

National Apprenticeship Week 2024: Skills for Life

For National Apprenticeship Week this year, we are shining a light on the talented apprentices within the Health and Safety Executive and showing the positive impact they have, for both the individual and the organisation.

The theme for National Apprenticeship Week 2024 is “Skills for Life”; reflecting on how apprenticeships can help individuals develop the skills and knowledge required for a rewarding career. But also, how greater use of apprenticeships can help HSE to develop a talented workforce that is equipped with future-ready skills.

We interviewed two apprentices at very different stages of their careers. This is what they had to say...

Anne Strype, Health and Work Branch



Anne Strype at her Level 6 apprenticeship graduation

My name is Anne Strype. I am a 47-year-old mum of 2 and I have worked as a Policy Advisor in HSE for 15 years.

I never dreamed I would be able to achieve a degree at my stage in life, so when the opportunity was suggested to me (by my line manager at the time) I jumped at the chance.

I did a Level 6 Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship. This included modules such as Operational Strategy, Project Management, Communications, and Leadership. These areas are highly relevant to a policy role, and I was able to incorporate the skills I have learnt into my work very quickly.

I am not naturally academic, but I tackled it one module and one assignment at a time. I have to admit, it was extremely challenging trying to balance a high-paced policy role, my training with QA, and my family life.

However, as the course progressed, the skills I was learning through my apprenticeship helped me with this, and I have built confidence along the way. I also had great support from my apprenticeship skills coach who was always there for me through the highs and the lows with great advice and guidance.

I am pleased to say I graduated in October 2023 with the Awards Ceremony held at the Southbank Royal Festival Hall in London which was an AMAZING experience!

I am extremely proud of my achievement of a 2:1 in my Degree and Distinction in my Apprenticeship and so grateful for the opportunity that was offered to me by HSE. I highly recommend anyone considering an apprenticeship to go for it. You won't regret it.

Jake Rutherford, Operational Support



Jake on his second day in the office

I'm Jake Rutherford, I am 18 years old and I started at HSE two days ago!

It's a bit surreal that I have started my apprenticeship during National Apprenticeship Week, but I'm hoping to get a lot out of this apprenticeship at HSE.

I left college last year and started working in a pub which I did enjoy however it wasn't regular work and it didn't provide me with a good work-life balance due to working late nights and weekends. I also couldn't see a career or longevity, I wanted something that would give me a career.

I spoke to a few family members as my Mum and two of my cousins work in the Civil Service and told me about the apprenticeships they offer. So, I looked on the Civil Service Jobs website and found this administrative support apprenticeship at HSE.

I didn't know much about health and safety but since starting it's mind-blowing how much HSE covers from the inspections and investigations to our science and research.

Everyone is very friendly and I haven't been thrown in the deep end, I've felt very supported by my team. I'm excited to get stuck into my role and working the investigations team on their reporting, it sounds so interesting!

As it's only day three, I'm not entirely sure what my career path within HSE or the Civil Service might be, but I'm excited to see where and what I'll be doing once I finish my apprenticeship.

[Remembering the Morecambe Bay cockling disaster – 20 Years On](#)

HSE inspector Peter Lennon, a member of the investigation team that investigated the incident, has reflected on the Morecambe Bay cockling disaster in a blog

On the evening of 5 February 2004 over 30 young men and women were trapped by rising tides in Morecambe Bay as they harvested cockles – 23 tragically lost their lives. Most of those who were at work were Chinese nationals. Many of them had little experience or knowledge of the sea.

Cockling on Morecambe Bay was a long-established industry undertaken by the local fishing community, who understood the dangers of the tides in the bay and had been taking precautions over time.

Up until then, more people had become involved in what had quickly developed as a lucrative business: not all understood the hazards or the precautions needed to work safely.

HSE immediately established a team from the then Field Operations Division (FOD) North West Agriculture Group to assist in the complex investigation, right from the beginning. The team worked together with Lancashire Constabulary, the local fishing community, the local authorities and the Gangmaster Licensing Authority to understand what had happened and what could be done to prevent anything like this happening again.

What happened next?

Working with others, including HSE's Agriculture Sector, we produced guidance on how to work safely in the bay – and in similar estuaries and tidal areas – when harvesting produce such as cockles. We supported local authorities as they developed a regime for permits to regulate the activity, making sure everyone works as safely as possible.

The investigation also revealed how the workers had been exploited by gangmasters and our Vulnerable Workers' Team has continued to work with the Gangmaster Licensing Authority and others to deal with concerns about those who are being exploited and whose health and safety is being compromised.

Reflections

On a personal note, after being involved in the investigation and following the case to its final conclusions in court, "Morecambe Bay" will always resonate as a preventable human tragedy in which young people lost their lives in a foreign country, far away from their loved ones.

There is a memorial to those who died, close to the RNLI station, in Morecambe. If you find yourself nearby, please take the time to visit it.

Notes to editors:

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.

[Farming company fined £320,000 after death of "much loved" family man](#)

A company involved in fruit and vegetable production has been fined £320,000 after a man "who always put family first" was killed at a site in Burscough.

Francis Schlachter, known as Frank, suffered severe head injuries when he fell from a skip at a farm operated by M.A.Forshaw Limited on 3 January 2020. The 64-year-old from Southport was described as 'a rock' by his wife of 35 years Linda, who said how much he would be missed by his friends and family.

"I have lost my soul mate," Linda said.

"He was a gentleman through and through, who will live on in our hearts and memories forever.

"It is the little things in life that you take for granted, which are greatly cherished now he's gone and they mean the absolute world.

"Frank was my rock. He was kind, dependable and always put his family first. Since his passing, I have had a fair share of trials and tribulations to encounter and these have been a great challenge without the support of a beloved husband.

“We have all suffered the loss and it will be embedded in our bones forever.

“No man should go to work and never return home after a day of hard work.”

Frank had been working at the site off Marsh Moss Lane, tipping food waste into a skip from a container attached to a forklift truck (FLT). The container could not be securely attached to the FLT, which was known to detach from the vehicle during the procedure. As Frank attempted to manually assist in the operation, he was standing on top of the skip when the container slipped from the FLT causing him to fall to the ground, resulting in fatal head injuries.



Frank Schlachter fell from the top of the skip while working at the site in Burscough

Companies that use work equipment must manage the risks associated with its use. Detailed guidance on the [Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998](#) is available. Guidance for those [using lifting equipment for work](#) is also available.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that M.A.Forshaw Limited of Heaton's Bridge Farm, Scarisbrick, West Lancashire, had not fully assessed the risks involved in this daily task. Had they done so, the dangers would have been identified. They also failed to maintain equipment in safe working order and to properly instruct staff in safe working practices.

The company pleaded guilty to breaching regulation 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £320,000 and were ordered to pay £4,574 costs at a hearing at Wirral Magistrates' Court on 1 February 2024.

HSE inspector Lianne Farrington said: “This wholly avoidable tragic incident led to the death of a much loved husband, dad and grandad.

“It was caused by the failure of the company to implement safe systems of

work, properly maintain work equipment, and sufficiently assess the risks involved in routine work processes.

“If suitable work practices had been in place prior to the incident, Frank’s death could have been prevented.

“At HSE, we always stress the need for employers to risk assess tasks by speaking to the employees who undertake the work, and to ensure that work equipment is safe and suitable to use.”

This prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Sam Tiger.

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2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.

[Worktops firm fined after repeated failures to protect employees](#)

A Stockport-based stone worktop manufacturer has been fined £26,000 for repeatedly putting its workers at risk.

Granite & Marble Shop Ltd failed to implement safe working practices despite warnings from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The company consistently put their employees at risk from serious injury by failing to adequately guard dangerous machinery at their site in Roland Road, Reddish.



There was no interlock guard on the sliding doors meaning they could be opened while the machine was in operation

A HSE inspector visited the site in 2019 and enforcement action was taken to have the appropriate guards installed, and to introduce daily checks, to ensure these were in place and functioning correctly.

HSE guidance is available about the importance for employers to consider [how their workers use machinery](#) and to have adequate arrangements in place to ensure it remains safe to use.

However, when an inspector returned to the site on 18 August 2021, the guarding measures that had been put in place were broken or disabled – once again placing employees in danger.

A HSE investigation found that The Granite & Marble Shop Ltd of Cheadle Place Stockport Road, Cheadle, Cheshire, had failed to properly manage, supervise, and monitor the control measures that had been put in place, in order to ensure that guards were being used as intended.



The interlock guard on the sliding doors wasn't working

The company pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and were fined £26,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,708 at a hearing in Manchester Magistrates' Court on 31 January 2024. The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Sam Crockett.

After the hearing HSE Inspector Stephanie Simcock said: "This case highlights how critical it is that all employers make sure they properly assess and apply effective control measures to minimise the risk from dangerous parts of machinery.

"Machinery safety and supervision and monitoring is a must. We will prosecute if repeated breaches are found, regardless of whether there has been an incident.

"Despite an earlier intervention and advice being given, this company continued to fail in its duty to protect its employees."

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3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. Guidance on [working safely with machinery](#) is available.

[Textiles firm fined £60,000 after worker's arm dragged into machine](#)

A textiles company has been fined £60,000 after a man broke his arm when it was dragged into machinery at a site near Chorley.

The employee, a man from Blackrod in Greater Manchester, suffered serious injuries to his right arm in the incident at the factory operated by Pin Croft Dyeing and Printing Co. Limited in Market Street, Adlington, on 20 June 2022.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found the man had been operating a large fabric spooling machine when a brake malfunctioned. During his attempt to manually slow the rotation of the machine, his sleeve became caught up with an exposed grooved spindle and his right arm was drawn into the mechanism. It became twisted by the rotation of the machine which broke both major bones in the forearm and caused serious tissue damage.



The man had been operating a large fabric spooling machine when a brake malfunctioned and his sleeve was caught in a grooved spindle

HSE guidance is available [how important it is for employers to consider their workers use machinery](#) and to have adequate arrangements in place to ensure it remains safe to use.

Despite the company being aware of the risk posed by the moving spindle, they failed to either remove or suitably guard this part of the machinery.

As a result of his injuries, the man, who was right-handed, spent four nights in hospital and was unable to return to work for six months.

Preston Magistrates Court heard that Pin Croft Dyeing and Printing Co.

Limited of Adlington Works, Market Street, Adlington, Lancashire had neither guarded nor removed the exposed grooved spindle despite being aware of the risk it posed to employees.



During his attempt to manually slow the rotation of the machine, his sleeve became caught up with an exposed grooved spindle

The company pleaded guilty to breaching section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. They were fined £60,000 and was ordered to pay £2.147 costs at a hearing at Preston Magistrates Court on 31 January 2024.

After the hearing, HSE inspector David Bellis said: “This man’s injuries were serious but they could have been much worse. The whole incident and its consequences could have been avoided if basic safeguards had been put in place.

“At HSE we would like highlight that all employers should make sure they properly assess and apply effective control measures to minimise the risk from dangerous parts of machinery.”

The prosecution was brought by HSE enforcement lawyer Chloe Ward.

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