

Council Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report – 2021/2022

1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises significant council wide health, safety, and wellbeing performance and management activities over the period 2021/22. The report covers key achievements, council-wide statistics and developments for the year ahead to improve performance and outcomes while it continued to respond to Government and public health guidance on managing the COVID pandemic in the workplace.

The objectives, performance outcome and stats will vary from pre-pandemic years due to number of services operating under Business Continuity Plans for the duration of the year in response to coronavirus.

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

- Continual Support to Council Services and Schools in response to the pandemic
- Our responsibility for ensuring the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of employees, service users, members of the public and contractors in response to the pandemic.
- The on-going effective implementation of the council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy along with temporary Covid19 legislation for workplace.
- Continual improvements in health, safety and wellbeing through the monitoring and measurement of performance to highlight areas where the council performs well as well as areas for improvement.
- Openness and accountability

Key activities:

- 1) The Safety, Health and Wellbeing (SHaW) service continued to work with the Public Health, Health Protection team and the Emergency Planning service to support council services and Schools in response to Covid adapting to Government and Public Health guidance on operating safely.
- 2) The SHaW team supported services in resuming and/or continue with Business As Usual (BAU) activities in line with Government and Public Health guidance for Covid19.
- 3) The SHaW team supported services in implementing measures to meet the corporate targets of reduction in work related incidents and Ill health as part of BAU.
- 4) The SHaW team carried out corporate procurement exercise for Lone Working device (Solo Protect) for Council's lone workers in high-risk environment.
- 5) A council wide stress audit was concluded, and results shared with individual services to support stress action plans in order to reduce work related stress
- 6) The SHaW team conceived and implemented the Home and Agile Working Project to support staff working from home in response to Covid19 and developed further alongside the Council's long-term Hybrid Working strategy on the ways staff will work in future evolved.

- 7) The SHaW team took on the responsibility to establish and manage the PPE Hub in response Covid19 and provided essential PPE kits to front line staff, care homes, schools and other services. The team also supported the public health team with supporting local and mass testing facility and provision of LFT kits as the country continued to response to pandemic while learning to leave with the Covid19.
- 8) The SHaW team reviewed the software systems that support the council's health and safety management. This led to alignment with the HR learning and development system POD and transfer of the eLearning systems to HR to ensure its usability in all areas of the organisation including front line services.
- 9) All the councils Local Codes of Practice were reviewed and updated on the new school SharePoint website. These provide guidance to schools on the implantation of health and safety requirements and council policy.
- 10)The Workplace Health and Wellbeing Group (WHWBG) produced a Workplace Health and Wellbeing Strategy whose aim is to drive both short and long term improvements in our employees physical and mental wellbeing, reduced staff absences, 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.
- 11)Regular meetings and workshops have been put in place to support and upskill the Mental Health First Aiders at the council, of which there are over 100. The provision of MHFAs offers a first response and signposting for staff in difficulty with their mental health, particularly in response to pandemic.
- 12)Health checks for staff were provided at the Colindale office and depot with over 80 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. Signposting to cancer awareness and prevention was included this time.
- 13) A flu immunisation campaign alongside Covid19 vaccination was carried out with over 180 staff given vaccinations.
- 14)The service contributed to the successful health and safety evaluation of the Brent Cross Waste Transfer Station submissions

2. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE FOR 2021/22

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) Audits in the schools showed slight improvements in H&S performance with average compliance audit scores of 82%
- 4) Implementation of Working from Home project and provision of equipment for staff to work safely from home
- 5) Implementation of Corporate Lone Working System for services with staff working in high-risk environment
- 6) Council wide stress survey was completed by a total of 489 staff, which is approximately one third of our employees.

Review of Corporate Health and Safety Policy

The following corporate policies were amended and implemented:

- Lone Working
- Hybrid Working
- Display Screen Equipment
- Workplace Violence

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.

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

There has been a slight increase in the total number of incidents reported over the period, from 86 in 2020/21 to 116 in 2021/22. This is due to country being in lockdown due to Covid19 for most part of 2020 and emerging out of pandemic during the latter part of 2021. Only a slight increase should be seen as a reflection of the work the council has done to review and improve its H&S management approach in response to Covid and supporting services in resuming BAU activities.

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 front-line employees attributable to pupils verbally abusing teachers or front line employees delivering services to members of public. 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.

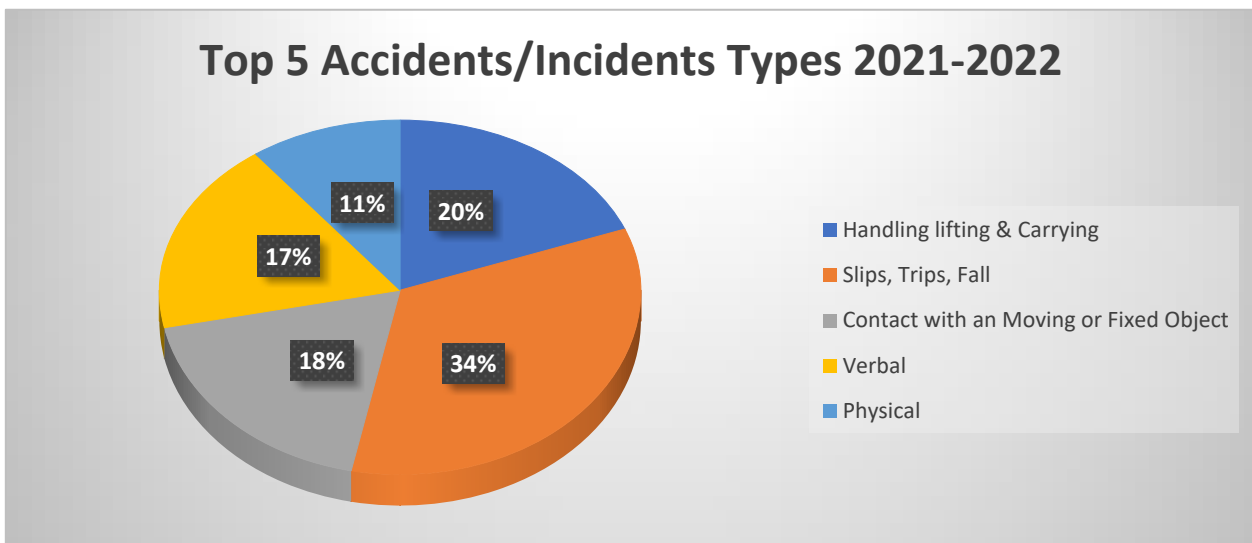


Chart 1 – Significant reported Work-Related Incidents to employees by type 2021-2022

Chart 2 shows that last year the two most common cause of work-related ill health reported on CoreHR; Covid-19 and other infection related illness. This is due to the council’s pragmatic response during the pandemic while ensuring essential service continued to operate.

Other main work-related illness includes “stress related”, mental ill health which include psychological ill health 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 only limited to work, as a good employer we should seek not only to reduce organisational causes of stress but also support staff who are experiencing issues that may lead to mental health issues outside of the workplace. This was evident during the pandemic when working pattern of many staff changed, some ended up working in isolation and many were required to self-isolate due to pre-existing medical condition.

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 financial wellbeing, etc. Staff also have access to trained mental health first aiders that was revised to cover risk of pandemic such as self-isolation, working in isolation, change of work environment. The SHaW and PH team delivered number of support sessions for managers to enable them to operate services safely while ensuring they were able to provide support for staff and respond to staff concerns. Services have stress action plans in place to manage the risk of organisational stressors.

Musculoskeletal injuries rate although down from previous year, 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. The ill health injury rate is down due to most of services operating only essential services during the pandemic and the SHaW team implemented Working from Home project to ensure staff working from home had DSE compliant equipment while from home. 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.

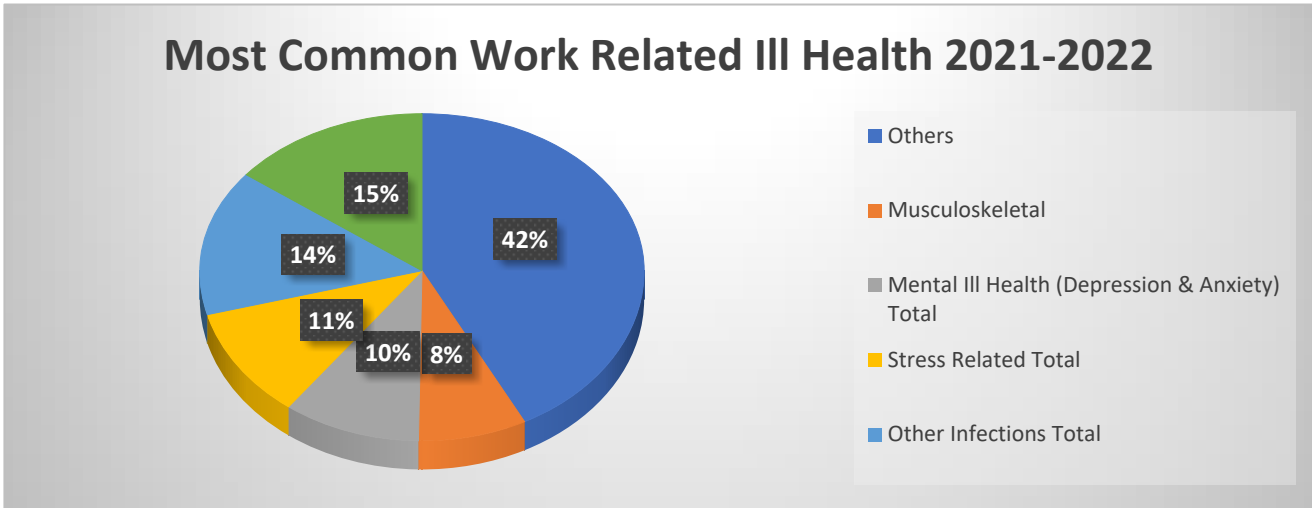


Chart 2 – Most Common Work Related Ill Health 2021-2022

Corporate Health and Safety Training

We have continued to deliver corporate health and safety training through the HR Learning POD as well as through face-to-face training. There are more than 30 courses available on the HR Learning POD with 3 of those being mandatory training for all staff and a further 2 for staff with managerial responsibilities. While the training stats is lower than previous years due to change of E-Learning systems, the SHaW team continues to engage with the HR and the individual services to ensure all current and new staff completes the mandatory training course within the set timeframe.

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	62%
DSE	48%
Fire Safety	53%
Managing Health and Safety for Mangers	62%
Principles of Risk Assessment	62%

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 20 School H&S Audits and performance reviews were carried out in 2021/22 with the averaged results of 82%. The areas for improvement are in local premises related compliance and record keeping. 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 number of audits carried out were limited due to SHaW teams' resources being diverted to the Covid19 response.

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.

Stress Survey

The survey was completed by a total of 489 staff, which is approximately one third of our employees.

Acknowledging that the events of the last 18 months and that the findings of the staff stress survey cannot be fully utilised, it is still important to address some of the areas which highlighted concerns. These centred around:

- Although staff are clear of what is expected of them at work, they say that there is a lack of consultation and information around change, and they are unclear how these changes will affect them
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The volume of work does not allow staff to be able to prioritise their workload and it is felt that some tasks are being neglected leading to a lack of control.

3. COUNCILS HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES FOR THE PERIOD 2022/23

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 participation and productivity of our workforce. They also seek to address any gaps or trends identified through monitoring activities as highlighted in this report.

- *Seek reductions in days lost due to stress related/mental ill health – The Corporate Stress Audit findings to be part of the individual services stress action plan. The Safety Health and Wellbeing Team to support Directors, through Directorate H&S Champions, to produce action plans that address organisational issues identified in an audit. The Head of SHaW to review current provision for Stress and Mental health training as well as employee support offer.*
- *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 and monitoring of health and safety risks, particularly those associated Musculoskeletal Injuries, including manual handling and Display Screen Equipment.*
- *Ensure staff undertake mandatory health and safety training - Directors to introduce measures to identify training and development needs, and to ensure that all staff have undertaken mandatory health and safety training, so that good health and safety practice is imbedded in daily work routines.*
- Implementation of Corporate Potential Violent Person Register (PVPR) system for the council and its Partners, to ensure services and partners have single system to be able record and share potential risk information about an individual or location with staff who visits services users or works in community are able to work safely.
- Improving Health and Wellbeing has become a key target for the council in its ambition to make Barnet a happier and healthier place to live as well as work. To this end, a Workplace Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been developed which will set out the following main proposals:
 - to put in place measures to properly implement existing procedures for protecting the health of our workforce, and;
 - to investigate some new initiatives for maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of our employees, our partners employees, and effect improvements in the wellbeing of our customers and citizens.