

Health and Safety Summary Report 2021-2022

Chair of Sub Committee; Gary Quilter

Portfolio Holder; Councillor Carol Bull

Lead Officer; Martin Hosker (Service Manager)

Director Responsible for Health and Safety; Jill Korwin

Directorate; HR, Legal and Governance; Jen Eves

This is a summary report for the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee outlining the information that has been discussed and shared with the Health and Safety Sub Committee over the last year with regards to the work of the Health and Safety Team.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Health and Safety Team works to ensure that our staff work in a safe and healthy environment supporting the delivery of the corporate priorities. It is important that the Council continues to review, monitor and improve, wherever practical, its arrangements and practices. Members will be aware that the Authority provides a varied range of services, some with inherently higher-risk activities and in challenging and changing environments.
- 1.2 This summary report has been produced to identify and document key aspects of West Suffolk Council's health and safety performance over the last year (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022).
- 1.3 West Suffolk Council is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe place of work for all its employees, as well as taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the public and the environment (which may be affected by its work) are exposed to the lowest practicable level of risk. This is also extended to contractors and members of the public who visit or access our services. We achieve this through the following:
 - Providing health and safety advice and guidance both internally and to external third parties.
 - Audits/Inspections which includes the review of risk assessments, safe systems of work, use of equipment, to ensure we meet legal requirements as a minimum, although we aim to the highest best practice.
 - Undertaking Fire Risk assessment on corporate buildings.
 - Managing or arrange health and safety training, including first aid.
 - Managing the occupational health service.

- Lead/organise wellbeing events.
- Leading on drug and alcohol testing.
- Recording accidents, incidents and near misses, including violence at work, and carry out subsequent investigations if necessary.
- Ensuring that both internal and third-party events held on our land have suitable event safety plans.
- This year has seen the additional significant demand to lead on COVID advice and action regarding work related and building issues.

- 1.4 We also work as an integral part of the organisation on all major projects.
- 1.5 This report demonstrates that the Council's health and safety performance continues to be very good during the last year. Key areas for focus for next year are:
- Encouraging completion of mandatory annual training
 - Continuing work with the new health and safety system
 - Continuing to embed a proactive culture around near misses and embedding learning to help reduce the likelihood of accidents occurring

2. Incidents and Near Misses Summary Analysis 2021/2022

- 2.1 Staff incidents have continued to decline compared to the previous 2 years (graphs are available on request).
- 75 in 2021/2022
 - 99 in 2020/2021
 - 115 in 2019/2020
- 2.2 Out of the 75 incidents, 3 were reportable under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).
- Rib injury (suspected fracture 24 days off work). Cause - Landscape operative pushing cut foliage with a pitchfork using his upper body as leverage, pitchfork got caught on the ground causing handle to go into ribs.

Action taken - Risk Assessment (RA) reviewed, and Safe System of Work (SSoW) amended.

- Broken finger (20 days off work). Cause - Waste operative was not following safe working procedures whilst loading waste into the back of a Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV).

Action taken - immediate reminder to all waste operatives on the safe working practises whilst working at the back of the RCV. On the return to work of the injured employee was given refresher training.

- Lower back pain (6 days off work and return to work on light duties). Cause – Poor posture.

Action taken – RA reviewed along with SSoW.

- 2.3 Again, we have seen a reduction in days lost due to incidents compared to previous years.
- 60 days lost in 2021/2022
 - 115 days lost in 2020/2021
 - 66 days lost in 2019/2020
- 2.4 We had 6 “Near Miss/Non-Reportable Dangerous Occurrence’s” all in Operations. Near miss incidents often precede loss-producing events but may be overlooked, as there was no harm (no injury, damage or loss). Thus, many opportunities to prevent future incidents are lost. Although we encourage the reporting of near misses to gain an opportunity to help identify potential unplanned events preventing injuries and damage, reporting is low. In February this year we embarked on a project to promote near misses and encourage safety suggestions across Operations. Booklets have been created with simple forms inside which will be located on all vehicles as well as in offices. Forms can be then filled in and posted in the near miss and safety suggestion boxes located at all sites. Line managers will feedback to individuals and staff on near misses and safety suggestions.

3 Drugs and Alcohol

- 3.1 The Council has been testing employees for drugs and alcohol for over 10 years as many will know there are 4 occasions when we carry out testing:
- Pre-employment testing
 - Post Incident/For Cause testing
 - Employee Compliance testing
 - Random testing

- 3.2 During the past twelve months, we have tested, 1 for cause and 29 random/pre-employment drug and alcohol tests, all of which were found to be negative.

4 Occupational health

- 4.1 During the past 12 months, there have been:
- 60 Occupational Health appointments (slightly less than the previous year) these appointments are confidential and linked to both personal and work-related issues, but when reviewing the reasons for referrals, we do not have a trend across the organisation or in a particular directorate that would cause any concerns.
 - 76 Annual health surveillance appointments where employees are checked for (similar to previous years):
 - Symptoms of Hand Arm Vibration (HAV)
 - Lung function
 - Hearing loss
 - Skin infection

5 Wellbeing

- 5.1 The welfare of our staff remained a priority during the response to COVID-19 especially as staff continued to work from home. This has been co-ordinated with the help of HR business partners, Wellbeing Champions and Mental Health First- Aiders (MHFA's) who provided specific support for staff working in certain areas, such as "Home but not alone" support for vulnerable people.
- 5.2 In the Spring last year, the well-being pulse survey findings found:
- Well-being levels across the organisation continued to be positive and the results from this survey were very consistent with the previous survey.
 - The survey continued to show that there is great team support and positive working relationships across the organisation and high confidence that people can get help when they need it, as well as high levels of interest in work staff do.
 - We identified that the return to the offices and the opening of the government roadmap could present challenges for staff and the focus of the well-being conversations which was factored into our preparations for this.
- 5.3 Various wellbeing events have also been delivered, this included:
- Understanding our new normal life
 - Parent and Carer Support Group
 - Home and working alone support group
 - Wellbeing Suffolk free webinars
 - Counselling
 - Coping with Coronavirus – online courses
 - Mental Health awareness week 17-21 May
 - Mental Health First Aider contacts
 - Mental health and wellbeing training currently bookable on MiHR
 - Self-referrals with occupational health
 - Wellbeing champions - supporting the promotion of wellbeing information
 - West Suffolk We Save Wellbeing Community
 - Influenza virus vouchers
 - Staff awards
 - Domestic Abuse Champions
 - Wellbeing webinars provided by Westfield Health
 - Physiotherapy
 - Health checks (for example cholesterol) delivered by Occupational Health
 - Osteoporosis and PSA (prostate cancer) screening
 - Mind E Booklets
 - Joint Pain Advisors
 - Employee assistance program

6 Covid 19 - Overview

- 6.1 The team continued to provide health and safety support and advice across the Council during the pandemic prioritising workloads according to risk and demand. The response to COVID-19 necessitated a fast and dynamic response to changing guidance.
- 6.2 Generic risk assessments have been undertaken and distributed to staff regarding COVID – 19, each service has considered their own operational tasks and adapt their local risk assessments appropriately.
- 6.3 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - the team has continued to work with the Operations team to centrally procure and store equipment at the WSOH, where a PPE cell has been established. Throughout the pandemic our PPE stocks of have remained good and met the necessary statutory standards.
- 6.4 Supporting vulnerable staff - Throughout our response, we have worked with HR colleagues to support those staff identified as clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable or those living in households with people in these categories.
- 6.5 The approach to supporting vulnerable staff and considering what roles they can carry out in the organisation if they cannot work from home has remained under continual review in accordance with government guidance. We will continue to do so in the future.
- 6.6 Operations - Waste collection has continued throughout the pandemic, and this has been carried out in accordance with health and safety advice and guidance, which has been adapted to respond to national and Waste industry guidance.
- 6.7 All staff have been asked to read and adhere to COVID safe working practices based on current governmental guidance. We worked with the communications team to provide information for staff around how the revised office layouts will work, with photos and videos to help them better visualise the changes. We continue to do some spot checks in the buildings to ensure compliance with current guidance.
- 6.8 Staff working in the community – Guidance for staff working in the community is constantly reviewed and passed to staff when changes occur.
- 6.9 Testing for staff – There has been regular lateral flow testing for staff based at West Suffolk Operational Hub (WSOH) by a SCC mobile testing team, funded by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), when this funding was withdrawn in December 2021 the mobile team was disbanded and this method of testing ceased.
- 6.10 During this reporting period the Government has made lateral flow testing kits readily available to everyone. We encouraged staff who do not have access to the regular testing at WSOH to apply for free home testing kits via the Government link and self-test prior to working in the office.

7 Health and Safety Training (including E-Learning)

- 7.1 There has been 3 specific health and safety training courses provided to relevant staff in the past year they were:
- IOSH Managing Safely course – This course is for managers and supervisors equipping them with the know to manage health and safety within their teams.
 - Drug and alcohol collector training – This training enables staff to take drug and alcohol samples following strict chain of custody procedures, enabling us as an authority to keep our drug and alcohol testing in house.
 - Manual Handling training (Train the Trainer) – Gives staff the ability to train others the correct techniques in moving loads.
- 7.2 E-Learning modules – Below is the data of staff completing the Health and Safety E-Learning modules for 2021/22:
- Display Screen Equipment Awareness Training 78%
 - Display Screen Equipment Risk Assessment 77%
 - Manual Handling Awareness Training 88%
 - General Health, Safety and Environmental Awareness Training 87%
 - Fire Safety Awareness Training 78%
 - Driver Safety Awareness Training 86%
 - Stress Management Awareness Training 79%

8 Inspections, Audits and Fire Risk Assessments

- 8.1 The Health and Safety Team continuously undertake informal/formal inspections as well as formal audits and fire risk assessments. During the past 12 months we have completed all the programmed work (20 audits and 23 Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's)).
- 8.2 Having a structured audit and fire risk assessment process ensures a consistent approach is taken across the Council. Once complete the Managers of the relevant areas receive a full and detailed report of the findings, along with an action plan with a time scale for completion.

9 Projects/Events

- 9.1 We continued to give advice on various projects across the Council which includes continued support to Mildenhall Hub, Western Way Development (WWD).
- 9.2 As part of the project team, we with partners (internal and externally) have developed plans for the return to the offices in line with the government roadmap.
- 9.3 Having an overview of all events both internal and external we gave event safety advice as and when required which included event safety advice at the Safety Advisory Group.

10 Support to third party clients

- 10.1 Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) – During the last 12 months the Health and Safety team continued to support ARP by providing them with complete health and safety service including access to all the online health and safety learning modules. We attended meetings and liaised with other key stakeholders of Breckland District Council (BDC) and Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd who provide a health and safety service to BDC.
- 10.2 From April 2022, we will no longer be giving health and safety advice to the partnership, health and safety will revert to the individual employer. Although this means we will only be looking after our staff with regards to health and safety, we will continue to work closely with all partners to achieve commonality.

11 Re-active work/advice/support

- 11.1 This is the second year we have recorded data on the number of re-active work requests the Health and Safety Team received during a 12-month period. Re-active work is work/advice that was not planned or foreseen.
- 11.2 Over the past 12 months there over was over 3000 requests for re-active work/advice/support, slightly more from last year.

12 Forward Planning

- 12.1 The immediate priorities will be within Operations looking at:
 - Risk Assessments – ensuring they are suitable and sufficient and followed
 - Safe Systems of Work - ensuring they are suitable and sufficient and followed
 - Helping to embed near miss reporting and safety suggestions
 - Hand Arm Vibration monitoring and equipment monitoring compliance
 - Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment compliance.
- 12.2 As well as the reactive health and safety work we will be reviewing our policies and completing a full programme of FRA's and Audits (programme available on request).