

Health and Safety Summary Report 2023-24

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This is a summary report for 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 2022 - 31 March 2023).
- 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 some external third parties.
 - Audits/Inspections which includes the review/advice on risk assessments, safe systems of work, use of equipment, to ensure we meet legal requirements as a minimum, although we aim to be in the top end of best practice.
 - Undertaking Fire Risk assessment on corporate buildings.
 - Managing or arrange health and safety training, including first aid, IOSH management training.
 - Managing the occupational health service.

- Together with the Principal HR Business partners, 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 as and if necessary.
- Ensuring that both internal and third-party events held on our land have suitable event safety plans.

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, including iLearn online training modules
- Continuing work with the health and safety management system
- Continuing to embed a proactive culture around accidents/near misses and embedding learning to help reduce the likelihood of accidents occurring.

2. Incidents and Near Misses Summary Analysis 2022/2023

2.1 Staff incidents have risen over the last year, but remain comparable to 2020/2021 levels;

- 91 in 2022/2023
- 75 in 2021/2022
- 99 in 2020/2021

2.2 Out of the 91 work incidents, 5 were reportable under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and 1 incident involving a member of public was reported.

Work related -

- Whilst emptying operative pulled a bin and he felt his right shoulder pop out and then back in again, resulting in 19 days off.

Action taken – On return to work, retrained on task.

- Overreached when planting causing a strained back resulting in 25 days off.

Action taken – On return to work, retrained on task.

- Whilst exiting the vehicle operatives right foot slipped on the road surface causing his right ankle to twist resulting in 22 days lost.

Action taken – Return to work interview to remind operative to be more cautious when getting in/out of vehicles.

- Whilst working in a restricted space between a hedge and a wall operative turned to manoeuvre and their hand slipped off the handle towards cutter bar and cut through the glove taking off the tip of their right thumb resulting in 11 days off.

Action taken – review of risk assessment.

- Operative pulled calf muscle whilst carrying waste collection resulting in 15 days off.

Action taken – None pulled muscle.

Member of the Public-

- Lady tripped whilst walking down the left side stairs in the Apex.

Action taken – First aid administered for head wound, ambulance called, and the casualty was taken to hospital. Stair well was checked for defect/hazard, but nothing was found. Health and Safety attended and assessed the stairs, no defects were found.

2.3 Again, we have seen an increase of days lost due to incidents compared to previous year, but slightly less than 2 years ago.

- 90 days lost in 2022/2023
- 60 days lost in 2021/2022
- 115 days lost in 2020/2021

2.4 We had 10 Near Miss/Non-Reportable Dangerous Occurrence's. 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. We encourage the reporting of near misses to gain an opportunity to help identify potential unplanned events preventing injuries and damage, although the reporting is still low. Therefore, in February 2022, a project was launched within Operations to promote the reporting of near misses and safety suggestions. This has been successful, and staff have been contributing to this internally at the depots. (Please note, these near misses and suggestions are localised to Operations, if required management will add these onto the Council reporting system).

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, 14 random and 25 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:

- 70 Occupational Health appointments (slightly more 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.
- 68 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 post the COVID-19 response, especially as staff continued to work in a range of agile ways. This has been co-ordinated with the help of HR business partners, Health and Safety, Wellbeing Champions, Domestic abuse champions and Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA's).

5.2 Various wellbeing events have also been delivered, this included:

- Mini health checks - Haverhill Depot.
- 3 separate days of NHS health checks.
- Men's health events, with various stalls and health checks – in person at Haverhill and WSOH.
- Men's health webinar.
- Atrial Fibrillation testing in WSH.
- We had 70 staff take up our Flu voucher offer.
- Intranet articles – how to stay on budget with rising costs, national walking month, overcoming social anxiety, world mental health day, how to cope with stress and avoid burnout etc.
- Organizational engagement sessions – reframing, balancing emotional needs.
- Get the best out of you for home and work – facilitated by our external counsellor/life coach, including dealing with change, communicating, how the brain works, perception and living life.
- Webinars on Menopause, Sleep, Women's and Men's health.
- Following the Menopause webinar there was a check in and chat and now a support group.
- Financial wellbeing – managers guide – circulated to staff.
- Cost of living support booklet – located in depots.
- CPR training provided by SARS.
- Wellbeing Suffolk free webinars.
- Mental Health awareness week.
- Making Every Contact Count training.
- Understanding our new normal life.
- Parent and Carer Support Group.
- Home and working alone support group.

- Counselling.
- Domestic Abuse Champions.
- Physiotherapy.
- Staff awards.
- Employee assistance program.

6 Health and Safety Training (including E-Learning)

6.1 There has been some specific health and safety training courses provided to relevant staff in the past year. These were:

- IOSH Managing Safely course – This course is for managers and supervisors equipping them with the knowledge 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.

6.2 E- Learning modules – Below is the data of staff completing the Health and Safety E-Learning modules for 2022/2023:

- Display Screen Equipment Awareness Training 65%
- Display Screen Equipment Risk Assessment - 67%
- Manual Handling Awareness Training - 79%
- General Health, Safety and Environmental Awareness Training - 76%
- Fire Safety Awareness Training - 74%
- Driver Safety Awareness Training - 76%
- Stress Management Awareness Training - 62%

6.3 Health and Safety online training has now been incorporated into the Learning and Development training platform, iLearn, bringing all online learning into once place and supported by a reporting function to ensure completion of mandatory training.

7 Inspections, Audits and Fire Risk Assessments

7.1 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 (27 audits and Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's)).

7.2 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.

8 Projects/Events

8.1 We continued to give advice on various projects across the Council which includes continued support to Mildenhall Hub, Western Way Development (WWD).

8.2 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.

9 Forward Planning

- 9.1 The immediate priorities will continue to be within Operations looking at:
- Risk Assessments – ensuring they are up to date and fit for purpose and followed by employees.
 - Safe Systems of Work - ensuring they are fit for purpose and followed by employees.
 - Hand Arm Vibration monitoring and equipment monitoring compliance.
 - Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment compliance.
 - Health and Safety audits and fire risk assessments – ensuring actions are followed up by staff and reported back.
- 9.2 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).
- 9.3 With the departure of the Health and Safety Senior Advisor (Feb 23) and retirement of the Service Manager Health and Safety (Apr 23) a restructure has taken place and health and safety has been merged with and reports to the Service Manager, Human Resources, Payroll, and Learning and Development. Prior to the merger close working and synergies existed in the delivery of the provision of health and wellbeing to our staff.