

Council Health and Safety Annual Report – 2019/2020

1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises significant council wide health, safety and wellbeing activities over the period 2019/20 covering key achievements, council-wide statistics and developments for the year ahead to improve performance and outcomes. The report includes early response to COVID-19 pandemic as well as transfer of parts of the Safety, Health and Wellbeing Team from Capita to the Council

The objectives of this report are to demonstrate Barnet Council's commitment to:

- Our responsibility for ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of employees, service users and members of the public;
- The on-going effective implementation of the council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy;
- Continual improvements in health and safety through the monitoring and measurement of its health and safety performance to highlight areas where the council performs well as well as areas for improvement;
- Openness and accountability

Key activities:

- 1) The SHaW team supported services in implementing measures to achieve the corporate targets of reduction in work related incidents and ill health
- 2) A council wide stress audit commenced, which will be concluded in the current financial year
- 3) The operational areas of the Safety, Health and Wellbeing (SHaW) service were successfully transferred back in house on the 1 October 2019.
- 4) Following transfer, the Head of SHaW reviewed service provision to ensure it was fit for purpose and met the evolving needs and priorities of the council. Contracts were also reviewed to ensure they delivered quality as well as value for money.
- 5) The SHaW team reviewed and the software systems that support the council's health and safety management. This led to improvements in the incident reporting and eLearning systems to ensure its usability in all areas of the organisation including front line services.
- 6) All the councils Local Codes of Practice were reviewed. These provide guidance to schools on the implantation of health and safety requirements and council policy.
- 7) The Workforce Health and Wellbeing Group (WHWBG) produced an action plan with the intent of scaling up our organisational offer on workforce health and wellbeing. The aim is long term improvements in staff physical and mental wellbeing, reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, staff engagement and resident's satisfaction. The group is chaired by the Head of SHaW and led by Public Health. It includes stakeholders from services, partners and the Trade Unions.
- 8) The council has introduced Mental Health First Aiders who are widely to offer early support for staff

- 9) Health checks for staff were provided with over 100 staff taking part. These health checks assess key health and wellbeing indicators such as weight and blood pressure and provide advice on ways to improve health.
- 10) A successful flu immunisation campaign was carried out with over 400 staff given vaccinations.
- 11) The service contributed to the successful health and safety evaluation of the Brent Cross South Station submissions.
- 12) The SHAW Team responded successfully to the first wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This included early sourcing of PPE supplies and sanitising products. The provision of advice on risk mitigation following lockdown to essential services, as well as advice to staff on working from home and health issues, including mental health.

2. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE FOR 2019/20

Main performance achievements:

- 1) A reduction in reported incidents of 20%
- 2) A RIDDOR Accident Incidence Rate of 368 (HSE reportable incidents per 100,000 staff), which is below the average for public service provision of over 500.
- 3) Slight improvements in H&S performance with average compliance audit scores increasing from 84% to 87%.
- 4) Improvement in premises compliance across the council estate

Review of Corporate Health and Safety Policy

The following corporate policies were amended and implemented:

- Health and Safety Training
- Fire Precautions
- Display Screen Equipment

Accident/Incident data

The council strives to continually improve its health and safety performance and to reduce work related accidents and ill health. Managers are required to ensure all incidents are reported and investigated and to introduce measures to prevent recurrence.

All incidents are recorded on the council's on-line accident reporting system and sickness absence is reported on HR Core. These are interrogated by managers and the Safety, Health and Wellbeing (SHaW) team to ensure all incidents are fully investigated and to identify any emerging work-related incident or ill Health trends.

There has been a decrease in the total number of incidents reported over the period, from 119 in 2018/19 to 98 in 2019/20. This should be seen as positive news and a reflection of the work the council has done to review and improve its H&S risk management approach. The majority of time off incidents that occur are related to either manual handling activities or slips and trips. The council remains high performing with its Accident Incidence Rate (RIDDOR incidents per 100,000 staff), a national recognised measure of performance, standing at 368 for the reporting

period, which is considerably below the average for public service provision of over 500. Despite this the council will continue to strive to reduce not just RIDDOR incidents but all reported incidents.

Chart 1 shows the commonly reported work-related incidents by type with the most common being 'Slips and Trips', 'Verbal Assaults' and 'Handling and Carrying'. Slips and Trips are the most common incident reported nationally and are in the main contributable to hazards in the working environment such as slippery and uneven floors, trailing cables, etc. Risk assessments consider environmental conditions and managers are required to regularly inspect the workplace to ensure no hazards exist. The majority of verbal assaults reported occurred in schools and are attributable to pupils verbally abusing teachers. This is also true of physical assaults, the majority of which occurred in special schools.

The RIDDOR reportable incidents were either Lifting and Handling injuries or Slips and Trips occurring in the Streetscene Directorate and Schools. RIDDOR incidents are those reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), such as injuries that have resulted in over 7 days absence from work. Chart 2 also highlights musculoskeletal injuries as a common cause of work related ill health and lifting and handling is a major contributor to these types of injuries. These mostly occur within the Streetscene directorate for which management regularly review their manual handling risk assessments and deliver training on lifting and moving to their staff.

Chart 2 shows that there are two common cause of work related ill health reported on CoreHR; include psychological ill health, including stress related, and musculoskeletal, commonly muscle injuries to the neck, shoulders and lower back.

Organisational change and lack of control are common causes of work related stress and anxiety amongst staff. Exposure to stress and anxiety is not though limited to work, as a good employer we should seek not only to reduce organisational causes of stress and anxiety but also support staff who are experiencing issues that may lead to mental health issues outside of the workplace. To this end the council provides a variety of support services to staff including our 24/7 employee assistance programme, which includes confidential counselling sessions as well as advice on finance, etc. Staff also have access to trained mental health first aiders. Services have stress action plans in place to manage the risk of organisational stressors.

Musculoskeletal injuries are commonly caused by both lifting and handling activities or repetitive movements and poor posture, such as when continual using Display Screen Equipment or in maintenance activities. Many of these injuries are attributed to lifting and moving and so regular review of risk assessments and provision of guidance and training to staff is crucial in managing these types of injuries.

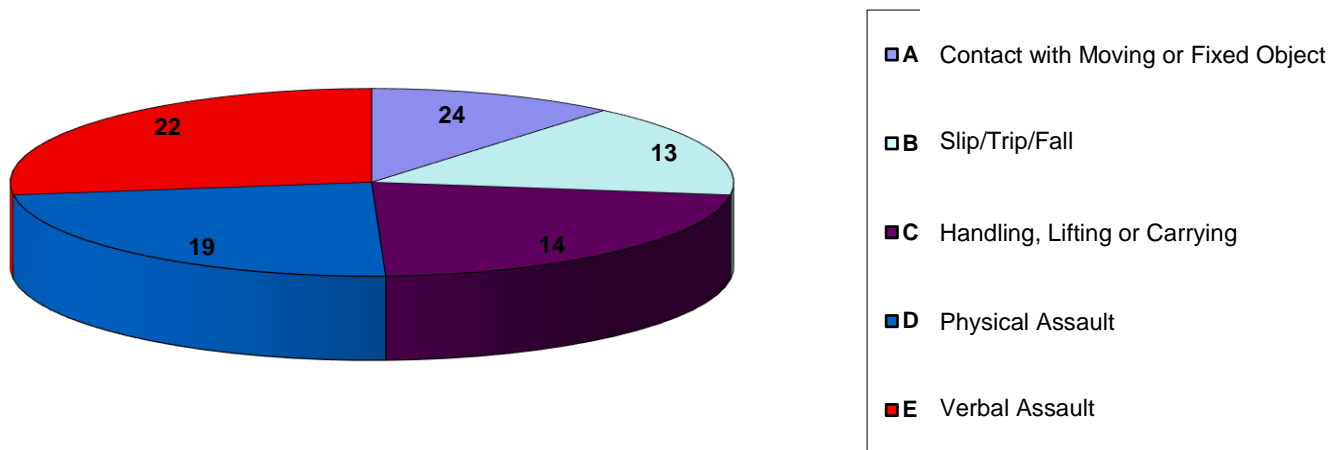


Chart 1 – Significant reported Work-Related Incidents to employees by type 2019/20

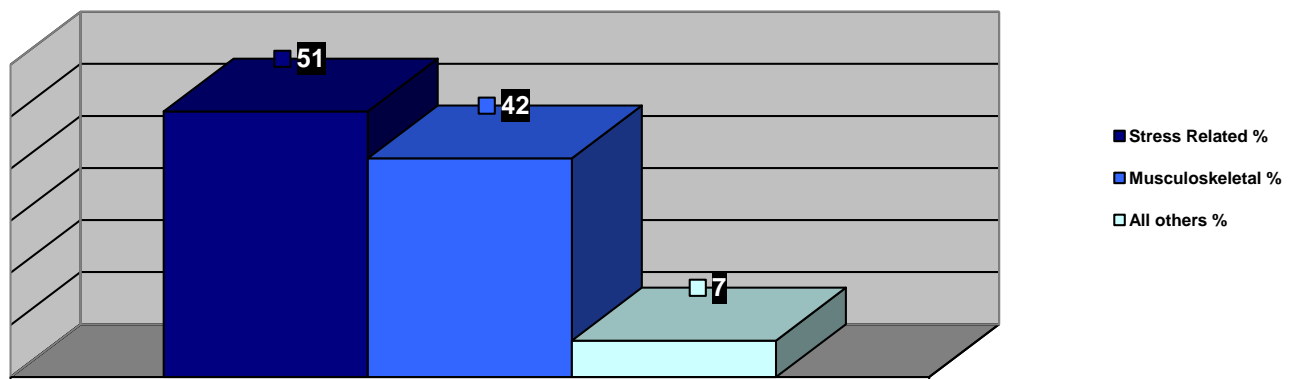


Chart 2 – Most common causes of Work Related Ill Health 2019/20

Corporate Health and Safety Training

We have continued to deliver corporate health and through our e-learning system as well as face to face training. There are 26 courses available on our eLearning system with 3 of those being mandatory training for all staff.

Alongside this corporate training services organise and deliver a wide range of role specific health and safety training and workshops, identified through performance review and risk assessments.

The mandatory corporate H&S training modules and numbers who completed these courses are as follows:

Mandatory E-learning - Percentages Completed	
Workplace Safety	71%
DSE	85%
Fire Safety	73%

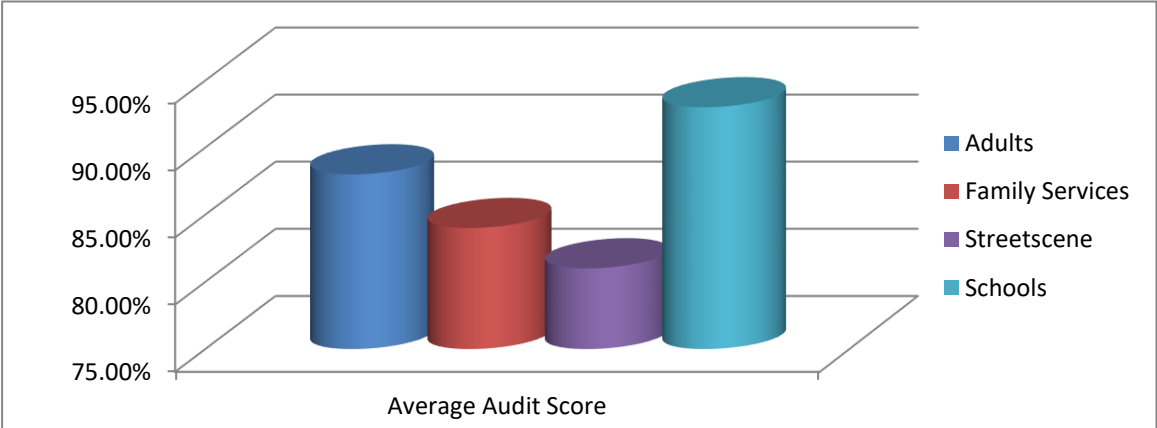
Health and Safety Audits

To monitor compliance with the councils Health and Safety Management System, legislation and accepted good practice, we use a system of internal auditing to

identify and remedy any gaps in health and safety performance. The audits are carried out by health and safety professionals with the annual audit programme agreed by the Head of Safety, Health and Wellbeing. The areas for audit are selected to ensure a representative sample of council activities as well as considering higher risk activities. Audits are not normally carried out on lower risk areas of the council, such as predominantly office based activities, to make effective use of the available resource. It is important to note that risk assessments and regular monitoring by managers continues in these low risk areas to ensure good practice and compliance.

A total of 33 H&S Audits and performance reviews were carried out in 2019/20 with the averaged results of the audits summarised in the table below. The average overall performance score across the council was 87% which is an increase in the average score compared to 2018/19 of 84%. Scores of 70% and above are viewed as 'Good Performance' 'Excellent Performance' would see scores of >90% and achievement of this score is the councils aim.

The audits show that the council performs well in the implementation of policy and in H&S risk management. The areas for improvement are in local premises related compliance and record keeping.



It is important to note that all audits result in the production of action plans to address any areas of low performance, with the SHaW team supporting managers in addressing these gaps.

Early response to COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID 19 response began in February for the council with the SHaW team actively sourcing supplies in both PPE and sanitising products to ensure supplies for any increase in the pandemic.

As the impact of the pandemic increased the service role changed to supporting the response by providing advice to the council leadership on risk mitigation as well as providing support to managers and staff. Guidance was issued on lockdown and managing risks to those essential services that continued to operate, as well as providing them with appropriate PPE. Guidance was also provided to staff about working safely from home.

3. COUNCILS HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES FOR THE PERIOD 2020/21

The corporate priorities aim to ensure the continued proactive improvements in health and safety and wellbeing performance, reduction of work related injury and ill health and increased productivity of our workforce. Given the COVID-19 pandemic response and SHAW Team significant involvement with the response, there will be enhanced focus on actions during 2020/21. Priorities for business as usual also seek to address any gaps or trends identified through monitoring activities as highlighted in this report.

- 1) *Continue to support the councils COVID 19 response.*
Provide templates to ensure COVID 19 secure workplaces and activities.
Provide guidance to staff working from home and introduce system to ensure they have suitable work equipment
- 2) *Seek reductions in days lost due to stress related/mental ill health –*
Corporate Stress Audit to be undertaken to identify Organisational Stressors. The Safety Health and Wellbeing Team to support Directors, through Directorate H&S Champions, to produce action plans that address any organisational issues identified in audit. The Head of SHaW to review current provision for Stress and Mental health training as well as employee support offer.
- 3) *Continue to seek reductions of at least 10% in days lost due to work related incidents and ill health -* The Safety Health and Wellbeing Team to support Directors to review local arrangements for the management of risks, particularly those associated Musculoskeletal Injuries, including manual handling and Display Screen Equipment.
- 4) *Ensure all staff have undertaken mandatory health and safety training -* Directors to introduce measures to ensure that all staff have undertaken mandatory health and safety training and that health and safety practice is imbedded in daily work routines.
- 5) *Achieve excellence in the revised London Healthy Workplace Award*
The Workplace Wellbeing Group to continue to formulate initiatives and implement actions to improve employee physical and mental wellbeing.