# Health & Safety Strategy

March 2024

Gateshead Council

# Contents

# Our Vision Statement

Our vision is to have a culture where everyone's health and safety matters and where every colleague takes action to make it happen.  We'll encourage and enable colleagues to work together, with our customers, in a way that creates an injury-free working environment to ensure that everyone goes home safe every day.  We'll do this by taking responsibility for behaving safely, challenging unsafe behaviours and conditions when we see them, because our colleagues' and our customers' health and safety is a priority that must never be compromised.

## Our people's health and safety matters - let's make it happen!

### Our Vision is About:

- Visible commitment, leadership, and role-modelling from senior management.

- Creating a 'no blame' culture, where people learn from near misses and accidents and work hard to prevent recurrences.

- Having simple and easy to follow policies, procedures, and guidance documents.

- All colleagues role model great behaviours, applaud great ones and feel able to challenge unsafe ones.

- Creating effective processes for engagement, participation, collaboration, and communication.

- Everyone taking personal responsibility to work safely and follow safe working practices.

- Taking ownership to intervene and say 'stop' if we feel a situation or behaviour might be unsafe.

- Creating an environment of trust and transparency where reporting concerns is encouraged.

- Sharing lessons learnt and good practice to ensure we have an injury-free working environment.

- Creating a safer working environment within which our employees can thrive.

- Establishing ways of working that ensure that our practices, process, systems, policies, and procedures support our ambition to be an exemplar for health and safety.

- Information to help keep everyone healthy and safe is cascaded and communicated effectively to all colleagues.

- Everyone is suitably trained, qualified and competent to do their roles safely and free from harm.

- Achieving consistent behaviour through audits and promptly remedying deficiencies.

# Defining Health, Safety and Culture

## Health

Occupational health is about how work affects a person's health and how someone's health affects their work. Good occupational health at work promotes and maintains the health and wellbeing of colleagues and enables good worker health, improved productivity at work and ultimately positive individual social wellbeing and wealth.

## Safety

Safety at work encompasses a wide range of duties and responsibilities aimed at ensuring everyone works in an environment and works in a way that is aimed at keeping everyone free from harm.
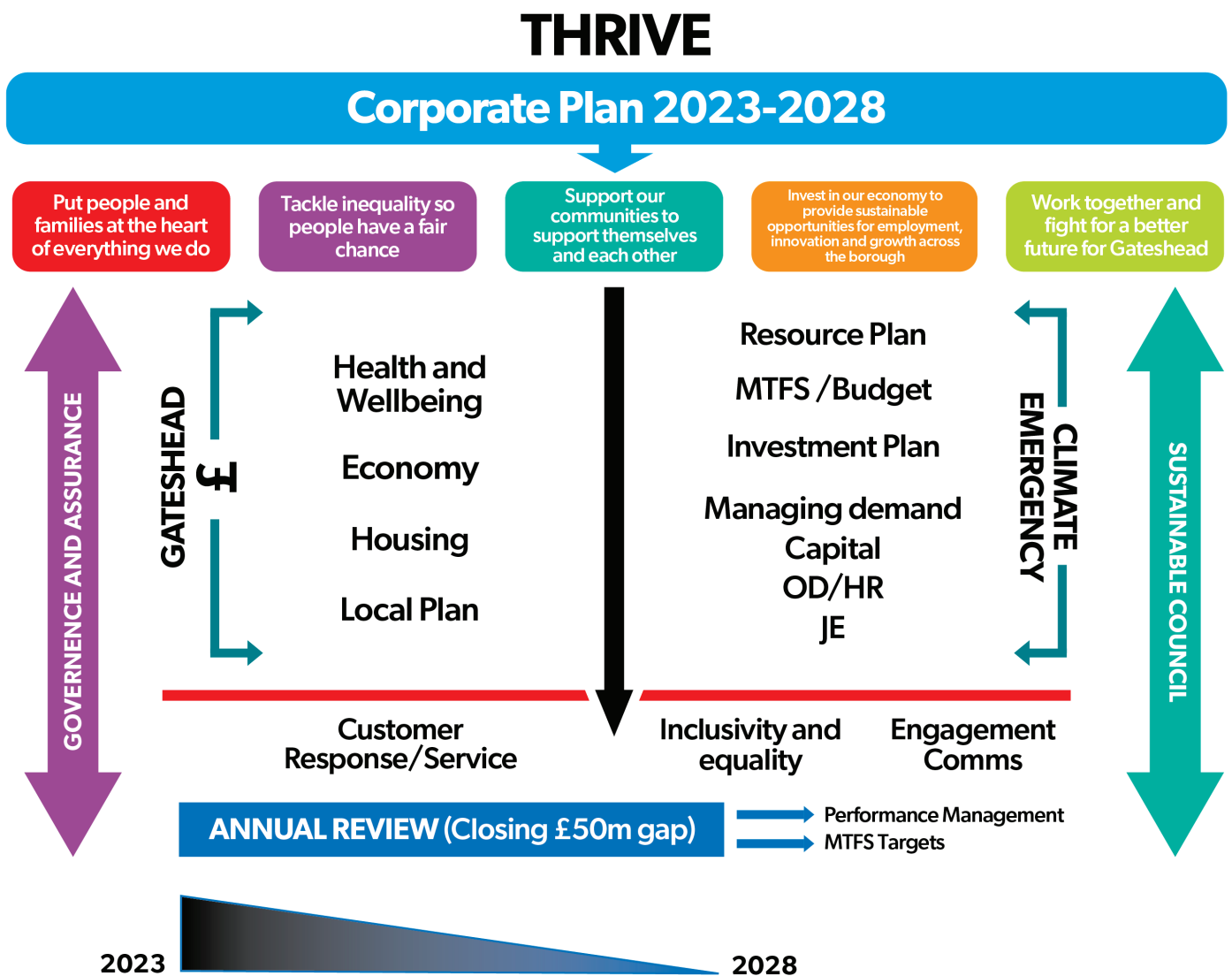
## Culture

A health and safety culture is a way of doing things that is shared, taught, or copied. It's a combination of our attitudes, our values and our perceptions that influence how something is being done in the workplace, rather than how it should be done.

# Health & Safety Enabling the Thrive agenda and the Council's Corporate Plan

Our strategic approach, 'Thrive' has ambitions to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives, including our employees, many of which live in Gateshead. It drives our major policy decisions, aiming to put people and families at the heart of everything we do.

Improving the health and safety at Gateshead Council enables our overall Thrive agenda. The illustration below is a visual representation of the Council's five-year strategy. The link between Thrive, the Corporate Plan and ultimately the Health and Safety Strategy can be seen below: i.e. a deliverable of the Workforce Strategy. This is shown below for illustrative proposes only to highlight how this strategy supports the wider aims and objectives of the organisation.

# THRIVE

## Corporate Plan 2023-2028

| Put people and families at the heart of everything we do | Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance | Support our communities to support themselves and each other | Invest in our economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation and growth across the borough | Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead |

**GOVERNENCE AND ASSURANCE**

**GATESHEAD £**

Health and Wellbeing

Economy

Housing

Local Plan

Resource Plan

MTFS /Budget

Investment Plan

Managing demand
Capital
OD/HR
JE

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

**SUSTAINABLE COUNCIL**

Customer Response/Service

Inclusivity and equality

Engagement Comms

**ANNUAL REVIEW (Closing £50m gap)**

→ Performance Management
→ MTFS Targets

2023                                                                 2028

# The Council's Approach to Health and Safety

**Corporate Health & Safety Policy**

The Council's Health & Safety Policy sets out our general approach to health and safety. It states the aims and commitment of senior leaders for health and safety management and outlines roles and responsibilities

**Health & Safety Strategy**

The Council's Health and Safety Strategy sets out what we want to achieve and our vision for Gateshead Council culture.

**Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan**

Our Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan will set out the specific activities that will deliver the change need so that the vision in the strategy becomes a reality.

# Our strategic approach for health and safety

Our approach will take account of our obligations in line with legislation, our workforce strategy, and what we want to do/have committed to, so that we grow a sustainable positive health and safety culture.

We'll deliver the change that's needed through focussing our activities on **six key themes**:

**Commitment and leadership**

**Engagement and participation**

**Communication**

**Learning and Competence**

**Monitoring and reporting**

**Accountability**

# Our Priority Aims

Priority Aims are stated below against each of the six themes.

## Commitment and leadership

**We will ensure there is clear visible commitment and support from leaders for making sure people stay safe at work by:**

- Ensuring suitable resources are available and clear lines of responsibility are understood.
- Actively promoting and championing H&S initiatives and good practice.
- Responding to issues raised within a reasonable time.
- Carrying out regular Safety Tours.
- Making health and safety a topic of everyday conversation e.g. Safety Moments.

## Engagement and participation

**We'll create an environment where it is easy for people to have open discussions about health and safety and to not be afraid to speak up when they see opportunities for improvements.  We'll do this by:**

- Creating a framework which will allow us to reach out to all employees,
- Ensuring there are 'positive feedback loops' and not just one directional.
- Carrying out a 'safety climate survey' and taking action to address issues raised.
- Create a way to promote good behaviours and call out poor ones.

## Communication

**We'll make sure there are effective means for communicating health and safety information and news by:**

- Identifying areas and reasons why communication fails, and where it works well.
- Use effective communication channels for communicating both internally and externally.
- Ensuring health and safety is embedded within our corporate communications strategy.
- Producing documents and procedures that are written in simple and accessible language, so it is suitable for the audience to understand.

## Learning and Competence

**We'll ensure our people are suitably competent to carry out their roles. We will provide learning that impacts positively on people's motivation, H&S knowledge, behaviour, and perceptions. We'll do this by:**

- Ensuring expectations, requirements and responsibilities are clear.
- Ensuring mandatory H&S related learning is identified per job role and is delivered at suitable frequencies for those who require it and in ways that suit differing learning styles.
- Refresher training is provided where identified and for critical roles.
- Providing quality learning and instruction which is delivered in an effective way and is accessible to all employees.
- Ensuring mechanisms are in place for demonstrating competence amongst suppliers, contractors etc.
- Providing our people with an appropriate level of information at induction.

## Monitoring and reporting

**We'll ensure that health and safety performance is measured and reported on, in a way that targets areas for improvement by:**

- Measuring positive culture change against KPIs
- Ensuring pro-active reporting and intervention takes place.
- Improving systems for capturing and sharing lessons learnt.
- Evaluating data to identify trends.
- Providing dashboard information to leaders for their areas
- Developing our systems to support greater self-certification.

## Accountability

**We'll establish and maintain an environment in which people take responsibility not only for their own safety, but the safety of the team. We'll achieve this by:**

- Making sure everyone knows what the Council's expectations are for health and safety behaviour.
- Clarifying and communicating consequences for when expectations are met – recognition and feedback to reinforce good performance.
- Clarifying and communicating consequences for when expectations are not met – non-compliances/ escalation mechanisms: the focus being on a fair and balanced approach, not looking to apportion blame.
- Individuals hold themselves accountable for their actions and decisions, which will build trust. This in turn creates a safe and secure environment in which individuals can express themselves without fear of judgment or repercussion.

# Our 5-year plan and how the strategy will be used.

We recognise that evolving the culture within the Council to one where we are continually improving may take a number of years, and we also know that having a plan is how we'll understand what we've got to do and when.

We know that there's lots to do and embedding change takes time.  We want our people to be healthy and safe and engage with a culture which is aimed at everyone going home safe every day.  We'll develop leading key performance indicators to measure our incremental changes so that people can see the difference we can make as a team through learning, continuously improving and embedding new ways of working.

This Kell's Model for safety culture (see Fig. 1 below) shows how we want to develop and what we want to achieve, with continuous improvement being our target for success.

An initial Safety Climate Survey will be carried out to establish a baseline for safety culture maturity across the Council.  Subsequent surveys will then be later used to measure progress over time.

Fig. 1: Safety Culture Maturity Model*
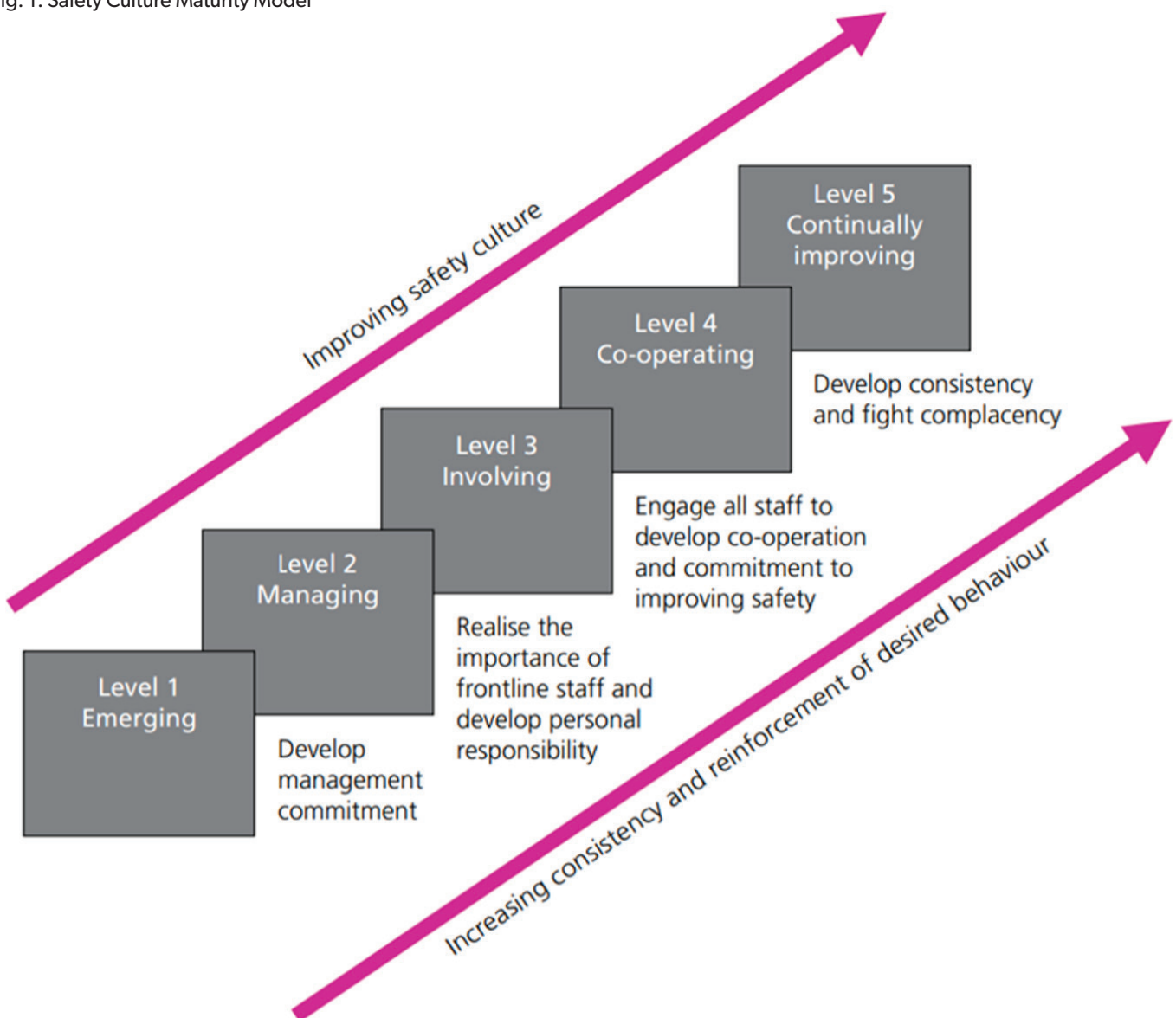


* Safety Culture Maturity® model. © The Keil Centre 2001 Safety Culture Maturity is a registered trademark of The Keil Centre Ltd

## Level 1 – Emerging

Safety is defined in terms of technical and procedural solutions and compliance with regulations. Safety is not seen as a key business risk and the safety department is perceived to have primary responsibility for safety. Many accidents are seen as unavoidable and as part of the job. Most frontline staff are uninterested in safety and may only use safety as the basis for other arguments, such as changes in shift systems.

## Level 2 – Managing

The organisation's accident rate is average for its sector, but they tend to have more serious accidents than average. Safety is seen as a business risk and management time and effort is put into accident prevention. Safety is solely defined in terms of adherence to rules and procedures and engineering controls. Accidents are seen as preventable. Managers perceive that most accidents are solely caused by the unsafe behaviour of front-line staff. Safety performance is measured in terms of lagging indicators such as lost time incidents (LTI) and safety incentives are based on reduced LTI rates. Managers and Senior Leaders are reactive in their involvement in health and safety (i.e., they use punishment when accident rates increase).

## Level 3 – Involving

Accident rates are relatively low, but they have reached a plateau. The organisation is convinced that the involvement of the frontline employee in health and safety is critical if future improvements are going to be achieved. Managers recognise that a wide range of factors cause accidents, and the root causes often originate from management decisions. A significant proportion of frontline employees are willing to work with management to improve health and safety. Most staff accept personal responsibility for their own health and safety. Safety performance is actively monitored, and the data is used effectively.

## Level 4 – Cooperating

The majority of staff in the organisation are convinced that health and safety is important from both a moral and economic point of view. Managers and frontline staff recognise that a wide range of factors cause accidents, and the root causes are likely to come back to people's behaviours and management decisions. Frontline staff accept personal responsibility for their own and others health and safety. The importance of all employees feeling valued and treated fairly is recognised. The organisation puts significant effort into proactive measures to prevent accidents. Safety performance is actively monitored using all data available. Non-work accidents are also monitored, and a healthy lifestyle is promoted.

## Level 5 – Continuous Improvement

The prevention of all injuries or harm to employees (both at work and at home) is a core organisational value. The organisation has had a sustained period (years) without a recordable accident or high potential incident, but there is no feeling of complacency. They live with the fear that their next accident is just around the corner. The organisation uses a range of indicators to monitor performance, but it is not performance-driven, as it has confidence in its safety processes. The organisation is constantly striving to be better and find better ways of improving hazard control mechanisms. All employees share the belief that health and safety is a critical aspect of their job and accept that the prevention of non-work injuries is important. The organisation invests considerable effort in promoting health and safety at home.

# Priority Actions and Delivery Plan

The Health and Safety team will be responsible for creating and maintaining a Corporate Health & Safety Action Plan and associated key performance indicators that translates our strategic vision into practical delivery.  Individual Groups and Services will be required to follow this action plan and integrate relevant practical elements into their local plans and operations.

## Monitoring

The Corporate Health and Safety Committee is ultimately responsible for monitoring the effective implementation of this strategy and action plan.  CMT is responsible for ensuring, that they support and endorse the plan and seek appropriate assurance on delivery.

Gateshead Council