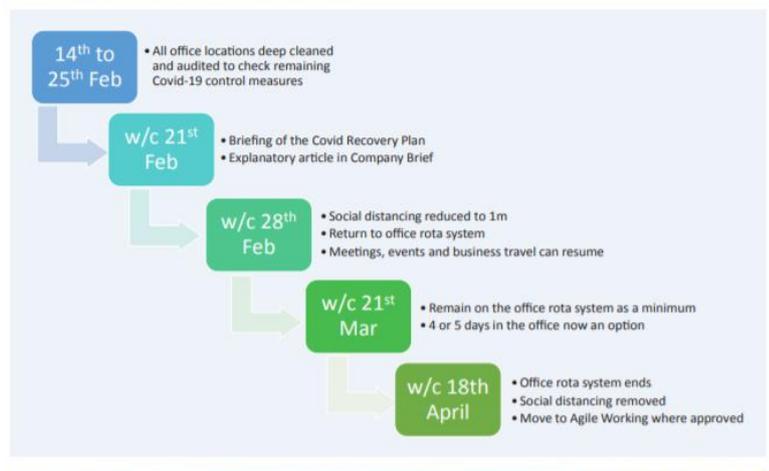
Please notify HRTeam@nienetworks.co.uk if you have received your first Covid-19 vaccine. WE ARE HERE TO HELP! If you have any queries or concerns about your working arrangements, please speak to your Line Manager or HR Representative.



On Tuesday 15th January we emailed an update on our approach to Covid in response to changing government guidance. A summary of our approach is shown below.

Whilst government restrictions have been lifted, the COVID-19 pandemic still exists and the CMT will continue to monitor and review the situation and will be ready to respond as necessary.

Once again, thank you for your continued support and co-operation.



14th to 25th Feb

- All office locations deep cleaned and audited to check remaining Covid-19 control measures

w/c 21st Feb

- Briefing of the Covid Recovery Plan
- Explanatory article in Company Brief

w/c 28th Feb

- Social distancing reduced to 1m
- Return to office rota system
- Meetings, events and business travel can resume

w/c 21st Mar

- Remain on the office rota system as a minimum
- 4 or 5 days in the office now an option

w/c 18th April

- Office rota system ends
- Social distancing removed
- Move to Agile Working where approved

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN)

operating area covered all UK and ROI during the pandemic, this presented an additional challenge as the Government guidance was different in every jurisdiction and changed frequently. To ensure the business stayed within the law, a team of people were committed to monitoring and interpreting the guidance.

Regular **SSE** Group Gold & Business Silver Command meetings were set up and an introduction of specific HR process for reporting actual and suspected cases of COVID-19 developed to monitor any hotspots. Introduction of a 'Ways of Working group' was also successful (with representatives from HR, trade unions, key business operational stakeholders, and the SHE Team) to look at effective ways of working whilst maintaining the company's ability to meet its regularity obligations.

Throughout the pandemic, most companies were beginning to learn a lot about remote working around how staff can communicate and operate, and also the positive impacts on people from a 'work/life balance perspective' including how much can be achieved with less travel barriers. It was also realised however that there is significant value in maintaining good levels of 'face to face' interactions. **SSEs** 'Ways of Working' group has worked hard to capture and embed these lessons into its new ways of working post pandemic. **SSENs** SHE Team also reviewed its Safety Management System to embed pandemic learnings into the appropriate sections, and a group wide Safety Health and Environment (SHE) COVID-19 guidance booklet was developed and regularly reviewed and updated by a nominated small team. This helped reduce the need for separate business unit guidance, which was consulted on and worked upon jointly with trade union colleagues.

During the whole pandemic to date there have been very few occasions that any critical company operation was close to being adversely impacted by positive/close contact self-isolation. At times when the industry was approaching critical levels, it was able to plan in advance and able to implement early contingencies.

Mental Health

Across the UK electricity industry, we have a proven track record of one of the lowest rates of fatal and non-fatal work-related injury rates across Europe and comparable with best performing sectors internationally. Although there is room for improvement, the safety performance across the sector is improving at a steady rate. However, this isn't the same for work-related ill health, as current trends show this is either staying the same or increasing and when compared against other sectors across the industry, the UK electricity industry ill health rates are above average.

The most commonly reported causes of mental ill health in the UK and across the electricity sector are stress, depression, and anxiety. Through PI, the member companies in partnership with the trade unions are working collectively to support the reduction in this trend. Using our collective resource to focus on this problem, the industry is seeking to deliver interventions that make a real difference. To have a greater impact on workers' health, society, and the economy, wider industry and business will need to help too and as such wider engagement is part of the key outputs from the UK Electricity sector.

Through the PI initiative and ENAs Occupational Health Committee, member companies set out on a journey in 2021 with a specific aim initially to monitor progress individually on mental health and stress at work to identify and implement interventions based on HSE's management standard principles throughout phase 3, using 2021 as an opportunity at company level to gather data and establish a benchmark. In addition to this, the sector set out to broaden the awareness of mental ill health, not only to support the removal of stigma associated with it as a health issue, but also to support people across the sector in identifying who is suffering, why they are suffering and what can be done to help them get better.

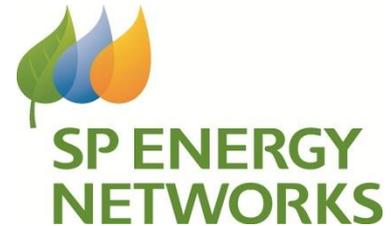
Collectively this has started to be achieved by all companies delivering targeted campaigns to staff at all levels via a variety of mediums highlighting available support services and initiatives aimed to help people suffering from a mental ill health condition and ultimately improving the overall health and wellbeing of staff. Ways of communicating with staff has changed since COVID-19 however, it has allowed companies to develop and be more innovative with how they engage their staff to ensure that people receive the right support in the right way.

Broadly, all companies have now or are in the process of, providing mental ill health resilience training and training up Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) across their businesses, not only to act as covert personnel providing interventive support functions but to also broaden the knowledge and awareness of mental ill health and wellbeing services in the workplace. These are being delivered with set targets in place to ensure all businesses have a suitable and sufficient support function to provide assistance for all staff who may be mentally unwell. These additional personnel complement existing first aiders in the workplace who are there to render first aid for physical injuries.

Effective training for line managers and people leaders is being delivered across the businesses to raise awareness of mental health to all employees. This supports an enduring goal of creating a working environment where we all feel safe and able to talk openly about our mental health.

Mental ill health has been an enduring and key occupational health priority for the UK electricity Industry pre-COVID-19 and the challenge has been to move from a reactive to a proactive approach. A key target area was to understand more about the health culture across the sector and understand what aspects may be impacting the mental health of our employees. Through ENAs Occupational Health Committee, a 'Healthy Workplace Framework' has been developed which sets out further continuous improvement mechanisms of which the companies will look to collectively deliver throughout the rest of phase 3 of the PI initiative, which has a specific focus around mental ill health.

Within **ScottishPower Energy Networks (SPEN)** and across the **ScottishPower** Group, a 'Mental Health Steering Group' was established in 2020 involving various groups across the **ScottishPower** business, and by working in partnership with SeeMe, a companywide survey of staff was undertaken. The overall goal has been to create a working healthy culture and develop an environment where employees feel able to engage more openly about mental health and to further enhance existing support mechanisms to help staff remain well in work.



SeeMe Survey Aims:

- To understand mental health attitudes and culture;
- To have a factual benchmark - not just anecdotal evidence;
- Independent and anonymous data collection using a mental health charity SeeMe for trusted expertise and advice.

As a result of the survey, the actions taken were to develop a structured improvement plan which is on going, and to develop a structured Improvement Action Plan and set up three subgroups, which are:

1. Training Workstream;
2. Support for Mental Health First Aiders;
3. Policy & procedures.

What ScottishPower are trying to achieve?

- Build a positive workplace regarding mental health;
- Tackle mental health & discrimination in work;
- Ensure that ScottishPower has inclusive policies & procedures to support mental wellbeing;
- Ensure that ScottishPower are a forward-thinking employer in relation to mental health;
- Effective training for line managers/ people leaders;
- Raise awareness of mental health to all employees;
- Support staff experiencing difficulties with mental health and ensure early access to help.

Other ScottishPower initiatives have been developed and are now in place to support their people, these include but are not limited to:

- Trained MHFAs across the entire group;
- Occupational Health confidential self-referral systems introduced;
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Helpline & online support services now available via an EAP App as well as frequent EAP Webinars to help build confidence in the use of the service;
- In house counselling services;
- A dedicated Mental Health Steering Group;
- Mindfulness sessions;
- Monthly Teams live sessions from Red Umbrella. Topics included: Surviving the holiday season; understanding alcohol and mental health; Burnout; Understanding suicide; mental health resilience; dealing with low confidence; A little stress conversation; Time to talk - how to get the conversation started about mental health; The impact of Lockdown 2.0 on our mental health; Managing Stress and Mental Health in the Age of COVID-19.

Like most companies across the electricity sector, **Northern Powergrid (NPG)** has developed a stress risk assessment which can be used to support staff to understand what part of their role may be contributing to their stress levels or impacting their overall wellbeing. The stress risk assessment can be conducted with the support of a dedicated 'People Team' and/or a trade union representative. Some potential outcomes from the stress risk assessment include:



- More Regular 121s/Meaningful conversations with line manager
- Alternative duties for a short period of time
- Training/Coaching or mentoring
- EAP through Validium – self referral or management referral for counselling
- GP – NHS counselling service
- Review job description
- Review workload/role



This has included a series of training initiatives and briefings on health and wellbeing, including the introduction of 'Wellbeing Wednesdays'.

Fatigue Management

Developments within other sectors and an emphasis on fatigue management from the HSE, has led to a significant programme of work by the electricity companies over the last couple of years to ensure the safety and welfare of employees and introduce the required controls to manage this risk. There are a number of factors to consider in managing the acute and chronic effects of fatigue that extend beyond the minimum legal requirements of the Working Time Regulations (WTR). Companies have reviewed operational and management job functions, business needs, the balance between work and travel, and historic and seasonal patterns as part of the process of determining potential improvements to work processes.

An ENA Fatigue Management Task Force (FMTF) was established to coordinate this work providing a focus for companies to consider all relevant aspects and the means for engagement with regulators, trade unions, external experts, and other sectors. A key part of this work was the review of available data which highlighted the circumstances where working hours could be exceeded (standby rotas, call outs, emergency work) and where additional controls are required.

ENAs FMTF and the member companies continue to engage with other businesses across the sector including the Gas Distribution Network (GDN) Operators via a dedicated Gas Operators Fatigue Management Group. The communication between the two forums has been maintained since 2020 allowing companies to glean and share best practice advice between the two sectors. This has also included engagement with external industry professionals including human factors advice from the experts within the academic sector on the cognitive impacts and risks of extended working hours from sources such as The Keil Centre and training provider “Beyond the Barriers”, whilst also maintaining an insight into the work being conducted through the GDNs with consultants such as Greenstreet Berman.

One of the main outputs was the publication of a set of guiding principles, which were set out in ENA Position Paper 10 ‘Fatigue Management’, this provides the businesses with a framework for introducing a risk assessment process to follow and company specific systems and controls.

Companies are reviewing phased management interventions for extended working hours, the impact on cognitive abilities, how technology can assist in the risk assessment process, and the importance of training and awareness amongst staff. There are opportunities for further research in this area, and the industry also intends to support a planned HSE research programme. In the meantime, a summary of some notable company achievements to date are provided below.

ESB engaged an external consultant to assist with the development of their training and support programme, known collectively as **ESBs** Fatigue Management Solutions. A risk assessment template and other supporting material was developed for local business areas to adapt as required. This included an online training toolkit and programme which supported staff to assess individual health and lifestyle challenges often associated with shift work, providing practical solutions for staff members to consider and implement into their daily routine. This also helped staff to manage their work life balance and in effect support and mitigate their individual risk of being fatigued.



Energy for generations

Promotion of other linked services and a ‘one stop shop’ of health and safety information was developed and promoted to shift staff and shift managers which included **ESBs** Fatigue management solutions.

Northern Powergrid (NPG) has been tackling the issue of fatigue within the workplace in detail over the last two years and, in a similar vein to the work coordinated through ENAs FMTF, **NPG** established their own internal fatigue focussed working group. This involved members of their management team, the workforce, and full-time officers from technical and industrial trade unions to ensure a consistent approach and method to managing fatigue in the workplace which enabled and encouraged a holistic and inclusive process to bring about change.

As the work through the FMTF and ENAs position paper highlighted, levels of working may be required that would routinely be over and above 16 hours on a regular basis. As such companies like **NPG** have either altered or are looking to alter their working patterns from a standby arrangement to a formal shift. This has provided adequate cover without the need to work beyond the 16 hours limit. **NPG** has converted 130 jointers from standby working arrangements to shift working, these shift patterns were developed by members of the internal fatigue working group. All patterns were designed around the HSE best practice guidance on shift working. In line with ENAs position paper, **NPG** also introduced a maximum of 16 hours working in any 24-hour period, complemented by a real time risk assessment which is to be completed following a period no later than 12 hours of working.

This is complemented by a re-developed electronic time sheeting system which actively monitors the working time of all time recorded staff, ensuring that any individuals working outside of the WTR have an intervention plan in place via their line manager and are actively controlled to reduce the average hours worked. This is combined with a series of other interventions that **NPG** have put in place as set out within their Fatigue Risk Management policy, ultimately to support staff to reduce the risk of fatigue and to come to work and go home safe and well.

Occupational Health Management

The identification, assessment, and implementation of risk reduction programmes represents a mature, organisational response to managing occupational health. A systems, people, and task oriented approach will identify the tools, training, and planning needed for effective health management. The challenge here is how best to manage existing and well-established responsibilities on health surveillance and fitness to work issues, and ensure these programmes are functioning effectively and communicated and promoted to staff. Employee medical assessments and health surveillance for example are not only often a legal requirement but have been proven to be effective in the prevention and early identification of employee health issues. Information and data collated through these routes, along with health-related absence data will be captured within a new industry Health Reporting Template currently being developed, which will provide another means of monitoring and demonstrating effective health management. A detailed health survey questionnaire was issued to all companies to set out their health reporting capabilities; this information will be used to develop a consistent, industry wide template to enable annual health data and trends to be produced. This will build on the previous industry template, and a summary of the findings from 2014-2019 was included in the [Powering Improvement 2015-2020 Progress Report](#).

Within an industry rightly focussed on MSDs and mental health, there remains a need to manage a range of residual health risks, including exposure to COSHH substances, noise, vibration, and asbestos etc., for which the pandemic raised challenges in engaging directly with employees through health referrals, appointments, and assessments.

All the businesses have established health surveillance and fitness to work assessment processes in place, often jointly managed with an external Occupational Health Provider. Routine assessments are conducted periodically according to the job and role, and employees are then normally deemed to be either 'fit for work' or 'not fit for work'. Like all other companies, **Electricity North West Ltd (ENWL)** uses the data from health surveillance to identify any trends, and individual workplace adjustments can be considered in light of any issues or concerns raised.



Specific roles may be subject to additional testing in light of the potential health risks, for example **NIEN** ensure health checks for forklift truck drivers (over 45 years), regularly carry out health screening for night workers, and respiratory screening for a variety of operational functions. Sickness absence data is a core measurement tool in monitoring the effectiveness of health management practices. **NIEN** report that the top five reasons for absence over the last two years have been, in order, stress/mental health (34%), MSDs (17%), COVID-19 (14%), medical conditions (9%), and accidents/injuries (7%). Figures are quoted for 2021 but are broadly similar to 2020 data. Notably, long term absence accounts for the majority of absence irrespective of the impact of COVID-19, but that 70% employees (72% in 2020) achieved full attendance.

ESB reflects the general approach to health management in that a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative information is collated and acted upon. A case management referral process allows for the assessment of individual health issues, and is supported by wider support tools such as pre-employment medicals and questionnaires, health screening, medical examinations, and specific monitoring and testing where appropriate for noise, vibration, asbestos, lead etc. Many of these functions are either performed in house by medical practitioners or outsourced occupational health provision. Both routes are now presenting challenges from the availability of qualified, experienced health professionals, and this will be a focus for the industry over the next few years.

Managers within **NPG** are expected to manage employee sickness absence, but they can recommend a referral to Occupational Health where necessary. This is aimed at helping better understand colleagues' illness, any reasonable adjustments that could be considered, and agree suitable targets and timeframes for health improvement with the individual. Formal Welfare Review Meetings are held for instances of long-term sickness; the purpose of these meetings is to ensure communication is maintained throughout the colleague's absence and that actions are put in place to support the colleague to return to work as soon and as safely as possible. When an individual is then planning to return to work, medical guidance provided by their consultant or GP in conjunction with Occupational Health advice is used to develop a phased return plan or introduce any reasonable adjustments that are recommended.

The company is looking to offer more coaching to managers in order to help them feel more comfortable and well-equipped in managing these issues. This is coupled with plans to introduce a new company wide ‘Oracle’ system, which will allow the business to better track colleagues’ absence cases and generate reports more easily.

There has been a concerted effort in **National Grid** to retender the company’s Health & Wellbeing provision, which covers occupational health management, the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), and MSD support services. This will ensure there is a better continuity of care for employees and will assist in the level and accessibility of health data available from both the provider and company internal systems.



The challenges of COVID-19 were met by **Scottish Power** who adapted to ensure continuity of health care provision. The Occupational Health Monitoring (OHM) programme was revised to enable health questionnaires to be issued to individuals and returned via the Health Portal, and employees then contacted and followed up. The pandemic did not prevent a thorough review and update of the Health Needs Assessment and Risk Matrix, or a similar review of the Health Audit Plan all of which sits within the company’s clinical governance framework.

Being part of a corporate group and with overseas ownership (**Iberdrola**) affords opportunities for external audit and review, and improvements have been made to the health management system and the fitness to drive health assessments as part of the Management of Road Risk (MORR) programme. Other support services include early intervention via nurse triage and access to counselling and physiotherapy services, whilst there is provision and guidance on specific issues such as flu vaccinations for over 50s staff, menopause, and domestic abuse.

In a similar vein to others, **SSE** have reviewed their health trends and causes of absence over the past couple of years as part of assessing the impact of the pandemic. The Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR) and number of ‘Safe’ days remain broadly the same, whilst sickness absence and calls to the EAP service provider increased slightly from 2020 to 2021 as staff returned to normal working practices, although the number of triage assessments and health interventions has reduced to a degree. Stress, anxiety, and depression (30.2%) remains the top reason for days lost and accounted for one in three sick days in 2021/22. Cold/flu absence has increased indicating that employees are reporting sick with those symptoms more than before or during the pandemic.

The focus within **UKPN** is on the company’s top four identified causes of health absence, namely COVID-19, mental health, cold/flu, and MSDs, and their initiatives, campaigns, and guidance centre on these issues. Access by employees to support services before reporting absent from work is encouraged to assist early intervention, and rehabilitation services are provided to help employees either stay in work or to support them back into the workplace. Line manager training and access to the services is a key part of this approach. Fitness to work assessments for safety critical work is vital and factors in employee age and specific roles/tasks. General physiological health is assessed, but any relevant mental health and general fitness levels and musculoskeletal functional ability are also considered to help ensure a full range of body health and movement.



Again, occupational health provision enables additional testing requirements for specific hazards, whilst occupational health nurses can advise on any change in frequency in monitoring and assist with the evaluation of organisational and individual control measures to help prevent ill health.

A balance between quantitative and qualitative health data is monitored by **Western Power Distribution (WPD)** to help ensure a balanced approach to the development of strategies to safeguard the health of their employees, such as their reporting on mental health. The business has seen a downturn in the physical impact of work activities on staff (MSDs) as technology changes have improved work practices and removed/reduced the level of risk. Conversely, the move to a low carbon future will bring the requirement and handling of larger equipment, and so there is a need to continue to work with suppliers to identify at a nearly stage how to manage the design, procurement, installation, and operation of such equipment to help reduce any potential risks to the health of the peripatetic workforce.

Health & Wellbeing (HWB)

The ENA Occupational Health Committee has overseen two specific outputs on health and wellbeing in recent years these are the collective Committee collation and assessment of initiatives and best practice within companies and ENAs Position Paper 04 'Health and Wellbeing Framework'. The former was updated in 2020 as part of the process of sharing information between companies, and it was agreed that work should now focus on the development of a set of industry overarching objectives on health and wellbeing as well as the training and communication routes that are employed within the businesses. The ENA Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Framework was first established in 2010 in Phase 1 of Powering Improvement, and then reviewed and updated in Phase 2. It continues to provide the basis for collective industry work on organisational and individual improvements on health, forming the centre piece of the PIs Occupational Health Roadmap of useful guidance material.

Many of the companies' promotion of HWB initiatives crossover onto other areas of health management that have been set out in this review. They also build upon and use national guidance and messaging on general population health where appropriate, using professional bodies' and health charities' expertise and published material. This also represents an area that is sometimes hard to both quantify and measure, and employee engagement scores can vary and be dependent on other factors affecting staff.

However, **ESB** have developed a HWB Dashboard and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report to help determine progress, and a HWB App has been introduced for the benefit of all employees to assist with personal health management.

NIEN have produced a dedicated employee HWB policy to manage this issue. This is supported by a HWB forum that has been established to develop and deliver initiatives and a programme of events. A 'Wellbeing Scorecard' is used to report to the company Board and H&S Management Committee along with wider occupational health statistics.

Companies have had to adapt their approach to HWB in the light of the pandemic and developments in physical and mental health issues in the UK population. For example, **National Grid** has rolled out a domestic abuse awareness strategy for the business considering the increased risk of this for employees, due to the change in ways of working arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The company has developed standalone documents and tools to raise awareness in support of this issue.

There is now a greater level of awareness of the impact menopause can have on individuals in the workplace, and work is being carried out on designing and implementing a manager toolkit for the business on how best to support individuals. This new initiative will be launched on 18th October 2022 to coincide with World Menopause Day.

Work has been conducted on raising awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace for employees in collaboration with the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion agenda to ensure it is managed effectively. This has been embedded into training, diagnostic assessments, and workplace assessments to ensure that the company can introduce the correct adjustments for people.

NPG are committed to the health and wellbeing of their employees throughout the duration of their employment. A number of policies and processes are in place to support both colleagues and the company, including employee health care provision services as well as necessary guidance on managing attendance and sickness absence and specific health risks.

Scottish Power recognise the importance of sound health and wellbeing management to the extent that the company has employed a dedicated consultant to manage their approach. As part of a multi-national organisation, the business has a set of Global Company Employee Health and Wellbeing Guidelines in place. In line with other network companies a 'Wellbeing Scorecard' is used for reporting alongside occupational health statistics. These provide an indication of the effectiveness of a series of health and wellbeing initiatives and programme of events which are delivered to all employees.

A key part of the management approach taken by **SSE** revolves around effective stakeholder engagement, both with their external service health providers to ensure value added activity, but also employee consultation forums. For example, a monthly 'Occupational Health and Wellbeing Steering Group' is comprised of representatives from all areas of the business to discuss potential ideas and rollouts in relation to HWB. Likewise, monthly meetings with all the local safety representatives are held to discuss upcoming events so they can update their local areas, and monthly meetings with the trade unions help prepare for upcoming campaigns and events to allow for any HWB concerns to be raised. The effectiveness of these can be gauged by use of **SSE's** 'Great Place to Work Survey', which includes the reporting of wellbeing scores to the business and an assessment of the progress the company is making on wellbeing issues.

A number of active employee belonging groups enable colleagues to share and learn from each other, including a 'taking care of ourselves and each other' initiative and a 'chronic health and disabilities group'. This has led to the publication of personal stories on issues such as Huntington's disease, epilepsy, depression, cervical cancer, alcohol abuse, gambling and more. The feedback from employees has been excellent and has resulted in many others coming forward to discuss how these health issues relate to and affect them. In addition to this, a practical outworking programme has encouraged employees to attend cancer screening tests during worktime.

HWB policies are often integrated within an overarching occupational health management policy, enabling separate strands of work to be linked with other health priorities and reported in a consistent manner. This practised by **UKPN** whereby HWB is both incorporated within health and safety reports and occupational health and EAP statistics, and is overseen by an 'Occupational Health Stakeholder Group'. Industry wide collaboration includes engagement and participation in the PISG and ENAs Occupational Health Committee (HWB Matrix and sharing of best practice).

Similarly, the approach from **WPD** has been to ensure that changes at a national level are considered and implemented at a company level where appropriate. Any collective work agreed at a national level are then promoted through the company's 'Switched Onto Health' initiative, whilst HWB policies are regularly reviewed and where necessary updated to reflect these changes.



Communications

There are a number of established routes for best communicating collaborative work on health, and the priority and frequency of messaging needed. All companies issue regular communications on health via various tools and forums, and proactively support national messages on health with targeted initiatives and promotion where appropriate. This allows for individual company programmes and messaging on these topics to be promoted through companies' own communication channels. There are also opportunities to utilise the ENA Communications Team and their 'Grid' of campaigns to highlight any specific topics or initiatives that would benefit from the collation and publication of industry health messages. Collaboration with Electricity Network company PI partners and their stakeholders through ENA also represents a valuable resource and common message that can be agreed and promoted within the generation and retail sectors. Specific events that can be targeted include ENAs SHE Management Conference and webinars, both of which will can be used to further promote the industry health priorities.

All companies use a variety of communication tools to engage with employees and will tailor these according to the health topic messaging required:

- Published Health & Wellbeing Strategies on company web pages and employee handbooks;
- Dedicated Health and Wellbeing pages on the company intranet;
- Communication Plans setting out an annual health programme;
- Company magazines, team briefs, toolbox talks, Health & Safety days, guidance material;
- Health and safety films, video blogs, posters, e-mails, social media etc.;
- Company Annual Reports and Corporate Social Responsibility Reports;
- Mental Health First Aiders and Wellbeing Champions;
- Internal health and safety bulletins, and alerts from other companies;
- Promotion of national awareness days, and external health initiatives and support.

Reinforcing the messages of national awareness days on health is adopted by **ENWL**, such as ‘Time to Talk Day’, ‘National Stress Awareness Week’, ‘World Suicide Prevention Day’, and ‘World Mental Health Day’, all of which are focussed on improving peoples’ mental health. An annual climate survey for health and safety seeks employees’ opinions on the company’s approach to the management of mental health issues and the controls they have over stressors in their work. A very high positive response to health and safety (83% agreed that the company puts safety first and foremost) has been followed by an encouraging endorsement of the support for health and wellbeing initiatives (74% of colleagues feel their wellbeing is supported) and the company’s climate survey wellbeing index scored 72% in October 2021.

Employee engagement surveys are similarly valued by **ESB** through their ‘Our Voice’ programme, and this is supported by dashboards and KPIs on health, safety, and wellbeing. In addition to national campaigns, the company supports No Smoking, Cancer screening, Flu vaccination, and Work Positive (stress) initiatives. Public reporting on health performance is published in the company’s Annual Report and separate Sustainability Report.

Many of the **NIEN** initiatives are similarly linked to national campaigns, as illustrated by their programme of events:



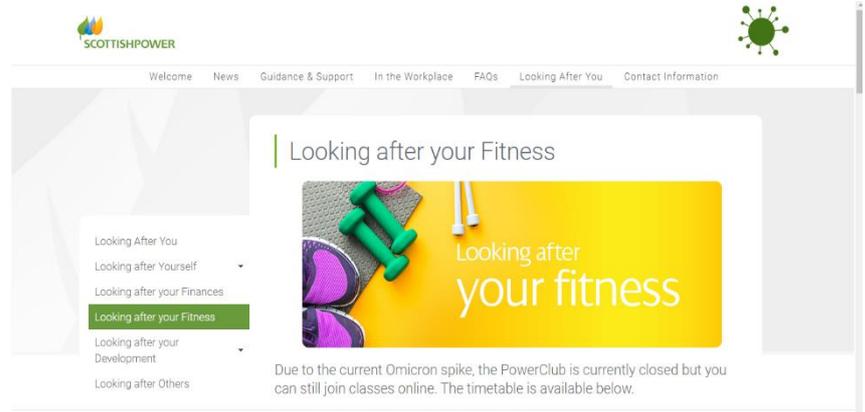
This is supported by monthly employee briefings within ‘The Wire’ intranet platform. Much of this work is then focussed through an inhouse programme in support of the European Health & Safety Week, which is designed to help employees take proactive steps to maintain good physical and mental health. Examples of the briefings are attached.



Communication Plans are important to help provide a focus for company’s annual programmes, and these can be targeted to specific workforces as per the approach by **National Grid** to help shape the communications and messages to office, operational, control room and apprenticeship staff among others.

Communications on health are introduced from the very first day at **NPG** through the employee induction process. HWB, company support and health and safety culture are presented, with new staff introduced to the company's HWB policies and expectations of behaviour. This starts an e-learning process, which includes health and continues throughout an individual's career. The Communications Team regularly circulate updates to colleagues on any new initiatives, company news, and HWB messaging and guidance.

This is even more relevant for vertically integrated businesses such as **ScottishPower** where the Communications Plan needs to encompass the requirements and needs across a number of separate functions with the electricity sector (generation, networks, and retail); health priorities need to address those risks facing all staff such as MSDs and physical health ('Looking After You' programme), as well as any specific health issues within the different parts of the businesses.



This is a key consideration for **SSE** too, and the company's Annual Health & Wellbeing Calendar of campaigns is formulated with input from each of their seven business areas. Campaign messages are then shared at a group level via intranet, Yammer channels, weekly SHE Bulletins, and an employee led forum. This is supported by a wide network of local SHE committees within the heart of the separate businesses to help bring them to life. Monthly campaigns reflect the national health and wellbeing messages, as well as specific SSE initiatives such as summer and winter campaigns for both employees and contractors. Numbers of intranet visits, newsletter reads, and external health provider data are all monitored to determine the reach and impact of health messaging, and similarly a variety of SHE forums and employee groups are used to good effect by the Communications Team.

A powerful tool is the sharing of personal stories by colleagues to make 'uncomfortable topics comfortable'. Short films and stories using 'what gets you through' testimonials have helped to educate others about illnesses that are often not visible to others. These help to demonstrate how colleagues have managed difficult situations using the resources and support available through cancer campaigns, Men's Health Week, and others.

UKPN utilises many of the communication tools routes outlined but have adopted a whole person approach and focus on four key national campaigns each year to help prompt conversations around physical and mental wellbeing. The HWB Champion community is key in disseminating the messages, and the level of engagement and feedback in the campaigns is monitored. Health Coaches have proved to be another means of positively engaging staff for which feedback has been excellent, leading to a number of case studies and examples of improvement in individual's health.

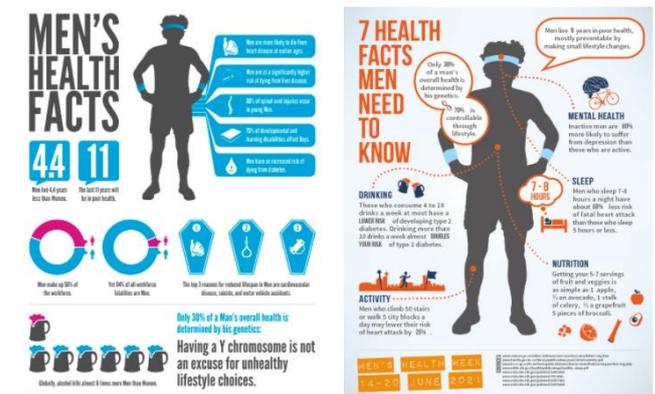


We're marking Women's Health Week on 21-27 June and we've collected some useful tools and resources that are available to everyone.



It's Men's Health Week 2021 (14-20 June) and we've collected some useful tools and resources that are available to everyone.

Men's Health Facts



The industry collaboration and best practice sharing at national level is used to good effect by **WPD** and feeds into their ongoing 'Switched Onto Health' initiative, which underpins their HWB programmes. Recent focus areas have included mental health, skin safety, fatigue awareness and management, back care, and ongoing EAP support services.

Wider Engagement on Health

Introduction

Proactive work on occupational health within the electricity sector needs to demonstrate an aspiration and commitment to go beyond legislative requirements and promote physical, mental health, and wellbeing interventions. This should be part of a strategic and integrated approach to health and safety management and based on an evidence based, multi-disciplinary approach that delivers benefits to both the business and employees.

Wherever possible risks to health should be designed out of working practices, equipment and innovation introduced to help reduce identified risks, and the impact of interventions on sickness absence and presenteeism monitored to measure performance. This is further assisted through the effective line management of staff; the training of managers and the interaction between them and their teams is a critical aspect of good health management. This work needs to be led by senior management to help set the tone and culture of the organisation thereby meeting NICE guideline recommendations that health and wellbeing should be a core priority for management.

COVID-19 learning

The electricity sector has been mindful of and participated in wider work through Government and professional bodies in determining its response to COVID-19 and the actions taken to control the risks in the workplace. HSE issued guidance on the physical controls based on evidence-based advice from SAGE, medical experts, and health providers to limit transmission routes, advise on suitable PPE and RPE, and manage the changes required both in work and home environments given the significant change in working practices. Good practice guidelines and toolkits were available and referenced from MIND, the Society of Occupational Medicine, CIPD and other reputable bodies.

The industry has participated in wider Government discussions and concerns with the treatment of critical infrastructure staff (operational control rooms), supply chains, transport issues, and the impact on and sector contribution to the economic recovery. Increasingly companies are now focussing on the impacts on employee mental health from the pandemic addressing issues of isolation, loss, and family related pressures from home working.

A risk-based approach leads to a hierarchy of controls to be implemented in line with the specific aspects of the workplace, for which a workplace assessment coupled with individual assessment needs provides an overarching return to work assessment. This takes account of workplace transmission routes and individual medical vulnerabilities. Organisations have also had to be mindful of testing requirements (antigen and antibody types). The benefits of Occupational Health Providers are evident here as expert advice can be sought on the overall risk assessment process, practical support measures, and employee health assessments and consultations; there is a proven link between workforce health and wellbeing and organisational resilience and productivity, so a company programme of risk prevention and health support is important. The return to the workplace and the emergence of hybrid working will require consideration of adaptations, new equipment assessments, and changed working practices reiterating the importance of employee engagement and consultation.

Studies from the Charters Institute of Personal development (CIPD) have reported some expected messages such as the initial impact on mortality and morbidity from the pandemic, but also benefits from reduced sickness absence in the short term. The next 2-5 years however are predicted to result in an increase in health conditions due to delayed operations and socioeconomic impacts from redundancy, cancelled/delayed contracts etc. Longer term (>5 years) may see an increase in long COVID issues, MSDs, and mental health impacts from changed working practices.

Safety Charity Work

ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)

Safety charities have long campaigned for more controls, reporting and research on driver related fatigue issues, and ENA and the industry has engaged with and taken relevant learning and guidance from such bodies for incorporation within its procedures and practices. For example, ROSPA position statements emphasise the need for companies to be mindful of the science and factors affecting sleep and road fatigue, including work demands, organisational factors (staffing, team functions, physical environment), and work/travel time requirements. Different categories of staff, age, and roles (shifts, standby duties, emergency response) will all play a factor in the level of fatigue risk to employees, whilst the latter need to be mindful of factors under their control such as work life balance and lifestyle. However, the onus is on the employer to assess the potential risk and introduce the policies and procedures, awareness, training, culture, and consultation and communication routes needed to manage this risk. All of these issues are being considered through the FMTF.

British Safety Council (BSC)

BSC reported that Business for Health, in conjunction with the CBI, are developing a new health reporting framework to help measure and incentivise action on health. The aim has been to draft sector level metrics and examples that demonstrate the link between good employee and business health. Research will continue into 2022 including the piloting of a test measurement index. Details of the initiative are set out in a business case document 'Business Framework for Health', which includes a foreword by Professor Chris Whitty.

HSE policy

HSE Management Standards represent one of a number of approved tools for managing mental health issues in the workplace. HSE has issued updated guidance in a number of areas, including home and lone working and the potential effect on employee mental health. This information is on the main stress web pages, which themselves have been updated with new studies and resources. The HSE 'Working Minds' campaign was launched by the Chief Executive at their Health and Work conference. This represents a collaboration with MIND, Mates in Mind, and ACAS partners and is targeted at SMEs whilst being applicable to all employees and workers. The industry has experience in utilising some of these effective interventions and awareness raising campaigns such as the national the Time to Talk initiative, company specific workforce engagement routes, and the introduction of Mental Health First Aiders.

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU OSHA) – Healthy Workplaces Campaign

The EU OSHA two-year Healthy Workplaces campaign on MSDs entitled 'Lighten the Load' provides access to free resources, including case studies, research, guidance, and news on European wide initiatives. ENA and member companies review the published material where relevant and draw on any significant learning and good practice through the Occupational Health Committee.

As part of the overarching campaign OSHA issues reports on the strategies, research, policies, and initiatives for MSDs that have proven to be the most effective across Europe, and these are freely published for reference and use. A number of initiatives and programmes have been assessed, including the GB H&S Strategy 'Helping Great Britain Work Well', to determine whether a prescriptive or policy approach was adopted and how they were designed to meet employee needs. Common themes for success include the need to prioritise health issues and commit sufficient resource to managing programmes. Key health risks need to be identified and appropriate control measures introduced through an effective planning process. This should focus on preventative pathways that prioritise proactive workplace design and training and then rehabilitation measures (reactive) in that order. A whole life approach to employees' health is needed and any initiatives should be subject to continuous evaluation and learning. This must include the collation and analysis of field data to provide both the required evidence base and to help identify causal factors for the various forms of MSDs.

Wider ENA work

Electro Magnetic Fields (EMFs) Cohort Study

The industry Cohort Study of the CEGB workforce produces morbidity and cancer incidence data that continues to be collated and analysed to determine any health impacts arising from past work exposures. Additional research and analysis of the data can be proposed in addition to routine maintenance of the Cohort data, are subject to approval by an industry governing body Northmere. A recent study of the cohort data to investigate any link from EMF exposure and motor neurone disease has been completed by Birmingham and Warwick universities. The results indicated no increased risk of MND from EMF exposure and the findings have been published in the Journal of Occupational Medicine. Other work is focussed on the revision to existing EMF guidance and information, greater visibility and access to publicly available EMF information, monitoring industry call data numbers and trends, the ongoing assessment of optimum overhead line tower phasing in line with a voluntary Code of Practice agreed between Government and the industry, and the transfer and updating of future Cohort data management responsibilities.

Diversity and Inclusion

Businesses have also been looking into and developing their own internal diversity and inclusion policies with a focus on sharing best practice across the sector with an overall goal to promote that the electricity industry is an inclusive sector that supports the rights of all people to be able to be who they are both in work and outside of work. This needs to include an assessment of all employees' health needs, particularly those who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged. ENAs Occupational Health Committee is currently reviewing companies' policies and approach in this area with a view to developing and improving the overall practice across the sector. Encouraging engagement between all employees across the sector is an enduring goal and one to which the UK electricity industry will continuously endeavour to build upon.

Events

Beyond the Barrier - Sleep & Fatigue

Companies benefited from a dedicated workshop run by Dr Alanna Hare from the British Sleep Society in July 2020 as part of the industry's collaboration with the Beyond the Barriers Group. This was an insightful explanation on the science of sleep, the potential impacts on individuals from poor management, and practical insight into the tools and behaviours that can be adopted and encouraged to improve wellbeing and performance.



More clarity is needed on the definitions of fatigue, tiredness, and sleep to better understand their causes and help determine those actions and behaviours that will reduce the physical and mental impact on employees. Other physical factors play a part, such as weight, activity, diet, and home/life issues, whilst those under pressure from work, irregular work patterns, and long commutes will suffer from impaired cognitive ability. All of these issues affect memory, the ability to learn, and decision-making factors providing links to other health interventions emphasising the importance of an integrated approach to occupational health management. The economic costs and drivers for managing these issues were also set out; poor management leads to a significant reduction in national GDP and increased numbers of days lost.

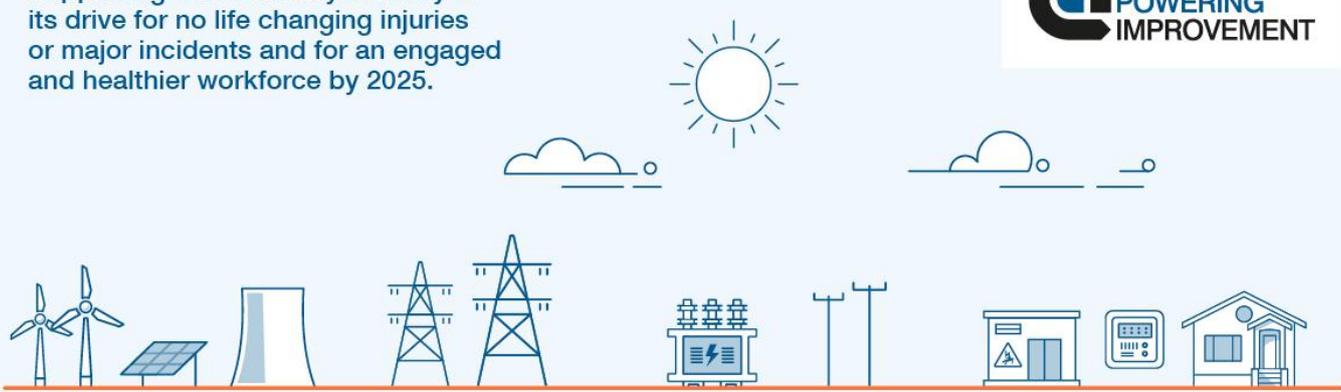
Advice was provided on the means to 'Plan and Pace' activities and priorities in order to help manage fatigue related issues. This will help balance out energy intake and output and avoid extremes of alertness and tiredness, and a number of tools were highlighted to assist with understanding and self-management to identify stressors and trigger points. The key is the prioritisation of work and then planning how and when to achieve goals in line with physical and mental capabilities.

A greater understanding of the science of sleep will help individuals optimise its physical benefits (National Sleep Foundation recommendations) and will lead to positive impacts on levels of core sleep, body cycles, and necessary physiological aspects so again education is key here. A mantra for everyone irrespective of work sector is to adopt a Routine (sleep pattern) – Relaxation (wind down) - Room (home environment) - Recovery (naps) approach to maximise the benefits of sleep. Specific messages for the electricity sector were geared around practical behaviours for those on shift work, between and after shift routines, and driving (commuting and operational hours); the latter is a UK wide work-related health and safety risk which results in many vehicle related fatalities and injuries every year. Ultimately, many of the interventions that can assist in reducing the risk from fatigue and sleep related issues mirror the recommendations of the HSE Management Standards on stress; employers need to improve the workplace environment, tackle workplace stressors, train staff in fatigue awareness, and maximise employees' control over their work schedules where possible.

Health webinar (November 2021)

An industry wide health webinar was held in November 2021 to cover learning from the pandemic from a physical and mental health perspective, and also to outline initial work in support of the PI 2021 Delivery Plan. This coincided with the annual Energy UK Health & Safety Week. This was a round table event chaired by Mark Patterson (PI 2021 Champion, SSE Director for H&S) featuring panel members from across the industry, including representation from the ENA Occupational Health Committee and Trade Unions.

Supporting UK electricity industry in its drive for no life changing injuries or major incidents and for an engaged and healthier workforce by 2025.

<p><u>Generation</u></p> <p>⚠ RISK ALERT</p> <p>Embedding continuous improvement and health and safety best practice across all generation sites and to support the wellbeing of all staff and contractors.</p>	<p><u>Transmission</u></p> <p>⚠ RISK ALERT</p> <p>Transforming how the networks operate and supporting the development of an engaged and healthier workforce.</p>	<p><u>Distribution</u></p> <p>⚠ RISK ALERT</p> <p>Delivering electricity to customers via smart, innovative, and reliable network solutions and keeping colleagues healthy and safe at work.</p>	<p><u>Retail meters</u></p> <p>⚠ RISK ALERT</p> <p>Ensuring the industry delivers a safe service and rollout of smart meters for both customers and workers by prioritising health and safety.</p>
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A series of short introductory presentations were followed by a round table/Q&A panel session with a thread focussing on the solutions to the key industry issues and challenges in promoting occupational health in energy over 2021, particularly in context of the National HESAC goals for having an engaged and healthier workforce under its PI industry initiative. The focus was on the priority topics for occupational health identified within the 2021 Delivery Plan, namely COVID-19 impacts, fatigue management, mental ill health management, health & wellbeing, the management of traditional industrial health issues (musculoskeletal disorders, fitness to work and health surveillance) and communications. This enabled delegates to consider issues affecting vulnerable and lone working staff from the pandemic and lessons learned, the effectiveness of policies and processes in supporting diversity and vulnerability, existing and future challenges on mental health, and emerging health priorities such as fatigue management, the impact of new technology, and an evolving approach to health and wellbeing. This all needs to be achieved whilst retaining a continued focus on the management of health issues associated with core operational activities.

The session concluded with a forward look to health challenges to 2025 and expectations on the PI theme in 2022 & 2023, 'Promoting a Positive Health and Safety Culture'.

National Health Days



Information is routinely published by member companies and ENA in support of key national health awareness days including Mental Health Awareness Week, which is usually held in May each year. This has included promotion of EAPs, online learning systems, MHFA training, HWB initiatives, mental health toolkits, and work in support of adopted themes such as 'Acts of Kindness'. Businesses also use the week to reiterate messages from their existing mental health programmes.

Some companies promote mental health issues all year round via ongoing company programmes, including 'Switched Onto Health' and monthly podcasts (**WPD**) and Wellbeing Wednesday (**NPG**), whilst **NIEN** used World Mental Health Day in October 2021 to launch a video, 'Stamp Out The Stigma', developed to help raise awareness via recorded stories from individual employees. **UKPN** focussed on World Menopause Day also held in October 2021, which is an annual event to raise awareness of the issue and the support options and services available for improving health and wellbeing.

ENA member companies have committed through the Healthy Workplaces Framework to promote specific national health initiatives and events, and a Communications Plan will be used to plan communications and promotional work to help raise general awareness and showcase company initiatives.

ENA SHE Management Conference 2022



29-30 June 2022 Brighton



The conference was held on 29 & 30th June 2022 at the Hilton Metropole Hotel, Brighton and was hosted by **UKPN**. One session was dedicated to occupational health issues and chaired and supported by members of the Occupational Health Committee. Presentations were held on the some of the industry and 2021 priority health issues including COVID-19 management, mental health/resilience, and fatigue management. These helped draw out the benefits of working in partnership, the need for an integrated approach to managing key health issues, the importance of observing legal duties, and the learning from incident investigation.

Measuring Progress

Industry health data over the last couple of years needs to be set within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to an unprecedented change in short and long-term working arrangements and environments, and impacted the health and sickness absence data that is recorded. Broadly speaking there was a significant reduction in sickness absence in 2020 and into 2021 due to many employees working from home or only attending a place less frequently, providing staff with a greater freedom and flexibility over their working hours. This had a corresponding impact on sickness rates, presenteeism, the ability to manage health conditions, and the availability of staff for work. Safe working, good hygiene practices, and responsible behaviours will also have contributed to this reduction, and some employees felt a sense of pride in the status of being critical key workers and were keen to contribute to the national response to the pandemic.

However, whilst overall sickness rates reduced, the prevalence of mental health and stress related issues were seen to increase as a consequence of various aspects of the pandemic. Similarly, some companies reported an increase in the number of new MSD cases due to work at home practices, reduced activity, and reduced access to equipment. Those with existing health conditions however have benefitted from the more flexible working practices, reduced commuting, and an improved work/life balance.

Absenteeism is now observed to be reverting to pre-pandemic levels as staff return to the workplace and face to face assessments and referrals can again be held.

ENA member company collective 2020 & 2021 Health, Safety and Public Safety Data will be made available in a separate report.

PI 2022 & 2023 – ‘Promoting a Positive Health and Safety Culture’

Work has already started on the next theme of PI phase 3 for 2022 and 2023 which focuses on ‘Promoting a Positive Health and Safety Culture’. The Delivery Plan is available to view on the PI website. A PI Champion is also in place (Chris Burchell, Managing Director of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Distribution) and will promote the strategy and support the work of a new dedicated PI Subgroup which is leading this work.



“Powering Improvement is a hugely important collaboration across the sector focused on the vital agenda of keeping our people safe. That is why I’m delighted to be able to support its work as Champion over 2022/23. Our industry faces both exciting and challenging times ahead and as we collectively address the energy transition, ensuring our health and safety approach keeps pace is something we should continue to prioritise together.”

For further information see
www.poweringimprovement.org

PARTNERS

Energy Networks Association (ENA) is the voice of the Networks. The industry body for the UK electricity transmission and distribution companies.

Energy UK is the trade association for the UK electricity supplier and generator companies.

TRADE UNIONS

GMB
Prospect
Unison
Unite

GOVERNANCE

Powering Improvement is managed and directed by National Health, Safety and Environment Committee (HESAC) comprising representatives from Energy UK and ENA member companies, the industry trade unions (GMB, Prospect, Unison and Unite) and HSE.

Executive decisions on behalf of ENA member companies rest with the ENA SHE Committee and ultimately the ENA Board.

Executive decisions on behalf of Energy UK companies rest with the Energy UK Safety Leaders Group

