



# HSE under pressure: A perfect storm

Prospect union's report on the long  
term causes and latent factors





# HSE under pressure: A perfect storm

Since at least 2010, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the country's principal safety regulator, has experienced significant budget cuts which have had a serious impact on its ability to function. Coupled with over a decade of pay constraint, the impact on HSE's ability to recruit and retain an effective mix of staff has resulted in diminishing numbers of inspector, policy, and scientific staff, primarily but not uniquely within its core 'conventional' areas.

Prospect believe that diminishing numbers mean that there is now a capacity and experience crisis resulting in a reduction in operational delivery metrics associated with the twin roles of the HSE: advisory and regulatory. Such challenges have impacted significantly on the HSE model and will have a long tail into the future if we are not able to convince politicians of the need for a truly independent, appropriately funded and effectively sized regulator.

Prospect members in HSE are concerned that the HSE has now shrunk below the critical mass to be an effective regulator.

What are the causes of the pressure HSE is facing? They are multiple. This report is an examination of the various factors at play.

As the report shows:

- Funding for HSE in 2021-22 is 43% down on 2009-10 in real terms on a comparative basis.
- The level of mandatory investigations that are cancelled are at an all time high.
- Many staff have seen real terms cuts in pay between 20 and 25%, with pay lagging significantly behind comparative roles in industry.
- Staff numbers have been cut by 35% since 2010 on a like-for-like basis.
- The number of inspectors has fallen by 41% over 20 years.
- Changes in the balance between experienced and trainee inspectors has increased the training burden on experienced staff at the same time as numbers have fallen.
- The number of HSE inspections is falling and this reality is reflected in the 2022-23 business plan.
- HSE has an aging workforce meaning significant skills and experience could be lost shortly.

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# HSE Funding

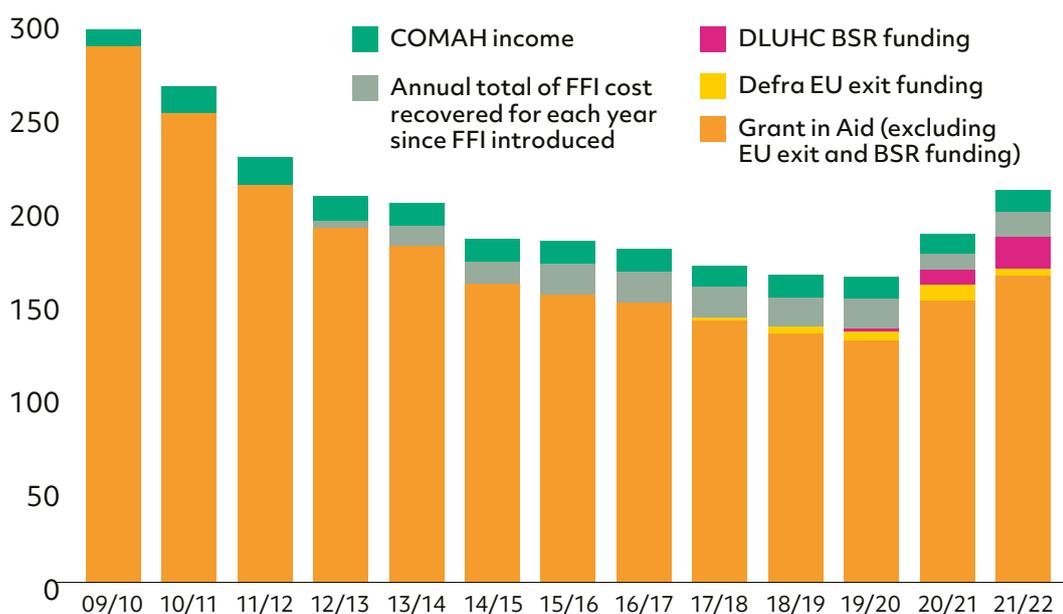
It's no exaggeration to say that the Health and Safety Executive has faced long term pressures due to a series of savage funding cuts and resource constraints.

Since 2010 HSE has experienced cuts to its core Grant-in-aid funding of around 45% in cash terms. From £228m in 2010 down to £126m in 2019, and more recently increased to £185m in 2022. Although the latter is a significant rise, it is still significantly lower than 2010, and when 12 years of inflation is factored in, funding in 2021-22 is still 35% down on 2009-10.<sup>1</sup>

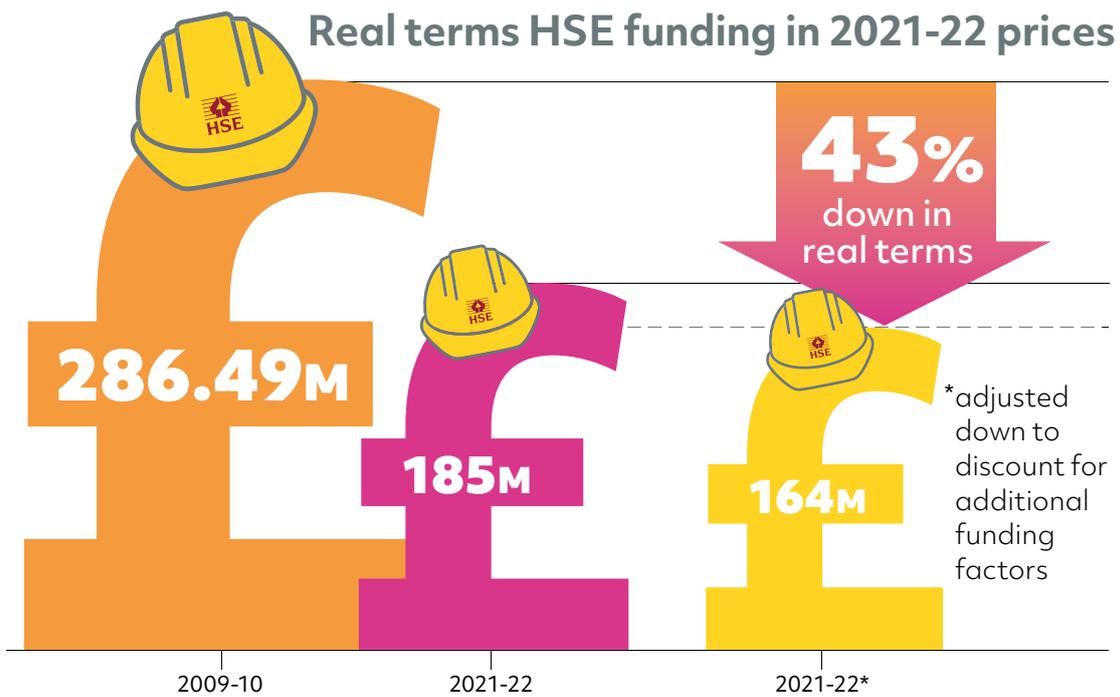
From 2010 to 2017 government funding covered all HSE functions and included virement of funding from Defra for the operations of the Chemical Regulations Division (CRD), and income from the industry for approval and licensing of chemicals.

From 2017-18 additional virement from Defra was introduced to fund the work on the repatriated duties from EU Exit on a UK chemicals regulatory regime.

## Real terms HSE income, 2021-2022 prices



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

Further, from 2019/20 onwards there was an additional annual virement from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for the Building Safety Regulator (BSR).

Therefore, to compare the £185m for 2021-22 to 2009-10 this figure needs to be adjusted down to discount for these additional funding factors to £164m. So, on a comparative basis this is £84m down on 2010, or in real terms £122m (43%) down.

Even the apparent increased generosity of £164m compared to some of the immediately preceding years includes one-off and ringfenced spend on replacement IT equipment and systems to modernise and assist with the new hybrid working reality.

## Other Income

HSE has some sources of income in addition to grant-in-aid and virement in the shape of various regimes that recover the costs relative to activity in industry sectors such as offshore safety and major hazard safety.

In response to the cuts to grant-in-aid from 2010, HSE was tasked by the then Minister for Health and Safety, Chris Grayling, to introduce the Fees for Intervention (FFI) cost recovery regime for its traditional inspection and investigative work (invoked when a material breach is identified). Since the introduction of FFI in 2012, the income it has generated is only a fraction of the reduction in grant-in-aid, and has got nowhere near the £40m per year HSE suggested could be raised in Field Operations Division (FOD) alone.

# Pay rates for HSE staff

The pay budget for staff has also been constrained for many years through tight central government control, resulting in cumulative below-inflation pay awards. This means comparison with the Retail Price Index (RPI) or average wage trends show sizeable pay erosion, which have been likened to a demotion by a civil service grade, or a 20 to 25% cut in many cases.

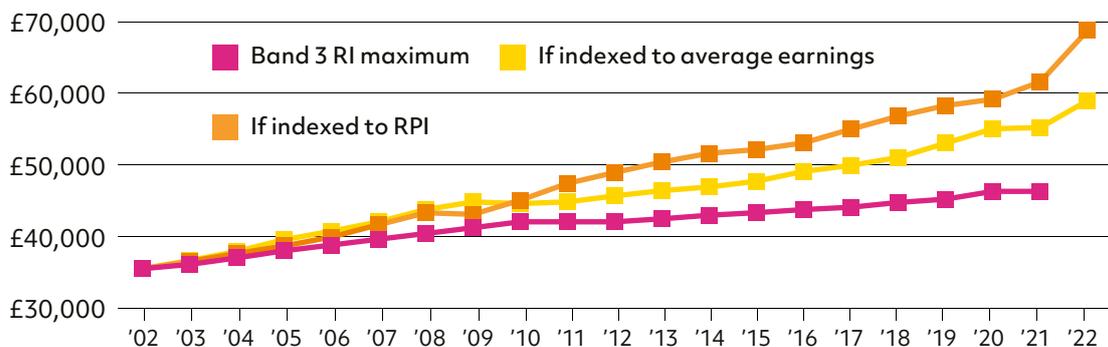
The graph below demonstrates the widening gap between the Band 3 Regulatory Inspector max (top of pay band) against RPI and average earnings growth. This is a typically shaped graph for most HSE staffing disciplines (with only the salary levels on the y axis needing to be adjusted for other HSE staffing roles).

The removal of the pay progression system in 2013 means that there is no current mechanism for rewarding any developing capability for individual staff. Staff employed since 2002 will not have reached the 'rate for the job' due to becoming stranded at or above mid-pay range with no prospect of advancement, and there is a consequential bunching at the lower end of the pay scale for newer starters or those that have been promoted. Many staff who are stranded on the pay ranges are being leapfrogged by new starters as, in order to recruit, HSE has to offer pay higher up the pay range. This causes anger and frustration.

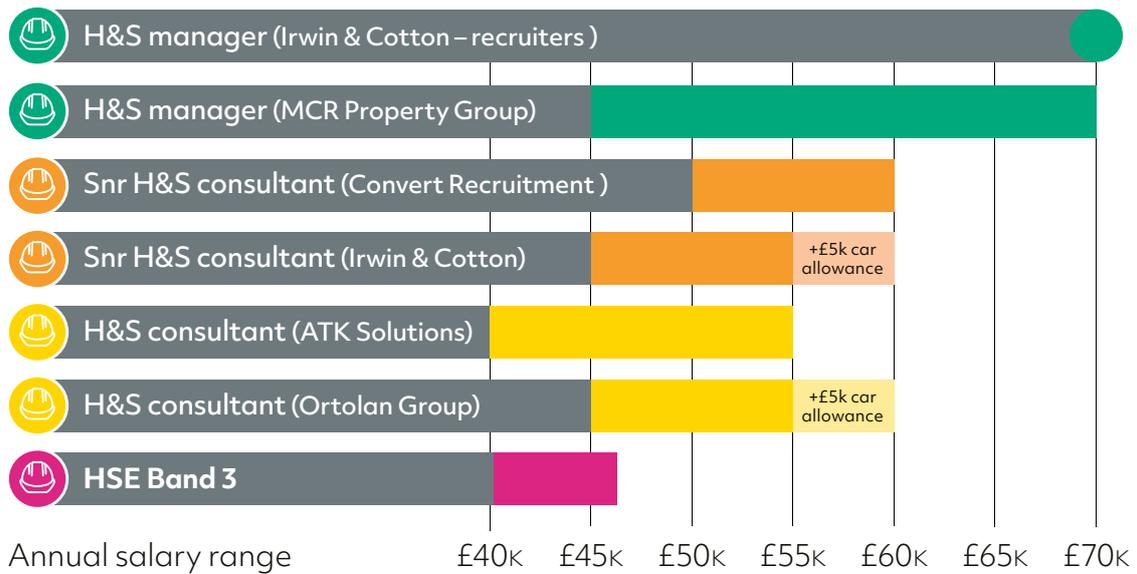
Prospect's analysis concludes that HSE's pay rates are no longer competitive with

## Band 3 Regulatory Inspector max increases vs inflation and average earnings

1 April 2002 – 1 April 2022



## Examples of Private Sector consultancy roles compared with HSE Band 3 regulatory inspector pay



Source: Source: Prospect analysis of ONS data and advertised vacancies – job vacancies reviewed May 2022

many of the relevant comparators and, as such, recruitment (other than for trainee inspectors/scientists) is difficult in many disciplines, with retention rates fluctuating with up-ticks in the comparator markets.

Although HSE have committed to the submission of a pay reform business case (and promised staff it's coming) to fix the broken elements of its pay system, its timing could not be worse with the current economic climate impacting on levels of affordability. High inflation is likely to eat away any benefit of pay reform, while the value of HSE's Spending Review 2021 settlement is being

significantly undermined by high inflation, eating up budgets at a pace not seen for 40 years.<sup>2</sup>

HSE are expending a lot of energy to deliver the long-awaited pay reform, and many members have told Prospect that they are waiting to see what is delivered and if it's not good enough they will then leave HSE. The worry is that if HSE fails to deliver something that is realistic (that is, delivers a progression mechanism and revalorises the rate for the job), and remains competitive with inflation, then their efforts will simply serve to accelerate the exodus of valuable staff out of HSE.

# Staffing resource

At the turn of the millennium HSE had more than 4,200 staff. Machinery of government changes have created fluctuations around numbers so a direct comparison cannot be made with today's staffing levels. However, discounting of staff from the rail and nuclear regulatory functions that have now separated from HSE, an informed view results in a like-for-like estimate for 2010 of 3,700 staff to use for comparison.

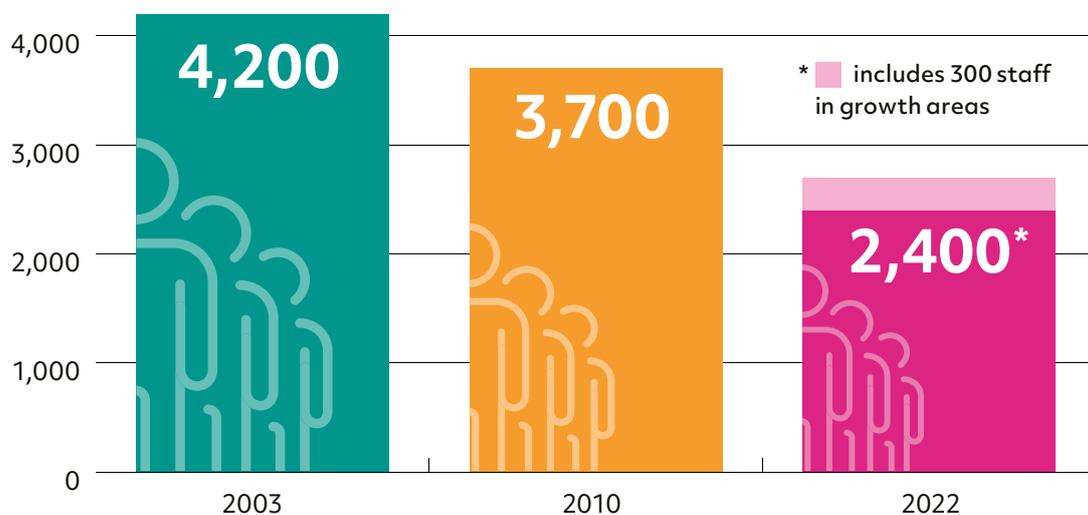
In 2022 headcount is around 2,700. All in all, there has been a shrinkage of around 1,000 staff since 2010. However, this is masked by the growth in the Chemical Regulations Division (CRD) which is up by 180 staff to scale

up to undertake Brexit-related repatriated duties, as well as growth in various other internal functions such as IT and Facilities, and to some extent Human Resources.

Therefore, it is estimated that without the growth in the areas where HSE are taking on additional regulatory responsibilities, comparatively HSE headcount would really be around 2,400 (down by 1,300 staff, a 35% reduction on the 3,700 figure for 2010).

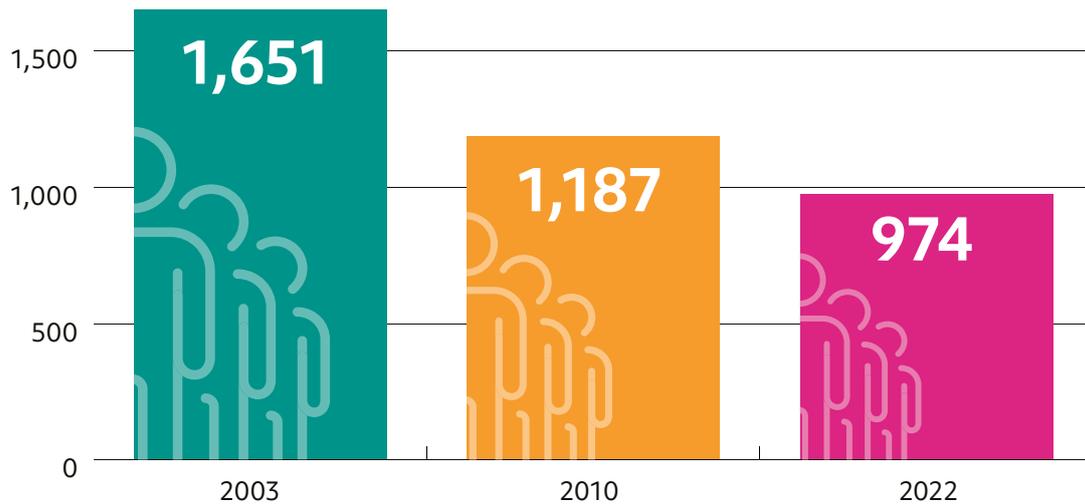
What the government's failure to adjust cash Spending Review allocations in light of current inflation levels, and further squeeze on public service budgets planned for future

## Estimated staff changes, 2003-2022



Source: Estimates using various sources

## Total inspector numbers, 2003-2022



Source: Estimates using various sources

years (5% efficiencies to be delivered in 2024) will do to these numbers is yet to be determined.<sup>3</sup> Where the axe would fall is also unknown, but some areas of HSE could not sustain a further hit.

Looking specifically at HSE Inspectors, 'All inspector' numbers (regardless of grade role or division) have fallen from a total figure of 1,651 in 2003, to 1,187 in 2010, to the current figure of 974 (a 41% reduction over 20 years).

Those who do most of the conventional activity of managing or undertaking inspection, investigation, enforcement, and prosecution are the 'Main grade regulatory inspectors' (Bands 1 to 4) in the Field Operations (factory visiting) and Construction Divisions. These have also reduced significantly, from 962 in 2003 to 661 in 2022.

Increasingly there has been a focus on 'frontline regulatory inspectors'. On a general basis HSE employs 381 qualified regulatory Inspectors (B3) which is 29% fewer than 2010 numbers. However, the impact on the divisions that do the bulk of the heavy lifting (for conventional activity) is more significant. Field Operations Division are down to 144 qualified regulatory inspectors. Construction Division are down to 103 - although there are

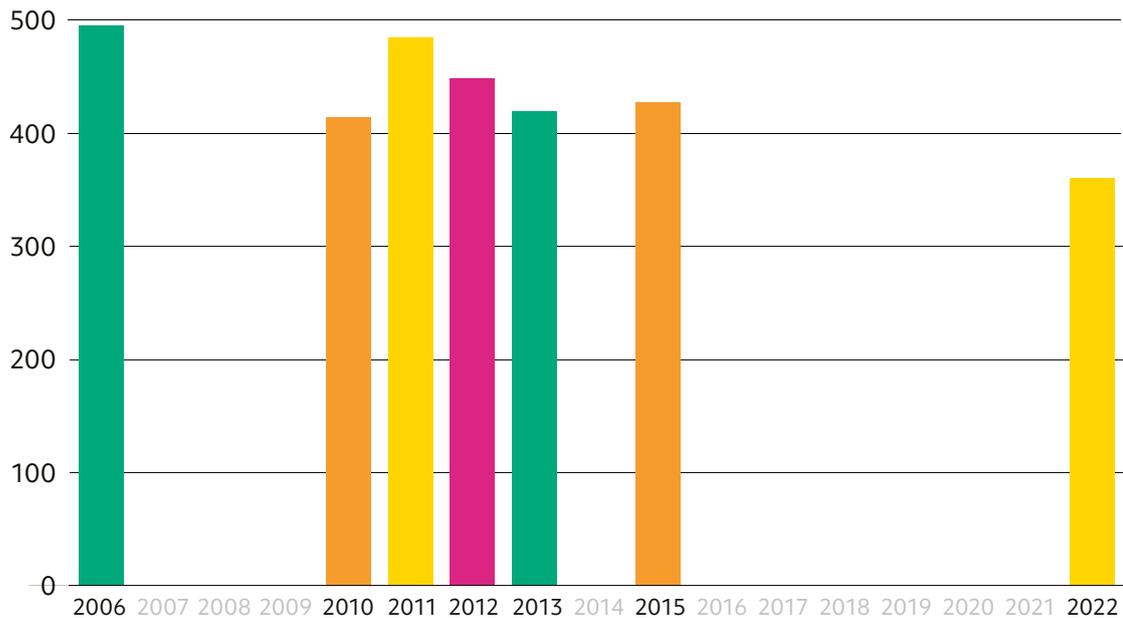
roughly 20 policy staff to be deducted and an unknown number of inspectors (possibly 30) still counted but working within the Building Safety Regulator.

This indicates that the frontline regulatory inspectors outside the "high-hazard" sectors is currently running at around 200 FTE qualified regulatory inspectors, supplemented by around 113 B4 trainee regulatory inspectors.

These qualified regulatory inspectors not only have to train the B4 trainees, they also undertake the other range of regulatory and advisory activities, from proactive inspection to accident investigation, enforcement, and prosecution.

It is important to remember that the ratio between qualified regulatory inspectors and trainee inspectors is historically significant and places an additional load on the organisation's ability to deliver. For example, in 2013 there were 378 regulatory inspectors supporting 41 trainee inspectors (one trainee to every nine experienced inspectors), whereas in 2022 the numbers are 200 to 113 (one trainee to every 1.7 inspectors). This is likely to become increasingly problematic as the qualified inspector cadre shrinks due to retirement and resignations while recruitment is increased to bolster numbers.

## Band 3/4 inspectors



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

A similar, if less acute, reduction in inspectors is seen in the other divisions such as the Chemicals Explosives and Microbiological Hazards Division (CEMHD) and Energy Division (onshore and offshore oil and gas, coal, and renewables); and among specialist inspectors (engineers and health/human science disciplines).

Inspector numbers in policy roles within the Engagement Policy Division (EPD) are also down, with smaller teams taking on additional workload, and in some cases with vacancies being carried as there is reluctance from the field divisions to release inspectors to these roles.

Scientific grades in Science Division (formerly the Health and Safety Laboratory) are at around 200. Although it's difficult to track the scientist grade numbers over time and determine a decline, in 2006 there was a total of 400 HSL staff, and another 75 in the Chief Scientist group. These are now part of Science Division which has 320 staff, indicative of

a 30 per cent reduction. Prospect union representatives in Science Division report shortages of critical scientists, difficulties in filling key vacancies and retention issues across a range of disciplines, arguing the linked double digit turnover rate is largely due to low pay for scientists that may also hold postgraduate qualifications.

Although the Chemicals Regulation Division is going through an expansion, recruitment of scientists has been difficult and so the locations where scientists can be based has been broadened. Evidence from the National Audit Office suggests the training effort in CRD is significant – estimated to be 25% of costs.<sup>4</sup>

Prospect are aware that long term retention trends of staff are also problematic with experienced and recently trained staff finding far greater reward in the private sector. These issues are again reflective of the low pay for highly qualified scientific graduates.

“...my pay doesn't reflect my experience and capability. I've done this role for nine years and I'm still nowhere near the supposed rate for the job, although I'm watching that erode too. At this rate I will never get there and am actively looking for employment elsewhere.”

### Ratio of B3 inspectors (Field Operations Division and Construction Division) to B4 trainee inspectors



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

# Impact on HSE Activity

## Inspections

Prior to 2010, annual inspection totals reported by HSE were more than 25,000 (more than 41,000 in 2006-07).<sup>5</sup>

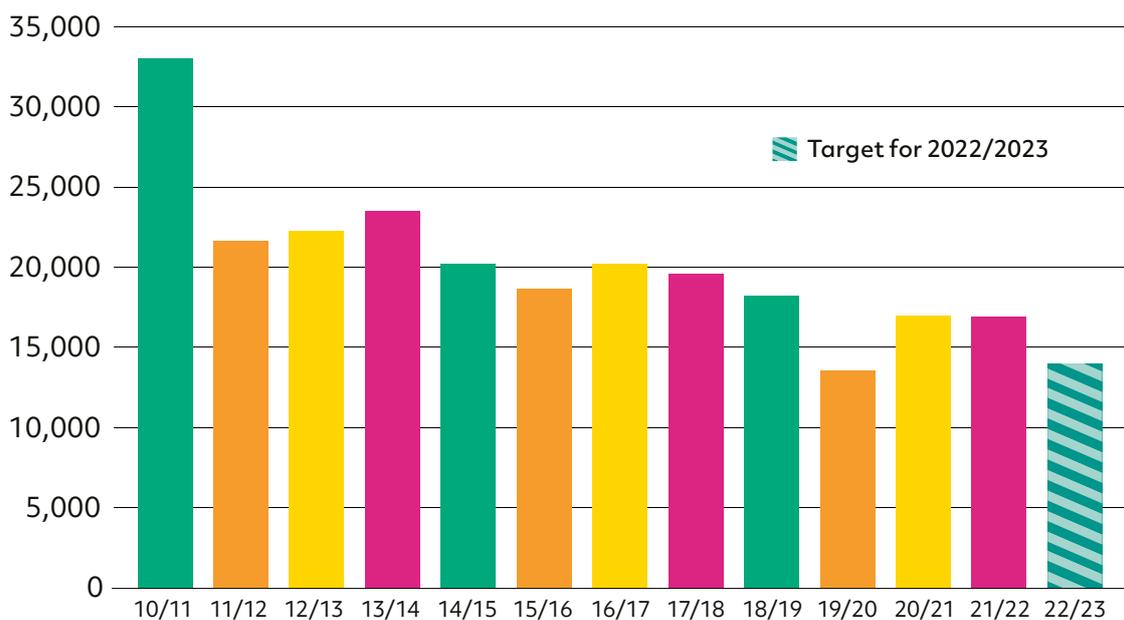
Proactive inspections are currently being delivered at around 16,000 to 17,000 per year. This cannot be sustainable as the inspector grades decline in numbers.

As the Fee-For-Intervention (FFI) material breach-rate of inspections has been around

50% for the years prior to Covid, half of the interventions bring recovered costs into HSE.

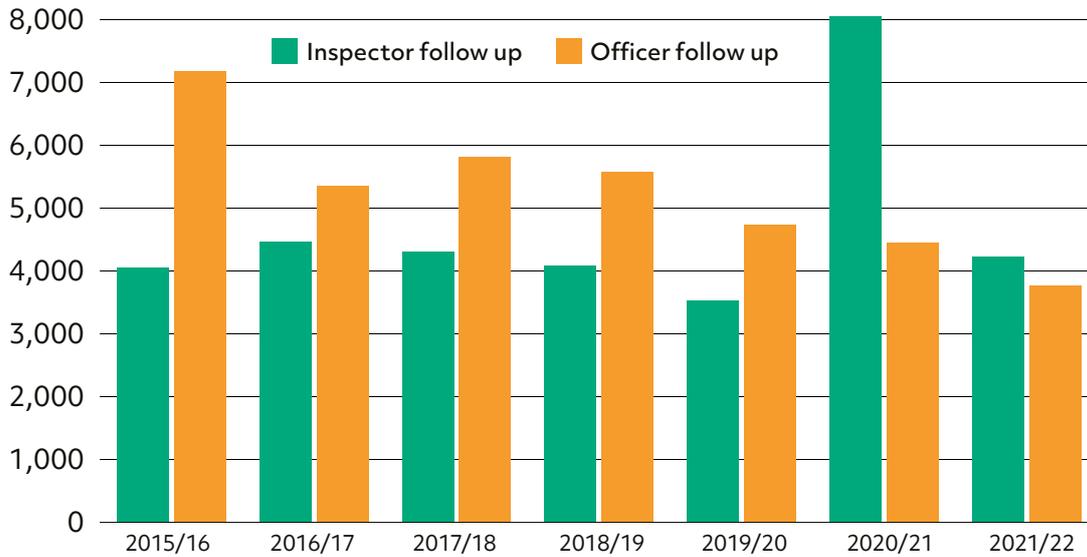
The target HSE had in its 2021-22 business plan was to undertake 14,000 inspections. Normally there is a general end of year rally to push up the final figure. During 2021-22 however, numbers were so low at the end of quarter 3 that there was a three-month push of 'inspection only' activity to get to the final figure of 16,874. This was only achievable by jettisoning or pausing all other activities.

## Inspections carried out by HSE inspectors, 2010-2023



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

## Triaged red/amber concerns followed up by inspectors and visiting officers



Source: HSE supplied to Prospect HSE branch

In the high-hazard sectors, Prospect have received reports from members that there are large numbers of sites or operators who, in accordance with Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) regulations should have an agreed intervention plan with inspections, but do not because of shortages of regulatory and specialist inspectors.

HSE's business plan for 2022-23 sets a range of targets for its various activities. In relation to inspections the target is to complete 14,000. It is likely that these targets will become increasingly difficult to achieve, primarily as experienced inspector resource likely decreases, and the training burden likely increases as the ratio of inspectors to trainees increases.

A further pressure on the target, but more significantly on the diminishing inspector resource, is that fatal accidents remain relatively stable (over a multi-year trend period). As such the likelihood of having one or more complex investigations per inspector increases, eroding any capacity the individual inspector will have to do proactive work.

### Concerns

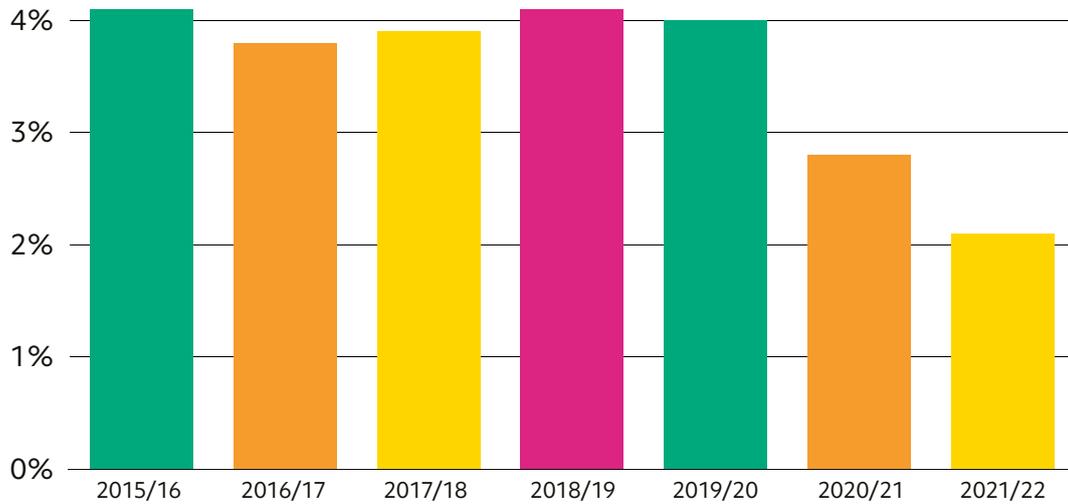
Triaged red and amber concerns (complaints received and considered as requiring follow-up) that are followed up by inspectors, which typically run at 4,250 per year, are supplemented by lower-level inquiries by visiting officer staff. The numbers of these have dropped from over 7,000 in 2015-16 to 3,700 in 2022.

### Investigations

Accident investigation is mainly driven by Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and HSE's internal selection criteria. This has historically resulted in only small numbers of total RIDDORs being selected for mandatory investigation.

Such low numbers have always been a concern. The Work and Pensions Select Committee report of 2004 raised concerns over the drop in investigations – 8.1% of all incidents reported under RIDDOR in 2001/02 to 5.6% in 2003/04.

## Investigations carried out as a proportion of reported injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences (RIDDOR)



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

More recently, from 2015-20 investigations have been at around the 4% level with a sharp decline for 2020-21 and 2021-22. There may be a pandemic legacy, but staffing resource is also a clear issue and the cancelling of investigations for this reason is at record levels.

Mandatory investigations can be cancelled for specific reasons ('investigation would be impractical', 'already taken all reasonably practicable precautions' and that 'HSE does not have sufficient resource') and recorded as such on the 'decision recording form' (DRF).

For 'impractical' and 'reasonably practicable measures taken' reasons of cancelling, the 2021-22 figures are significantly higher than in 2015-16.

- 'Investigations would be impractical': 35 in 2015-16; 88 in 2021-22
- 'All reasonably practical measures taken': 204 in 2015-16; 381 in 2021-22

This may indicate that Principal Inspectors, rather than allocating reported incidents for investigation, are being more proactive in applying the reasons to cancel, presumably

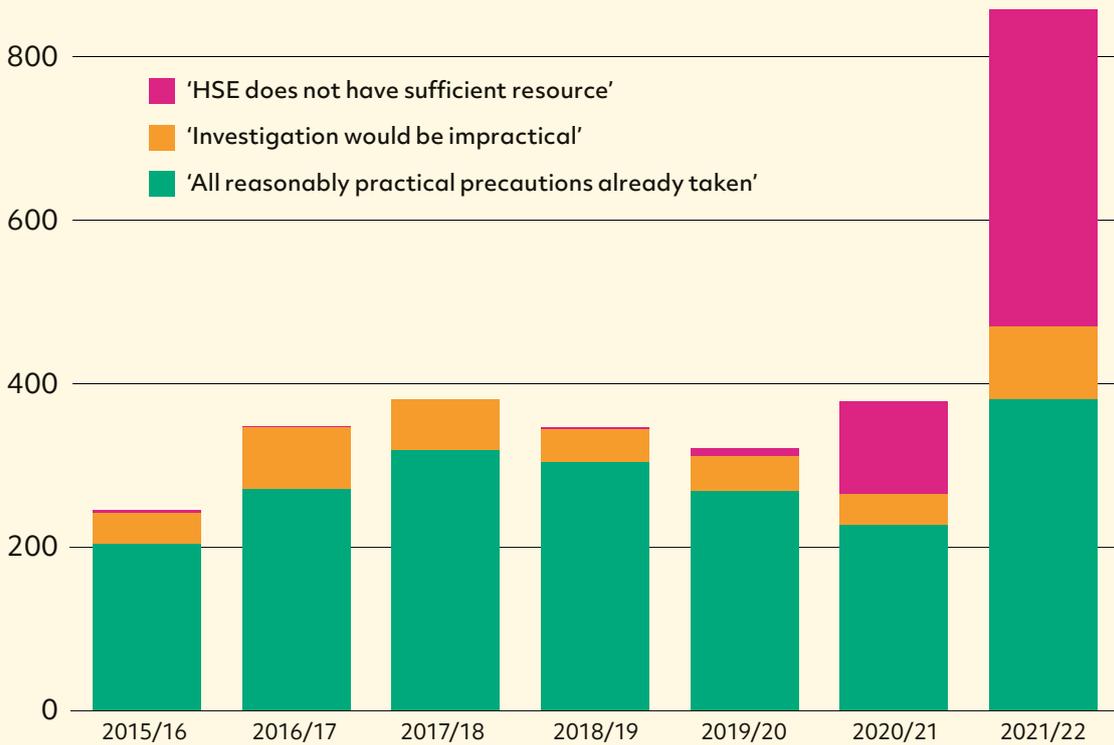
to actively manage the workloads of overstretched inspectors.

However, for 'inadequate resources' the trend is much starker and is also led by a proactive instruction from the senior management to actively stop all investigations except fatal accidents, or when a Head of Operations authorises an investigation. The steepness of this increase is exponential.

In the Field Operations Division, material breach rates (which initiate cost recovery from companies) for mandatory RIDDOR investigation are historically above 45% and in the Construction Division above 50%, although both have tailed off since 2020. This suggests that investigations are not being cancelled to chase Fee-For-Intervention cost recovery elsewhere, but that there is a genuine shortage of resource in the inspector grades and pressures to train up trainees.

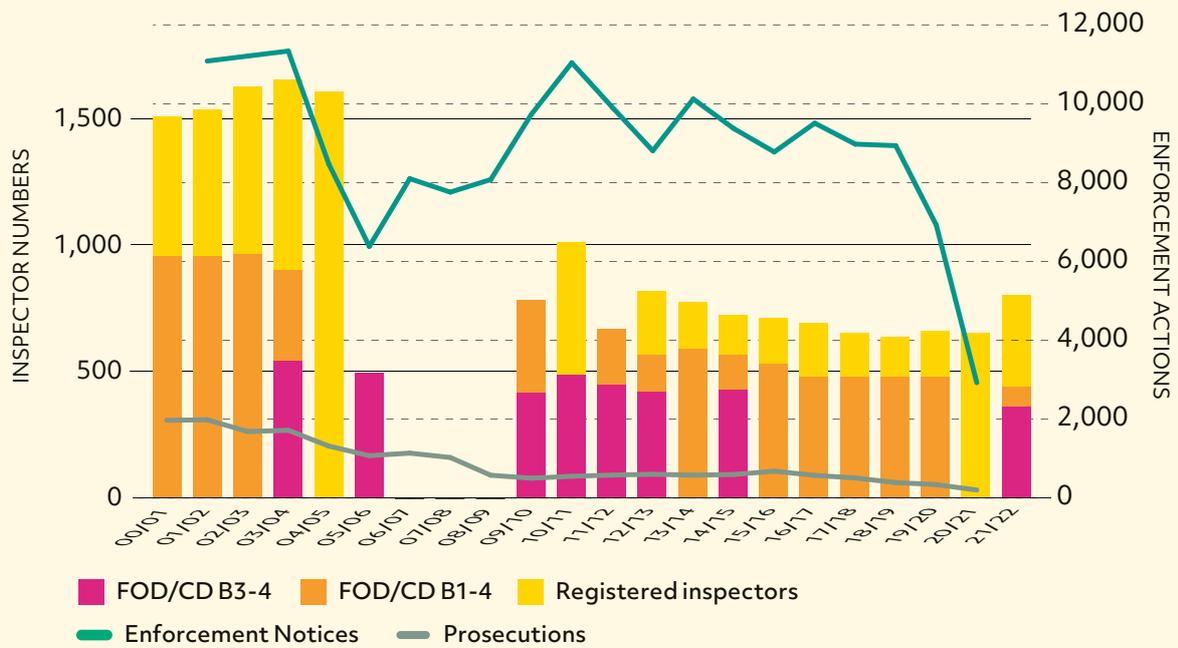
This resource pressure makes a nonsense of HSEs target to complete 90% of non-fatal investigations within 12 months. If you are not starting the investigations, they do not form part of the measurement, and so the

## Mandatory Investigations not undertaken, by reason



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

## Inspections carried out by HSE inspectors, 2001-2022



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

measure, met or not, can't be truly compared or benchmarked against prior performance based on actual numbers of investigations.

HSE is relying on using Decision Recording Form categories on a range of perceived lower level incidents that may or may not secure outcomes if investigated, and justifying it as prioritising resource elsewhere. From the perspective of securing justice for victims, this is akin to the Police not turning out for house break-ins due to lack of resource and saying it doesn't matter anyway as we

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***“...the frequency of people I know leaving for jobs in the private sector is increasing, it seems every week I hear of someone else going. It makes me reconsider my commitment to HSE, and regularly think about leaving too.”***

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are focussing on street robbery. It doesn't tackle the issue, but simply ignores it and explains it away as improved targeting.

Although not necessarily a response to the increase in cancelled mandatory investigations, HSE (as signalled in the HSE business plan 2022-23) is undertaking a review of its incident selection criteria, with the intention of linking selection to risk rather than actual harm. Although in the early stages, it is understood that the intention is to develop a weighting that can be applied to an individual incident report, and that the weighting will include some reference to available resource, which could result in the incident not being investigated due to lack of resource.

### **Enforcement figures**

The analysis around the annual numbers of enforcement notices being served is less clear as there are significant fluctuations in the figures between around 7,000 and 11,000 right up to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The short-term trend from 2017, however, is a clear reduction in Enforcement Notices being served, plus a sharp decline in prosecutions. This correlates with the HSE inspector figure dropping below 700 and the FOD/CD inspector figure dropping below 500 in that year.

# Age profile

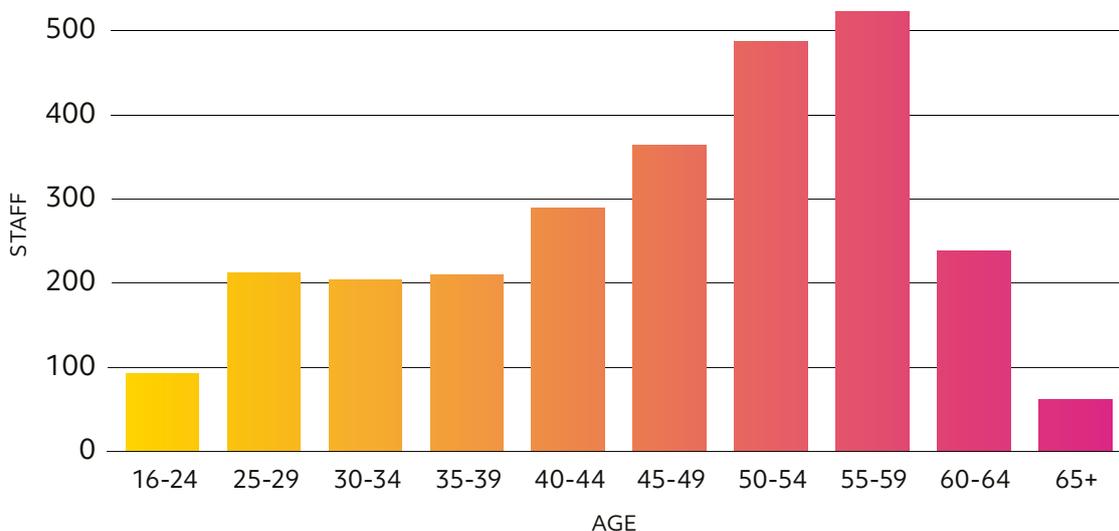
HSE has an aging workforce, with 31% of total staff above 55 years old and significant additional numbers in the 50-55 range. The majority of these will have access to early retirement should they wish.

The upper bands have higher rates of over-55s, and generally account for longevity and career-based promotion. The administrative discipline and Band 6 are also high when it comes to the over-55-year-old demographic, but this doesn't create the same elongated training/capability burden when staff leave and are replaced.

The Chemicals Explosives and Microbiological Hazards and Energy Divisions have significant age issues and will include the disciplines of engineering/safety specialists, health specialists and offshore specialists.

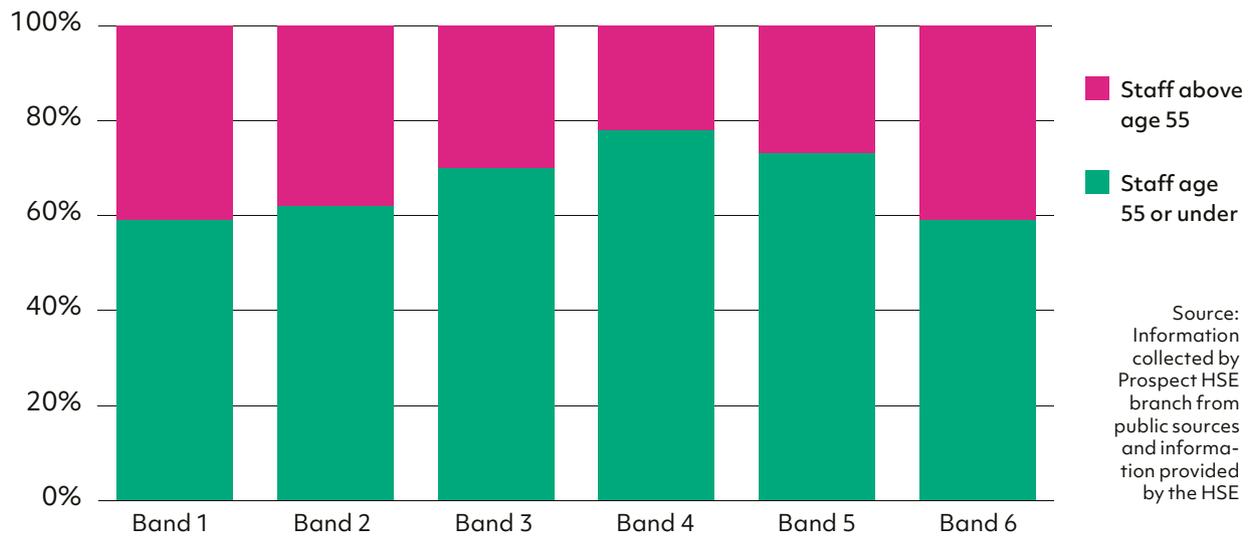
Although the Regulatory Inspector and the scientific disciplines appear less problematic, these are the 'through grading' training roles which take significant time to replace via early years training, promotion to grade and additional career development. If the career offer and reward package are not pitched right, retention weaknesses adds to numbers leaving. This is a situation Prospect believes exists currently.

## Age range across HSE



Source: Information collected by Prospect HSE branch from public sources and information provided by the HSE

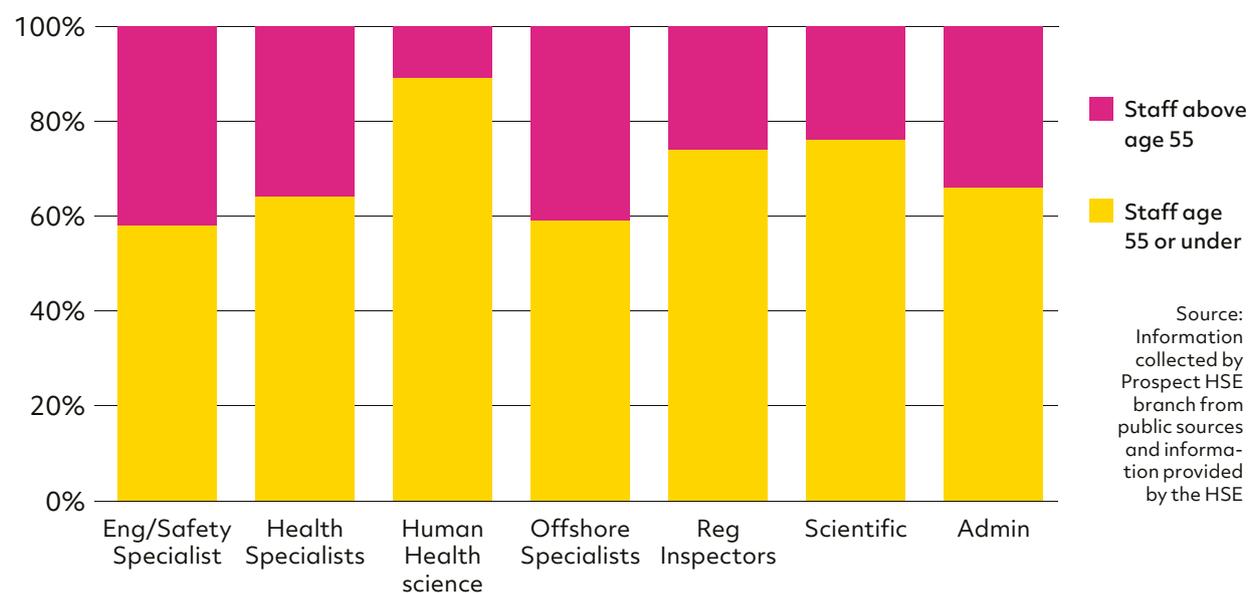
## Staff above/below 55 years old, by Grade



## Staff above/below 55 years old, by Division



## Staff above/below 55 years old, by Discipline





# Other factors

Of course, in a changing world, not all falls in outputs can be simply be put down to staffing numbers. Some impacts are directly linked but others create barriers to efficiency and therefore have a more indirect impact. To explain a few indirect impacts:

The IT systems for work recording and intelligence gathering are incredibly poor and unreliable, although there are long-standing plans to replace them. The existing systems have created duplication of recording, provide a poor ability to extract useful information, and staff experiencing loss of recording effort when the programmes fail to save, crash or simply (yet inexplicably) lose data.

Recalling the balance of B4 trainee inspectors to B3 qualified regulatory inspectors in Field Operations and Construction Divisions, the ratio changed from one B4 to every nine B3s in 2013 to the current ratio of around one to two, which means that almost half of the B3 cadre are actively (and likely intensively) training someone else. This again will have a detrimental impact on outputs.

If you have fewer inspectors, the likely geographical spread of where they are located will be smaller. This results in inefficiencies when it comes to travelling to and from sites as greater distances need to be covered, and therefore time spent on travel constrains time spent on inspection and investigation, enforcement and evidence

collection. Several specialist inspector teams have, due to recruitment difficulties, become organised into 'national' teams and, as such, the inspectors are burdened with significant travel and inconvenience of having to stay away from home more frequently.

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***“...as team members have left, they simply haven't been replaced. There is an expectation that I will pick up some of the work, and I'm feeling very stressed. I have even sought a move to another team to reduce my workload, but I'm told I cant be released as there are too few staff to let me go.”***

HSE has over time (and will have far into the next decade) lost significant intelligence in the form of experienced staff retiring or leaving for alternative employment.



Furthermore, the removal of detailed and comprehensive guidance documents, withdrawn and no longer accessible to inspectors as a consequence of the 2011 Löfstedt Review – ‘Reclaiming Health and Safety for all’,<sup>6</sup> lauded as a reduction in burdens on industry, is an inefficiency on inspectors, as, overnight, accepted standards outlined in this guidance were no longer something inspectors could refer to during enforcement decisions.

The consequence is that standards and guidance coupled with access to knowledgeable colleagues is no longer (or is less) available, which slows down an inspectors’ consideration of issues they come across that are beyond their own experience (and puts a huge burden on less experienced staff). This requires inspectors to return to first principles problem solving and conducting base research more frequently to find what would be deemed as an acceptable expectation or standard.

The growth in ‘the fear of’ personal injury litigation and the risks to profits from the new sentencing guidelines has meant that the pre-trial phase of prosecution has become increasingly more complex and time consuming, especially in agreeing (or not) causation, harm, and culpability.

This may be ameliorated with the introduction of the new Legal Services Division taking on prosecution approval and case management, but the limited staffing of it has yet to be tested, especially if prosecutions take an upturn in the future. Initial indications suggest that it’s becoming more difficult to get prosecutions approved and the relationship between internal lawyers and inspectors needs to develop.



# HSE's Strategy for 2022-2032

## 'Protecting People and Places'

Although HSE is an arms-length body, and independent of government, it still operates in a political climate, serving government and ministerial interests. HSE has to maintain its role of being an effective regulator and keeping workplace health and safety's profile low during the electoral cycle.

True independence is fettered by the oversight of the minister, the parent department (Department for Work and Pensions), the constraints of the funding model and constraints on the pay system. This results in HSE having to cut its cloth to match its funding constraints, rather than being explicit about its difficulties and need for additional funding, inspectors and other key staff to address the expectations of the wider public.

The strategy is quickly becoming a largescale change programme as HSE is seeking to reshape itself, through restructure and consideration of delivery functions. Without increased resources, at best this will simply be a sticking plaster, a moving around of the deckchairs to accommodate change. At worst it could be the wholesale dismantling of HSE as it currently is, and replacing it with an inferior organisation that can claim to be an improvement through counting outputs and presenting them as effective regulation.

Prospect consider HSE's latest 10-year strategy as deregulatory in its approach, reflecting the diminishing organisation it is. The strategy says:

"Our expectation and evidence suggest that most businesses have the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to manage safety risk for themselves. The maturity of business and their increased level of understanding of safety risks means that we can look to regulate in different ways."<sup>7</sup>

Prospect is concerned that this means a departure from previous expectations, and that businesses will be left more and more to self-regulate. They will not be routinely inspected to make sure they comply. Instead, they will be "engaged" through the likes of call centres, digital platforms and social media campaigns. Although current available digital tools are more sophisticated, this approach has been criticised by previous select committee examinations of HSE.

In devising this strategy, HSE did not seek, in a formal public consultation, what stakeholders such as trade unions, victims' groups, or the general public, thought of their plans. This demonstrates a high level of corporate arrogance, and a detachment from the reality of a broader expectation of the regulator. In short HSE doesn't know what the public and other stakeholders want or expect from HSE in terms of a model, service delivery and outputs.



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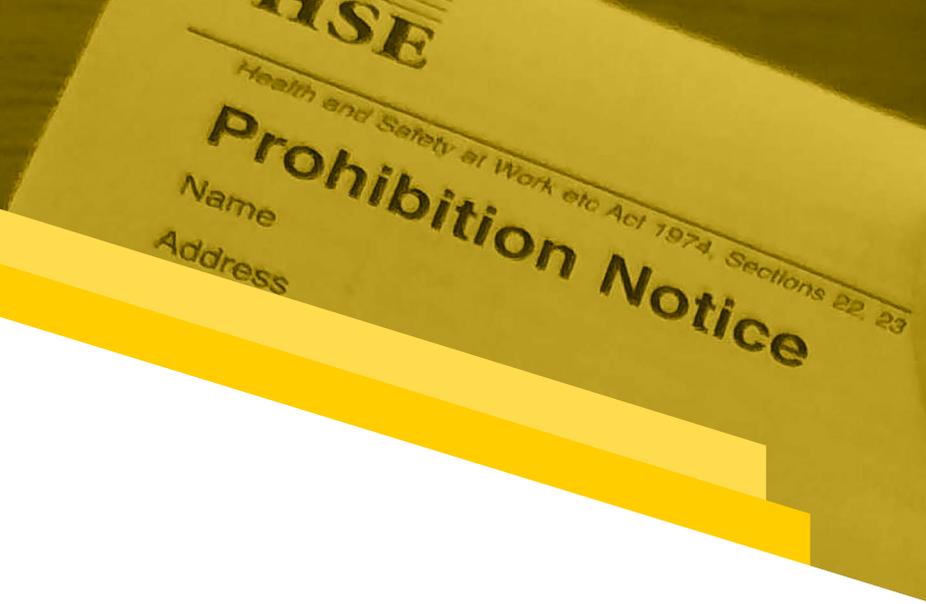
*“Currently only fatal accidents have any degree of certainty of follow-up. This is a direct consequence of the decline of inspectors and the record numbers of mandatory investigations routinely cancelled. Prospect believes this situation is unacceptable.”*

If Covid demonstrated one thing in relation to health and safety at work, it's that the public expects workplaces that don't comply with the law, or don't have the appropriate standards in place, will be inspected by appropriately qualified staff. Unfortunately, with only a rump inspectorate, that expectation is continuously being failed. HSE has instead dallied with the use of contractors (companies with experience of debt-collecting, for example) with low levels of training and skills to visit businesses and create an impression of still having a presence on the ground.

Prospect members are concerned HSE will increasingly look for ways to maintain this illusion of 'busyness' by presenting high numbers of counted contacts (phone or visit) as 'effectiveness' without having to deploy trained and qualified inspectors to undertake interventions which secure sustained compliance.

Currently only fatal accidents have any degree of certainty of follow-up. This is a direct consequence of the decline of inspectors and the record numbers of mandatory investigations routinely cancelled. Prospect believes this situation is unacceptable.

The public has a reasonable expectation that if they or their loved ones are seriously injured at work, then an investigation will take place and negligent employers be held to account. That this is no longer happening is a shocking failure to secure justice, and a failure that can only get worse unless the decline in inspector numbers is reversed.



# Conclusion

Long-term impacts created by government funding decisions and several latent factors coming together have created the perfect storm for the country's principal health and safety regulator.

The degree of pressure that HSE is under is increasing and, if not alleviated soon, at best HSE will be unable to sustain its reputation as a respected regulator and at worst, will struggle to exist even in diminished form.

Failures to recruit and retain the correct mix of skilled specialist staff, from scientists and policy-makers to inspectors will lead to an inability to deliver advisory and regulatory functions, justice for victims, and be an effective deterrent to bad employers and those who do not take the law seriously.

Prospect have long championed the HSE and the role our members undertake within it. We have previously campaigned and lobbied to ensure funding levels and models are appropriate, but we have never felt so close to the precipice.

It's time for a new campaign to save the HSE and demand a realignment of the HSE, to ensure its independence and activities are in line with public and stakeholder expectations.<sup>8</sup>



# Endnotes

- 1 Real terms comparisons have been calculated using standard Treasury GDP deflator method as published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gdp-deflators-at-market-prices-and-money-gdp-september-2022-quarterly-national-accounts>
- 2 For analysis see for example IFS, <https://ifs.org.uk/articles/inflation-squeeze-public-services>
- 3 For commentary see <https://ifs.org.uk/collections/autumn-statement-2022> and <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2022/11/Help-today-squeeze-tomorrow.pdf>
- 4 <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Regulating-after-EU-Exit.pdf>
- 5 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmworpen/246/246i.pdf>
- 6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reclaiming-health-and-safety-for-all-lofstedt-report>
- 7 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/assets/docs/the-hse-strategy.pdf>
- 8 Prospect started this discussion with a call to action passed by the 2022 TUC Congress: <https://congress.tuc.org.uk/motion-56-hse-resourcing/#sthash.jsvGRnW5.9rFKSXdK.dpbs>



# HSE under pressure: A perfect storm

Prospect union's report on the long  
term causes and latent factors

