

# Council Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report – 2022/2023

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises council wide Health, Safety, and Wellbeing performance and significant management activities over the period 2022/23. The report covers key achievements, council-wide statistics and developments for the year ahead to improve performance and outcomes.

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

- Our responsibility for ensuring the Health and Safety of employees, service users, members of the public and contractors.
- Continual support to council services and schools to improve Health, Safety and wellbeing.
- The on-going effective implementation of the council's corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing policies.
- Continual improvements in Health, Safety and Wellbeing through the monitoring and measurement of its performance; to highlight areas where the council performs well as well as areas for improvement.
- Openness and accountability

### **Key activities towards meeting the council's health and safety priorities:**

- 1) A questionnaire was sent to service directors to identify, current systems and processes in place to manage, monitor and improve workplace Health and Safety. Responses will be analysed and used to help formulate service action plans.
- 2) A Potentially Violent Persons Database has been rolled out across the organisation. This enables the council to share and manage information and for staff to manage risk when delivering services.
- 3) A Lone Working alert system has been introduced that enables staff to alert a control centre when in difficulties.
- 4) More robust monitoring and escalation has been introduced to improve take up of mandatory training.
- 5) A 'Workplace Wellbeing Strategy' has been produced, in collaboration with stakeholders, and was approved by Corporate Management team. A draft action plan has been produced, to implement the strategies aims and objectives. This will be consulted on before being finalised.
- 6) A Sports and Wellbeing event was held in September at Barnet Leisure Centre, with over two hundred staff participating.
- 7) We ran health check clinics for staff, at Colindale and the Depot. Of the 168 staff that attended sixty-eight were referred to their GP for further investigation
- 8) Almost two hundred flu jabs were administered at Colindale and the depot in addition to 109 flu vouchers issued.
- 9) The Health and Safety Business Partners are assisting services to review risk assessments and control measures related to stress related illness, musculoskeletal injuries and work-related assault.

## **2. SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE FOR 2022/23**

### **Main performance indicators:**

The review shows that the council performs relatively well overall and manages its significant risks effectively. The main area of concern is an increase in the number of incidents, and of instances of verbal and physical assaults being reported. This may be due to the previous numbers being impacted by some COVID restrictions still being in place during 2021 and a significant number of staff working from home. It is worth noting that there was a reduction in incidents reportable to the Health and Safety Executive. We will continue to monitor trends and identify issues, to support services in improving controls.

The main performance indicators over the year are:

- A 20% reduction in RIDDOR reportable incidents compared to last year.
- An increase in the number of reported minor injury incidents of 31%.
- There was an increase in the number of reported physical assaults from 2 in 2021/22 to 11 in 2022/23. There was also an increase in the reporting of verbal assaults from 16 to 31.
- The number of mandatory courses undertaken maintain an average completion rate of around 70%.
- The service concentrated on Community schools for its audit programme in 2022/23. Ten audits were undertaken, with average compliance audit scores a healthy 89%. Areas for improvement were found to be record keeping for premises compliance.

### **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.

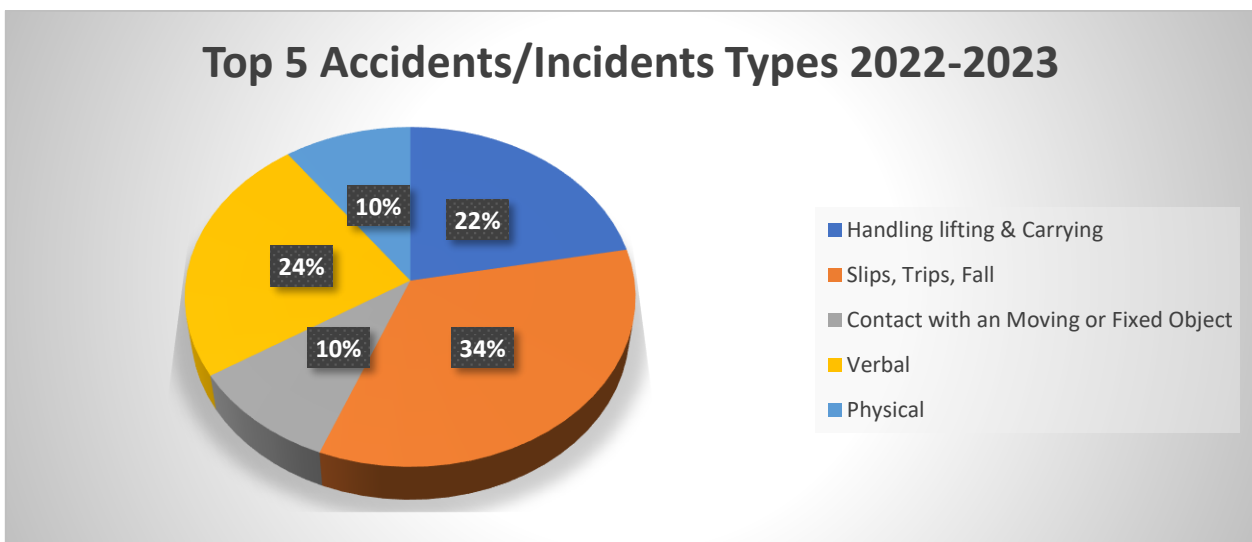
There has been an increase in the total number of incidents reported over the period, from 93 in 2021/22 to 127 in 2022/23. This may be due to some COVID restrictions still being in place during 2021 that impacted working patterns, with many of our staff working from home. The SHAW service will continue to monitor these trends and to support services in measures to reduce the risk of incidents.

Many 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, currently standing at 351 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. Many of the verbal assaults reported occurred in Schools and to front-line employees attributable to pupils verbally abusing teachers or front-line employees delivering services to members of public, such as Streetscene staff. 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 handing 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 2022-2023**

**Chart 2** shows that last year most common cause of sickness absence reported on CoreHR were “others”, these include minor ailments such as colds, minor viral infections, as well as staff being absent for other reasons such as surgery etc. We have categorised these in one group as they tend not to be associated with work activities.

Our main work-related absences include “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 pro-active advice on dealing with issues and reducing stress, confidential counselling sessions as well as advice on finance, etc. Staff also have access to trained mental health first aiders as well as other more tailored services, such as the Nafsiyat intercultural support service. 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 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.

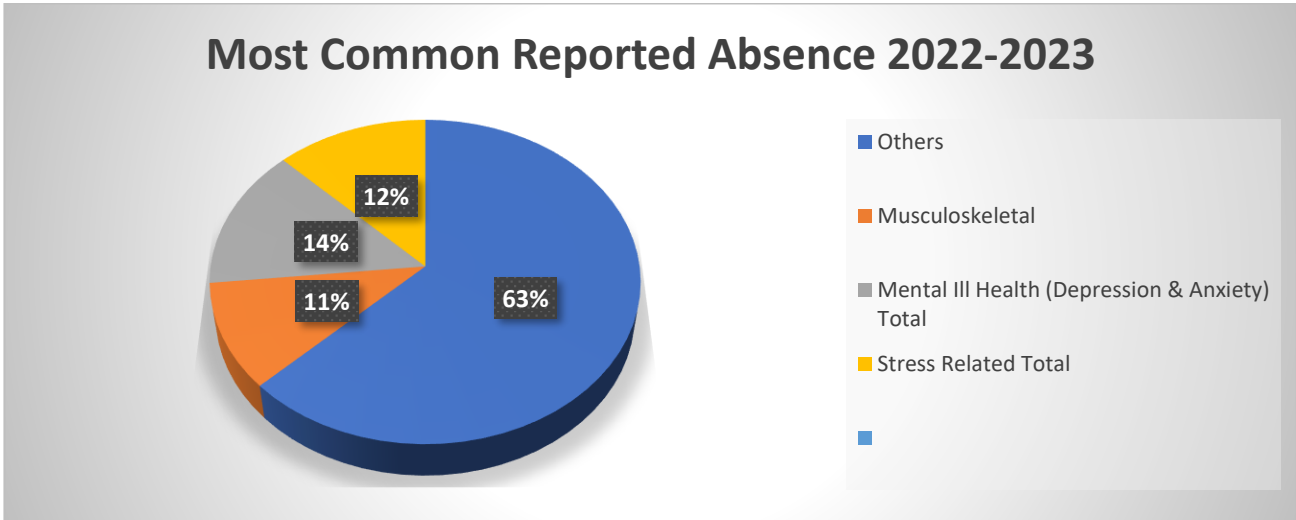


Chart 2 – Most Common absences 2022-2023

## 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. Training completion rates remain at around 70%. To improve this the SHaW team continues to engage with the HR and the individual services to ensure all current and new staff complete 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	72%
DSE	61%
Fire Safety	63%
Managing Health and Safety for Mangers	76%
Principles of Risk Assessment	74%

## 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.

For the period 2022/23 the service prioritised audits of community schools. A total of 10 School H&S Audits were carried out in 2022/23 with the averaged results of 89%. 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.

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.