

# Leadership and worker engagement in the ports industry

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HSE's 2014 Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) on Safety in Docks (L148) was developed through close consultation with employer and employee representatives. It is designed to address both the larger end of the industry and those working in small harbours and highlights the importance of leadership and full workforce involvement. Worker engagement goes beyond consultation and refers to the extent to which workers contribute to decisions that affect their health and safety. Leaders play an important role by engaging the workforce to achieve safe and healthy conditions.

This qualitative study explored how leadership and worker engagement practices were implemented in GB ports. Findings revealed several good leadership practices including leading by example, challenging unsafe practices and being visible. Listening to and acting on workers' concerns and ensuring that feedback is provided on issues raised was also important in facilitating and/or sustaining worker engagement. Study participants considered that use of a variety of communication methods is essential to engage workers. Health and safety representatives played an important role in increasing attention to health and safety and were generally supported in their role. Worker attitude to health and safety and generational issues in particular were perceived as a potential barrier to worker engagement.

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# Leadership and worker engagement in the ports industry

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## KEY MESSAGES

- This qualitative study explored how leadership and worker engagement practices were implemented in a sample of GB ports. A number of good leadership practices were identified across the six participating ports, including senior management visibility, challenging unsafe working practices, operating an ‘open door policy’, listening to and acting on workers’ concerns, encouraging reporting of incidents and near misses, and leading by example. These were corroborated by most workers taking part in the study.
- Managers are perceived to be more effective when they listen to and act on workers’ health and safety (H&S) concerns, do not compromise H&S at the expense of productivity, and foster open reporting.
- Generally workers and H&S representatives seem to be well involved in a range of H&S activities, including reviewing risk assessments, equipment selection, workplace inspections, and accident investigations. Some variations in levels of involvement were identified across participating ports.
- A good mix of approaches was used to engage with workers and non-permanent staff and communicate H&S. These approaches appeared to be tailored to port size, which was evident by the broader range of communication methods used in larger ports.
- H&S meetings were generally well-attended however operational demands and/or shift patterns may sometimes pose difficulties in getting everyone together in one place.
- Generally, workers felt that they could raise H&S concerns directly with supervisors and/or senior managers as well as indirectly through H&S representatives. H&S meetings, toolbox talks as well as informal discussions with management were some of the forums used to raise H&S issues.
- The systems for reporting incidents and near misses tended to vary according to port size. Online reporting systems were used in large ports whereas direct reporting to management and/or use of paper forms appeared to be more widely used in smaller ports.
- A range of training courses was provided by participating ports, which were perceived to be sufficient and relevant for the job. Training courses were also provided to H&S representatives to help support them in their role.
- Workforce attitudes towards H&S, such as beliefs that ‘H&S is not their responsibility’ and perceptions that older workers may be more reluctant to change their working practices were identified as potential barriers in worker engagement.
- Difficulty in balancing safety with productivity, due to the competitive nature of the industry, was also acknowledged as a potential barrier in worker engagement.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In December 2013, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Board approved the introduction of a shorter, simplified Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) on Safety in Docks (L148). The ACOP is supported by guidance, which has been developed by Port Skills and Safety with the support of HSE and Unite the Union. HSE's perspective is that leadership and worker engagement are central to the effective implementation of the ACOP by stakeholders. Consistent with this, researchers from HSE's Health and Safety Laboratory explored how worker engagement and leadership practices were implemented in a sample of GB ports. The specific objectives of the research were:

- To identify current practice in leadership and workforce engagement by gathering the perceptions of stakeholders (employers, managers, workers and their representatives).
- To identify the extent to which the ports exemplify good practice in terms of health and safety (H&S) leadership and workforce engagement.
- To explore the barriers to effective leadership and workforce engagement specific to the ports industry.
- To derive recommendations that will inform an industry-led action plan based on the evidence gathered.

Worker engagement goes beyond consultation and refers to the extent to which the workforce contributes to decisions that affect their H&S. Leaders play an important role and can nurture worker involvement by engaging the workforce in the promotion and achievement of safe and healthy conditions, promoting effective 'upward' communications and high quality training.

## METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach, combining focus groups and semi-structured interviews with workers, managers and H&S representatives, was used to address the research objectives. A representation of different types (e.g. trust, municipal, and private) and sizes (e.g. small, medium, and large) of ports was included in the study sample. A total of 52 participants across 6 ports (3 trust, 2 municipal and 1 private port) took part in the study. Data collected from the interviews and focus groups were analysed thematically using 'Framework', a systematic approach to data management and analysis.

## FINDINGS

### Leadership practices

A number of practices were identified through which management tried to convey their commitment and engage workers in H&S, including being visible (e.g. through safety walkabouts), leading by example, being approachable (e.g. by promoting an 'open door' policy), and listening to workers' concerns. Demonstrating the value of reporting, as well as providing feedback on H&S issues raised was another leadership practice that emerged as important in fostering worker engagement. Instances were identified where participants felt that they did not always receive feedback on the H&S issues raised whilst perceptions that management had a 'heavy-handed' approach to incidents was perceived as discouraging open reporting in some cases. The prevalent view among workers was that they were supported in stopping work on safety grounds by senior managers and/or supervisors. A minority view was also expressed however by some participants that they were not always supported in such

decisions. Some examples were identified where senior managers tried to incorporate practices from other industries as a means of improving two-way communication and worker engagement.

### **Worker involvement in H&S activities**

Several examples of worker and H&S representatives' involvement in H&S were identified, such as being consulted in and/or reviewing risk assessments, carrying out workplace and equipment inspections, and being involved in equipment selection. However, some participants also expressed a desire for more worker involvement, particularly in the selection of equipment and in reviewing working methods/risk assessments. Workers and H&S representatives would be involved in incident investigations if they had been personally involved and/or had witnessed an incident. H&S representatives were sometimes part of the investigation team along with management and/or the safety department. Plans were discussed by two ports of upskilling workers in incident investigations and including H&S representatives in incident investigation teams.

### **Motivation for engagement in H&S**

The need to keep both oneself and colleagues safe, often stemming from an appreciation that working in a port environment can be dangerous, appeared to be a driver for engagement among workers. In addition, being personally involved in and/or witnessing colleagues being involved in incidents, the desire to 'make a difference' and ensuring that workers are treated fairly, were reasons provided for taking up the H&S representative role. The majority of ports did not provide incentives or tangible rewards for H&S (e.g. vouchers or other forms of financial incentives), and provision of verbal praise for a job well done was acknowledged by several participants. In addition, H&S representatives also mentioned being supported by management in their role, for instance, in terms of attending training courses, and given time to attend meetings.

### **H&S communication**

Participating ports employed a good mix of approaches including both face-to-face (e.g. H&S meetings, briefings, toolbox talks) and written (e.g. noticeboards, newsletters) methods to communicate H&S to permanent, as well as non-permanent, employees. A broader range of communication methods was evident in larger ports (e.g. use of the intranet, media screens) to ensure that H&S messages reached the workforce. Using a mix of communication methods and finding novel ways of delivering H&S messages was perceived as important in keeping workers engaged and motivated in H&S (particularly among large ports).

There was a perception by workers and managers that H&S meetings were well-attended, although difficulties were also acknowledged in getting 'everyone together in one place' due to shift patterns and/or operational demands. H&S meetings were perceived to provide a good forum of two-way communication between management and workers (in terms of raising H&S issues, for example), although instances where this did not appear to be the case were also identified. Frequent interactions between managers and workers in smaller ports were also highlighted as a means of picking up issues quickly (i.e. outside H&S meetings). Some participants in small and medium ports noted that workers may not always find out about the issues discussed at H&S meetings, or may do so by 'word of mouth'.

### **Safety voice and feedback**

Both direct (for instance through line and/or senior management), and indirect (through H&S representatives) avenues were used for raising H&S concerns (with the exception of one port, which did not have a representative due to the small number of employees). Systems were in place for reporting incidents and near misses and the formality of these appeared to vary depending on port size (e.g. online reporting systems in large ports vs. direct reporting to senior

management and/or use of paper forms in smaller ports). A combination of approaches was used to provide feedback on incidents and near misses, such as through H&S meetings or directly to individuals and/or teams. One large port relied solely on the individual logging into the online reporting system to find out about how an issue reported was being addressed. Whilst the system was perceived to be transparent (i.e. workers could log in at any time and find out about the progress and/or outcomes of the investigation), it was acknowledged that workers may not always have the time to log onto the system.

For the majority of ports, the process for raising H&S ideas and suggestions appeared to take place informally (e.g. through supervisors or H&S representatives). One port had a formal online suggestion scheme for submitting ideas; however, there was a perception that its effectiveness was limited by the fact that workers did not receive timely feedback on their suggestions.

### **Training and competence**

Participating ports provided a range of training (e.g. manual handling, forklift truck training, lone working), which was perceived by workers to be sufficient and relevant for their job. Relevant training was also provided to H&S representatives to help support them in their role. This typically included H&S training courses through the union, covering areas such as risk assessments and incident investigations. Additionally, pairing inexperienced workers (both permanent and non-permanent staff) with experienced ones was a prevalent means through which some ports enabled inexperienced workers to build up their competence.

### **Barriers to worker engagement**

A barrier to worker engagement that was mentioned by some managers and H&S representatives related to workers' attitudes regarding H&S. There was a perception that workers may sometimes not view H&S as their responsibility and may not engage with H&S on a day-to-day basis (for instance, by challenging working practices and thinking about how H&S could be improved). Further, some managers felt that older workers may be more reluctant to change their working practices. Challenges in balancing safety with productivity and the potential resulting pressure on the workforce for private ports in particular were also mentioned. Additionally, ensuring that workers can attend H&S meetings due to shift patterns was a commonly mentioned challenge. Some issues that appeared to pertain to specific ports were also mentioned, such as supervisory credibility due to lack of industry background, the frequency and quality of H&S communications, and consistency in messages across the management chain regarding incident reporting.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The research findings offer valuable insights as to the ways in which leadership and worker engagement were enacted in practice, and how they could be improved. A number of good leadership practices were identified and, in some cases, a drive to introduce novel ways to engage workers. Providing more opportunities, where possible, for direct two-way communication between workers and senior managers could help further improve engagement as well as more formal approaches to eliciting H&S suggestions from workers. Giving sufficient notice by planning meetings in advance and ensuring that there is an agreed process for feeding back issues to the workforce (particularly among larger ports) could help improve H&S communication further. Continuing involvement of the H&S representative role in investigation teams and providing training to develop 'soft' skills might also be worthwhile. Staff surveys may be an additional tool for managers to gauge worker engagement (particularly for larger ports) and inform relevant interventions. Risk communication, focusing on workers' personal susceptibility to risk and incentives to encourage positive H&S behaviours, could help increase worker engagement, and challenge attitudes and/or incorrect beliefs.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

On the 4th of December 2013 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Board approved the introduction of a shorter, simplified Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) on Safety in Docks, (L148) (HSE, 2014). This followed extensive consultation and collaboration with the industry's key stakeholders. The ACOP is based on general duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and relevant statutory provisions. The ACOP is supported by guidance<sup>1</sup>, which has been developed by Port Skills and Safety with the support of HSE and Unite the Union.

HSE's perspective is that leadership and worker engagement are central to the effective implementation of the ACOP by stakeholders. HSE also believes that the development of the revised ACOP has engaged the industry. This research was conducted to build on this relationship.

Involving the workforce remains a key strategic goal for HSE and activities designed to drive effective workforce engagement are prominent in each of HSE's individual sector strategies. One essential outcome of this research is to identify good practice and areas for development that can be shared across the ports industry benefiting all sizes of ports.

### 1.1.1 The Ports industry

The term 'port' refers to the "location where traffic changes between land and sea modes of transport" (UK Marine SACs project; [www.ukmarinesac.org.uk/activities/ports/ph3.htm](http://www.ukmarinesac.org.uk/activities/ports/ph3.htm)). It is "any dock, wharf, quay, jetty or other place at which ships load or unload goods or embark or disembark passengers" (Work at Height Regulations, 2005).

The UK Major Ports Group (UKMPG; <http://www.ukmajorports.org.uk/pages/industry-profile>) estimates that there are 130,000 people employed in the ports industry across more than 500 ports. There are three types of ports (private/commercial, trust, and municipal) with various operational activities carried out including ferries, containers, oil, leisure, fishing, bulk goods and general cargo (British Ports Association; <http://www.britishports.org.uk/uk-ports-industry/market-overview>).

In the ACOP on Safety in Docks, leadership and management, a competent workforce and an environment where people are trusted and involved are some of the core elements of managing for health and safety (H&S) in the ports industry.

However, HSE acknowledges that one of the biggest challenges to the industry is that "*Port work often involves a number of different employers and/or contractors who can all affect each other's activities. These may include harbour authorities, port operators, stevedoring firms, hauliers, ships' masters and crew*" (HSE, 2011, p.2). Therefore, organisations "need to have strong and effective health and safety systems in place. These should ensure co-operation, co-ordination and communication between all employers and their workers". (HSE, 2011, p. 2).

According to the ACOP, there are also a number of other challenges for managing H&S in the ports industry. These include:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/l148.pdf>.

- The changing nature of docks as workplaces (due to tidal movements, weather and timing issues).
- The use of temporary workers who may be less familiar with the dock environment than permanent employees.
- The need to board ships and use ships' equipment. Workers should not be allowed to work in an area of a ship that is unsafe until it has been made safe or a safe method of work is in place.
- The presence of members of the public who visit dock premises. These may be either passengers or users of public rights of way who may be unfamiliar with the premises and/or hazards.
- The need to converse with ships' crew and other parties, e.g. hauliers, whose first language may not be English.

### 1.1.2 Defining leadership and worker engagement

There are many definitions of the term worker engagement and these also vary when applied to H&S, or more generally, to the whole functioning of an organisation.

In their review for the UK Government, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) suggest that employee engagement can be viewed as a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, and are able, at the same time, to enhance their own sense of well-being. Engagement can be defined as an attitude, behaviour or an outcome but the authors highlight differences between the three. An employee might feel pride and loyalty (attitude); be a great advocate of their company to clients, or go the extra mile to finish a piece of work (behaviour). Outcomes may include lower accident rates, higher productivity, fewer conflicts, increased innovation, reduced turnover and sickness absence (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009). But all three – attitudes, behaviours and outcomes – are part of the engagement story. There is a virtuous circle when the pre-conditions of engagement are met; when these three aspects of engagement trigger and reinforce one another.

When worker engagement has been used in the area of H&S, as in the Step Change in Safety (2012) programme, the notions of active and collective participation, as well as opportunity to challenge H&S management, are emphasized:

*(It is about) “the active participation of everyone in the workplace in managing and improving safety performance. (It is) “when engaged workers feel as able as managers to improve safety where they work. Workforce engagement therefore means that all workers participate in and challenge how safety is managed where they work.” (p.1)*

Within H&S, worker engagement and worker involvement are often used interchangeably. The differences between them appear to be regarded as one of emphasis. Worker involvement is more aligned to the mechanisms or processes by which the workforce is consulted. Worker engagement concerns the extent to which workers contribute to decision making. In which case worker involvement provides the routes by which worker engagement, in its strictest sense, is achieved.

One of the essential principles of effective leadership, according to HSE (2013), is to nurture worker involvement by:

- engaging the workforce in the promotion and achievement of safe and healthy conditions;
- having effective 'upward' communication;

- providing high-quality training.

HSE also states that there should be strong and active leadership from the top and this includes visible, active commitment from the board. There should be effective ‘downward’ communication systems and management structures, and integration of good health and safety management with business decisions, as well as on-going assessment and review looking to identify and manage health and safety risks.

### **1.1.3 Previous research**

Little research can be found on leadership and worker engagement in the ports industry. One notable exception is a recent study by Cardiff University, which explored the management of health and safety in a sample of globalised container terminals in Europe (4 ports) and Asia (2 ports).

Specifically, Walters and Wadsworth (2012) found differences in arrangements for the directly employed workforce and contractors, and differences between terminals in advanced countries and those in advancing ones. These differences were in terms of the “depth and formality” (p.13) of interactions, which in turn impacted not only on the function, but also the sustainability of these interactions. One example provided in the research was that of safety committees. For instance, although there were opportunities for worker representation across the sites included in the study, in some terminals (in advancing economies) representation was not consistent, due to for example shift patterns or access to training. This did not allow for sustained involvement in activities. In comparison, at other terminals, there were long standing experienced members of safety committees, which allowed them to fully engage with issues, and they were given appropriate training for this role. Differences between terminals were also recognised for worker representation in areas such as investigations, inspections, risk assessments, and consultation on health and safety (Walters and Wadsworth, 2012).

Interestingly, the research also found that employees in advanced countries were not entirely happy with arrangements. They reported concerns being raised about issues such as:

- Provision made for consultation on occupational health issues (more of an emphasis on safety),
- Access to information on accidents, incidents and near misses,
- Consultation on OHS in relation to new management practices concerning changed work organisation,
- Involvement in specific safety practices such as risk assessments and toolbox talks.

## **1.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this research was to gather intelligence that will inform tangible industry-led actions to improve leadership and workforce engagement in the GB-based ports industry.

The specific objectives of the research were:

- To identify current practice in leadership and workforce engagement by gathering the perceptions of stakeholders (employers, managers, workers and their representatives) in a sample of GB ports.
- To identify the extent to which the ports exemplify good practice in terms of H&S leadership and workforce engagement.
- To explore the barriers to effective leadership and workforce engagement specific to the ports industry.

- To derive recommendations that will inform an industry-led action plan based on the evidence gathered.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative approach, combining focus groups and semi-structured interviews, was used to address the research objectives outlined previously. Semi-structured interviews were well suited for this research as they combine structure with flexibility, thus allowing the researcher to be responsive to what the interviewee is expressing and to probe him/her further. Focus groups are particularly useful for topics where deliberation, discussion and the stimulation of other people's ideas are likely to bring depth to the topic. Both methods allow for rich information to be gathered from the perspective of the interviewee, and were therefore particularly suited to exploring participants' views on worker engagement and leadership practices.

### 2.2 SAMPLE AND RECRUITMENT

A purposive sampling approach was adopted for the recruitment of ports. A purposive sample is a sample selected in a non-random and deliberative manner, choosing participants for their knowledge and experience in the topic, as well as the particularity of their work context (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Different port types (e.g. trust, municipal, and private) and sizes (e.g. small, medium, and large) were included in the sample. In addition to the size and type of port, a criterion for inclusion in the study was that participating ports were not undergoing any incident investigations by the HSE at the time of the study.

Ports were invited to take part via a 'Ports Summit' event that took place on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014 in order to launch the revised ACOP on Safety in Docks. A total of 11 ports (7 private and 4 trust) expressed an interest in taking part, of which 4 were selected for inclusion consistent with the aforementioned criteria (3 trust and 1 private port). An additional 2 municipal ports were recruited using a database with contact details supplied by HSE colleagues, as well as through internet searches conducted by the research team. A total of 52 participants took part in the study. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the number and type of ports that took part, and on the number of interviews and focus groups conducted across different job roles.

**Table 1** Summary of interviews and focus groups conducted

<i>Port type</i>	<i>Port size</i>	<i>Management sample</i>	<i>Worker sample</i>	<i>H&amp;S representative sample</i>
Trust x 3	2 medium, 1 large	6 x interviews	4 x focus groups (26 participants in total)	3 x 1 interview
Municipal x 2	2 small	3 x interviews	4 x interviews	1x1 interview
Private x 1	1 large	2 x interviews	1 x focus group (6 participants)	1 x 1 interview
<b>Sub-sample totals</b>		11	36	5
<b>Total number of participants</b>			<b>52</b>	

## **2.3 DATA COLLECTION**

Face-to-face visits were arranged with five of the six ports that participated in the study for the purpose of conducting the interviews and focus groups. Telephone interviews with management and workers (five interviews in total) were conducted with one port due to time constraints.

Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study and were assured that all the information that they provided would be confidential and anonymous. Prior to each interview and focus group, written consent was obtained from all participants.

Each interview and focus group lasted for approximately one hour, and was digitally recorded for the purposes of subsequent analysis.

Three HSE researchers conducted the interviews and focus groups between July and October 2014. All members of the research team were briefed on the interview and focus group schedules to ensure that the questions were interpreted in the same way, and any potential ambiguities were addressed.

## **2.4 DEVELOPMENT OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

Three tailored question sets were developed for each participant group (workers, managers, and H&S representatives), although a number of questions were common across them (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the workers' question set)<sup>2</sup>. The question sets were developed in consultation with HSE colleagues and HSE's Economic and Social Analysis Unit (ESAU). A number of topics were included, which were informed by previous research on the factors that are important for worker engagement (e.g. MacLeod and Clarke, 2009; Step Change in Safety, 2012). These included:

- H&S communication,
- How workers raise H&S concerns and make suggestions,
- The mechanisms through which feedback is given to the workforce,
- Leadership behaviours and practices that are used to demonstrate commitment to safety and encourage worker engagement.

Questions were also included to explore stakeholders' views on any barriers encountered in terms of engaging the workforce in H&S.

## **2.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data collected from the interviews and focus groups were analysed thematically using the 'Framework', a systematic approach to data management and analysis (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) that was developed by the National Centre for Social Research.

'Framework' involves a number of stages, including identifying the key topics and issues through familiarisation with the interview transcripts and then developing an initial thematic framework, which is used to summarise and analyse systematically participants' accounts. The questions, which were included in the interview schedules initially informed the development of the thematic framework, which was further refined to incorporate emerging themes from the interviews. The summarised data were then worked through drawing out the key elements and dimensions (themes) reflecting the range of experiences and views, as well as any similarities and differences in participants' accounts.

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<sup>2</sup> The manager and H&S representative question sets are available upon request.

### 3. FINDINGS

This section discusses the types of practices and mechanisms through which participating ports tried to engage the workforce in H&S. Where relevant, differences in practices across participating ports are discussed. Interview extracts are used as a means of illustrating and supporting the findings presented.

#### 3.1 LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Leadership is considered to be an important driver of good H&S performance. According to HSE (2013), demonstrating strong and effective leadership from the top and nurturing worker involvement are essential principles of effective leadership. Consistent with this, research has shown that demonstrable senior management commitment to H&S is a necessary component for effective worker participation in H&S (Walter and Nichols, 2007). The interviews and focus groups explored how managers tried to demonstrate their commitment to H&S and engage the workforce from the perspectives of both managers themselves as well as workers. A number of common leadership practices were identified, and are discussed below.

##### 3.1.1 Visibility

A consensus among all managers interviewed was the importance of being visible to the workforce, for instance, through safety walkabouts. Visibility was considered important for several reasons. First, it provided an opportunity for managers to directly engage with the workforce, and find out about safety issues personally. This was perceived to be particularly crucial for large ports where it was discussed that safety walkabouts were a good way of engaging with the workforce and finding out about the work that they do. For instance, in one large port, there was a perception that managers were out on site more frequently, which provided an opportunity for workers to show them the nature of the job and communicate the types of practices that did not work well:

*“These walkarounds are very good, even our managing director [name omitted], he’s come out with me and another fitter just to see what we actually do. And we take him to all the places, normally they’re not very nice but just to show him what is out there, you know, and how changeable the job is.”* (Interview 6, H&S representative, large port)

*“I think it’s because the managers are getting out from behind their desks more that the guys can actually show them, actually say to them, look, we can’t do it this way.”* (Interview 20, line manager, large port)

In addition, being out on site was perceived as providing an opportunity for managers to ‘supervise’ workers, ensure that safe working practices were followed (e.g. personal protective equipment were used) as well as challenge unsafe behaviours. For instance, a senior manager in a medium-sized port mentioned that he tries to do site visits twice a day, during which he checks whether workers have carried out their equipment checks and are wearing their personal protective equipment. Similarly, one senior manager of a large port mentioned that he tries to go out on site once a day and will pick up on any ‘unsafe’ practices, such as workers using their mobile phones. It was described that he would challenge individuals and explain why their behaviours were unsafe whilst a record of the conversation would be made and kept in the individual’s file. This was considered an important means of demonstrating that H&S is important; a practice which he encouraged his direct reports to also follow.

The prevalent view among workers was that managers were visible on site however this did not appear to be the case for all the ports. Specifically, one worker in a small port mentioned that he

did not see management on site very often, whilst workers in one large port mentioned that managers were not visible on site unless there had been an incident.

In addition to safety walkabouts, getting involved in H&S activities, such as inspections and audits was another means through which senior managers tried to be visible to the workforce. Senior managers in two large ports also mentioned that they would often sit in as ‘observers’ in shift safety committee meetings. This was perceived as a means of demonstrating their commitment to H&S but also provided an opportunity to ‘pick up points’ from the discussion.

### **3.1.2 Being approachable and listening to workers**

For several participants, being approachable and listening to workers’ concerns was an important leadership behaviour, which was perceived as demonstrating management’s commitment to safety. Those participants that perceived management as being approachable and attentive to workers’ concerns talked about specific management behaviours that demonstrated this, such as having an open door policy, listening to what workers have to say despite potential differences in opinion, taking on board workers’ ideas, being able to talk openly about concerns, showing an interest in one’s work and asking of any potential safety concerns they may have. For instance, the worker of a small port described how he felt that he was able to approach senior management and tell them anything without ‘fear’ of being reprimanded:

*“I have worked with one or two people in this job that’s been a bit sort of oh I’d better not say anything because I get might shouted at [...] they [senior management] will take notice of what I say. I just approach them as though, although we aren’t the same level, at the same level. I feel as though I’m at the same level within the organisation [...].”* (Interview 9, worker, small port)

Another example was provided by the H&S representative of a large port where he described how his Section Head takes an interest in his work and of the issues discussed at the H&S committee meetings:

*“If he [Section Head] sees me he will ask me how things are going, is there anything that’s concerning you at the moment or needs bringing up. And very keen to ask what’s going on in the shop floor, in the meetings like the sub-committee meetings.”* (Interview 6, H&S representative, large port)

Senior managers also recognised the importance of being approachable and listening to workers’ concerns and described that they always promoted an ‘open door policy’. In addition, having ‘informal conversations’ with workers when out on site was perceived as an effective means of getting workers to ‘open up’ and talk about any safety concerns that they might have. For instance, the senior manager of a medium-sized port described how he often talked to workers when they were working on the quay for example as workers found it easier to ‘open up’ in their ‘own environment’ than in the office:

*“I’ll quite happily go and sit with them or I’ll go down and sit on the side of a ship with them and chat about anything. And you do find when you’re talking to people that’s when things come out. And they’ll bring something up then, oh, can you sort this.”* (Interview 15, senior manager, medium port)

However, examples where management was not perceived as being responsive to workers’ concerns were also identified. For instance, the workers in one large port mentioned that although H&S representatives brought up H&S issues at meetings, there was a perception that managers sometimes ‘brushed them under the carpet’.



### **3.1.3 Encouraging reporting and acting on H&S concerns**

Encouraging and motivating workers to report incidents and near misses was mentioned by a number of managers as a means through which they tried to demonstrate their commitment and engage workers in H&S. A number of behaviours and practices were identified through which senior management tried to encourage reporting. Demonstrating the value of incident reporting was one approach adopted. For instance, in one large port it was described that line managers would explain to workers how incident reporting allows the organisation to learn whether similar incidents tend to reoccur and identify ways of how they can best be prevented. The approach adopted by the senior manager of a small port involved having one-to-one conversations with workers to demonstrate the 'full cycle' of reporting, i.e. what happens when an incident is reported and how the issues that contributed to the incident were addressed. According to the senior manager in question, this helped demonstrate to workers the value of reporting and had been positively received by workers.

In addition, being seen to take workers' H&S concerns and issues reported seriously, trying to understand them and address them, was also considered crucial in motivating workers to report. There was a belief that workers are more likely to report when they see that actions are taken in response to the issues reported. Consistent with this, several managers explained that they tried to address H&S issues reported (either informally - for instance, directly to supervisors and/or senior management, or through the reporting system in case of large ports) promptly. In addition, providing feedback to workers was also considered crucial. However, this did not appear to happen in all cases. Some participants in the large ports in particular mentioned that they did not always receive feedback on the H&S issues raised. For instance, the H&S representative in one port discussed that issues brought up in H&S committee meetings would be 'actioned' to a manager, but he did not always receive feedback as to whether/how the issues had been addressed. Similarly, participants in another large port mentioned that supervisors do not always get back to workers about issues raised, and there was a sense that the same issues tend to reoccur in the organisation.

Finally, whilst the importance of trying to understand why incidents occur, rather than blame individuals was perceived to be crucial in promoting open reporting, some instances were identified where participants felt that there was not always a focus on understanding the underlying causes of incidents. For instance, the H&S representative in a large port mentioned that management sometimes has a 'knee jerk' reaction to incidents, which was perceived as discouraging reporting. There was a sense that managers look into 'obvious' solutions, such as re-training staff, rather than trying to get to the 'root' of why incidents happen.

### **3.1.4 Encouraging workers to stop work on safety grounds**

Encouraging workers to stop work on safety grounds and being seen to support such decisions was another leadership practice that was perceived as demonstrating managers' commitment to H&S. Several examples were identified where workers felt supported by supervisors and/or senior managers in stopping work on safety grounds. For instance, workers in a medium-sized port described how senior management and supervisors always reiterated that, if workers had any concerns, they should stop work until the issue was resolved. An example was given where a slider used for unloading cargo was unstable and the job was stopped until the issue was resolved. Overall, the prevalent view among workers in the sample was that they could and had stopped work on safety grounds:

*"We all can [stop the work on safety grounds]. Everybody is told that they can do that and they should do that [...] If it's deemed to be unsafe then it's stopped until... and somebody says that*

*they want to stop it, then it's stopped until the matter's resolved to everybody's satisfaction basically.*" (Interview 10, worker, small port)

*"I've done it [stopped a job] many a times."* (Focus group 5, workers, large port)

One senior manager discussed the importance of empowering and 'trusting the judgment' of workers and/or the supervisors, and supporting them in their decisions to stop work. Further, praising workers for their judgement to stop work was an approach that was used by a supervisor in a large port:

*"...where people have said, 'Can you go and have a look at this? We have seen that and you obviously go out and try and give them a bit of feedback and say, 'Yes, I have had a look at it and, yes, I had to stop the work and you guys were right. Well done.'"* (Focus group 7, workers large port)

However, examples were also identified where workers did not feel supported by senior management and/or supervisors in stopping work. For example, in one large port, there was a perception by some workers that there was pressure from supervisors to carry on with the job (as they had specific targets to meet in terms of number of boxes that had to be lifted per hour), despite H&S concerns. It was suggested that this pressure emanated from senior management due to a need to compete with other ports. It is important to note though that other workers in the port in question felt that they could and had stopped work on safety grounds. Some workers in a Trust port also voiced similar pressures to get on with the job due to a need to turnaround boats quickly.

### **3.1.5 Leading by example**

There was a view among both senior managers and line managers of the importance of leading by example and demonstrating in their own behaviour that H&S is important. It was suggested that if workers see management cutting corners, for instance, by not wearing personal protective equipment, then this would encourage unsafe practice among workers. Consistent with this, specific examples were provided that demonstrate how managers tried to lead by example. This included wearing the correct personal protective equipment when out on site, reporting unsafe practices and setting consistent safety standards for both permanent and non-permanent workers:

*"[...] from day one I've always worn the correct safety gear, always pulled them up and I've just, as I keep saying to them, it's about being firm but fair, and I would treat everybody the same whether they're a contractor or one of my guys [...] I think a lot of it they look up to the managing team to see what are they doing and if they think we're cutting corners they would do it the same no doubt."* (Interview 17, senior manager, medium port)

*"You've got to be seen to be doing. It's no good saying one thing and doing something different. You've got to work in the manner that you expect everybody else to work so if it's got to be done safely, you've got to work in that manner [...] You have to be a role model, you have to lead from the front, you've got to set the example."* (Interview 18, line manager, medium port)

*"I do try and make sure that I file reports because people see who's reported them, what's been reported, I just think demonstrating the credibility and the commitment at that level and filing reports, if I see something go wrong, being seen to do so."* (Interview 19, senior manager, large port)

### 3.1.6 Incorporating safety practices from other industries

Some examples were identified where senior managers were trying to actively incorporate practices from other industries as a means of ‘raising the profile’ of safety in their respective organisations and improve worker engagement. For instance, the senior manager of a medium-sized port with a background in the food industry had recently introduced ‘listening groups’ as a means of improving communication between senior management and workers. He explained that this idea was influenced from his background as the food industry placed more emphasis on safety communication:

*“...that’s relatively new [the listening groups], I suppose I come from an industry where we probably have more regular meetings but I would say communication, safety, security was a lot tighter within the food industry.”* (Interview 17, senior manager, medium port)

Further, the senior manager of a large port discussed the idea of introducing ‘red cards’ as a means of encouraging workers to stop work on safety grounds, a practice that he had ‘picked up’ from the water and utility industry.

*“I guess something I saw from [name of organisation omitted] was everyone there has a red card ...So it’s almost like a football red card, that people can say, ‘What you’re doing is unsafe.’ Yeah, hopefully next year, I want to get those out to everyone...”* (Interview 19, senior manager, large port)

The senior manager in question had a background in the rail industry and discussed that with initiatives such as the one mentioned above, he wanted to raise the profile of safety in the port and ensure that it was the number one priority (much like in the rail industry):

*“Safety was genuinely number one there [in rail industry], it really, really was [...] you got the message on worker safety. Never quite got the same impression here and I’ve really tried to change that [...]”* (Interview 19, senior manager, large port)

## 3.2 WORKER INVOLVEMENT IN H&S ACTIVITIES

The interviews and focus groups explored the extent to which workers were involved in H&S activities and the process through which this involvement took place. A number of examples of worker and H&S representatives’ involvement in H&S were identified across participating ports. These included risk assessments, workplace and/or equipment inspection, selection of equipment and incident investigations, and are discussed below.

### 3.2.1 Risk assessments

Involving employees and H&S representatives in assessing the risks of a workplace or work activity is valuable as they have an expert insight on the risks involved. Further, workers are more likely to understand and comply with procedures in place to control risks if they have been involved in developing them (HSE; <http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/riskassessments.htm>).

There was evidence across participating ports of arrangements in place to engage workers and/or H&S representatives in assessing the risks of a workplace or work activity. In all cases, risk assessments were written by senior members of staff, such as H&S managers or senior engineers. However, workers were consulted in assessing the risks of novel tasks (e.g. on the risks involved, the type of equipment needed for the job) or if there was a need to re-write risk assessments (e.g. if new types of equipment had to be operated). It was explained that the majority of work conducted tended to be familiar/routine, but workers would be involved in

assessing the risks and determining control measures for new jobs (e.g. loading/unloading cargo). For instance, the line manager of a small port explained that the process involved writing a method statement, followed by the risk assessment and then discussing the job with all the workers involved. Following this, the method statement and/or risk assessment would be changed, if there was a better/safer way of completing the work and/or if new/additional risks were identified. There was an appreciation that getting workers directly involved in reviewing working procedures was crucial in developing safe systems of work that were effective:

*“There’s no point in management sitting and writing the risk assessments [...] I need my staff involved because they’re the ones that are doing the job. They know the pitfalls and the things to look out for so, from my point of view, it’s essential to have the man that’s actually doing the job involved as part of the team so we would always aim to do that to make sure that as many people are involved as possible.”* (Interview 22, line manager, small port)

Further, the senior manager of a large port explained that meetings were held for reviewing risk assessments, which were attended by safety managers as well as H&S representatives. The group would review a selection of risk assessments and update them accordingly. Additionally, two ports in the sample also sought workers’ feedback on an annual basis to ensure that risk assessments and working procedures were an accurate reflection of the job:

*“So one of the things which we do certainly within the shipboard side of things, is every year we actually get the skippers, we get the crews, to review the working procedures.”* (Focus group 7, workers, large port)

One of the two aforementioned ports had recently set up a working group, which included management as well as H&S representatives from different work areas across the port, with the aim of revamping risk assessments. It was explained that there was a recognition that there were too many risk assessments, some of which were not perceived to be practical, and thus the working group was tasked with reducing the number of procedures and ‘converting them into a tool that is useful’ for workers.

It should be mentioned, however, that some workers in two ports felt that their respective organisations could do more to involve them in assessing risks and determining control measures. Specifically, in one port, there was a perception that workers should have more input in these activities, when drawing up lifting plans for new cargo, to enable the workforce to have a better appreciation of the risks. However, a dissenting view was also expressed, according to which, only appointed persons could be involved in drawing up the lifting plans, as they require specialist knowledge. Despite these conflicting views, however, there was a perception that workers could raise issues with management and the lifting plans would be amended accordingly.

Finally, in one port it was suggested that the H&S representatives were no longer involved in reviewing risk assessments. It was explained that they would typically discuss the risks and control measures with workers and they would feedback to management any issues identified. The reason provided by management for not consulting H&S representatives was that they were taking too long to sign off the risk assessments. There was a sense that this had created feelings of distrust between management and the union/workers:

*“[...] what happened is they believed I wasn’t getting the risk assessments back quick enough. So, rather than tackle that issue they said well we’ll just not bother with the union because to me it is a backward step [...] I think it creates distrust between the two parties because we’re not working together. Management are saying they know best without consulting the union.”*  
(Interview 13, H&S representative, large port)

### 3.2.2 Selection of equipment

Several examples were identified where workers felt that they were effectively consulted to ensure that new equipment purchased was fit for purpose. For instance, one worker from a small port noted that he was consulted by a senior manager on the particular type and make of equipment that he needed for his job. The worker in question perceived this level of consultation positively, as it ensured that the equipment purchased was fit for the job. Another worker from the same port mentioned that he had been given a 'purchase card', which enabled him to buy any PPE (such as boots) that he and his colleagues needed.

In one large port, consultation often took place in the form of working parties specifically set up for trialling new equipment. For instance, the senior manager of the port in question gave an example where a working party was set up to trial the introduction of new yard cranes. Members of the working party could involve H&S representatives and/or 'normal members of the workforce' who may have an interest in trialling specific types of equipment:

*"It could be the union health and safety ... it doesn't have to be the union health and safety rep, it could just be a normal member of the workforce. Sometimes we have guys that have certain interests, it might be somebody that's brought the idea to us or ... you know and sometimes we would even put a notice out saying that we've got this work stream coming up would anybody like to be part of the working group."* (Interview 25, senior manager, large port)

However, examples where workers did not feel sufficiently consulted were also identified. This was the case in one of the medium-sized ports in the sample, where an example was provided where workers were not consulted on the purchase of a new batch of forklift trucks. Workers felt that the forklifts were not fit for purpose and as a result it took longer to complete the job. It was described that, typically, a foreman and one or two drivers would be involved in the selection of plant/equipment, but on this occasion, there was a perception that workers were not consulted. A similar example was identified in a large port, where it was reported that H&S representatives had not been consulted on a new batch of cranes that had recently been purchased. It was further explained that workers had raised a number of issues when they started using the cranes that could have been avoided if there had been timely consultation.

*"About a year ago we had another batch of like equipment, forklifts and stuff, a lot of us felt that...that we should have been more involved in the protocols because it's not the right kit for our job [...] But of course if we was more involved in that we could have directed them."* (Focus group 2, workers, medium port)

*"[...] the crane was signed off, the risk assessment was signed off by the health and safety department without any consultation with the workforce and we were then told to get on and drive the crane. When the workforce started driving the crane they said well, we've got issues with certain things like the emergency exits, the crane actually twists round and when it twists round there's no exit [...] rather than have it sorted out at the beginning where they could have had input and all the rest of it..."* (Interview 13, H&S representative, large port)

### 3.2.3 Workplace and equipment inspections

Involvement in equipment and workplace inspections was another means through which some ports in the sample tried to encourage worker engagement and promote the importance of H&S.

Workers were responsible for ensuring that they have the right equipment for the job and that it is in good working order. For instance, it was explained that workers had to conduct daily visual checks of equipment and 'sign off' that the equipment was safe to use. This was perceived as

‘part of the message’, that H&S is important and helped to promote a sense of personal accountability for safety.

*“...it’s your responsibility if you’re discharging a ship or loading a ship to make sure shackles, swings, wires or whatever you’re using are all correct equipment for the job. And when you’re doing it during the day that there’s no faults with them, so you have got some... everybody’s got some responsibility.”* (Interview 4, H&S representative, medium port)

Additionally, workers and/or H&S representatives were also involved in workplace H&S inspections. For instance, in one large port, H&S representatives were responsible for conducting quarterly inspections in their own work areas (along with management), whilst in a medium-sized port, these were carried out monthly. Worker involvement in workplace inspections was also evident in one small port in the sample. In the port in question, one worker was responsible for carrying out weekly inspections of the ladders and slipways in the port, a task that had previously been senior management’s responsibility. The inspections were carried out using a checklist, which was reviewed and signed off by senior management on a weekly basis. This was perceived as a more efficient way of conducting the inspections and ensuring that any issues encountered are resolved quickly:

*“I suppose in a way because I’m round and about every day I do see... I take notice and I see everything every day whereas when they used to do it, it used to take them maybe a full morning to walk round and check everything. So I see it one day, I repair it, so when I come to do my sheet in the week, nine times out of ten, everything’s up to scratch really.”* (Interview 8, worker, small port)

### **3.2.4 Incident investigations**

The interviews and focus groups also explored the extent to which workers and H&S representatives were involved in incident investigations. Involving H&S representatives can give employees more confidence to co-operate and enable them to feel more comfortable in ‘speaking up’ to a co-worker who can relate to them (HSE; [www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/accidents.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/accidents.htm)).

It was explained that workers and H&S representatives would be involved in incident investigations if they had been personally involved and/or had witnessed an incident (e.g. giving statements). H&S representatives were sometimes part of the investigation team, along with management and/or the safety department (for larger ports), but there were variations across the ports. For instance, the H&S representative in one port mentioned that he was not involved in investigations but also noted that there had not been any incidents in the port, and believed that he would be involved if there was an incident. In another instance, the H&S representative of a large port explained that H&S representatives would not be typically involved in incident investigations (although they could be if they wanted to, for instance, in more serious incident investigations). This was perceived to work well as there was trust that the investigation process was thorough.

There was acknowledgement that it was important for H&S representatives to be part of the incident investigation teams, and participants in two ports discussed future plans for doing so. Specifically, the H&S representative in one of the aforementioned ports discussed that the Terminal Manager had requested that he becomes part of the investigation team. The worker in question welcomed this suggestion and felt that this would also enable him to feed back to the workforce the outcomes of the investigation:

*“...part of what he [Terminal Manager] wants me to now get involved in is, if there’s any accidents or incidents or anything like that, he wants me to start being part of the investigation team [...] I think it’ll be good to be involved in that side of things, so from the actual incident to the conclusion, how we can stop that happening again. If you’ve got a safety rep involved they can then go back to the workforce and say look at this, the reasons it’s happening, these are the actions that were taken to stop this happening again.”* (Interview 4, H&S representative, medium port)

Further, the senior manager of a large port explained that, although the safety team had the required skills to conduct incident investigations, he was planning to ‘upskill’ the workforce in the next year to enable them to become part of the investigation teams:

*“The safety team are the only people I can really trust to investigate properly and really go, ‘Why, why, why, why, why?’ A real core, I’d like to do some more training with the more general workforce, to get... to upskill them. Hopefully, we’ll do that next year.”* (Interview 19, senior manager, large port)

### **3.3 MOTIVATION FOR ENGAGEMENT IN H&S**

#### **3.3.1 Workers**

The interviews and focus groups explored the drivers for worker involvement in H&S. A key driver identified, related to the need to look after both oneself as well as one’s colleagues and ensure that everybody went home safely. This often stemmed from an appreciation that working in a port environment can be dangerous.

*“All I want my workmates to do, my friends to do, is come into work and go home to our families when I’ve finished work. That’s first and foremost in my mind. I’ve been involved in a major accident within this port, I tell you what it’s not very nice [...] the port job is the most dangerous job going, apart from fishing that is.”* (Focus group 5, workers, medium port)

None of the participating ports – bar one – provided workers with tangible rewards or incentives for H&S (e.g. vouchers or other forms of financial incentives). The prevalent reason provided was lack of resources/ money although beliefs that workers were ‘intrinsically motivated’ to make the port a ‘safer place’ (and thus incentives were not required) and concerns that rewarding H&S performance could potentially encourage workers to under-report, were also mentioned. One large port in the sample awarded (every year) a trophy to the area that showed the biggest reduction in the number of accidents.

Finally, verbal praise by management for a job well done was mentioned by some workers as a source of encouragement for being involved in H&S. For instance, in one port, senior management praised workers for a job well done during the monthly team meetings:

*“They [Harbour and Deputy Harbour Master] do praise you at these monthly meetings. They’ll say, ‘Oh, you’ve done a good job there.’”* (Interview 6, worker, small port)

#### **3.3.2 H&S representatives**

The H&S representative role was typically allocated through either volunteering for the role or through peer nomination.<sup>3</sup> The importance of ensuring that workers ‘are safe’ was a commonly cited driver for taking up the H&S representative role. In some cases, having been personally

<sup>3</sup> The smallest port in the sample did not have a H&S representative role given that the number of workers on the port was very small.

involved and/or witnessing colleagues being involved in incidents, appeared to heighten the desire to be involved in H&S and taking up the H&S representative role. The desire to ‘make a difference’ and making sure that workers ‘are treated fairly’ were also frequently mentioned incentives for taking on the role.

Further, some H&S representatives also acknowledged the encouragement and support they received from senior management and/or line management in their role. Specific management behaviours identified included: providing praise for a job well done as a H&S representative; supporting decisions to ‘overrule’ a supervisor and stopping a job on safety grounds; providing time to attend relevant training and H&S committee meetings; involving them in relevant working groups and research (i.e. the present study); and encouraging them to expand their role (e.g. being involved in incident investigations).

*“He’s [Head of Section] very proactive in making sure there’s reps in these [sub-committee] meetings. That’s a very big concern for the port, trying to get reps from the shop floor because they do want to hear what we have to say.”* (Interview 6, H&S representative, large port)

*“I’ve been putting I would like to get more involved with health and safety issues [incident investigations] and in the past they haven’t taken much notice of it, but since [terminal manager] started...I’ve got complete faith in [Terminal Manager], I know [Terminal Manager] will make it, yeah, he’ll get us involved eventually, so, it’s good.”* (Interview 4, H&S representative, medium port)

In one port, however, some workers suggested that the organisation could do more to involve and support them in their H&S activities (e.g. giving them time to speak to workers about H&S issues, getting more involved in reviewing risk assessments).

### **3.4 H&S COMMUNICATION**

A number of communication approaches were identified across participating ports, which aimed to both provide workers with relevant H&S information, as well as allowing workers to communicate their views to management. All participating ports employed a combination of verbal and written communication approaches although the breadth of communication strategies used varied with larger ports typically employing a broader range given the size of the workforce.

#### **3.4.1 Verbal communication methods**

Verbal, face-to-face communication methods are highlighted as an essential component of promoting worker engagement in the workplace. Whilst these approaches may be more labour intensive (compared to non-verbal approaches), there are benefits for engagement in terms of motivation, and improved sharing of ideas (Lunt et al., 2008). Specific verbal communication approaches that were used across the ports in the sample included:

- **H&S meetings**, which tended to take place either bi-monthly or quarterly. These meetings would typically be attended by H&S representatives, workers representing different sections/departments, and management. Additional H&S meetings that were shift and/or section-specific were also observed in larger ports. H&S representatives were perceived as having a key role in representing the workforce and ‘airing’ workers’ specific H&S issues or concerns as part of these meetings. A key function of these meetings was to also inform workers of relevant H&S information, such as recent incidents and near misses. More frequent monthly H&S meetings took place in one small port. These were chaired by senior management (i.e. Harbour and/or Deputy Harbour Master) and were used to feedback to



workers relevant H&S information, but were also used as opportunities for workers to raise directly with management any H&S suggestions or concerns.

- **Operational meetings** used to discuss on-going and new work coming in. Although these meetings were predominantly focused on production, it was highlighted that it was also a forum for workers to raise any specific H&S issues (e.g. with equipment/plant and personal protective equipment).
- **Toolbox talks** also formed an essential part of H&S communication. These were typically delivered by the supervisor or foreman and were used to discuss with workers the plan of work, the type of equipment required for the job and the specific hazards to look out for. It was highlighted that the types of jobs that workers would be involved in tended to be familiar (same type of cargo loaded/unloaded for example), therefore, toolbox talks delivered for non-routine / unfamiliar tasks were particularly important, as they were seen as opportunities for workers to raise any concerns and/or clarify any issues.
- **Training seminars and/or toolbox talks on specific topics** (such as working at heights, working near water, manual handling) were also used by some of the larger ports. These acted as ‘refreshers’ and as a means of engaging workers with relevant H&S issues. They would typically be run internally, either by a member of the workforce, who was a qualified trainer, or by management (e.g. safety managers).

Specific face-to-face communication approaches that were identified in particular ports also included:

- **Listening groups:** The terminal manager in one port had introduced bi-monthly ‘listening groups’, which were attended by workers (e.g. warehousing staff, stevedores), supervisors as well as the Union H&S representative, who also took meeting minutes. It was described that these groups served a dual purpose: first, to re-iterate key points that were raised during the H&S and operational meetings, to ensure that all workers were aware (as there was an appreciation that workers did not always attend the meetings due to operational demands and/or shift patterns); and secondly, it was an opportunity for workers to feedback to management any H&S issues or concerns that they might have. The terminal manager in question highlighted that the listening groups had helped to promote more frequent, direct interactions between workers and management, and there had been positive feedback from workers perceived these as beneficial/useful.
- **‘Wash down’ meetings:** These were run by the supervisor after the completion of a job, and were used as opportunities to discuss with workers how it went and what could be done better.
- **H&S feedback as part of annual performance appraisals:** In one small port, the Harbour Master had incorporated feedback on H&S as part of workers’ annual performance appraisal. It was explained that if a particular member of staff had experienced a number of incidents, these would be discussed with the individual in order to identify what went wrong and what could be done to prevent them from recurring.

### 3.4.2 Written communication approaches

In addition to the above face-to-face communication methods, all the ports that participated in this study employed at least one of the written communication methods below as a means of engaging workers in H&S:

- **Notice boards:** All participating ports made use of notice boards as a means of communicating important H&S information to workers. Examples of information that was typically displayed on noticeboards included: the minutes from H&S meetings, safety posters, and specific safety notices including incidents that may have happened in other ports. The importance of ‘refreshing’ H&S messages and keeping notice boards up to date was acknowledged.
- **Intranet:** One large port stored the minutes from H&S committee meetings on the intranet (rather than a notice board) and workers were sent a link to these minutes by email. Computers were provided in the ‘mess rooms’ so that workers could access the intranet during their lunch break.
- **Newsletters:** These were used by two of the larger ports that participated in the study; these were circulated quarterly in one port and every 6 months in the second port. Newsletters included information on incident trends across the port, as well as relevant work-related H&S issues. Another port was considering re-introducing a quarterly newsletter that would be sent to workers along with their pay slips.
- **Monthly accident and near miss reports** were used by one large port. The reports were prepared by shift managers and distributed to their respective individual shifts. The monthly reports contained information on accident trends and actions taken, as well as provided information on on-going projects on site.
- **‘Safety dashboard’:** This was a document circulated to all business managers and heads of departments, on a quarterly basis, in one large port. It was a recently introduced initiative, which aimed to disseminate information on incident trends across the port, as well as other relevant issues arising from the port’s safety management system. The future plan was to cascade this information to the workforce as an additional means of engaging workers in H&S.

One large port made **extensive use of technology** as an additional means of communicating H&S information to workers. This was achieved firstly through the use of media screens, which were located across different parts of the port and provided information on specific H&S topics (e.g. Ebola). In addition, ‘real time’ information (such as on weather conditions) was sent to managers and supervisors via text messaging, who then cascaded this information to the workforce. For specific worker groups, such as crane drivers, relevant H&S messages for specific tasks would also appear on in cab screens.

### 3.4.3 Communication of H&S to non-permanent employees

The interviews and focus groups also explored the ways in which ports communicated H&S to non-permanent employees (i.e. those employed on a temporary basis such as agency workers and any other casual employees).

A **H&S induction** was a common means of communicating to non-permanent employees, the safety rules and procedures to be followed across participating ports. The induction, in the medium and larger ports, tended to be completed online. This was sometimes followed by an assessment to test non-permanent employees’ understanding of the safety rules and procedures. This was followed by a site-specific induction, which was used to communicate any specific H&S issues they would need to consider in the specific areas of the port that they would be working at. In the case of smaller ports, the H&S induction tended to be conducted by a senior manager (such as the H&S manager), who would introduce non-permanent employees to the site and the safety requirements to be followed. In addition to the induction, **H&S**

**booklets/leaflets** specific for non-permanent employees were also used as a means of conveying H&S messages in two large ports.

In ports where non-permanent employees worked on operational tasks (e.g. loading/unloading cargo), **toolbox talks** were used as a means of communicating H&S information. Specifically, it was explained that non-permanent employees attended toolbox talks along with permanent workers. They were delivered by the supervisors and focused on discussing the work to be done, the equipment required for the job, as well as highlighting the hazards to look out for. Non-permanent employees did not typically attend H&S meetings, with one notable exception, where in one port, a representative from the agency that supplied non-temporary employees, attended these meetings.

In two ports, non-permanent employees were typically used for non-operational tasks, such as working on major infrastructure or engineering projects on site. In one port, **weekly meetings** were held in order to discuss on-going projects on site, as well any H&S issues and/or concerns that may be relevant across the different non-permanent employee groups. In the second port, a supervisor would typically be assigned on each project to oversee the work and act as the main point of contact for H&S issues and/or concerns.

#### **3.4.4 Perceived effectiveness of H&S communication**

The prevalent view among participants was that H&S communication worked well. Participants gave examples of being able to openly raise issues (e.g. with equipment) during H&S meetings, as well as having access to relevant H&S information, as and when needed (e.g. method statements, risk assessments). Further, participants in some of the smaller ports also highlighted that daily interactions between management and workers allowed H&S issues to be picked up quickly. A concern was expressed by some workers in one port, that H&S meetings did not provide an effective forum to discuss safety issues. Specifically, it was explained that managers were provided in advance of the H&S meeting the issues to be discussed, and that during the meeting it was not possible to raise any new issues. This was perceived as hampering a two-way dialogue on H&S.

There was a prevalent view among both managers and workers that H&S meetings were well attended, and that workers and/or safety representatives were given the time to attend them. Further, where possible, the meetings were scheduled around workers and/or safety representatives' availability. However difficulties in getting 'everyone together in one place', due to shift patterns and/or operational demands, were also acknowledged.

Communicating the issues discussed at H&S meetings to the workforce was a challenge that was highlighted by some participants across medium and large ports. For instance, participants discussed that while H&S representatives will try to communicate what was discussed at H&S meetings, a lot of the information is found out through 'word of mouth'. This was compounded by the fact that, as it was suggested, workers may not always read the minutes from the H&S meetings (e.g. due to workload). The H&S representative in one large port also highlighted that there was no agreed structure as to how representatives should feedback the issues discussed at the meetings. The same participant also felt that there was a lack of understanding regarding the extent to which feedback should be provided solely by the H&S representatives, or whether this responsibility should be shared with management.

An important element of H&S communication was ensuring that a mix of approaches was used, combining both face-to-face, as well as written communication methods. This was particularly important for larger ports where some participants highlighted that they tried to use multiple channels of communication (e.g. toolbox talks, notice boards, H&S meetings) to try and capture everybody and ensure that H&S messages are received. This appeared to be less of a barrier in

the small ports in the sample. Indeed, a commonly cited reason for why H&S communication worked well in small ports was because workers and management saw each other very frequently, which made it easier to communicate H&S issues.

Finally, using a mix of communication methods, as well as finding novel ways of delivering H&S messages and raising awareness was perceived as important in keeping workers engaged and motivated in H&S. For instance, an example was provided by a senior manager of how they were planning to introduce ‘red cards’ as a means of encouraging workers to stop a work activity that was perceived to be unsafe.

### **3.5 EMPLOYEE VOICE AND FEEDBACK**

One of the main drivers of employee engagement is the extent to which workers have an opportunity to feed their views upwards and raise H&S concerns (e.g. MacLeod and Clarke, 2009). In addition, being seen to take workers’ comments and concerns seriously, providing feedback and acting on these concerns, is also important in promoting worker engagement (Fidderman and McDonnell, 2010).

#### **3.5.1 Incident and near miss reporting**

Systems were in place in all participating ports for workers to report incidents and near misses. In small and medium-sized ports, workers would typically complete a paper form, which would be passed on to the supervisor and then to the H&S manager. A notable exception was one small port, where workers would report the near miss or incident directly to senior management, who would log the report electronically. There was a perception that this informal means of reporting worked well, and that workers found it easier to report issues directly to management (by phone or in person) rather than filling in a form. In contrast, the two large ports in the sample relied on an electronic reporting system, although workers in one of the ports also had the option of completing a paper form for near misses.

There was variation across participating ports in terms of how feedback on the incidents and near misses reported was provided. Among the small and medium-sized ports, feedback was typically provided through the H&S meetings. In addition, senior managers and/or line managers would feedback directly to the individual and/or their team regarding how the issue reported was being addressed. For instance, senior or line managers would either call or talk to the individual concerned in person, provide feedback to one worker and ask him to pass on the information to others, or would talk to workers during their lunch break (i.e. in the ‘mess rooms’ as they were sometimes described). In addition, for incidents, one medium-sized port also sent a letter to the individual involved, detailing the outcomes of the investigation and the measures that had been taken in response to the incident.

In contrast, in one of the large ports, workers had to log into the electronic reporting system in order to find out how the issue reported was being addressed. There was an acknowledgement that feedback could be improved, as workers may not always have the time to log into the system. For instance, one senior manager acknowledged that it should be easier for individuals to find out what was being done about the report submitted, for instance, by having automatic emails sent to individuals. On the other hand, there was a perception that the electronic system was transparent, as workers could log in at any time and find out about the progress and/or outcomes of the investigation.

In the second large port, a copy of the near miss/ incident report was sent to the individual detailing how the issue was addressed (with the original retained by the safety department, and a second copy sent to the supervisor). In addition, feedback was provided to all workers using

monthly summaries of incidents and near misses, including the actions taken, which were put on the noticeboard.

### **3.5.2 Raising H&S concerns**

Several avenues were available to workers in terms of raising H&S concerns across participating ports. Workers would typically raise any issues regarding the job directly with the supervisor and/or line manager. In the case of one small port workers would directly approach senior management (i.e. Harbour Master or Deputy Harbour Master). Any issues that could not be resolved through speaking to the supervisor or line manager would typically be raised with the H&S representative, who would, depending on the issue, escalate it to management and/or bring it up at the H&S meetings. Toolbox talks prior to starting work as well as H&S meetings (in small and medium-sized ports), were additional avenues through which workers could raise H&S concerns.

### **3.5.3 H&S ideas/suggestions**

The interviews and focus groups also explored the mechanisms through which workers were encouraged to put forward any H&S ideas and/or suggestions. For the majority of ports this process appeared to take place informally. Specifically, it was described that workers would bring up any ideas or suggestions directly with supervisors or H&S representatives, in which case they would be subsequently discussed at H&S meetings. In one port, the Terminal Manager had introduced ‘listening groups’ (see 3.1.6. or 3.4.1), which were perceived as an additional avenue through which workers could make H&S suggestions.

One large port in the sample had a formal process in place in the form of an online suggestion scheme. This involved completing an online form to put forward any idea (i.e. not only related to H&S). Whilst it was recognised that the suggestion scheme was in principle a good way of engaging workers and eliciting ideas, it was recognised that in practice it did not work very well. This was because workers did not receive prompt feedback on the ideas that they proposed. As was explained by a senior manager, submitted ideas would be forwarded to the appropriate person to be reviewed (i.e. depending on whether the idea was safety or business-related). However, there were often delays in doing so. There was an acknowledgement that in order for the process to work well it was important to provide workers with timely feedback and the intention was to explore how the system could work better in the future:

*“It [suggestion scheme] needs a jolly good re-launch and I’ve volunteered my team to say, “I want to take it on”, because I think it’s a good idea if done well, but you have to... people, again, need the feedback quickly. They need to see, if they’ve put something into it, that something might happen...”* (Interview 19, senior manager, large port)

## **3.6 TRAINING AND COMPETENCE**

Training is considered an important prerequisite for worker engagement. Workers that have had training are better able to identify hazards and are less likely to overlook safety issues compared to workers that have not had any training (Cameron et al., 2006).

The findings suggest that participating ports provided a range of training, which was perceived by workers to be sufficient and relevant for their job (e.g. manual handling, forklift truck training, lone working, oil spill emergency response training, first aid training, and training in the use of fire extinguishers).

Relevant training was also provided to support H&S representatives in their role. This typically included H&S training courses through the union, covering areas, such as risk assessments and incident investigations. In some cases, risk assessment training was not only confined to H&S representatives but was also given to workers. This was the case in one small port. The senior manager in this port had already sent one worker to attend the risk assessment training course, which was Council-run, and commented that he was planning to send more workers on the course. He explained that attending the training course was perceived as a useful means of engaging workers and promoting a sense of shared responsibility and ownership. The line manager of a medium-sized port who was also responsible for delivering in-house training concurred with this view:

*“I think some people think we [senior managers] do the risks assessments because we do, yes, but it’s not our risk assessment. It’s them and they’re doing the job and that’s what I’m trying to get through to them because they definitely... I think their view is it’s the manager’s job [...]”* (Interview 21, senior manager, small port)

*“Since I got into training, being an instructor brings it more where if you watch people do something I’m not sure the others know that. [...] I think it [training] brings it [H&S] more home to people when they go through training courses.”* (Interview 16, line manager, medium port)

The aforementioned senior manager also felt that in addition to skill development, sending workers to training courses gave the message that the port is investing in and values its employees. Although cutbacks in the port’s budget restricted the number of training courses workers could attend, larger ports often assisted smaller ports financially with joint training (e.g. oil prevention emergency response training in collaboration with other ports where costs are proportionate to port size).

In addition to training provision, pairing inexperienced workers (both permanent and non-permanent staff) with experienced workers was a prevalent means through which participating ports enabled the former to build up their competence. The aim was to gradually ‘expose’ inexperienced workers to different jobs across the port in order to get an understanding of the risks involved until they built up their competence to be able to work unsupervised. Non-permanent workers in one port were predominantly ex-stevedores that used to work for the port and often acted as mentors for inexperienced workers.

### **3.7 BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP AND WORKER ENGAGEMENT**

Participants were asked to reflect on any particular barriers to effective worker engagement and leadership both in their organisations, as well as in the industry more broadly, and offer suggestions on how they could be overcome.

A barrier to worker engagement that was mentioned by some managers and H&S representatives related to workers’ attitudes regarding H&S. There was a perception that workers may sometimes not view H&S as a shared responsibility (with management) and may not engage with H&S on a day-to-day basis (for instance, by challenging working practices and thinking about how H&S could be improved). This was partly related to a broader mentality that was perceived to still exist in the ports industry, which was referred to as ‘job and knock’. It was explained that ‘job and knock’ can encourage workers to rush in order to finish the work quicker as they could leave when the task was complete and would still get paid for the whole day. Working late at night was perceived to be the ‘worst time’ in the ports industry, as the quicker workers finished the job the quicker they could go home. Several senior managers mentioned that they tried to actively discourage this culture, for instance through supervision

and reiterating to workers the importance of not rushing. Perhaps not surprisingly, discouragement of 'job and knock' was perceived to be easier in smaller than larger ports, as it was easier to monitor workers' behaviours. A senior manager suggested that support from the union was also important in discouraging this practice:

*"... working faster to get away early, which in itself is a health and safety risk. We're totally against job and knock, we totally... well, I'd ban it but some people occasionally keep saying... because by encouraging people to go as fast as they possibly can to get home early they will cut corners. And we get no support from the union managing that."* (Interview 24, senior manager, large port)

Generational issues were also mentioned by some managers, particularly the difficulty in engaging older workers in H&S. It was explained that experienced, older workers may be more resistant to changing their working practices and may be less receptive to H&S messages compared to their younger counterparts. Being able to engage with and communicate H&S to older workers was considered to be important in light of an ageing workforce that characterised the industry. It was not always obvious to participants, however, how this challenge could be addressed:

*"We've got an ageing workforce, I feel. A lot of the lads here have been here for many, many years, haven't they? I'm not saying they're set in their ways, but you do get set in your ways when you've been here 20 odd years and, 20 years ago, you were doing it like this, and you've done it like that for ten years [...] and you think how are we going to get this across? You've got to work out... you can't say do it differently. You've got to work out how we're going to get this guy to do it differently."* (Interview 21, senior manager, small port)

Drawing on his experience, a line manager explained that simply 'telling' older workers that they need to work differently often meets 'resistance' and that a more fruitful approach is to explain the reasons why certain practices need to be adopted.

The importance of balancing safety with productivity and the pressures in the industry to make a profit, particularly for private ports was also discussed. For instance, the senior manager of a Trust port explained that, unlike private ports, as long as the port has 'paid every bill, it doesn't matter if we only make a pound'. The difficulty in maintaining a balance between safety and productivity was also shared by the senior manager of a private port. It was explained that the need to remain competitive exerts 'pressure' on the workforce to continuously improve productivity, thus making it challenging to maintain a balance with safety:

*"We are in a very, very competitive industry, we have new competitors that have just opened up or recently opened up down at [name omitted] so we have a major focus on improving our productivity to meet the customer demands and the greatest challenge is obviously keeping the focus on safety whilst still remaining productive [...] So that's a great challenge for us at the moment in time. That obviously is putting pressure onto the workforce, so that is an issue without a doubt [...]"* (Interview 25, senior manager, large port)

Shift patterns were another barrier in worker engagement that was mentioned in relation to communicating H&S to the workforce. Specifically, challenges were mentioned in terms of ensuring that workers can attend H&S meetings due to shift patterns. Efforts were made to ensure that meetings were arranged by taking into account shift patterns, but finding a convenient time where everyone could attend was perceived to be a challenge. For instance, the H&S representative in one port noted that sometimes he would attend meetings in his own time if it clashed with his shift (i.e. he was on the night shift and the meeting took place in the morning). In addition to attendance at meetings, ensuring that important H&S information

reaches the workforce (for instance, if something may have happened whilst a worker has not been at work due to his shift pattern) was another challenge mentioned. Due to the aforementioned reasons, there was an acknowledgment among senior managers of the need to use different methods of communication as much as possible (e.g. meetings, noticeboards).

Finally, some issues that appeared to pertain to specific ports were also mentioned and included:

- Perceptions of ‘blame culture’: the H&S representative of a large port mentioned that a perception that the organisation has a ‘heavy-handed’ approach to incidents discouraged workers in his section from reporting incidents and near misses. The H&S representative felt that there should be clearer communication about when/if workers would be disciplined. This was because there seemed to be inconsistencies down the management chain with some managers being more willing to discuss with workers why incidents happen and what could be done to prevent them from happening again than others.
- Lack of supervisor credibility due to lack of industry experience: Workers in one large port felt that some supervisors who had come from different industries lacked appreciation of the nature of the work and the hazards involved. On the other hand, it was suggested that supervisors that had come up ‘through the ranks’ and had worked in different parts of the port had a good understanding of safety issues and were respected.
- More direct communication between management and the workforce: The line manager of a medium-sized port felt that there should be more opportunities for workers to raise issues directly with management; there was a perception that the communication tended to be ‘top down’.
- More frequent safety and operational meetings: Having more frequent and shorter meetings rather than quarterly meetings, which are longer in duration, was recommended by one line manager in a medium-sized port; this was because workers tend to ‘switch off’ whilst it is easy to forget the issues discussed until the next meeting takes place. It was acknowledged however that it might not be possible to have more frequent meetings due to difficulties in getting everyone in one place.



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored current practices in leadership and worker engagement in a sample of GB ports. In doing so, a number of mechanisms and leadership practices through which ports try to engage workers in H&S, as well as potential barriers that pertain to the industry were identified. The findings provide valuable insights as to the ways in which leadership and worker engagement could be improved in the industry.

Before discussing some suggested next steps that the industry might wish to consider, the strengths and limitations of the present research need to be considered. The study employed a qualitative research design exploring leadership and worker engagement practices from the perspectives of key stakeholders (e.g. senior and line managers, H&S representatives and workers) in a small sample of ports. The qualitative approach including different ports in the sample (e.g. in terms of type and size), provided a range of perspectives on the research questions addressed in this study. Whilst providing a rich insight into the leadership and worker engagement practices in the sample of ports that participated in the study, the present findings would need to be supplemented by quantitative data (through surveys for example) to establish how common each of the phenomena identified are within the wider industry.

### **Leadership practices**

A number of good leadership practices were identified across participating ports, including senior management visibility, challenging unsafe working practices, operating an ‘open door policy’, and leading by example. These are recognised as effective leadership practices that help demonstrate active and strong leadership from the top of the organisation, which is a key driver of employee engagement (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009; HSE, 2013). It should be noted, however, that a concern that management might be placing more emphasis on productivity rather than safety was expressed by some participants in two ports. Senior management play a crucial role in ‘setting the tone’ regarding the importance of H&S and it is important to ensure that there is consistency in how H&S messages are communicated down the management chain. This issue notwithstanding, examples were also identified where senior managers tried to incorporate novel approaches to engaging with workers, such as ‘listening groups’ to enhance two-way communication between workers and senior management.

### *Suggested next steps*

The adoption of initiatives that aim to encourage direct two-way communication between management and employees may be a fruitful means through which senior management can further improve worker engagement. Research suggests that employees at organisations where there are meetings with senior managers have higher perceptions of voice and influence over decisions than organisations where such meetings do not take place (Dromey, 2014)<sup>4</sup>. Further, attitude or staff surveys (such as safety culture surveys<sup>5</sup>) could be a useful tool for managers (particularly in medium and large ports) in providing an insight on how employees feel and how relationships between managers and staff are conducted. They can also be used to identify potential variations in engagement across their organisation and identify appropriate interventions for enhancing worker engagement (Dromey, 2014).

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<sup>4</sup> The study used data from the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations study, which included a sample of 22,000 employers across 2,680 workplaces in the UK.

<sup>5</sup> Such as HSE’s Safety Climate Tool (<http://www.hsl.gov.uk/products/safety-climate-tool>)

## **Worker involvement in H&S activities**

A number of examples were identified, which suggested that workers and H&S representatives are consulted in H&S matters, including reviewing risk assessments, and getting involved in equipment selection as well as workplace and/or equipment inspections. However, some isolated examples were also identified where worker consultation in some areas (risk assessments, equipment selection) could be improved. With regards to the H&S representative role, continuing involvement in H&S investigation teams is desirable.

### *Suggested next steps*

Taking into account ‘soft’ skills (e.g. listening, communication) in the selection of the H&S representative role and/or providing training to develop these skills might be worthwhile. Research has shown that enhancing H&S representatives’ ‘soft’ skills can have a beneficial impact on worker involvement, for instance in terms of introducing or improving practices and procedures (e.g. assessing workplace risks, use of personal protective equipment) and improved reporting of risks (Broughton et al., 2013).

## **H&S communication**

Participating ports employed a good mix of approaches, including face-to-face and written or visual methods to communicate H&S to permanent, as well as non-permanent, employees. Predictably, a broader range of communication methods was used in larger ports to ensure that H&S messages reached the workforce. Shift patterns and operational demands were identified as challenges in ensuring that workers and/or H&S representatives could attend H&S meetings. Communicating the issues discussed at H&S meetings to the workforce was a challenge that was highlighted by some participants across medium and large ports.

### *Suggested next steps*

Giving sufficient notice by planning meetings in advance (for six months to a year) (HSE; [www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/frequency.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/frequency.htm)) and ensuring, as much as possible, that shift patterns are taken into account, may help improve attendance at H&S meetings. Agreeing a process in place for H&S representatives to provide feedback to the workforce (in addition to existing methods that were in place across the ports, such as publicising H&S meeting minutes on noticeboards) might be desirable. The effectiveness of any processes would need to be determined locally depending on the size of the port.

## **Safety voice and feedback**

Giving workers a voice in terms of ensuring that their views are sought and listened to is an important driver of worker engagement (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009). The prevalent view among participants was that they could raise H&S concerns through the direct (for instance through line and/or senior management), as well as indirect (through H&S representatives), avenues available to them. Systems were also in place for reporting incidents and near misses and the formality of these tended to vary depending on the size of port. Whilst there was a recognition of the importance of providing feedback to workers on the H&S issues raised, some instances were identified where there was a perception that feedback was not always provided. Timely feedback on how H&S issues raised are being addressed is important in promoting worker engagement (Fidderman and McDonnell, 2010), as well as explaining the reasons when workers’ concerns cannot be addressed. Further, the process for raising H&S suggestions and ideas appeared to take place informally across the majority of the ports, typically by speaking to a supervisor or H&S representative.

#### *Suggested next steps*

Having an additional, more formal process in place, for instance in terms of suggestion schemes/boxes, may be beneficial for larger ports and could provide an additional avenue of getting fresh ideas about H&S from workers. However, acting on H&S suggestions and/or providing justification for not taking ideas forward is crucial to the success of such initiatives. A useful means of communicating to workers how their suggestions have been taken on board is the 'You said – we did' approach; workers' comments and suggestions would typically be presented alongside the resultant changes implemented (e.g. through posters, boards).

#### **Barriers to worker engagement**

Workforce attitudes towards H&S, such as beliefs that 'H&S is not their responsibility', as well as generational issues, with older workers being perceived more reluctant to change their working practices, was a commonly cited barrier in worker engagement.

#### *Suggested next steps*

Risk communication that focuses on messages highlighting workers' personal susceptibility to risk, as well as incentives (e.g. these could be monetary or otherwise such as 'safe person/team of the month' award) to encourage positive H&S behaviours (such as following H&S procedures), can be used to help increase worker engagement and challenge attitudes and/or incorrect beliefs.

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## **6. APPENDICES**

### **6.1 APPENDIX 1: QUESTION SET FOR WORKERS**

#### **Background**

Q1: Can you tell us how long have you worked in this port, and in your current job, and briefly what your job is?

#### **Worker engagement - H&S communication**

Q2: What communications do you receive on health and safety? (e.g. type and format of communications)

Q3: Do you think that the way H&S information is communicated works well?

#### **Worker engagement practices – Participation in H&S**

Q4: Do you get any opportunities to get involved in health and safety?

Q5: What motivates you to be involved in health and safety activities?

Q6: What do you think about the level of involvement that you have in health and safety activities?

Q7: How would you raise H&S concerns and who would you raise them with (e.g. directly to line manager, through H&S rep or H&S committee)?

#### **Worker engagement practices - Challenge**

Q8: Are you encouraged to challenge any unsafe practices that you might spot on site? Can you give me an example?

Q9: Can you stop work when you have a H&S issue or concern?

#### **Worker engagement practices – Support**

Q10: Do you have enough resources to carry out your job safely? Can you give me examples of this?

Q11: Do you have opportunities to attend H&S training?

#### **Leadership practices**

Q12: Do you think that line managers/senior managers are engaged/committed in health and safety? If yes, how do they demonstrate this?

Q13: How do line managers/senior managers encourage you personally to be involved in health and safety activities?

Q14: Do you see contractors/ non-permanent staff getting involved in H&S? In what way/why not?

**Barriers to workforce engagement**

Q15: Is there anything that prevents you from being engaged in your work?

Q16: If yes, how can these obstacles be overcome?

Q17: Is there anything else that you would like to add that we have not covered?







# Leadership and worker engagement in the ports industry

HSE's 2014 Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) on Safety in Docks (L148) was developed through close consultation with employer and employee representatives. It is designed to address both the larger end of the industry and those working in small harbours and highlights the importance of leadership and full workforce involvement. Worker engagement goes beyond consultation and refers to the extent to which workers contribute to decisions that affect their health and safety. Leaders play an important role by engaging the workforce to achieve safe and healthy conditions.

This qualitative study explored how leadership and worker engagement practices were implemented in GB ports. Findings revealed several good leadership practices including leading by example, challenging unsafe practices and being visible. Listening to and acting on workers' concerns and ensuring that feedback is provided on issues raised was also important in facilitating and/or sustaining worker engagement. Study participants considered that use of a variety of communication methods is essential to engage workers. Health and safety representatives played an important role in increasing attention to health and safety and were generally supported in their role. Worker attitude to health and safety and generational issues in particular were perceived as a potential barrier to worker engagement.

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