

Try the shout test – protect workers' hearing

Bosses who have to shout at work to get heard may not actually be angry! Instead, they may have a noise problem within the workplace.

Research on noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) shows around a fifth of the British working population could be exposed to high noise levels while doing their job.

While Britain has seen new cases of [occupational deafness](#) significantly drop over the past decade, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is urging workplaces to consider the shout test to manage noise at work and ways to give workers' ears a break.

HSE's noise expert Chris Steel said: "If you are shouting at work and can't be heard from two metres away, the chances are there's a noise issue. Try it out for yourself and see if you can be heard.

"Preserving hearing at work is crucial as noise can cause temporary or permanent hearing damage.

"But there needs to be a balance. While too little noise reduction could cause hearing damage, too much could isolate the worker and lead to accidents."

The issue of noise at work is the subject of a scientific report recently discussed by specialists in the field.

The Workplace Health Expert Committee (WHEC) report says about 20% of the working population in Great Britain could be exposed to high noise levels (>85 dBA).

The report goes on to say that while there are limited statistics on the prevalence of noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) in Britain, the most likely affected groups of workers are those who have been employed in the armed services, shipyards, construction, and agriculture.

HSE has important guidance in relation to [noise at work](#) although evidence suggests new cases of occupational deafness is in decline.

Chris Steel continued: "People often experience temporary deafness after leaving a noisy place like a nightclub or a bar.

"Although hearing recovers within a few hours, this should not be ignored. It is a sign that if they continue to be exposed to the noise, without an adequate break, their hearing could be permanently damaged. The same applies to noise in a workplace.

"While the prevalence of occupational noise induced hearing loss has

decreased over the last forty years, mostly through noise control technology, the dangers still need to be taken seriously.”

Bosses must assess and identify measures to eliminate or reduce risks from exposure to noise so that they can protect the hearing of their workers.

If you are already using hearing protection, it needs to be managed so try using CUFF:

C = Condition; is the hearing protection in good condition?

U = Use: are workers using the hearing protection all the times they should be?

F = Fit; does the hearing protection fit the wearer?

F = Fit for purpose; have you selected hearing protection that gives the right level of noise reduction?

The full [WHEC report](#) on occupational noise is available.

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.
2. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
3. WHEC is a scientific and medical expert committee whose purpose is to consider the evidence linking workplace hazards to ill health. They provide independent, authoritative, impartial and timely expertise on workplace health. [Workplace Health Expert Committee \(WHEC\) – Science,engineering and evidence – HSE](#)