

Career spotlight: Scott Middleton

In this interview, Scott Middleton shares his career path and advice on successfully managing risk and making an impact at work to inspire those up and coming in their careers.



How did you get into health, safety, risk management as a career?

I never set out to have a career in health and safety, my background was in plumbing which I really enjoyed, however in my second role there was a real focus around water safety which included writing detailed legionella risk assessments in quite complex buildings. I fully embraced this challenge and it led me to gain a qualification in health and safety so it all started there with the NEBOSH Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health in 2013.

What Qualifications do you have, which have proved most valuable and what advice would you give those starting

BRIEF BIO/ KEY CAREER MILESTONES:

Scott Middleton has been a health and safety specialist since 2018. He is based in the North East of Scotland and works for his local health board, NHS Grampian, where he provides advice, education, and support on a wide range of health and safety related risks that face the organisation to a large, and diverse workforce.

Prior to this he specialised in water, working as a Legionella Team Leader for Aberdeen City Council where he led a small team responsible for the provision of a comprehensive legionella risk control, inspection, and monitoring service. By trade, Scott is an experienced and fully qualified plumber where he served as an apprentice and journeyman at Aberdeenshire Council.

Name:

Scott Middleton

Position:

Health and Safety Specialist

Organisation:

NHS Grampian

Industry/ Sector:

Healthcare

out or considering a career in risk management?

For my role in health and safety, I hold the NEBOSH General Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health, the NEBOSH National Diploma in Occupational Safety and Health and I am also studying year 2 of an MSc degree in Safety and Risk Management at University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

Over the years I've also managed to pick up several other qualifications in specific areas such as human factors, legionella, occupational noise, and construction safety.

A recognised higher-level qualification such as the NEBOSH National Diploma or equivalent gains entry into higher level health and safety roles. I managed to gain all of my qualifications whilst being in a permanent job role at the same time.

I found that the NEBOSH National Diploma provided me with a sound technical understanding of health and safety, whereas the MSc that I am currently studying provides me with different skills such as researching, critical thinking, report writing, and referencing.

What are the benefits of joining professional organisations such as the

International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM)?

As a chartered safety and health practitioner it would be understandable for me to focus all of my focus towards health and safety, potentially forgetting about risk management in all its forms. However, by being part of the IIRSM community I am surrounded by a diverse network covering a range of sectors, and risk disciplines such as business continuity and crisis management, compliance, emergency planning, environmental management, insurance, health and safety, project management, quality management, risk management, security, and more.

In terms of networking and membership benefits I have always valued my relationship with IIRSM and have found that their support and encouragement in my early career hugely beneficial. I have been able to meet and work with individuals and organisations from many businesses and charitable sectors. The membership engagement is something I believe in passionately which is why I am actively involved in a number of IIRSM initiatives.

What does a typical week look like for you?

My role over the COVID-19 pandemic has changed somewhat, I am now more involved in larger projects that effect the wider

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organisation, rather than the individual sectors that I was previously aligned to. I regularly attend meetings, and can receive an enquiry, or a request for assistance on any health and safety related topic as my organisation is very diverse. This does require a lot of effort to keep up to date and knowledgeable on all the information that is out there. Very often my workforce want help on how to translate the requirements into practical solutions for their individual areas.

I've recently learned new skills by developing some of our face to face training courses into online modules using specialist software.

What is the biggest career challenge you have faced, how did you approach the challenge, what was the outcome and would you approach it differently with hindsight?

It is hard to define one particular moment as there have been so many! I've had to overcome a lot of personal challenges such as public speaking anxiety, and imposter syndrome to name a few. Again, the older I get the more comfortable I am in myself.

Moving from one particular sector to another was challenging as it took a while for me to adapt. This shouldn't put others off though because the vast majority of skills (whether technical or soft) will be transferable.

What is your proudest achievement so far?

I was recently given the opportunity to judge the 'Mentor of the Year' category at IIRSM's 2022 Risk Excellence Awards. I have also recently supported another safety and health practitioner achieve chartered status which was satisfying.

What/ who inspires you and why?

I am inspired by the small gestures in life such as someone thanking me for some advice I gave them which worked, or following training delivery etc. I take inspiration from

BRIEF BIO/ KEY CAREER MILESTONES:

Scott is a IIRSM Fellow, and holds IIRSM's Recognised Safety Practitioner (RSP) status. He is also a Chartered Member of IOSH, and a Full Member of The Water Management Society. In addition, he is actively involved on a voluntary basis with the IIRSM, this includes sitting on the Content and Editorial Panel, the Mentoring Platform, the Emerging Risk Leaders' Network, Chair of the inaugural IIRSM Scotland Region Branch and will judge the 2022 IIRSM Risk Excellence Awards.

Scott has a keen interest in music, reading and watching football and snooker.

things outside the sphere of health and safety such as listening to music, and spending time with my family. I have a mentor too who is distant from my own organisation. I regularly keep in touch with them as they provide me with impartial and confidential advice.

What are your most important tips for someone starting out on their health, safety, risk management career?

Never aim to be a perfectionist, otherwise you will never be satisfied in what you do!

What are your career aspirations now?

I am at a place in my career where I am happy where I am. In terms of personal development I will continue focusing on my MSc degree, and continue supporting IIRSM members via the new mentoring platform.

Understandably within the healthcare sector there is an emphasis on patient safety. How do you try and ensure that this is balanced against occupational safety and health?

This is something me and my team are actively trying to address. I believe education is key and can be done by developing and delivering health and safety training aimed at middle and senior management. Of course, it will be something that takes a bit of time to change, however I do believe we are heading in the right direction. We need a healthy and

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safe workforce to adequately care for our patients.

How can you be a Leader as a Health and Safety Specialist?

This is where I believe non-technical skills such as teamwork, listening, and decision-making are key. I believe I am open-minded and non-judgemental which also helps. A lot of these skills develop with age.

About IIRSM's Emerging Risk Leaders Network

The IIRSM Emerging Risk Leader Network (ERLN) is a working group of ambitious professionals who are proactively looking to get ahead in their careers or support others to do so. The purpose of the Network is to:

- Support its members in developing their influence and profile within their place of work and the wider risk community.

- Empower members to build career success by learning from and supporting others from different industries, risk disciplines and geographical locations to cross-pollinate ideas, knowledge, best practice and lessons learned.
- Facilitate opportunities to showcase member capabilities through delivering informative and novel

ideas and solutions through different channels.

- Promote the importance of developing risk and leadership skills early on in careers.

To find out more and for sponsorship opportunities, visit:

www.iirsm.org/iirsm-emerging-risk-leaders-network