



**LACORS** working together

# Improving the health, work and well-being of local communities

How health and safety contributes to local area agreements (LAAs) and multi-area agreements (MAAs)



## Why health and safety is important to LAAs and MAAs

Health and safety at work involves all of us whether we are employers, employees or members of the public visiting workplaces like pubs, restaurants, hospitals and shops. It should therefore feature in local area priorities and strategies.

Work is good for people. It brings significant benefits to people's lives – financially, socially, psychologically, and to their health and well-being. It provides support for their families and dependents and enhances their quality of life. However, when people are exposed to unacceptable work-related risks, their physical and mental health may suffer. This can damage their health and place additional demands on the local economy, services and community.

## Government commitment to health, work and well-being

Improving the health and well-being of the working population is set out in the Government's strategy, *Health, work and well-being: Caring for our future*. The strategy is a cross-departmental partnership between Department of Health (DH), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and the Health Departments of both the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government. It aims to help reduce health inequalities and social exclusion by demonstrating clearly that work helps maintain and improve people's overall health and well-being.

The strategy includes a focus on:

- Improving the general health of the working age population.
- Creating healthier workplaces and preventing people from becoming ill or injured as a result of their work.
- Maximising the opportunity that workplaces provide to help people make healthy lifestyle choices.
- Making early interventions when health problems arise and ensuring the necessary treatments are easily available.
- Encouraging the provision of good quality occupational health services.

Local authorities, through their power to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of local areas and regulatory activity, are critical to delivery of the strategy. They are at the heart of developing sustainable community strategies to identify the priorities for their area and to work with their strategic partners to improve the lives of local people.

## The cost of health and safety failures

HSE and local authorities are working with their partners (including healthcare, business, worker and third sector organisations) to deliver the Government's targets for reducing the incidence of work-related ill health and injury. The headline statistics do not paint a pretty picture.

- Some 36 million working days (30 million were due to ill health) were lost in 2006/07 as a result of occupational ill health and injuries.
- A significant number of those people coming onto incapacity benefits have come directly from work because of work-related ill health or injury.
- HSE estimated that in 2001/02, the costs to Britain of workplace accidents and work-related ill health were between £13.1 billion and £22.2 billion to the economy and between £22 billion and £31.8 billion to society.

Most of these costs are borne locally and highlight that health and safety failures affect us all and challenge the economic sustainability and vitality of local communities. HSE has estimated that the annual economic costs of work-related ill health and accidents to each local authority area are between £5 million and £186 million.

In 2006/07, 241 workers were fatally injured. However, every year thousands of people die from work-related diseases mainly due to exposure to dangerous substances during their working lives. Emerging information on annual work-related cancer deaths suggests that the number of these is likely to be in

excess of 6000. The majority of these are due to asbestos exposure.

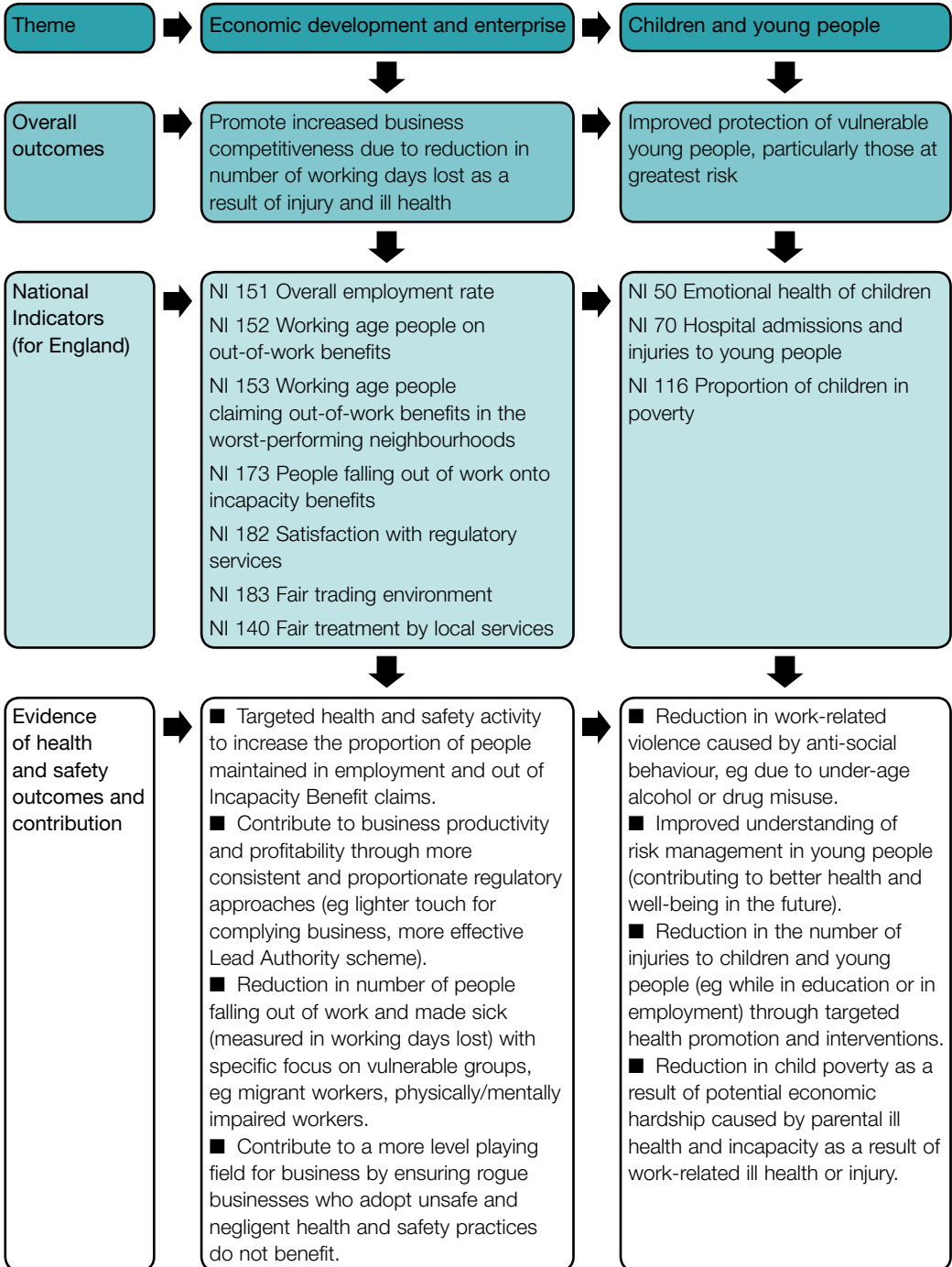
Work-related deaths, ill health and accidents not only bring significant loss and suffering to those affected and their families, but also place demands on local services, such as healthcare professionals, adult and young people support services, the Police, and voluntary sector organisations.

## The Local Government National Indicators

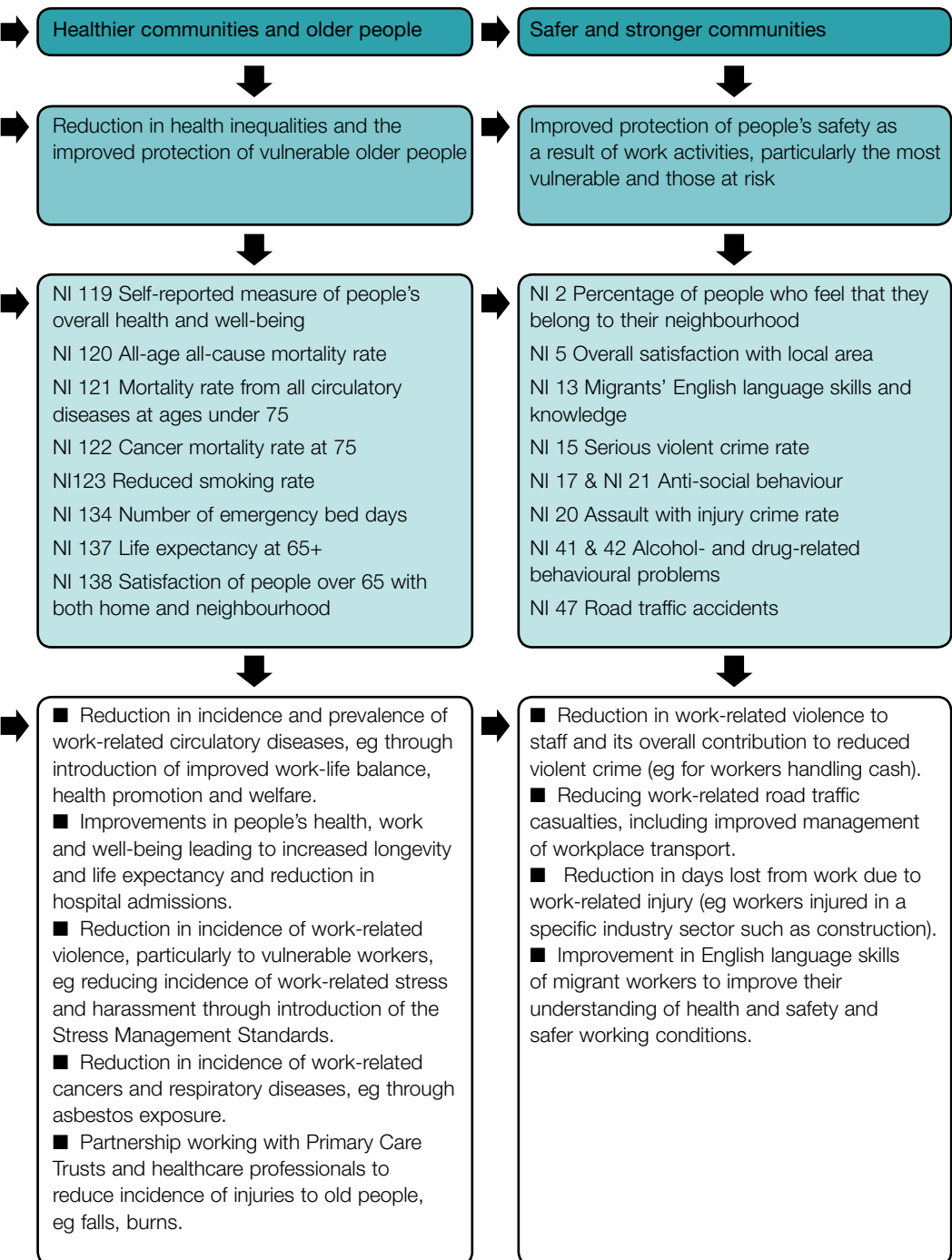
Improvements in work-related health and safety contribute to a number of the Government's priorities as highlighted in recently agreed Local Government National Indicators, for example maintaining people's health, reducing the number of hospital admissions, reducing the incidence of crime, keeping people in employment or helping businesses to have a workforce that is efficient, 'happy, healthy and here'.

National Indicator 173 specifically focuses on improving the well-being of local residents for each area by measuring the proportion of people who fall onto incapacity benefits directly from work. A significant proportion of these cases will have been caused by work-related injury or ill health. HSE has a valuable role to play here as its health and safety intervention activity is organised on a national and regional basis and so it is able to work across local authority boundaries, with other partners, to take a co-ordinated approach at a regional level.

# Improving health, work and well-being of local communities. How health and safety



## contributes to LAA targets and priorities



## Making it happen in practice

### Named Partner responsibility

HSE is a Named Partner to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. We therefore welcome the opportunity to engage with Local Strategic Partners and Government Offices to contribute to the delivery of the priorities and targets outlined in LAAs. We also look forward to engaging them in the development of key 'leading indicators'.

Health and safety targets can't be delivered overnight but leading indicators have a crucial role in showing us whether we are headed in the right direction. The simplest indicators are often the best – such as the number of safety products a particular supplier has sold, or how many organisations have adopted the Stress Management Standards (see the Leicestershire County Council example).

HSE and local authorities are already working together very effectively to drive forward improvements in occupational health and safety and we have established partnership teams in each region to work more closely across local communities. Each of the regional partnership teams is headed by a Partnership Manager. Details of these are in the contacts list on the back page.

### Case studies

#### *Kirklees: Better Health at Work*

Locally, work-related ill health costs the Kirklees economy up to £35 million each year. A 2005 survey estimated that almost 2.2 million working days are lost in Kirklees annually due to ill health. The main local workplace health issues are stress and back-related problems. Additionally there are over 5500 successful new claims for Incapacity Benefit in Kirklees each year. In 2004, Kirklees established the Better Health at Work Partnership (BHAW) to provide a free and confidential advice and support service to small and medium sized enterprises and individual workers to improve health and safety within local businesses by transferring knowledge and skills to the workforce.

A programme of occupational health, safety and return to work activity was taken forward to:

- promote a healthy and productive workforce;
- improve health and safety standards in organisations; and
- reduce the incidence of work-related ill health.

Project partners include HSE, Kirklees Primary Care Trust and Jobcentre plus. Additionally the Council negotiated Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets to reduce the number of successful new claims for Incapacity Benefit by 3% and to reduce the number of working days lost by 5% (reduction in some 109 000 days) over a three-year period.

*So what did the Council and its partners do and what difference did they make?*

- Worked with over 150 wide-ranging businesses and charitable organisations to improve their health and safety arrangements through topic-based interventions (with a particular focus on work-related stress and musculoskeletal disorders).
- Established a system of referral mechanisms for GPs, health professionals and individual workers to deal with work-related ill health.
- Raised general awareness by undertaking opportunistic occupational health histories with over 1000 workers and working in depth with almost 300 individuals.
- Attended a range of events throughout Kirklees to promote BHAW, including promoting occupational health and well-being at Kirklees Business Partnership events.
- Contributed to achievement of first year LPSA targets for both indicators. Improvements of 15% have been achieved for both indicators in the first two years.

The improvements delivered to date are contributing towards HSE's Public Service Agreement target for reducing working days lost due to injuries and ill health, and DWP's 2006 target for reducing Incapacity Benefit claims by 1 million over the course of a decade. Kirklees consider that the success to date has been due to: a committed and supportive Partnership; a focused, motivated and enthusiastic delivery team; and clearly defined targets for what the project aims to achieve.

**Leicestershire County Council LAA:  
Workplace health and well-being**

Under the Healthier Communities theme, Leicestershire is implementing a three-year project to improve mental health and well-being in the workplace. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is aware that work-related stress has an impact on individuals, families, organisations and society. It is expensive in terms of Incapacity Benefit claims, loss of productivity and increased healthcare costs. Furthermore, the project will contribute to improved health and help to keep people in employment.

The LSP has developed a performance indicator to increase the number of public and private sector workplaces implementing HSE's Stress Management Standards. It has targeted workplaces with more than 200 employees. So far all public sector service providers have signed up to adopt the Management Standards, together with a number of private sector organisations.





## Contacts

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