

TITLE Health and Safety Annual Report 2018/19

FOR CONSIDERATION BY The Executive on 25 July 2019

WARD None Specific;

LEAD OFFICER Deputy Chief Executive - Graham Ebers

LEAD MEMBER Executive Member for Finance and Housing - John Kaiser

Please note that this section is for Members' information only and will not be included in the published version of the report:	
Key Decision	No
Politically Sensitive	No
Policy change	No
Public consultation required	No
Equalities Assessment required	No
Communication on Decision Made and Implementation	No
Call in likely	No
If yes, implications of the delay	
Key Political Issues, including any PR or other implications	
None	
Key Risks surrounding the decision and mitigation actions to be taken.	
None	

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The Council has a legal duty to protect the health and safety of employees and other people who come into contact with its undertakings e.g. customers, pupils etc.; the standard set by law requires employers to do what is considered to be 'reasonably practicable'.

The effective management of health and safety is an essential part of good corporate governance. Furthermore, the active management of accidents at work is essential, not only to protect people from harm but to also minimise financial loss through employee absences and other direct and indirect related costs.

The legal responsibility and accountability for health and safety lies with the employer. In addition to staff working in the services, the Authority is the employer in the case of community and community special schools, voluntary controlled schools, maintained nurseries and pupil referral units. In respect of foundation schools, voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools the Governing Body is the employer.

Note: this report does not include the health and safety performance of Wokingham Borough Council wholly owned subsidiaries. Operating as separate companies their respective boards monitor and review their own internal health and safety performance.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) notes the internal health and safety performance for 2018-19; and
- 2) endorses the approach described and the health and safety priorities for the current municipal year 2019-20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whilst not a statutory report, the preparation and issue of an annual health and safety report by a local authority (a health and safety regulator in its own right) in respect of its own internal health and safety reflects good practice and provides assurance to senior levels of the organisation.

In overall terms the health and safety performance during 2018-19 across both the schools and the services workforces could be viewed in a positive light in that the number of serious employee incidents i.e. those that require notification to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) remained at a low level with one RIDDOR made in relation to a school employee's workplace injury. An additional RIDDOR notification was made in respect of a pupil who fractured their hip as a result of tripping over cardboard on a classroom floor. Through investigations the root causes of accidents are established and lessons are learnt to prevent recurrences.

Of a total of 41 incident reports raised by service staff during 2018-19 (an increase of 14% over the previous year) 59% related to staff working with children and young people with special needs. 93% of the total reported incidents had an outcome of either a minor injury or were without injury. Three injury incidents resulted in employees being absent from work for less than seven days.

Incident reports by school employees went up by 42% in 2018-19 over the previous year from 311 incidents to 441. The increase was directly attributable to one special school who has continued to meet their objective of total reporting in order to ensure their risk prevention strategies, designed to protect the health and safety of staff and pupils alike, are well informed and kept up to date. A minor injury or no injury was the case in 98% of the total incidents reported by school employees whilst there were five incidences where an employee was incapacitated from their work for between one and seven days.

During 2018-19 no Improvement Notices or Prohibition Notices were served on the Council by the HSE for breaches of statutory health and safety duties nor were there any prosecutions.

BACKGROUND

The Health and Safety Annual Report 2018-19 is a high level report that looks back at internal health and safety performance during that twelve month period, highlighting the main achievements over the year and outlining key priorities for the current year. The annual report is transparent; it provides stakeholders with information on health and safety performance to enable an understanding of the key issues facing Council staff together with assurance to the Executive that the main risks have been identified, appropriately prioritised and are being adequately addressed.

The annual report is reviewed internally by various management and staff consultation groups. The Corporate Leadership Team, along with the central employee consultation forums for services and schools, receive supplementary information in the form of statistical charts with data breakdowns, for example, by work area and hazard type to aid analysis and the identification of trends and patterns in support of the ongoing development of suitable risk prevention strategies.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES – SERVICES

- No statutory notifications under RIDDOR were made to the HSE in 2018-19 in respect of the Council's services workforce.
- 41 incident reports in total were raised by service staff during 2018-19, an increase of 14% over the previous year. The average total services employee headcount remained fairly static across both those performance years. An increase in incident reporting numbers can be viewed as a positive indicator when factors such as greater awareness of the organisation's incident reporting policy and recognising the benefits of reporting minor/near miss events towards accident prevention are taken into account.
- 59% of the service employee incident reports were raised by staff working at the Bridges Resource Centre where the challenging and sometimes unpredictable behaviours of children and young people with special needs that are often complex, can have an impact on the staff delivering their care and support. In all cases the outcome was either an injury of a minor nature, for example, a scratch or hair being pulled or had no resulting injury. The vital information contained in these reports feeds into the review of risk assessments and individual care plans designed to protect the staff along with the vulnerable children and young people in their care.
- 2018-19 saw service employees report 8 incidents relating to slips, trips or falls on same level, a figure very similar to the two previous performance years. Slips and trips whilst accessing work buildings and using internal staircases featured as a discernible trend.
- There were no housekeeping related slip, trip, fall incidents reported in 2018-19 signifying a marked improvement in this accident type across the last four years. This sustained improvement in performance could in part be due to the organisation's continued focus on the importance of employees maintaining good housekeeping practice to aid accident prevention.
- Efforts to raise awareness amongst employees of the importance of incident reporting are ongoing, particularly in respect of verbal abuse and threats made against staff.
- RIDDOR requires for work related injuries involving members of the public to be reported where the injured person was taken straight to hospital for treatment. In relation to the delivery of the Council's services during 2018-19 there were no RIDDOR notifications in respect of members of the public.
- The reviews of lone working and stress in the workplace highlighted in the 2018-19 annual report took into account current needs, issues and ways of working; the reviews led to the development of new, more relevant and pragmatic guidance aimed at supporting the proactive management of these work-related hazards.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES – SCHOOLS

- One RIDDOR report was made in respect of a school employee who sustained burns to 3 fingers from a hot liquid whilst carrying out a teaching experiment. In line with Council policy the incident was the subject of a corporate investigation to establish and understand the root causes and learn lessons; an action plan was drawn up to prevent a recurrence.
- 441 incident reports were raised by school employees during 2018-19, an increase of 42% over the previous year. For the second performance year in a row the significant increase in the overall school employee incident reporting rates was directly attributable to a special school catering for pupils with moderate, severe or profound learning needs, many of whom have associated sensory motor and/or behavioural difficulties including autism spectrum disorder. Where the outcome of an incident involved injury most were of a minor nature e.g. a scratch, bruise or temporary discomfort. A positive reporting culture is critical to the school's ongoing development of tailored pupil behaviour and support plans designed to protect staff and pupils alike. The staff at the school are trained in Team Teach methods, a training programme aimed at managing challenging behaviours through positive interventions.
- Continuing a positive three year downward trend, there was a slight reduction in 2018-19 in relation to the number of school employee reports of slip, trip and fall incidents, 15 compared to the previous year's 16. The primary hazard trend in this category related to poor housekeeping, for example, wet or slippery floors and trips whilst assisting activities and pupils in outdoor play areas. Slips and trips are the most common cause of injuries at work. This type of incident is preventable, not inevitable, and the Schools Workforce and Health and Safety Committee continues to look at ways of raising awareness of the hazards amongst employees and the role that everyone must play in preventing slip and trip injuries in the workplace.
- One school related RIDDOR notification was made during 2018-19 in respect of a person who was not an employee. Whilst a class of children were making props for a drama production a pupil tripped over some cardboard on the floor sustaining a fractured hip. Changes have since been made to that and similar activities to ensure that hazards are not created in the first place so that risks are effectively controlled.
- The 2018-19 annual report highlights the completion of a fresh round of asbestos management surveys which have been issued to the Headteacher of each school. In response to an HSE inspection the Council's asbestos management framework was strengthened and made more practical; training was provided to Headteachers to support its implementation.

Corporate Health and Safety Priorities for 2019-20

- Based on the findings of the 2018-19 health and safety assurance programme in schools, to work in conjunction with the Schools Workforce and Health and Safety Committee to develop and follow through on the strategic improvement plan.
- To strengthen the policies and arrangements relating to violence at work towards Council employees, including threats and abuse directed at our staff through social media and other remote channels.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	Yes	
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	Yes	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	Yes	

Other Financial Information

A failure to comply with statutory duties has the potential to lead to fines, prosecution costs and enforcement recovery costs.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Not applicable

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

Not applicable

List of Background Papers

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and 'Managing for Health and Safety' (HSG65), a guide for employers published by the HSE.

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