

Health and Safety Annual Report 2023-24

Portfolio Holder; Cllr Gerald Kelly

Lead Officer; Richard King, Health & Safety Manager/Wendy Canham, Service Manager

Director Responsible for Health and Safety; Jill Korwin

Directorate; HR, Governance and Regulatory; Jen Eves

This annual report provides an overview of health and safety activity that has taken place during 2023/2024 and includes progress on a range of health and safety-based initiatives, inspections and audits, as well as an analysis of health and safety accidents and incidents.

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.
- 1.2 The Council provides a varied range of services, some with inherently higher-risk activities and in challenging and changing environments. It is important that the Council continues to review, monitor, and improve, wherever practical, its arrangements and practices.
- 1.3 This annual 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 2023 - 31 March 2024).
- 1.4 This report demonstrates that the Council's health and safety performance continues to be good during the last year and outlines key priorities for 2024-2025.

2. Governance

- 2.1 PASC, the Staff Consultative Panel and the Portfolio Holder provide governance and scrutiny over H&S provision across the organisation throughout the year. Across these different forums, members regularly review health and safety performance indicators, they are informed, and they can contribute to policy developments as well as being engaged in conversations around appropriate workplace health, safety, and welfare standards, thereby influencing the organisational response in line with the workforce strategy.

- 2.2 From an officer perspective, the Council has a Health and Safety Working Group to ensure that there is a corporate approach to relevant issues. The group meets on a quarterly basis with representation across the Council along with Trade Union representation. The group reviews and comments on codes of practice, reports and supports the Corporate Health and Safety team in determining the council's priorities in health and safety. Additionally, Leadership Team scrutinise health and safety performance in their regular performance review, with a view to ensuring that there is a breadth of understanding across senior officers of the current position and any trends / lessons to be learned.

3. Overview of key functions

- 3.1 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 where relevant.
- Audits/Inspections which includes the review/advice on risk assessments, safe systems of work, use of equipment, to ensure we meet the minimum legal requirements, with the aim to be in the top end of best practice.
- Undertaking Fire Risk assessments on corporate buildings.
- Managing or arranging health and safety training, including first aid and 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 if necessary.
- Ensuring that both internal and third-party events held on our land have suitable event safety plans.

- 3.2 We also work as an integral part of the organisation on all major projects.

4. Accident, Incidents & Near Misses Summary Analysis 2023/2024

- 4.1 Staff accidents and incidents have fallen over the last year as shown in the data below;

- 76 in 2023/2024
- 86 in 2022/2023
- 69 in 2021/2022
- 99 in 2020/2021

- 4.2 These are broken down as follows;

Table 1 – Details of accidents / incidents and near misses over the past 4 years

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Non-Reportable Injury	40	24	30	21
Animal bites / stings	1	0	1	0
Cuts or Abrasions	7	0	3	5
Contact with moving vehicle	1	0	1	0
Lifting and handling injuries	0	1	0	1
Machinery Contact	0	0	1	3
Manual Handling	3	11	6	3
Other	8	1	3	1
Road traffic accident	5	0	3	1
Slips/Trips/Fall	12	5	8	4
Falls from height	1	0	0	0
Struck by equipment/furniture	2	3	1	1
Struck by falling / moving object	0	3	1	0
Taken ill or Unwell	0	0	1	1
Trapped by furniture/Equipment	0	0	2	1
Non-Injury Incident	4	2	13	25
Contact with moving vehicle	0	0	1	0
Drunk/Intoxicated	0	0	1	0
Slips/Trips	0	0	1	0
Struck by falling/moving object	0	0	1	0
Other	0	1	8	9
Road traffic accident	4	1	1	16
Reportable Disease	0	0	0	1
Carpal tunnel Syndrome	0	0	0	1
Reportable Injury	3	3	4	6
Contact with machinery	0	0	1	1
Cuts or Abrasions	1	0	0	0
Manual Handling	0	2	2	1
Slips/Trips/Fall	1	0	1	3
Falls from height	1	0	0	0
Trapped by furniture / equipment	0	1	0	0
Other	0	0	0	1
Violence at Work	52	40	39	23
Aggression	10	5	6	1
Drunk / Intoxicated	3	0	1	0
Mental Abuse	2	0	2	0
Physical Abuse	2	7	1	1
Threatening Behaviour	17	14	12	7
Verbal Abuse	18	14	17	14
Grand Total	99	69	86	76

Please note that the increase in Road Traffic Accidents in the table above is due to a change in reporting software that has improved the visibility for the H&S team of incidents reported.

- 4.3 Out of the 76 work incidents, 7 were reportable under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), 1 of which was a reportable disease (carpal tunnel syndrome).
- 4.4 In addition to work related incidents, there was an increase in members of the public related RIDDOR accidents rising from 1 in 2022/2023 to 5 in 2023/2024. After investigation and review of the accidents it was concluded that there was no direct trend other than risks that are most probable for manual job roles and any reactive measures were suitable to prevent recurrence as far as practicable.
- 4.5 A full breakdown of the incidents reported to RIDDOR is shown in Appendix A.

5. Days lost due to incidents and accidents

5.1 We have an increase of days lost due to incidents compared to previous years. This is due to the fracture type injuries that have occurred as the individuals have taken longer to return to work and the increase is significantly linked to the RIDDOR related accidents (as shown in Appendix A). The majority of these have occurred in the operational environment as can be seen in table 2 below.

- 345 days lost in 2023/2024
- 90 days lost in 2022/2023
- 60 days lost in 2021/2022
- 115 days lost in 2020/2021

Table 2 – Details of the types of incidents and number of days lost

	Incident type	Total days lost
RIDDOR	Contact with Machinery	136
	Manual Handling	17
	Manual Handling	10
	Slips / Trips / Falls	131
	Slips / Trips / Falls	12
	Slips / Trips / Falls	26
	Carpal Tunnel	0
Non RIDDOR Accidents	Contact with Machinery	5
	Slips / Trips / Falls	2
	Slips / Trips / Falls	1
	Slips / Trips / Falls	2
	Slips / Trips / Falls	2
	Manual Handling	1
2023/2024 TOTAL		345

6. Safety Observations

6.1 There has been a commitment in the past year to further encourage the reporting of near misses and safety observations. To further improve our proactive approach to H&S reporting and in addition to near miss reporting, we have introduced safety observations at the start of 2024 as a separate reporting category. This includes the subcategories 'Unsafe acts', 'Unsafe conditions' and 'Safety suggestions. This will enable us to recognise and action potential hazards before they result in a near miss, accident, or incident, as well as encouraging staff to take ownership of their work environment.

6.2 Due to our continued commitment to encourage the reporting of near misses and observations we have had 79 Near Misses and Safety

Observations reported this financial year, up from just 10 for 2022-2023. The larger majority of these are localised to operations due to the nature of this service however we have had increased notifications from other services this year. Examples of some of the incidents reported are shown in Appendix B.

- 6.3 There have been no specific trends of concern in the near misses and safety observations reported. However, we continue to ensure that all reported near misses and safety observations are continuously monitored and actioned accordingly to address the areas of highest potential risk to injury, damage to property and the environment. We also continue to focus on areas which are not generally contributing to this accident data but could have the potential to cause serious injury or property damage, such as fire safety and contractor management.
- 6.4 We will be launching this year a QR code-based reporting system for safety observations to simplify the process, increasing reporting accessibility and further encourage all staff to report.

7. Drugs and alcohol testing

- 7.1 The Council has been testing employees for drugs and alcohol for over 10 years. There are 4 occasions when we carry out testing:
- Pre-employment testing
 - Post Incident/For Cause testing
 - Employee Compliance testing
 - Random testing
- 7.2 During the past twelve months (April 2023 – March 2024), we have tested, 1 for cause, 16 random and 17 pre-employment drug and alcohol tests. 1 pre-employment test was non-negative, confirmed by the laboratory as a positive result for drugs.
- CURRENT –**
1 PRE EMPLOYMENT TEST NON NEGATIVE
1 RANDOM TEST NON NEGATIVE, CONFIRMED NEGATIVE DUE TO MEDICATION UPON TESTS

8. Occupational health

- 8.1 During the past 12 months, there have been 85 Occupational Health (OH) appointments (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, there is no obvious trend across the organisation or in a particular directorate that would cause any concerns. We continue to work with our OH provider to monitor and action any trends.
- 8.2 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

Wellbeing

8.3 The welfare of our staff remains a priority as staff continue to work in a range of agile ways. This is co-ordinated with the help of HR business partners, Health and Safety, Wellbeing Champions, Domestic abuse champions and Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA's).

8.4 Various wellbeing events have also been delivered this year including:

- Mini health checks
- NHS health checks delivered by Onelife Suffolk and Abbeycroft Leisure over 6 days
- 60 staff took up our Flu voucher offer
- Anxiety toolkit delivered by Wellbeing Suffolk
- Wellbeing and career drop-in session with Mental health first aiders, wellbeing champions, HR, Learning and development
- Intranet articles – coping with grief and loss, menopause, sleep, nutrition, cancer awareness
- Organizational engagement sessions with counsellor and life coach (Get the best out of you for home and work)
- Menopause check in and chat
- CPR training provided by East Anglian Air Ambulance
- Wellbeing Suffolk free webinars
- Mental Health awareness week
- Counselling
- Domestic Abuse Champions
- Physiotherapy
- Employee assistance program
- Salary finance scheme
- Cycle to work scheme
- Lease car scheme
- Smart tech scheme
- Purchase of additional annual leave
- AVC scheme
- Abbeycroft Leisure subsidy for WSC employees

9. H&S Training (including e-Learning)

9.1 There are 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. An additional 9 staff members attended the course.

- A Health and Safety Event Management Course has taken place to provide a level of H&S training and knowledge to 14 employees across various teams who are currently involved with events or may be involved with events in some level in the future.
- Drug and alcohol collector training enables staff to take drug and alcohol samples following strict chain of custody procedures, enabling us to keep our drug and alcohol testing in house.

9.2 Below is the data of staff completing the Health and Safety E-Learning modules for 2023/24:

- A Guide to Stress in the Workplace – 76%
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) – 84%
- Fire Safety – 86%
- Manual Handling – 92%
- Working Safely - An Introduction to Workplace Health and Safety (for Employees) – 92%
- Driving Safely for Work – 92%

9.3 Health and Safety online training has now been incorporated into the Learning and Development training platform, iLearn. This brings all online learning into one place and offers the reporting function to help managers to monitor and ensure completion of mandatory training. For operational staff, computer access has been provided and improved in depot rest areas with some modules remaining as practical training, such as manual handling and use of fire extinguishers.

9.4 We continue to ensure that our First Aid provisions are suitable for our work environments including training of mental health first aiders. We currently have 63 qualified first aiders and 10 mental health first aid volunteers spread across our various sites to ensure our staff are fully supported and have this year installed Emergency Trauma first aid kits into our workplaces and areas accessed by the public.

10. Inspections, audits and fire risk assessments

10.1 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 (46 audits and Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's).

10.2 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.

10.3 The H&S Manager and Senior H&S Advisor have completed the Fire Risk Assessor 5-day training course at the Fire Service College. This ensures

that we are compliant in our obligations under the Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order 2005 that was revised in October 2023.

11. Projects / Events

- 11.1 The Health and Safety Team have continued to give advice on various projects across the Council which includes continued support to Mildenhall Hub and Provincial House Haverhill.
- 11.2 As one of the stakeholders around event safety, the team have continued to give event safety advice as and when required which included event safety advice linked to risk assessments at the Safety Advisory Group.

12. Forward planning; future priorities

- 12.1 Next year, in addition to the core functions of the Health and Safety Service, the following areas will continue to be prioritised:
- To encourage the completion of mandatory annual H&S training, including iLearn online training modules
 - Continue work with the new health and safety management system (Work Wallet), to further expand the usage and increase paperless records.
 - Continue to embed a proactive culture around accidents/near misses, with an improved more accessible digital reporting system and embedding learning to help reduce the likelihood of accidents occurring.
 - To review and revise the H&S auditing process.
 - To advise and assist with operational policy and procedure changes brought about by any new H&S legislation including 'Martyn's Law'.
 - Safe Systems of Work - ensuring they are fit for purpose and followed by employees.
 - To monitor health surveillance trends.
 - Health and Safety audits and fire risk assessments – ensuring actions are followed up by staff and reported back.
- 12.2 As well as the reactive health and safety work, we will be reviewing our policies and continue with a full programme of FRA's and Audits (programme available on request).

23rd April 2024

Appendix A – Breakdown of work related and public related RIDDOR's

Details of work related RIDDOR's

- Parks - Reportable disease – Annual OH surveillance showed signs of possible Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). A T4 Assessment concluded the staff member was suffering from early signs of carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS).
Staff members vibration exposure from handheld equipment (mowers, strimmer's etc) was minimal (3 – 53 HSE vibration points). The staff member has an existing health condition (Primary Raynaud's syndrome) that is likely to have contributed to the onset of CTS.

Action taken – Occupational health provider recommended that the staff members vibration exposure be limited to 100 HSE vibration points / 8hr period. Management to continue to monitor exposure through the Reactec vibration monitoring system.

- Waste & Street Scene – Over 7-day reportable injury – staff member putting loose cardboard into back of refuse collection vehicle strained his shoulder. This was confirmed following GP visit at the end of his shift and reported to line manager the next morning.

Action taken – Staff member had already completed inhouse manual handling training which included communication of the risk assessment (RA) and safe system of work (SSoW) for the process being carried out. The RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Staff member received refresher training when he returned to work.

- Landscaping - Over 7-day reportable injury – staff member was operating a John Deere ride-on-mower along a verge in long grass. The mower contacted the side of a hidden manhole cover jolting the machine sideways. This caused the hand and wrist to jolt from being attached to the mower lever controls. Staff member completed his shift but informed his line manager the next day that the wrist had swelled and was painful. Following a hospital X-ray it was confirmed that the accident had resulted in a small wrist fracture.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Toolbox talk given to landscaping staff be aware of hidden obstacles when cutting in long grass. Staff member received refresher training when he returned to work.

- Waste & Street Scene – Over 7-day reportable injury – whilst walking a wheelie bin back to the property, the staff member tripped over and into a large deep pothole in the road resulting in a minor fracture to his ankle.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Allocated footwear was examined and suitable for use.

Toolbox talk given to waste staff be aware of their surroundings. Staff member received refresher training when he returned to work.

- Waste & Street Scene – Over 7-day reportable injury – Staff member was carrying out litter picking duties within the B1112 layby when he lost his footing on uneven ground (grass verge) falling onto the layby hard surface injuring his right shoulder.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Allocated footwear was examined and suitable for use. Toolbox talk had already been issued as above.

- Waste & Street Scene (Commercial) – Over 7-day reportable injury – Staff member was moving a 360ltr wheelie bin when he slipped on a wet / icy metal drain cover twisting his ankle.

Action Taken – Site was visited by line manager to confirm the location of the wheelie bin was safe for staff access. RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Allocated footwear was examined and suitable for use. Toolbox talk had already been issued as above.

- Landscaping - Over 7-day reportable injury – staff member was digging ground area during planting of shrub when he made contact some unforeseen hardcore material beneath soil level resulting in a sudden pain in his hand and elbow. First GP visit was inconclusive of injury. Further X-ray at hospital confirmed a sprain to the right wrist.

Action Taken – RA and SSoW were reviewed by line manager and deemed suitable. Investigation concluded staff member had carried out his work process as trained.

Details of public related RIDDOR's

- Parks – 7-Year-old girl was playing on tree house rope bridge in Abbey Gardens when her foot fell through a gap in the slats resulting in her leg sustaining a cut from an exposed screw head. The girl was taken to hospital by her parent where she received two stitches to her thigh and given antibiotics.

Action taken – Tree house closed immediately and fenced off. Investigation revealed that the slats had come loose and moved apart in between the weekly equipment checks. The bridge was replaced, and daily recorded checks were increased / added for the park rangers in addition to the official weekly park inspections.

- Parks – Unsupervised 6-Year-old girl tried to access a piece of play equipment (Surf Rider) at Hardwick Heath that was above her age / size range. As she stood on one end the surf rider flipped 180 degrees causing the girl to fall to the ground and the surf rider striking her head as it swung back into position. The girl sustained a 3mm cut to her head which

was later glued / sealed at the hospital with no further signs of concussion.

Action taken – H&S and parks inspector attended site the same day and inspected the piece of equipment concluding that it was not faulty and operated safely as per manufacturers design. Further investigation revealed that the child was not within the correct size range to reach the grab handles whilst accessing the equipment and was not properly supervised by the child minder. No further action taken.

- Mildenhall Hub – Lady walking across from the leisure centre / main entrance towards the carpark tripped and fell forwards resulting in a dislocated finger and laceration to her head.

Action taken – First aid was given on site and ambulance suggested. The lady declined and said she would go with her husband later that day. Follow up conversation between the lady and H&S manager confirmed that she was admitted to hospital for 48 hours for observation due to the head injury. Further investigation (inc. CCTV, site visit) and discussions concluded that the lady had insufficient footwear (sliders) that curled over catching on the block weave paving. No further action required.

- Parks – Dog walker caught her foot in a divot / suspected rabbit hole whilst walking across Wood Henge Meadow in Nowton Park. This resulted in the lady in the lady sustaining a broken ankle.

Action taken – First aid was given on site by Ranger and ambulance called. Investigation of the meadow / accident area could not confirm the exact hole / divot due to the surrounding grass height. The investigation concluded that the lady walked over a section of the meadow that was noticeably uneven and away from the main trodden routes. No further action required.

- Car Parks – Lady walking through the pedestrian exit from St Andrews Street car park onto Bishops Road when she tripped over a low-level metal barrier. This resulted in minor injuries to her leg and right hand, as well as damage to her jaw in two places. The Lady did not report this to WSC until 29th August, the incident occurred on the 15th July.

Action taken – The car park was visited by the H&S team and car park manager to confirm the trip hazard / ground condition where the accident happened. It was discovered that a low-level metal barrier was in place in the pedestrian access / egress but was for no obvious purpose. This was immediately taped off and removed the following week. It was concluded that the metal barrier had been installed when the car park was initially built but there was no record as to why it was installed or for what purpose and was not picked up on car park checks. This was brought to the attention of the car park inspectors to raise awareness and further encourage the reporting of safety observations. No further action required.

Appendix B - Examples of the safety observations

- 1) Unsafe Condition – slippery floors within stairwells of Parkway Car Park increasing slip risk to public and staff.

Action: Site visited by H&S and carparks to investigate which concluded that the floor material required additional slip resistance. Slip risk signs installed throughout the building's stairways and additional layer of anti-slip floor paint installed within 4 weeks of initial report.

- 2) Unsafe Condition – Concern raised over inadequate lighting of EV charging in Olding Road car park.

Action: Site visited by H&S to investigate outside of daylight hours which concluded that lighting was not suitable. Electrical contractor investigated power supply box and lights. Fault was discovered and lighting was repaired.

- 3) Unsafe Act – Report of youths accessing scaffolding on Parkway carpark.

Action: Scaffolding contractor contacted and attended site to make security adjustments to prevent recurrence.