



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL


HEALTH AND SAFETY
ANNUAL REPORT
2014/15

1. INTRODUCTION

First introduced twelve years ago, this report relates to Wokingham Borough Council's internal health and safety performance and that of this Authority's maintained schools; each year we take advantage of the opportunity this review process presents to reaffirm our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in the management of health and safety in an open and public way.

The routine monitoring and review of arrangements and performance are an integral part of our overall management system. In the case of health and safety, at the end of each municipal year we take a look back at our achievements and the progress we've made against our three year health and safety plan; this enables us as an organisation to re-evaluate and determine our health and safety priorities and key actions for the current and future years. The process we adopt incorporates every level of the Council; from Councillors and the Executive, to the Corporate Leadership Team, Headteachers and managers and with our service and school workforces through their representatives.

Without doubt, at the core of every successful organisation there needs to be a positive health and safety culture and that is something that relies on the commitment and participation of the entire workforce. I would like to use this occasion to acknowledge everybody for their input and efforts with a particular note of thanks to the many individuals who play a vital part towards the management of health and safety across the organisation by undertaking essential additional duties such as first aiders, fire wardens and risk assessors.



Andy Couldrick
Chief Executive
Wokingham Borough Council

2. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to providing its employees with safe conditions of work and having effective arrangements in place for the management of health and safety. Our aim is to set and maintain sensible and proportionate standards of health and safety management to protect our staff and those others who may be affected by our activities and to minimise the losses (financial and reputational) to our Council from ill health and injury.

The Wokingham Borough Council health and safety policy is reviewed and updated each year; jointly signed by the Chief Executive and the Wokingham Borough Mayor, the policy signals the Council's commitment to health and safety and sets out the direction for service departments and our maintained schools to follow.

3. ORGANISATION FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) leads on the overall direction for internal health and safety with support from:

- a Director and an Elected Member designated as the leads for corporate health and safety;
- Managers and Headteachers to whom the day to day management of health and safety is delegated to;
- health and safety professionals who provide technical advice on all aspects of health and safety at work to assist CLT, managers and Headteachers to discharge their health and safety responsibilities; and
- the HR service who manage the occupational health contract and support the delivery of the central health and safety training programme.

4. ARRANGEMENTS FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Council's framework for health and safety management, which is linked to a three year plan, converts the health and safety policy into action; it includes:

Employee involvement and consultation: in addition to consultation arrangements at a local level, changes to policies, plans or decisions affecting staff health and safety are discussed by two parallel central committees (one for each workforce i.e. services and schools); membership of the committees consists of management and trade union representatives.

Health and safety training: based on identified needs, training in the core health and safety competencies is delivered by either in-house trainers, external specialist training providers or via an e-learning platform; examples of the courses available centrally include: risk assessment; fire warden, first aid; asbestos awareness and managing team stress. Job specific health and safety training is organised at local level.

Occupational Health: the Council's Occupational Health provider works in partnership with HR to provide advice and support to service managers in maintaining and improving employee health and minimising absences due to ill health.

Incident Reporting: staff are encouraged to report all incidents regardless of the severity of the resulting outcome or injury; this allows for a larger number of incidents, including near misses, to be analysed to identify any potential trends or patterns to determine what more can be done to mitigate risks to the health and safety of our staff on or off Council premises.

Compliance monitoring: determined by risk profiles and ongoing performance information, along with input from senior managers, Corporate Health and Safety undertake a variety of health and safety assurance activities, either as one off ad hoc reviews as necessary or as part of a wider, planned programme.

Contractor management: health and safety is a key criterion for consideration in the selection of competent contractors and service providers; designated contract managers are responsible for overseeing individual contracts and for monitoring the contractor's health and safety performance on an ongoing basis.

5. 2014/15 HIGHLIGHTS

Health and safety incident reporting: September 2014 saw the launch of WiSER, an upgraded version of the Council's information management system. WiSER supports the recording, management and monitoring of health and safety incidents and accidents for both services and maintained schools. Standard reports have been devised to assist in the analysis of data, the results of which then feed into the update of risk prevention strategies. Where service departments are concerned, WiSER provides a superior electronic self-service function for managers and staff which has removed the need for paper forms. A significant additional benefit is the system's ability to help make the correlation between employee workplace injuries and consequential sickness absences; this better informs our risk profiles and priorities and also triggers the notification of statutory reports to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Employee Engagement Survey 2015: Council staff were invited to take part in a survey to provide their views and opinions on a wide number of employment related topics including health, safety and welfare at work. About 55% of the workforce responded, an excellent result given that research shows most staff surveys only receive around a 40% return rate. So far, the information from this survey has been broken down and analysed; realistic plans for improvement are currently being drawn up and these will be shared with staff across the organisation in early summer 2015.

Automated External Defibrillators: following the tragic death of a young pupil from Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome at a local school in 2014, the Council issued a position statement strongly encouraging all schools in the Borough of Wokingham to consider installing an Automated External Defibrillator. In line with the funding arrangements in relation to the Dedicated Schools Grant, individual schools make their own purchasing decisions about such equipment; to support our schools in their consideration and installation of this potentially lifesaving device, the Council has provided policy and guidance along with further advice where requested.

Health and wellbeing: with links to the Council's wider priority relating to public health and wellbeing, February 2015 was designated as Staff Wellbeing Month. Classes, workshops, competitions and fundraising events were organised to get Council staff involved, encourage them to be more active and to help them tackle issues such as stress. Building on this initiative and worked around their personal time, a series of fitness activities have since been offered to staff. Future Staff Wellbeing events will take note of the results of the 2015 staff survey to ensure that common wellbeing issues are addressed.

School Governors: in response to concerns raised by a number of schools, one of the regular School Governor health and safety forums was dedicated to road safety at peak times outside of schools. Representatives from Thames Valley Police and the Council's Highways Team took questions from Governors and put forward various suggestions and solutions in respect of traffic management and raising driver awareness of the issues; support was offered to all schools on an individual basis to provide assistance where needed in helping to deal with local traffic issues and challenges.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE IN 2014/15

Incident Reports

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) require certain specified work-related accidents to be reported to the HSE. It is our internal policy for all incidents, no matter how minor and including near miss events, to be formally reported, investigated and for suitable remedial action to be taken.

The Corporate Health and Safety Team undertake the routine monitoring of all incident reports to enable the wider identification of emerging trends and to ensure actions to prevent recurrences are appropriate, proportionate and timely. In addition, statistical data is reviewed by management and staff groups.

Table 1 shows the total number of reports raised by employees across a 3 year period

Number of incidents reported by:	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
employees working in Council services	60	45	53
employees working in maintained schools	126	131	286
Total	186	176	339

Note. Employee numbers: Council services = 1,100 Authority maintained schools = 3,469

Table 2 shows a breakdown of the 2014/15 reports by incident category

Incident category	Services	Schools
Major injury: RIDDORs or other injuries resulting in absence	5	5
Minor injury: requiring no attention or received basic first aid	37	268
Work related ill health	0	0
Other: no injury, near miss event or verbal abuse	11	13

With the size of the combined workforces remaining fairly static, 2014/15 saw a 93% increase in the total number of incidents reported by employees against the previous year. Whilst the number of incidents reported by service staff has risen by 18% (something that was anticipated when the reporting process became easier as the result of the transfer to an upgraded electronic self-service reporting tool) the overall steep rise was directly attributable to one school which raised 60% of those reports. Such a dramatic increase in incidents would normally be a cause for concern; however, this is a special school catering for pupils with learning needs, many of whom have associated sensory, motor and/or behaviour difficulties and the increase is the direct result of the following: a drive by the school leadership team to raise the staff teams' awareness of the formal reporting requirements; greater diligence in reporting even the most minor of incidents; and an increasingly complex pupil population with behaviours that in some cases are more challenging. For the vast majority of those incidents the outcome for the staff member was minor, for example, a scratch or bruise; however, each reported incident enables the school an opportunity to review and update the pupil's behaviour management plan for the good of all concerned.

In general terms slips and trips continue to feature as a main hazard type with reported incidents for 2014/15 running at a level similar to previous years. More often than not with minor injury outcomes, housekeeping, spills on floors that had not been attended to and rushing appear as the main trends; awareness raising efforts amongst staff will, therefore, be stepped up in an effort to help address this hazard type which remains an ongoing priority.

HSE reportable incidents

Table 3 gives a breakdown of reports made to the HSE across a three year period

RIDDOR category	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Fatalities – any person	0	0	0
Service employees - specified injuries	1	0	1
Service employees - over 7 days incapacitation	0	0	1
Service employees - specified occupational diseases	0	0	0
School employees - specified injuries	2	2	3
School employees - over 7 days incapacitation	0	1	0
School employees - specified occupational diseases	0	0	0
Dangerous occurrences	0	1	0
Non employees – work related injuries	0	1	1
Total reports to the HSE	3	5	6

The total number of RIDDOR reports for 2014/15 were slightly up on the previous year with specified/major injuries to employees being behind the increase. Four out of the five employee injury reports raised were in respect of fractures: one a fractured wrist following a fall from a chair whilst putting up a wall display in a classroom; another was as a result of a sliding door that came off its runners causing a fractured hand; and two incidents involved staff who work with pupils with special educational needs, one a hairline fracture sustained when an excitable young person unexpectedly kicked their support worker's knee, the other to the foot of a teacher who was escorting a pupil off from a football pitch. The report of an over 7 day incapacitation related to an employee in a Council workplace who was struck on the head by a falling metal strip ceiling light.

For the purpose of comparison, the provisional national statistics produced by the HSE for employees working in public administration and the education sector in 2012/13 give an average RIDDOR reported injury rate of 270 and 160 injuries per 100,000 employees respectively; the Council's reportable injury rates for 2014/15 for public services were 181.81 and 86.5 for education, considerably lower than the most recent published national average.

The one non-employee injury RIDDOR report during 2014/15 related to a child who received hospital treatment for cuts to the head following a fall from a swing in a Council play area. Where incidents of a more serious nature occur investigations are more exacting and extensive and as such are overseen by the Corporate Health and Safety Team to ensure that the root cause(s) are established with suitable action taken to prevent a recurrence. In this particular instance an external play equipment specialist was commissioned whose review

concluded that neither the design nor the installation of the equipment were deemed to be a causal factor in this accident.

During 2014/15 no enforcement action was instigated against the Council for breaches of statutory health and safety duties nor were any Improvement Notices or Prohibition Notices served upon the Council by the HSE.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY IN WBC FOR 2015/16 AND BEYOND

The Council's three year Health and Safety Plan includes the following key objectives for the 2015/16 municipal year; due to their nature and potential changes to priorities as determined by organisational needs and risks, delivery against some of these objectives may extend beyond that point:

- To revise the policies and procedures in the health and safety manuals, both the service and schools' versions, to make them easier to use and understand whilst also bringing them in line with the revised HSE guidance HSG 65 'Managing for health and safety'.
- To continue working with maintained schools to refine and deliver our risk based seeking health and safety assurance programme which has the added benefit of supporting schools to develop greater health and safety competency at a local level through a guided self-evaluation process.
- To follow through on the health, safety and welfare issues raised by staff in the services' 2015 Employee Engagement Survey.
- To continue the development of WiSER in terms of the function for Council staff to self-serve the reporting of third party incidents e.g. member of the public and introducing a suite of incident data reports to enable service managers to be self-sufficient in monitoring local incidents and determining their own team/service area trends and priorities.
- Where health and safety topics are suited to this learning style, to continue in the development of further e-learning modules aimed at meeting the health and safety training needs of both service and school staff.
- To add to the corporate health and safety training programme a new event covering the selection and management of contractors.
- With input from staff, to review the Council's arrangements for protecting staff from violence at work across both the service and schools workforce; a key step will be to encourage this type of incident report in order to gauge a better understanding of the types of behaviours staff are exposed to at work.
- To improve the health and safety induction training for service managers ensuring it offers new starters a timely programme that better reflects their needs as individuals.
- To review the health and safety training needs of Elected Members to assist in ensuring that health and safety responsibilities are understood and, therefore, acted upon within the Council's decision making process.

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