

Public Buildings - Competent Person requirements

As an employer, you must appoint a competent person or people to help you meet your health and safety legal duties.

What a competent person does

They should have the skills, knowledge and experience to be able to recognise hazards in your business and help you put sensible controls in place to protect workers and others from harm.

Qualifications and training

It's not usually essential for them to have formal qualifications and they're not required by law to have formal training, although it can help.

Who you can appoint

You could appoint (one or a combination of):

- yourself
- one or more of your workers
- someone from outside your business

Usually, managing health and safety isn't complicated and you can do it yourself with the help of your workers. You know your workplace best and the risks associated with it.

If there's a competent person within your workforce, use them rather than a competent person from outside your business.

Using a consultant or adviser

If your business or organisation doesn't have the competence to manage health and safety in-house, for example, if it's large, complex or high risk, you can get [help from a consultant or adviser](#). But remember, as the employer, managing health and safety will still be your legal duty.

Get the right help

Competence and suitability

You must make sure the consultant or adviser you use is competent and suitable. It's not uncommon for employers to spend a lot for advice that doesn't help them comply with health and safety law, so it pays to source good quality advice.

Make sure they:

- have evidence of relevant training and knowledge, such as formal qualifications or practical experience of providing advice in your industry or area of work
- are adequately insured

Establish what help you need

They should help you to better manage health and safety for yourself. Unless you're clear about what you need, you probably won't get the right help.

Ask yourself if you need help with:

- health and safety management across the business
- putting things in place to control risks
- checking and maintaining controls

Explain clearly what you need and ask them to confirm what they'll do and when they'll do it.

If you just need a one-off visit to enable you to manage health and safety in-house, be clear at the outset to avoid tying yourself to a long contract.

Their advice should:

- be specific to the risks in your workplace – generic advice often fails to identify and control key risks, and it can be difficult to identify risks unless they visit your workplace
- be based on their knowledge and experience of your industry and processes
- concentrate on practical action to control significant risks, not over-respond to trivial risks
- recommend control measures that are reasonably practicable
- not generate paperwork for the sake of it

Make sure they'll provide a proper handover to help explain the key risks and controls recommended. If you do not think they've provided you with a practical, sensible solution to your problem, ask for an explanation and see if there's a simpler alternative. You can find specific advice on the most common risks in the workplace and how to manage them using the links below.

Asbestos

Confined spaces

Display screen equipment

Electrical safety

Equipment and machinery

Fire safety

Gas safety

Harmful substances

Manual handling

Noise

Personal protective equipment

Pressure equipment

Radiations

Slips and trips

Vibration

Working at height

Workplace transport

Work-related stress