

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance and Resources	DATE	12 November 2009
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Stewart Carruth		
TITLE OF REPORT	Health and Safety annual report April 2008 – March 2009		
REPORT NUMBER	CG/11/125		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report summarises health and safety activities in Aberdeen City Council for the period April 2008 – March 2009.

The commitment to produce an annual health and safety report is part of the Council's health and safety policy and is also reflective of best practice. As one of RoSPA's Scottish high achiever organisations we are also committed to going public on our health and safety performance.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The committee is asked to

- i. Approve this report
- ii. Approve the publication of this report on the Council website

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A proactive health and safety culture, which includes accident reduction, has a direct financial benefit to the organisation. Recent legislative changes have introduced tougher financial penalties on organisations which breach health and safety: the minimum fine in the lower courts is now £20,000.

This report is for information only.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The management of health and safety is consistent with the vision to make Aberdeen a healthier and safer place in which to live and work.

Reactive monitoring (such as the review of accidents and incidents and identification of trends) identifies remedial actions which allow Services to appropriately budget for remedial action and to plan and programme for continuous improvement. The maintenance of a healthy workforce will contribute to the sustainability of high quality services.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Accident performance is judged against targets set under the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) 'Revitalising Health and Safety' campaign and Public Services Programme. Failure to comply with the legislation could result in enforcement action from the HSE, potentially leading to prosecution and fines.

6. Annual health and safety report April 2008 – March 2009

6.1 Introduction

The health and safety team is based within the Human Resources section of Corporate Governance. The team comprises:

- Health and safety manager
- Principal health and safety adviser
- 5 Health and safety adviser
- Health and safety adviser (Fire)
- Employee counsellor (part time)

The staff in the team have a wide range of health and safety experience, including a broad range of operational experience across many of the Council's services, including education, grounds maintenance and trades.

6.2 Annual analysis of reportable accidents/disease 2008/09

This section contains statistical information for the period 1st April 2008 – 31st March 2009. It analyses, compares and reports on our annual statistics in relation to progress towards our targets under the Revitalising Health and Safety Initiative.

6.2.1 Reportable accidents/injuries (April 2008 – March 2009)

During the last twelve months:

- There were 74 employee reportable accidents, which is 5 more than last year.
- The largest category of incidents - slips, trips and falls - has increased from 21 to 30 incidents and accounts for 41% of the total number of employee reportable accidents.
- The number of incidents classified as being as a result of manual handling has slightly decreased from 19 to 17. Manual handling accidents account for 23% of the total number of employee reportable accidents.
- These two accident categories now account for 64% of the total number of employee reportable accidents, an increase from 58% for the previous twelve month period. Each Service has been asked to report to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee on their plans to minimise the risks in these two areas.
- "Struck by Object" has increased from 7 to 10 accidents over the previous 12 months, making it the third largest category. "Falls from height", "machinery" and "struck against object" accidents account for the majority of the other recordable accidents with 5, 4, and 3 instances respectively.

- There were no burns reported and one reported assault during this period.
- There were 27 third party reportable accidents, the majority of which were sports injuries and slips/trips on council premises. This is a 30% decrease from the 90 reported incidents during the previous period.

6.2.2 Accident rates

Period - Quarterly	Reportable Accident rate		Period - Annually	Reportable Accident rate
April – June 2008	1.38		2005/06	6.85
July - September 2008	1.88		2006/07	7.00
October – December 2008	2.44		2007/08	5.98
January – March 2009	1.49		2008/09	6.44

Comparison of the overall employee reportable accident rates for the last year shows no significant increase over the year with the figures remaining at less than 1.50 per thousand employees.

The annual comparison indicates a slight increase of 0.46 to 6.44 per thousand employees.

6.2.3 Benchmarking

Organisation	Period	Reportable Accident rate (per thousand employees)
Aberdeen City Council	2008/09	6.44
Comparator A	2008/09	4.4
Comparator B	2008/09	6.28

The two comparators are local authorities who deliver similar services in a more rural area.

6.3 Reportable diseases

6.3.1 Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS)

During the last twelve month period there have been no new cases of Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) reported.

The table below shows the numbers of employees undergoing health surveillance for HAVS in September 2009.

	Group 2	GROUP 1			Total under surveillance
	Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	
Buildings	14	2	0	0	16
Fleet	25	3	0	0	28
Grounds	271	21	7	1	300
Roads	67	11	3	0	81

The total number of employees in Group 1 (those employees medically diagnosed with symptoms) is 48 and the total for Group 2 (no symptoms) is 377.

Discussions have continued with the occupational health provider regarding the management of HAVS related stages and symptoms.

The Vibration Review Group was established to meet on a monthly basis to assist in the effective and consistent management of HAVS across the organisation. Currently the group is reviewing Service operational Vibration Action Plans following consultation and assistance from an external company.

The Vibration Procedure has been completed and issued, and has been developed on Visio software to aid managers to manage the HAVS process.

All employee information relating to HAVS is recorded on PSE which allows staffing teams to access reports for managers on a monthly basis.

6.4 Dangerous occurrence/Dangerous gas fittings

Throughout this period there were 11 Dangerous Gas Occurrences reported. The Gas Safety Group continues to monitor the situation but further improvements are required to manage and monitor this more effectively. A significant area requiring improvement is the monitoring and management of sub-contractors involved with gas work. Under the new structure within Aberdeen City Council the responsibility for gas works will no longer be shared over the neighbourhoods - rather there will be one head of service and one director responsible for gas safety throughout the Council.

6.5 Health and Safety Executive

6.5.1 Revitalising health and safety initiative: targets for 2010

In June 2000 the Health and Safety Executive launched its *Revitalising Health and Safety* strategy statement which set three national targets for improving health and safety performance by 2010:

- to reduce the incidence rate of **fatalities and major injuries** by 10%;
- to reduce the incidence rate of cases of **work-related ill health** by 20%;
- to reduce the number of **working days lost** per worker from work-related injury and ill health by 30%

These targets were accepted by Aberdeen City Council and our current progress, nine years later, is given below:

(Note: The following figures include all reportable accidents (not just fatal and major injuries) and specifically relates only to employees and not third parties.)

6.5.2 Target 1 - 10% reduction in the incidence rate of all reportable employee accidents

Target for 2010	Date	Reportable Accident Rate (per thousand employees)
10% reduction in the incidence rate of all reportable employee accidents	2000/01	8.75
	2008/09	6.44
Result: 26% reduction in incidence rate		

- The total number of employee reportable accidents represents a 26% improvement over the same figure in 2000/01.
- The incidence rate, expressed as a nominal number of accidents per 1000 employees, has increased slightly over the past 12 months but still shows significant improvement from 8.75 to 6.44.

6.5.3 Target 2 – 30% reduction of days lost from work related injury and ill health.

Target for 2010	Date	Days Lost from work related injury and ill health
30% reduction of days lost from work related injury and ill health	2000/01	3700 days
	2008/09	1837 days
Result : 50% reduction of days lost from work related injury and ill health		

6.5.4 Target 3 – 20% reduction of the reported cases of work related ill health

Target for 2010	Date	Cases of work related ill health
20% reduction of the cases of work related ill health	2004/05	20
	2008/09	0
Result: 100% reduction in incidence rate		

A target was set in 2004/05 following pro-active work on Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). The total number of reportable diseases for 2008/09 was 0 compared to 20 for 2004/05.

6.5.5 Discussion

It should be remembered that our self imposed target of “all reportable accidents” is more stringent than the HSE target of “all fatal and major accidents”. Our non reportable accidents have decreased by 34% in 2008/09. Employee reportable accidents have increased by 7% in 2008/09. “Slips/trips” and “Manual handling” continue to account for the largest number of employee reportable accidents, this is 64% for 2008/09 compared to 58% in 2007/08.

We need to continue to maintain and improve upon our existing procedures and processes to help secure our ten year targets for 2010. By ensuring that health and safety is included as an integral part of service delivery we will continue to improve the health and safety culture within the organisation. It is essential that we take a combined proactive and reactive approach to health and safety, sharing information and lessons learned throughout and across the organisation to ensure a consistent approach. Monitoring existing procedures for day to day service delivery and work practices will help maintain and improve the work environment for employees and our service users. With continued commitment from all levels, adequate resources and the support of the health and safety committees and safety representatives we can continue to meet and exceed the Revitalising Health and Safety Targets for 2010.

6.6 Health and Safety Executive Involvement

We have not been served any formal enforcement notices by the HSE during the last twelve month period.

HSE Inspectors have been in contact with the health and safety team in relation to a number of issues which have been investigated and actioned as necessary.

6.7 RoSPA Gold Award

The proactive approach of the health and safety team was rewarded with a second Gold Award by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for 2008/2009. This was presented in September 2009. In achieving these awards, we had to demonstrate:

- An excellent occupational health and safety management system and culture
- A rigorous approach to occupational health
- High levels of compliance with control measures
- Below average and reducing rates of error, harm and loss
- No fatal or major injuries due to employer negligence
- No significant enforcement issues (notices/prosecutions)

6.8 Health and safety policies and guidance

A new health and safety risk assessment procedure, including a revised risk assessment proforma, was issued at the beginning of the period and this details the corporate approach to risk assessment.

The *Stress Information Booklet –A guide for all Aberdeen City Council employees* was made available to all staff in November 2008. This outlines causes of stress, recognising stress, learning to cope with stress, and outlines employee responsibilities as well as further information, advice and support.

The Smoking Policy was replaced by the Smoke Free at Work Policy which was approved in December 2008 and is now in place.

New Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) guidance has been issued. This guidance sets out a framework for the control of hazardous substances in the workplace and provides information on how to undertake a COSHH risk assessment. The guidance also provides corporate risk assessment forms.

The Zone has been developed to improve the accessibility of health and safety information for employees. The health and safety pages contain newsflashes, contact details for the health and safety section, and links to external sites. Examples of new information published during this period include:

- working at height in schools;
- actions to reduce the risk of a slip or trip during autumn and winter;
- outdoor working – sun protection, and
- advice on managing and supporting people with mental health problems in the workplace.

In addition to the information included on the Intranet, the health and safety section also provide articles for City Life, Aberdeen City Council's online magazine.

The programme for review of all health and safety policies/guidance is ongoing with identified areas being reviewed and developed.

6.9 Health and safety matrix

The health and safety matrix was introduced mid-2007 to assist Services to manage, measure and monitor their compliance with 5 essential health and safety areas:

- first aid provision
- accident reporting requirements
- fire risk assessments
- risk assessments
- self audits

This matrix continues to be used across the Services.

In January 2008, a programme of workplace inspections replaced the system of self audits. This programme is in place and is managed by the Operational Support Managers.

Each Service reports progress on compliance with the health and safety matrix as part of their performance management reports.

6.10 Compliance monitoring

A total of 297 compliance visits were made during the period 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2009. These were undertaken on the following topics:

- fire risk assessment
- workplace inspections
- ladder inspection
- scaffold management
- roadwork safety management
- cash handling
- lone working
- risk assessment
- winter maintenance
- DSE assessment
- school security
- health and safety meetings and communication.

The topics which showed high rates of compliance included Workplace Inspections and Health and Safety Meetings/Communication. The topics where requirement for some additional work was identified were Risk Assessment, Lone working Arrangements and Ladder Inspection. This has been raised with the relevant services and will be monitored throughout 2009/10.

6.11 Occupational Health

In October 2008 Serco Occupational Health replaced Capita Health Solutions as the Council's occupational health provider. The following information, therefore, relates to the period Oct 08 – March 09.

During this time there were 317 referrals to Serco, of which 36 were medicals (either fitness to work or for LGV/MPV drivers).

6.12 Employee Counselling Service

During the period April 08 to March 09 the employee counselling service was provided in house and free of charge, to any employee of Aberdeen City Council. Throughout this period the counsellor saw 123 new referrals and the feedback received by the Counselling Service from clients has been consistently very positive.

As a result of collaborative procurement exercise with The Moray Council and Aberdeenshire Council a new employee assistance programme will be launched which will provide free, confidential support to all employees 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Regular reports on this service will be submitted to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.

6.13 Employee Good Health Group (EGhG)

Aberdeen City Council obtained the Healthy Working Lives Bronze award level in the second quarter 2008. Work continues on our Healthy Working Lives Silver award submission through the Employee Good Health Group.

The Employee Good Health Group initiated various campaigns during the past 12 month period, including Men's Health Week awareness, the creation of a Jog Scotland group for employees, No Smoking Day in partnership with NHS Grampian as well as topics such as 5-a-day and Stress at Work being published on the Zone.

Employee Good Health Group information can be found on the Health and Safety pages on The Zone, including details of forthcoming events and campaigns, and the contact details for EGhG members in all Services.

6.14 Health and Safety Training

The training co-ordinated by the Health and Safety section covers a wide range of issues across the council, including health and safety for managers, risk assessment, fire safety awareness, HAVS awareness and a number of first aid related and object / people handling courses.

Between April 2008 and March 2009 280 courses have run with a total of 1781 delegates attending.

The customised training module of PSe is in the process of being fully functional. All health and safety training must be booked through Employee Development Information on training is also available on the Health and Safety pages on The Zone, under 'Health and Safety Development'.

6.15 Managing attendance

The current corporate absence rate is 12.6 working days lost per employee. The corporate target is 10 working days lost per employee.

A project plan has been developed to identify a number of initiatives to improve the quality and accuracy of the absence management information, and to ensure that a fair and consistent approach to managing this issue is being taken across the council.

The main focus of the work involves updating the policy/procedure and guidance; reviewing the scope and consistency of information which can assist managers; developing new training schemes to assist managers, benchmarking with other organisations in terms of best practice (policy, information, reporting and training) and exploring new initiatives within current budget processes.

The current attendance management policy/procedure and guidance are being reviewed in terms of tone, style and content. The aim is to clarify all requirements and responsibilities for both manager and employees (employee responsibilities will be a new addition) in order to make the processes clear and straightforward. The resulting processes will have been benchmarked with other local authorities/public bodies with ideas which are considered to be good or best practice introduced.

The review will also look at the existing trigger times (taking best practice into consideration) and the training available for managers. There will also be a review of the associated forms - e.g. return to work forms - to make them more meaningful and useful.

In line with this review, other guidance will be developed, such as guidance on the use of occupational health which will encompass information on early intervention, phased return to work, case conferences, ill-health retirement and how to utilise the occupational health service to greatest effect.

Other proactive measures which are being developed include:

- a pilot physiotherapy service for manual handling workers which will involve accident prevention and work hardening as well as treatment for musculoskeletal injuries;
- the launch of the new employee assistance programme which will replace the current employee counselling service. In addition to the face to face counselling service already provided, the new programme will offer a free 24/7 helpline for all employees and their immediate families. This will also be supported by online information and support;
- roll out of mental health awareness training for managers which aims to de-stigmatise mental health issues and equip managers with the confidence and skills to recognise, manage and address mental health in the workplace; and

- building on the results of the previous employee stress survey by including some linked questions in the forthcoming employee survey.

6.16 Key Projects for 2009/10

The major projects that the health and safety section will be working on in the next twelve months include:

- Monitoring of the occupational health contract and provision.
- Monitoring of the employee assistance programme
- Launch of an employee health and safety suggestion scheme (in line with ACE ideas)
- Development of the managing attendance project.
- Maintenance of the RoSPA gold award status in respect of the Council's health and safety management system.
- Delivering the health and safety training programme. Each course will be reviewed to ensure the course objectives are being met.
- Maintenance of the Healthy Working Lives Bronze award and attainment of the Silver Award
- Introduction of e-learning modules as part of the health and safety training programme.
- Rolling out the occupational health and safety audit tool to assess how health and safety is being managed across the Council. This will be introduced once the new structure is in place and the programme will be developed to ensure that at least one section in each Service is audited each year.
- Continuing with the rolling programme to review existing health and safety policies and guidance/procedures in relation to legislation and best practice.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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