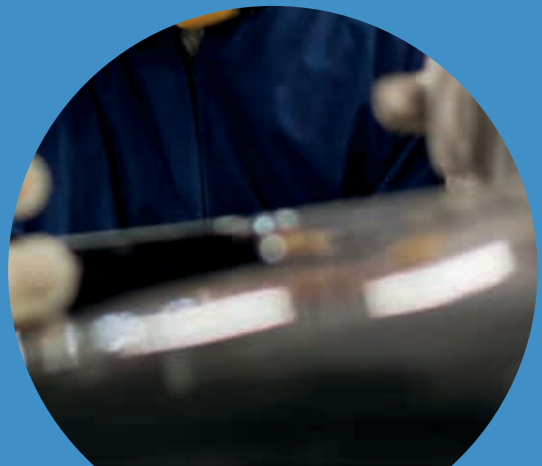
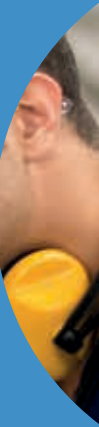


A GUIDE TO A CAREER IN HEALTH AND SAFETY

Exploring opportunities,
qualifications, and career progression



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Understanding the Field of Health and Safety	4
Career Pathways in Health and Safety	6
Skills and Competencies	7
Education and Qualifications	8
Sample Career Pathways in Health and Safety	9
Building a Career	10
Career Boost: Add other Relevant Expertise to your Toolkit	13
Challenges and Rewards	14
Conclusion	15

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Make UK Health and Safety Career Guide.

This guide is designed to help you explore, enter, and progress within the dynamic field of occupational health and safety. Whether you're a student considering your options, a professional looking for a career change, or someone already working in the field aiming to move forward, this guide offers practical advice and insight.

Careers in health and safety are critical to every industry. Professionals in this field ensure that workplaces are safe, compliant with the law, productive, and conducive to worker well-being. With opportunities ranging from entry-level roles to executive positions, a career in health and safety offers both purpose and progression.

This guide has been developed by a team of experienced health and safety professionals, educators, and career development advisors with decades of combined experience in a variety of industries, including construction, manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and education. Drawing on real-world practice and up-to-date industry knowledge, our aim is to provide trustworthy, practical information that supports your journey into a rewarding and impactful profession.

Please note: This guide relates specifically to health and safety regulations and practices in the UK. Requirements and standards may differ in other countries.

UNDERSTANDING THE FIELD OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. They are dedicated to protecting people and places and helping everyone lead safer and healthier lives.

Their role goes beyond worker protection to include public assurance. They work to ensure people feel safe where they live, where they work and in their environment.

HSE regulates to protect people against ill health, injury or death from work activities in Great Britain. They regulate risks within the scope of the Health and Safety at Work Act and associated regulations.

This includes protecting:

- Workers against potential risks of ill health, injury or death due to work, such as in manufacturing, health and social care, construction, waste and recycling, and agriculture.
- The public and workers against potential risks of incidents with the potential to harm many people.
- The public against potential risks to their health and safety from work activities

HSE are a strategic partner of Make UK.

1.7 MILLION

workers suffering from work-related ill health

13,000

deaths linked to past exposure at work, such as chemicals and dust

604,000

reported non-fatal injuries

£21.6 BILLION

annual cost of workplace injury and new cases of work-related ill health

Stats published in Health and Safety at work produced by Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Globally, ISO 45001 is a key standard for occupational health and safety management systems. It helps organisations proactively improve employee safety, reduce workplace risks, and create safer working conditions. It is designed to be integrated with other management systems such as ISO 9001 (quality) and ISO 14001 (environment), supporting a holistic approach to organisational risk management.

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) focuses on preventing accidents, injuries, and illnesses in the workplace. It combines law, science, management, and communication to create safer environments for workers across all industries.

Health and safety professionals work to:

- Secure senior level understanding, “buy-in” and help set the organisation’s health and safety strategy including short and long-term objectives
- Identify and assess significant workplace risks
- Develop health and safety, policies and procedures, assess their effectiveness and drive continuous improvement
- Ensure the competence of staff and others impacted by workplace risks
- Ensure compliance with regulations, standards and best practice
- Improve productivity



In many organisations, health and safety roles are increasingly combined with responsibilities in other functions such as environmental management and quality assurance. These integrated roles - often referred to as HSEQ (Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality) or EHSQ - reflect a growing emphasis on holistic risk management, regulatory compliance, and sustainable business practices. Professionals in these positions are expected to oversee environmental impact assessments, lead quality control initiatives, and support corporate social responsibility goals alongside traditional safety functions.

CAREER PATHWAYS IN HEALTH AND SAFETY

There is no single path into the profession. You can enter health and safety through academic study, vocational training, or by transitioning from another field.

Here are common roles and pathways:

ENTRY-LEVEL ROLES:

- Health and Safety Assistant
- Trainee/Junior H&S Advisor
- Site Safety Representative

MID-LEVEL ROLES:

- Health and Safety Officer
- Health and Safety Coordinator
- Risk Assessor or Auditor

ADVANCED ROLES:

- Health and Safety Manager
- Compliance Manager
- HSE Director or Consultant

SPECIALIST AREAS:

- Fire Safety Officer
- Ergonomist
- Occupational Hygienist

Often, individuals take responsibility for managing core health and safety systems while using trusted external consultants to support specialised or high-risk topics outside their areas of competency. This can include topics like dangerous substances and explosive atmospheres, toxicology, mental health or fire. This balanced approach allows generalists to remain effective across the wider organisation while still ensuring that specialist advice is available when needed. It also gives health and safety professionals space for future development and growth.

SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

Successful health and safety professionals need a broad mix of technical and core skills, for example:

Technical Skills:

- Conducting risk assessments
- Investigating incidents
- Developing safety procedures
- Understanding legislation and compliance
- Technical and digital skills - familiarity with safety management systems and reporting tools, data analysis for safety trends, use of audit software and mobile inspection apps

Soft Skills:

- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Leadership and teamwork
- Conflict resolution
- Training delivery and presentation
- Attention to detail
- Influencing
- Coaching and mentoring

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

You can start a career in health and safety through different routes:

Academic:

- GCSEs/A-levels in relevant subjects (science, health, engineering)
- Degrees in occupational health, environmental science, or engineering
- Postgraduate certificates or diplomas in health and safety

Vocational:

- Apprenticeships in health, safety, and environment
- On-the-job training

COMMON ACADEMIC ROUTE TAKEN BY MAKE UK LEARNERS

NEBOSH General Certificate

IOSH Managing Safely

NEBOSH
Diploma

SAMPLE CAREER PATHWAYS IN HEALTH AND SAFETY

FROM EARLY AWARENESS TO LEADERSHIP ALEX'S STORY

Alex began in facilities management but developed a passion for workplace safety while helping with accident reports.

Step 1: Completed IOSH Managing Safely to gain a practical understanding of risk assessment and hazard control.

Step 2: Gained the NEBOSH National General Certificate (Level 3), enabling applications for dedicated H&S roles.

Step 3: Worked as an H&S Officer for several years, building hands-on experience.

Step 4: Completed the NEBOSH Diploma (Level 6) to prepare for senior leadership.

Now: Health and Safety Manager in manufacturing, leading a team and setting strategic safety goals.

APPRENTICESHIP TO CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL SAM'S STORY

Sam left school at 18 and joined a large utilities company on a Health, Safety, and Environment Apprenticeship.

Step 1: Apprenticeship included on-the-job training, the IOSH Working Safely course and a Level 3 safety qualification.

Step 2: Rotated through departments, gaining experience in construction safety, confined space work, and environmental compliance.

Step 3: Progressed into a Safety Advisor role and began working toward CMIOSH chartered status through structured CPD.

Step 4: Completed a Level 5 Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety Practice while working.

Now: Senior HSE Advisor in the energy sector, mentoring apprentices and managing high-risk projects.

SPECIALIST TO GENERALIST HSEQ LEAD - PRIYA'S STORY

Priya started as an Environmental Consultant, advising companies on compliance with environmental regulations.

Step 1: Recognised that many environmental projects overlapped with safety and quality requirements.

Step 2: Completed IOSH Managing Safely, then NEBOSH General Certificate to broaden her skill set.

Step 3: Took on a Health, Safety, Environment, and Quality (HSEQ) Coordinator role, managing audits, quality systems, and safety training.

Step 4: Gained a Level 6 Diploma in occupational safety and became a full member of ISEP and IOSH.

Now: HSEQ Lead for a multinational manufacturer, overseeing integrated systems and using specialist consultants for niche areas like occupational hygiene.

BUILDING A CAREER

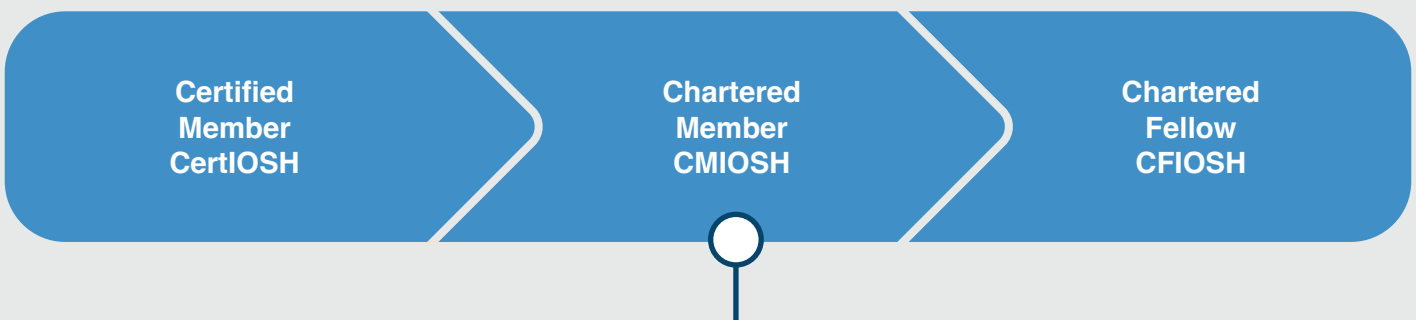
Once you're in the field, here are ways to grow your career:

- Set short- and long-term goals
- Identify areas for development and training
- Create a portfolio of audits, inspections, reports, and presentations
- Pursue chartered membership (e.g. CMIOSH)
- Network at events and conferences
- Seek mentorship and coaching



The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) is the world's largest professional health and safety membership organisation. Based in the UK, IOSH supports and represents health and safety practitioners globally by providing high-quality training, professional development, and resources.

Health and Safety Journey



The level at which most organisations deem a practitioner competent

Competency

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 makes it a legal requirement for organisations to take health and safety advice from a “competent person.” UK law defines a competent person as someone with the “necessary training, experience, knowledge, and other qualities.” Regardless of the entry point, hands-on experience and staying up to date is key to building competence.

Gaining experience:

- Internships or placements during study
- Volunteering for safety-related roles or committees
- Shadowing professionals
- Documenting safety tasks and building a portfolio
- Engaging in site visits across industries

In addition, completing and updating your Continual Professional Development (CPD) is vital to building knowledge, skills, training and experience. Examples of CPD include, but is not limited to, attending webinars, workshops, conferences, and training. Some in the profession question the value of recording CPD but it's one of the simplest and most transparent ways to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to improvement thereby reducing organisational risk and maintaining compliance. For those who are members of a professional association, CPD is an essential requirement and becomes a way of life.

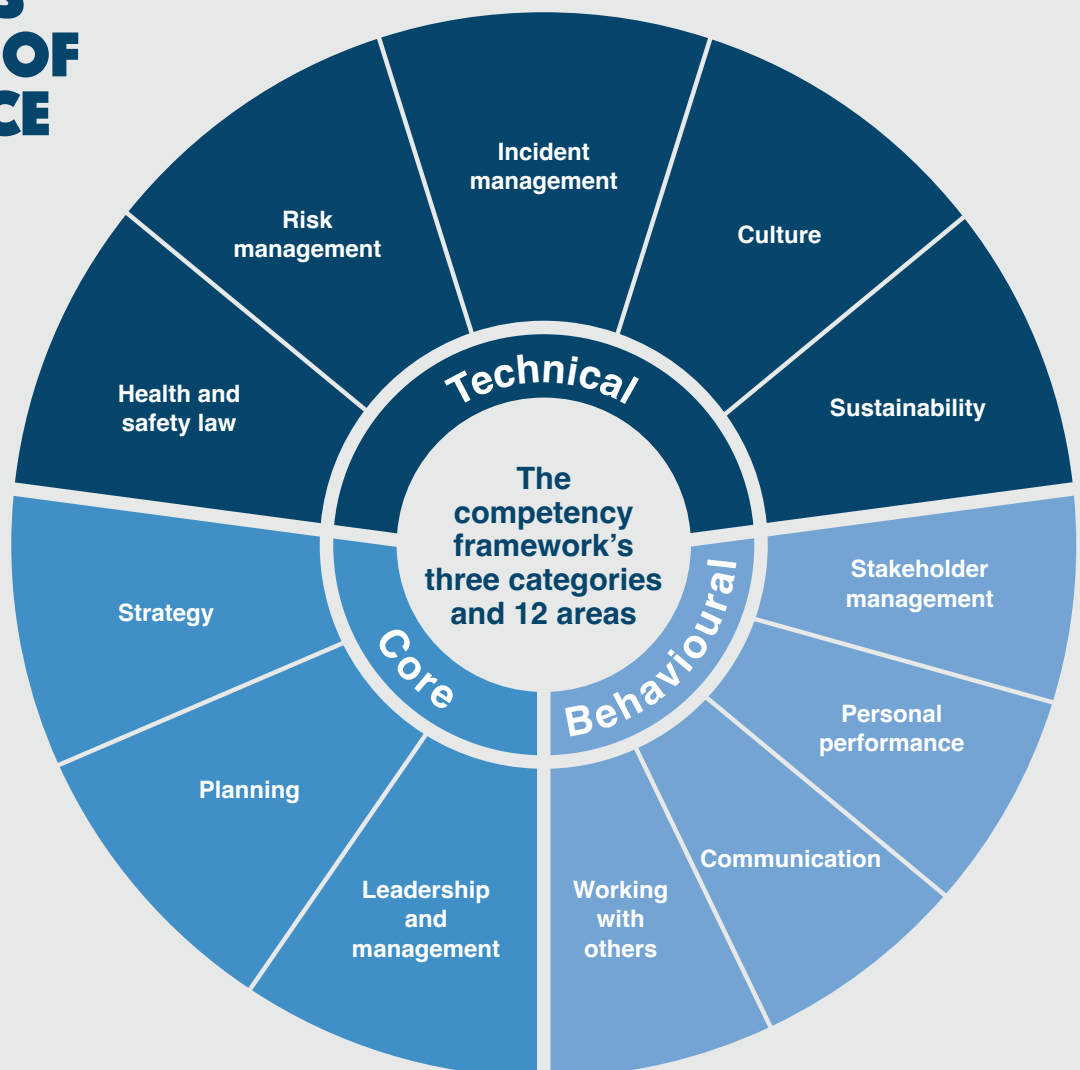


Even the most capable health and safety managers often rely on external experts to provide confidence and strengthen their safety oversight. Working with external experts offers peace of mind while ensuring that those critical health and safety responsibilities remain firmly in the hands of the employer.

IOSH Blueprint

An example of CPD tracking may include the IOSH Blueprint. This competency framework reflects best practice in occupational safety and health (OSH). It sets the standards for the skills, knowledge and behaviours OSH professionals need to manage risk and drive change in today's constantly evolving workplace. The competency framework is designed as an actionable set of standards to help build capacity across the health and safety profession. Practical and comprehensive, it includes 69 competencies covering 12 areas in three categories – technical, core and behavioural. Development needs vary depending on role, level, career aspirations, company size and sector, so it isn't a 'one size fits all' tool. You can use the competency framework to help maximise performance.

CATEGORIES AND AREAS OF COMPETENCE GRAPHIC



CAREER BOOST: ADD OTHER RELEVANT EXPERTISE TO YOUR TOOLKIT

As mentioned, in many organisations, health and safety roles are increasingly combined with responsibilities in other functions such as environmental management and quality assurance. These disciplines focus on risk prevention, regulatory compliance, and sustainable operations and increasingly, they are combined into integrated roles such as HSE (Health, Safety, Environment) or HSEQ (Health, Safety, Environment, Quality).

For those in H&S roles, developing environmental or quality expertise can make you a more versatile and valuable professional. Employers value professionals who can oversee multiple disciplines. Even short courses in environmental awareness or management systems (such as ISO 14001 or ISO 9001) can set you apart and open the door to broader responsibilities and higher earning potential.

Quality

- Qualifications such as ISO 9001 Lead Auditor / Internal Auditor, CQI Certificate in Quality Management, Six Sigma Green Belt / Black Belt, Lean Management training
- Professional membership - Chartered Quality Institute (CQI) or International Register of Certificated Auditors (IRCA)

Environmental Management

Training and membership with The Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP), formerly IEMA, can provide the knowledge and skills needed to confidently oversee environmental management.

Environmental Journey



The level at which most organisations deem a practitioner competent

CHALLENGES AND REWARDS

Like most professions, a career in health and safety comes with its own set of challenges and rewards. It demands dedication, resilience, and the ability to navigate complex situations, but it also offers a unique opportunity to make a real difference in people's lives and workplaces.

Challenges:

- Gaining buy-in from all levels of staff
- Keeping up with changing legislation
- Managing safety in dynamic or high-risk environments
- Dealing with incidents and investigations

Rewards:

- Making a meaningful difference
- Contributing to a positive workplace culture
- Strong job stability and demand across sectors
- Varied and dynamic work settings



CONCLUSION

A career in health and safety is more than a job - it's a commitment to protecting people and enabling success in every kind of workplace. Whether you're just starting out or looking to move up, the field offers stability, growth, and meaningful impact.

Success in this field comes from combining knowledge, practical experience, and the confidence to lead on safety issues. That's where trusted partners can make a real difference. At Make UK, we provide training, professional development, and ongoing guidance to help health and safety professionals at every stage of their career. From accredited qualifications to expert advice and tailored support, we're here to help you build the skills and resilience needed for the challenges ahead.

Your next step starts now and with the right tools, knowledge, and support, you can help shape a safer future.



READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Call: **0808 168 5874**

Email: **enquiries@makeuk.org**