

Health and Safety

1 Children should not be wrapped in cotton wool and must be allowed to play, fall over and hurt themselves, the head of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has insisted. Despite the organisation's reputation for promoting a risk-averse society, the chairman of the HSE, Judith Hackitt, said it was not good for society to overprotect young people.



2 In the past, schools have outlawed a wide range of children's games on health and safety grounds. Activities that have fallen foul of overzealous health and safety rules include British bulldog, tag, marbles and even skipping. But Mrs Hackitt has denied such bans were the work of the HSE: 36-1

3 She warned that children who were overprotected would be more likely to have accidents later in life because they would be naive when it came to assessing risk. She also blamed the compensation claim industry for using Health and Safety legislation to create a culture of blame: 36-2

4 Mrs Hackitt told the Independent on Sunday that the poor interpretation and application of health and safety rules denigrated her organisation's work, making people cynical about the need for laws to protect people in the workplace. Two or three people still lose their lives in the workplace in Britain every week. Mrs Hackitt said: 36-3

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