

"We shouldn't be afraid to take risks, even if that means risking failure."
Tony Blair

Staff News



We are pleased to announce the appointment of **Victoria Hogg**. Victoria joined us in January from the

Highways Agency where she was a Team Leader in the Safety Strategy and Management Group. Victoria's academic qualifications include a PhD in civil engineering and she is currently completing an MSc in risk management at Southampton University.

Unfortunately, we also had to say farewell to **Brian Campbell** – who has been tempted away by the Swiss Alps and the opportunity of helping Nestle roll-out risk management arrangements across the group's global operations.

Further details of our team can be found on our [web site](#).



Cost of Housing & Council Tax Benefits

Housing and council tax benefits, totalling £11bn per year, are administered by local authorities but funded by the Department of Work and Pensions. Risk Solutions has recently begun a major study to help the DWP gain a better understanding of the costs involved in administering these benefits. The study will provide better information on which to base decisions on redesigning the benefits, modernising delivery, and developing innovative fraud strategies.

Using cluster analysis, we have chosen a representative sample of local authorities who share similar characteristics thought to drive the costs of administering these benefits. We are now in the process of defining a cost model and survey to capture good quality information from local authorities. To ensure this information is as accurate as possible we are also undertaking in-depth visits with 30 local authorities to map the key processes involved. Each local authority administers these benefits in a unique way and capturing reliable cost information is a significant challenge. Our ability to gather information from diverse sources (and recorded in different ways) and then analyse it using techniques that take account of the uncertainty involved will be key to the success of this project.



Luas Risk Review

The Irish Government is investing heavily in Dublin's transport infrastructure and the Luas tram system is a central and high-profile part of its plans. The €775million project is being procured by the Railway Procurement Agency and will be operated by Connex Ireland. Passenger service operations are due to start on 30th June and, earlier this year, the RPA asked us to perform an independent review of the safety risks associated with the operational phase. The review had two objectives: to give the RPA assurance that the key risks are being managed and identify how it could monitor safety performance over the coming years.

Our approach was to assess the processes used to identify and manage the key risks by reviewing documents and interviewing key people on the project. We found that safety risks had been given careful consideration throughout the project and, by adhering to best practice and involving key stakeholders in safety decisions, we were confident that the risks were being well managed. To identify appropriate monitoring arrangements we developed a risk framework linking individual hazards to top events and used it to consider the extent to which trends in the number of incidents or precursors could be used as safety performance measures.

Improving Safety Communications

Improving safety performance is important to many of our clients and none more so than the Rail Safety and Standards Board. Over recent years we have worked on a wide range of projects including various initiatives to reduce human error – particularly in the area of Signals Passed at Danger, or SPADs. In a recent project we investigated the effectiveness of various media used by the rail industry to communicate key safety messages. This found that the material was of a high standard, but that the quality of local briefings and company safety culture was more variable, and had a measurable effect on performance at reducing SPADs.

To raise the standard of briefings generally, RSSB commissioned Risk Solutions to develop a good practice guide on safety communications. The guide took the form of an A5 booklet addressing topics from the competencies and skills of briefers to developing a communications strategy and practical tips on conducting a briefing 'to remember'. The guide concludes by describing how to evaluate the safety briefing process and describes our system of benchmarking good communications practice.

