

TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Health and Safety Performance Report

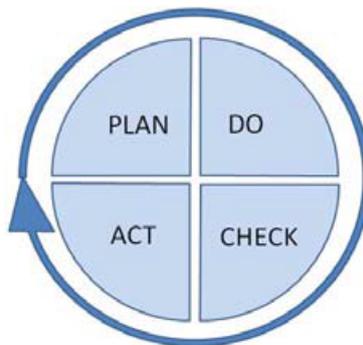
REPORT OF: Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

SUMMARY

This report reviews the health and safety performance for 2021/2022 of Gateshead Council and identifies key priorities for 2022/2023.

Introduction

1. Gateshead Council is committed to providing its employees with safe conditions of work as far as is reasonably practicable and has structured arrangements in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and others who may be affected by our activities. Our aim is to minimise the adverse impacts to individuals and the business from ill health and injury.
2. Gateshead Council continues to use the principals of the HSE guidance HSG 65, Managing for Health and Safety. The key principals are Plan, Do, Check, Act. These principals underpin the council's safety management system and operational processes and procedures as detailed in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy and arrangements.



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3. Health & Safety Performance Review 21-22

3.1 Incident Statistics

3.1.1 The statistics (which include the Council's schools) in **Table 1** show the following compared to the previous year:

- A rise in the total number of incidents reported. This can in part be attributed to the merging of the Gateshead Housing Company back into the council.

- Numbers of specified injuries has remained the same
- There has been an increase in near miss/ hazard reporting. Whilst this is encouraging to see, the number of near misses is still way below what we would expect to see. This suggests there is still a significant level of under-reporting of incidents.

3.1.2 The three categories which accounted for the highest number of reported incidents for 2021-22 were:

- Physical assaults (139 incidents)
- Slips, trips, and falls (94 incidents)
- Verbal abuse (67 incidents)

3.1.3 There were 131 physical assaults reported within care settings and schools. 99 out of the 131 incidents were classified 'unintentional' due to the fact they involved employees supporting service users/ pupils with complex care needs.

3.1.4 Industrial Disease cases included the diagnosis of hand arm vibration and Carpel tunnel syndrome.

3.1.5 The main cause of over 7-day injuries was lifting and handling (5 reported incidents).

Table 1 – Incidents Reported

Type	Year			Comments
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
Total Incidents	571	447	620	
Specified Injuries	12	7	4	Injuries sustained all involved fractures i.e., to the ribs, tibia, and hand.
Dangerous Occurrences	1	0	0	
Direct to Hospital	19	12	30	Not all DTH incidents logged were reportable under RIDDOR.
Industrial Diseases			4	Data for previous two years not recorded in statistics
>7 Day	12	14	12	These are Incidents at work that have directly resulted in over 7 days of absence.
Near Misses/ Hazards	121	206	225	Numbers of near misses reported are gradually increasing.

*2021-22 statistics changed from November 2021 to only include work related incidents.

3.2 Sickness Absence (Stress/ Work Incidents)

Table 2: Sickness absence

Type	Year			Comments
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
Sickness Absence	36,617	33,354	55,332	Total sickness absence days excluding schools (including COVID)
Stress	30.91%	37.01%	32.68%	Percentage of total days lost due to stress, depression and mental health including work related stress
Work incident	5.87%	1.35%	1.80%	Percentage of total days lost due to work related injury and ill health

3.3 Occupational Health Statistics

3.3.1 A summary of the work carried out is set out in the **Tables 3 and 4** below. Data for 2021-22 has yet to be verified due to staff absences within the admin team. This information can be provided at a later date.

Table 3: Appointments

Type	Year			Comments
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
Health Surveillance	515	498	TBC	
Driver Medical	84	2	TBC	
Vision Screening	56	36	TBC	
Medical Referral – OH Advisor	513	683	TBC	
Medical Referral – OH Physician	146	372	TBC	
Pre-employment questionnaires	97*	701*	TBC	Employees – * desk top exercise
Physiotherapy	476	211	TBC	
Counselling Sessions	2352	2300	TBC	Carried out remotely since the start of the pandemic.
Total	4239 (2401*)	4803 (4102*)	TBC	Note gradual increase in demand on service

Table 4: Non-Attendance

Type	Year			Comments
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
Health Surveillance	55	63	TBC	
Driver Medical	10	0	TBC	
Vision Screening	4	0	TBC	
Medical Referral – OHA	60	44	TBC	
Medical Referral – OHP	20	6	TBC	
Physiotherapy	15	4	TBC	
Counselling	113	87	TBC	
Total	283 (11.7% excl*)	204 (4.9% excl*)	TBC	* desk top exercise

*Figure excludes desk top exercise for pre-employment questionnaires

3.4 Enforcement Action

- 3.4.1 There were no prosecutions or enforcement notices issued by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) over the reporting period (see **Table 5**).
- 3.4.2 There was one Fee for Intervention (FFI) issued by the HSE following a RIDDOR report into a gas incident at 3 Skiddaw Place. A chimney was removed by Construction Services without the gas being capped off. This resulted in a gas fire venting into the loft space. An internal investigation was carried out by the H&S Team. All actions identified within the investigation report have since been closed out. There has not yet been a follow up visit by from the HSE at the time of this report.
- 3.4.3 The HSE also visited several times in the reporting period to carry out site inspections and to monitor COVID 19 precautions. No further enforcement action being taken.

Table 5 - HSE Enforcement Action

Type	Year			Comments
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
Prosecution	0	0	0	
Prohibition Notice	0	0	0	
Improvement Notice	0	0	0	
Fee for Intervention (FFI)	0	1	1	£160

3.5 Proactive monitoring – audits, Inspections

- 3.5.1 The impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic disrupted the previous health and safety audit programme and consequently no audits were carried out during the reporting period. Audits have already started for 2022-23 whilst a new three-year audit programme is being finalised.

3.5.2 Health & Safety Officers carried out 310 inspections which involved visiting construction sites, schools, and other council work areas. This enabled activities to be monitored and risk assessments, method statements, and training records to be checked.

3.5.3 Whilst there were many examples of work being carried out in a safe manner, there were also non-compliance issues relating to: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) not being worn; H&S documentation not available for inspection; scaffolding not erected to correct standards; asbestos registers not checked prior to work commencing and poor vehicle management. When the necessary standards were not being achieved the work was temporarily stopped until corrective action was taken. Feedback on outcomes from inspections were discussed at the relevant Group H&S meetings attended by senior managers.

3.6 Health and Safety Training

3.6.1 Health & Safety Training is delivered by both internal and external trainers. Training requirements are documented within the group training matrices produced by Workforce Development. Service Managers are also responsible for ensuring mandatory training is up to date and records are kept.

3.6.2 The figures in **Table 6** below show the number of employees that have attended Corporate Health and Safety training (delivered by the H&S Team) and completed e-learning modules.

3.6.3 There was a notable decrease in numbers of employees receiving health and safety training during 2020-21, which is a direct consequence of the pandemic. The health & safety team carried out training virtually via MS Teams and WebinarJam during this time although some courses had to be cancelled due to a number of reasons. This included:

- A reluctance or inability of some employees to attend training due to the responsive nature of work during the early stages of the pandemic,
- Some employees being unable to access Teams due to technology/ access issues.
- Employees being redeployed away from the day job and some furloughed

Table 6: Corporate H&S Training

Type	Year	Comments
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	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
Corporate	223 17 (2 of which were cancelled) courses 72% average attendance rate	19 12 (10 of which were cancelled) courses 90% average attendance rate	121 15 courses (5 of which were cancelled) 81% average attendance rate	Number attending corporate health and safety training courses (Accident investigation, Asbestos Management, DSE, Fire Warden, H & S for Managers, Risk assessment and Stress Management). Additional courses were delivered to schools on request.
e-learning	332	824	1109	All about Risk Assessments Asbestos Awareness Asbestos Internal Processes (Basic) Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Fire Safety Stress Awareness The Principles of Risk Assessment

3.7 Educational Visits

- 3.7.1 Council Health & Safety Officers (under the banner of the Educational Visits Advisory Team) provide advice and support to teachers, youth workers and other Council employees who are responsible for young people on educational and out-of-centre visits. They are also responsible for the implementation of, and monitoring compliance with, the policy and procedures which ensure the Council meets its statutory responsibilities for the safety of such activities. The team maintain the EVOLVE on-line visit planning, recording and approval system for Gateshead.
- 3.7.2 EVOLVE also provides the Council with a clear picture of the great range of Learning outside the Classroom opportunities being provided for Gateshead children.
- 3.7.3 In the academic year 2021/22 we recorded 5639 visits. (In the previous year, most visits were not undertaken due to the COVID pandemic). Of the visits for 2021/2022, 42 involved residential stays, 149 adventurous activities and there was no travel overseas due to COVID restrictions and related uncertainty of travel requirements to other countries.

3.8 Corporate Procedures and Codes of Practice

- 3.8.1 These form part of the overall health and safety policy, providing safe systems of work for employees to follow and to adapt them for their service areas as appropriate. There were 41 documents revised since October 2021. All new documents and those with significant changes are presented to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee as part of the consultation process. Minutes of meetings detailing specific details are available on the [intranet](#).

3.8.2 The Council's Health & Safety Intranet page has been re-designed to make it more user friendly and easier for employees to find what they are looking for.

4. Priorities for 2022/23

4.1 The council commits to maintaining appropriate health and safety management systems and arrangements. The following have been identified as key areas of priority for 2022/23 to ensure health and safety operates effectively:

- Review the **H&S Policy** to address changes in legislation (inc. Building Safety Act) and the council's commitment to improve the health and safety culture.
- Implement a strategy for improving the council's **health and safety culture**. This will involve a strong emphasis on group/service specific initiatives.
- Continue to update corporate guidance and processes to support the implementation of **hybrid working arrangements**.
- Ensure the Council's new **Learning Management System (LMS)** is implemented effectively so it supports services with the coordination of health and safety training and maintaining competency within their teams.
- Implement new **Occupational Health management software** which will make internal processes more efficient. This will also improve the customer experience for both employees and managers.
- Review **contractor management arrangements** to ensure they are working effectively, and a consistent approach is being adopted.
- Deliver **health and safety campaigns** to promote awareness and best practice on important topics.
- Review the constitution of the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and the structure of group level health and safety meetings to ensure effective 'downward' **communication systems** and encourage effective 'upward' communication so employees or their representatives are involved in decisions that affect their health and safety.
- Implement a **new corporate health and safety action plan**
- Ensure the effective **Implementation of a new Incident Reporting System** - The Health and Safety Team have been working with IT Services on the development of an online incident reporting system via AssystNet. This will replace the current process that has become outdated and no longer fit for purpose. The new system will provide numerous benefits for the council - it will make it easier for employees to report incidents themselves and help reduce the level of under-reporting. It will also provide an improved reporting function to aid statistical analysis as part of accident and incident investigation.
- Ensure the **reporting and checking of health and safety issues/ performance at group level** via a revised quarterly report format to GMT.
- **Monitor cases of ill health and sickness absence** trends links with workplace health, safety and wellbeing.
- Review the Council's mechanisms for **reporting and managing significant health and safety risks/ non-compliances**. This will include how issues of non-compliance are escalated and will consider both employees and contractors.
- Review the effectiveness of the current **Annual Health & Safety Performance Report (HS39)** and revise this where appropriate to ensure it serves as an effective tool for directors.

- Ensure **lessons learnt** are effectively captured, communicated and acted upon. This will include reviewing processes around internal comms.
- To **visually demonstrate commitment** to improving health & safety performance. This will link with plans for improving health and safety culture.

5. Summary

- 5.1 As detailed earlier in this report, the Council's approach to health & safety management continues to follow the guidance document HSG65 – 'Managing for Health and Safety'. Commitment from senior management is strong and progress has been made in delivering improvements.
- 5.2 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in this reporting period visited several Council sites, with no enforcement notices or prosecutions issued.

6. What will we do next?

- 6.1 The Health & Safety team will work with the Group Management Teams to continually improve H&S management systems including policies, procedures and arrangements.
- 6.2 The Corporate Health & Safety Committee will continue to meet quarterly to address strategic issues affecting health, safety, welfare and wellbeing. Actions in the Corporate health and safety action plan will be tracked.
- 6.3 Continue to monitor health and safety performance through both proactive and reactive means.
- 6.4 The Health & Safety Team will work closely with colleagues in the Building Safety Team, on any issues relating to fire safety, asbestos, water hygiene, gas and electrical safety as appropriate.
- 6.5 Occupational Health to meet all statutory requirements by fulfilling health surveillance programmes.
- 6.6 Group Management Teams and Head Teachers will be informed of any significant changes to the Council's corporate health and safety policies and procedures or when action is necessary because of any health and safety failing.
- 6.7 Senior Management Group will be advised on a quarterly basis on the progress being made and any issues to address.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are sought on:
- Whether the Committee is satisfied that the actions taken are appropriate and effective to maintain or improve the health and safety management system