

# Competent advisor service

Every employer is required to appoint a 'Competent Person' (or Competent Persons) to provide sound advice on all matters of health and safety - (Regulation 7 – Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999) The decision as to who should take on the 'Competent Person' role is probably one of the most important decisions an employer can take when it comes to managing health and safety effectively.

Often organisations may not have a sufficiently qualified member of staff and may not have sufficient resources to appoint someone in-house full time. The problem can often be exacerbated where operations are split over a number of sites and it is difficult for one person often working remotely, to ensure that a good health and safety culture is adopted at site level.

In cases such as this it may be beneficial to consider using an external Competent Advisor Service.

## What is a Competent Advisor Service?

This is where an external consultant is enlisted to act as your Competent Person for health and safety matters. The consultant will work with your in-house responsible person(s) to provide support regarding specific health and safety matters.

## What are the benefits of using an external consultant?

A professionally qualified Health and Safety consultant will have the knowledge and experience to ensure you are brought up-to-date with current legislation and are fulfilling your legal obligations.

Appointing an external advisor can often be a cost effective option as you are able to precisely match the amount of bought-in time with your Health and Safety requirements. Companies may find this is often cheaper than appointing someone in-house.

## What tasks might an external advisor assist me with?

Typical tasks you could expect an external advisor to assist with include:

- Assistance in developing policies and procedures manuals and documentation which is tailored to meet your individual business risks and needs
- Ensuring that your health and safety policy and manual risk assessments are refreshed annually. In medium/high risk work environments more frequent inspections may be required
- Updating your programme following a legislative change
- Attending corporate meetings or site specific meetings where you feel you need the support of a health and safety professional
- Liaising with the relevant enforcing authorities on your behalf
- Providing training to your staff and responsible persons at all levels of the organisation

## Things you should consider when using an external advisor

- Make sure you have made your brief clear and that the advisor understands your business and the way it operates
- Ensure you have complete clarity as to the work they will carry out and the costs involved
- Are they competitive on price?
- Check for evidence of competency and knowledge. Formal qualifications and membership of professional bodies is a good place to start. Ask them for examples of practical experience in undertaking work in your industry sector. Check whether they are a member of OSHCR (Occupational safety and Health Consultants Register). The OSHCR provides an up-to-date list of general health and safety advisers who have a qualification recognised by the professional bodies participating in the scheme. In addition the consultant will also have demonstrated that they have maintained their levels of knowledge in line with one of professional bodies CPD schemes.
- Do they have adequate insurance cover?
- Are the solutions they are proposing sensible and in keeping with your business needs and budgets?
- Are they willing to provide further advice and on-going support regarding any issues that arise from implementing their recommendations?

## How we can help

Metro SRM are able to work with your in-house 'Responsible Person' for health and safety to provide support in regard to specific health and safety issues, such as the development of health and safety management systems, asbestos management plans, CDM advice, etc. or alternatively act as your nominated 'Competent' health and safety advisors as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

One of the key elements in effective health and safety management is the need to constantly monitor and review your health and safety programme. Our Competent Advisor package ensures that you have a two yearly checklist which captures key activities including risk assessments, training and legislative updates and access to competent advice which is affordable and relevant.

Please contact us on 0845 058 9999 for further details or advice.