The Safety Futures Initiative



Zoe Garstang introduces an exciting new development – the SCSC Safety Futures Initiative (SFI) - to help encourage and nurture the next generation of skilled safety engineers. She introduces the SFI, describes its aims and activities and explains how to become a member.

Safety Demographics

As the safety community, and engineers in general, approach a retirement 'cliff' [1] it is now more important than ever to encourage and nurture the next generation of skilled safety engineers.

With approximately 19.5% of UK engineers due to retire by 2026 [2], there is an urgent need to diversify the demographic of safety engineers to ensure knowledge and skills are maintained.

There are a number of challenges contributing to the growing gap between the number of safety professionals required and those available. These include: an outdated view of the safety profession, a lack of understanding of what it involves, a lack of awareness of routes into the industry and an unclear career pathway once the individual has embarked on their journey.

Introducing the Initiative

The SCSC Safety Futures Initiative (SFI) seeks to address these by bringing together Young and Early-Career (YEC) individuals working, or interested, in safety. The Initiative provides a supportive environment within which to network, develop skills and share knowledge.

This Initiative is designed to encourage more people to consider a career in safety by showcasing what it has to offer. In doing this, the SFI can challenge the outdated perceptions about safety engineering and the routes into industry.

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SFI Aims

The SFI has four main aims:

1. To establish a community of like-minded individuals to share ideas and experiences as they progress through their studies/careers.
2. To create a forum in which YECs can share technical knowledge and develop both personally and professionally.
3. To increase awareness and visibility of the safety-related career opportunities and pathways.
4. To influence SCSC activities in order to meet the needs of SFI Members.

For those considering a career in safety, the SFI increases visibility of different career paths (e.g. apprenticeships, study options, government initiatives, etc.) to ensure they are widely accessible. For those in the early stages of their career, the SFI provides professional support and an insight into potential next steps. In the SFI, promotion and awareness of safety careers is just as important as retaining existing skilled professionals.

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The SFI integrates with a number of existing SCSC activities including involvement in the Steering Group, Working Groups and opportunities within the annual Symposium (SSS). Members of the SFI will benefit from a supported transition from the SFI to the SCSC as they progress in their career.

SFI Activities

Following an initial Launch Event in early 2021, the SFI will be organising a variety of further events and workshops throughout the year. These will be in addition to, and sometimes alongside, existing SCSC events (such as the one-day seminars, web events and SSS). The range of activities aims to provide members with the opportunity to network, develop new and enhance existing technical skills, to learn more about the industry as a whole, and explore potential career pathways within safety.

The Initiative has also started to increase the social media outreach of the SFI and wider SCSC activities. Alongside the current SCSC Twitter and LinkedIn pages, an SCSC Facebook page has also been established. In the future, we will seek to create more SFI-specific social media outlets to provide a space for members to interact.



Finally, the SFI is establishing a mentoring network utilising the expertise within the SCSC population and sharing the benefits that a diverse group can bring.

The SFI will reinforce the idea that the work undertaken within safety engineering and safety assurance really matters, and it will help YEC safety professionals to be more responsible, professionally and ethically, in their work and wider society.

Membership

Membership to the SFI is currently open to the following individuals:

- Those in full-time education, or
- Those aged 26 or under, or
- Those embarking on a safety career path later in life (less than 3 years in safety)

Membership costs £35 per year and members will receive access to all online events hosted by both the SCSC and SFI. Please see: thescsc.org/membership

If you are interested in joining the SFI, getting involved in developing the Initiative, or would like further information please get in touch.

References

[1] T. Bowers: https://www.globalrailwayreview.com/article/103410/addressing-rail-skills-shortage-covid19-apsco/, accessed Dec 2020.

[2] J. Cole: https://www.jonlee.co.uk/blog/2020/01/whats-the-reason-behind-the-shortage-of-engineers-in-uk, accessed Dec 2020.

[3] E. Sharf: https://www.itproportal.com/2015/11/03/urgent-need-for-cyber-security-talent-in-the-uk/, accessed Dec 2020

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