

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	RES/32/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Corporate Resources Committee

Date: 28 August 2019

Report Title: **Annual Occupational Health and Safety Report 2018/19**

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance

Purpose/Executive Summary

The Highland Council's Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy includes a commitment to the production of an annual report on its Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing (OHSW) performance. Annual reporting on health and safety performance is also reflective of best practice. This report presents the council's OHSW performance, achievements and progress in 2018/2019.

The key challenges for the Highland Council for 2019/20 are:

- Supporting ECOs implement health and safety within the new council structure
- Ensuing new Service health and safety plans for improvements to specific risks are actioned, implemented and monitored regularly.
- Ensuring sensible, proportionate risk management
- Improved accident, incident, near miss recording and reporting
- Delivering a programme of prioritised workplace fire risk assessments

The key OHSW achievements for 2018/19 were:

- Success of the mental health representatives programme
- Provision of new occupational health contract
- Initiatives to support managers and staff with

It was agreed at the Central Safety Committee on 9 August 2019 that this report be submitted to the Council's Resources Committee.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the achievements and performance for 2018/19
- Approve the OHSW Annual Report

1. Implications

- 1.1 Resource – Health and safety should be an integral part of management; failure to properly consider, plan and make sufficient resources available for health and safety will result in a negative impact on resources – both staff time and budget.

Legal - Failure to follow health and safety legislation can lead to enforcement action by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which can range from the serving of a Notification of Contravention, Improvement Notice, Prohibition Notice or Court Proceedings. HSE intervention is now charged at a cost of £156 per hour. Additional costs to the Council will always be required to rectify the breach of legislation.

Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - None

Climate Change/Carbon Clever - None

Risk – Failure to ensure staff safety can lead to civil action against the Council

Gaelic - None

and safety
carbon C4.1

Designation: Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager

Date: 20/08/19

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Background Papers:



Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing

Annual Report 2018/2019


1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Highland Council's Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing (OSHW) Policy includes a commitment to the production of an annual report on its Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing (OHSW) performance. Annual reporting on health and safety performance is also reflective of best practice. This report presents the council's OHSW performance, achievements and progress in 2018/2019 and presents the OHSW plan for 2019/20.
- 1.2 The OHSW policy is based on the Health and Safety Executive's model for successful health and safety management: Plan-Do-Act Check cycle and this report is structured in a similar manner.



- 1.3 The OHSW team is based in the People and ICT Team in Corporate Resources. The team is responsible for:



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- Ensuring that the Council meets its statutory obligations in respect of the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees and all others affected by its activities;
 - Developing policies, procedures and standards
 - Monitoring and inspecting workplaces and investigating accidents, incidents and occupational ill-health;
 - Managing the occupational health contract;
 - Providing health and safety training.

2.0 Plan

2.1 Policy

2.1.1 The Corporate OHSW policy reflects the Council's values, beliefs and commitment to provide a safe and healthy workplace. The policy includes link to further guidance on managing the hazards faced by staff in the Council. The last review of the policy was in May 2018; the next review will be undertaken following the Council restructure.

2.1.2 In addition to the corporate policy, each Service should have its own service-specific health and safety policy which sets out the Service's arrangements for managing health and safety. These policies are all available on the Health and Safety [Intranet site](#). The new Services will have to develop specific health and safety policies, based on the nature of the occupational health and safety risks faced by their staff.

2.2 Planning for implementation

2.2.1 Effective planning for health and safety is concerned with prevention through identifying and controlling risks. This involves:

- designing, developing and implementing suitable and proportionate management arrangements, risk control systems and workplace precautions
- operating and maintaining the system while also seeking improvement where needed
- linking it to how other aspects of the Council are managed

2.2.2 Each service has nominated a Head of Service (other than Corporate Resources which is a small service) to take on the role of Service Health and Safety Co-ordinator. Their responsibilities include coordinating health safety and wellbeing issues within their service and championing health and safety. They play a major part in implementing the corporate policy into their Service, developing their health and safety plan and ensuring planning for health and safety is included in Senior Management Team meetings at least quarterly.

3.0 Do

3.1 Risk profiling

3.1.1 The Council's health and safety delivery model covers the significant hazards faced by staff as they conduct their work activities. Not all services face the same hazard (or level of risk), and the Service health and safety action plan should focus on relevant risks, how they will be addressed within the Service and meet the requirements of Council policy and guidance.

3.1.2 There is a strong focus on the use of risk assessment as a management tool and ensuring that controls are proportionate to the risks. A continued emphasis on sensible, proportionate risk assessment will be one of the main themes for the OHSW team in 2019/20. There will also be a focus on the HSE's message: Go Home Safe

3.2 Organising

3.2.2 Health and safety responsibilities are described in the Corporate Policy and reflected in Service Policies. In addition to Service H&S Coordinators, individuals with specific responsibilities in Services for: risk assessment, Responsible Premises Officers, first aid, fire wardens, key workers (lifting and handling), trainers, assessors etc. have been identified. The basic requirement that everyone is responsible for the health and safety of themselves and others is one that is oft repeated.

3.3 Plan Implementation

3.3.1 OHSW plan

The main actions in the 2018/19 OHSW plan were to:

- Maintain the OHSW Management System (ongoing)
- Work with Services to maintain H&S plans (ongoing)
- Reduce the number of occupational health appointments where employees did not attend: percentage reduction achieved (ref 4.5.8)
- Review Violence and Aggression reporting in schools (ongoing ref 5.1.10)

3.3.2 Communication

The Staff Intranet and use of email are the main means of communication health, safety and wellbeing issues. The most important messages are published on the Intranet home page as well as the health and safety site. Health and safety advisers also raise issues at Area, Service and other health and safety meetings.

3.3.3 Communication messages have mainly focussed on security issues; mental health awareness; safe driving and safety alerts regarding battery disposal, safe use of ladders, sun exposure and manual handling. All messages can be found on the [OHSW news page](#).

3.3.3 Co-operation and consultation

3.3.3.1 The Central Safety Committee (CSC) is the main arena for health and safety consultation in line with the requirements of the Safety Representatives and

Safety Committees Regulations 1977. Reports on the occupational health service, health and safety updates and property health and safety issues are all standing items on the agenda. Where Services have had HSE intervention, there is an expectation that update reports will be submitted to the committee until the issue has been closed out.

3.3.3.2 In line with the Policy and Guidance on Consultation, Service and Area health and safety meetings are held quarterly. Service meetings are regularly held. Area meetings can sometimes be negatively impacted upon due to poor attendance – even though these now include the ability to join remotely. Improving attendance at Area meetings is included in the 2019/20 Action plan. Actions raised at these meetings can be escalated to the CSC if not addressed in a timely manner.

3.3.3.3 The appropriate health and safety adviser attends both Service and Area meetings. A representative from D&I's Property Management Team is also invited to the meetings to discuss health and safety property-related issues.

3.3.3.4 All work teams are encouraged to have health and safety as a regular item on the agenda for team meetings to ensure that issues can be raised and addressed.

3.3.5 Training

3.3.5.1 Health and safety training is, in the main, delivered by the health and safety team, without cost to the service, except where specialist input is required. The OHSW team can deliver training across the Council's geographical area, where there are adequate numbers of delegates.


3.3.5.2 The table below shows the number of Council staff attending health and safety courses in 2018/19:

Course title	2018/19	Trend
Dealing with challenging behaviour	25	↓
Mental Health Representative	17	↓
Accident Investigation and Reporting	2	↓
Responsible Premises Officer	5	↓
First Aid Certificate	36	↓
First Aid Certificate Refresher	42	↓
Emergency First Aid	176	↓
Moving and Handling (People)	38	↓

Evac chair / ski pad	6	↓
Evacuation procedures	8	↓
Fire Marshal	15	↓
Lone Working	21	↑
Manual Handling	53	↓
Risk Assessment	130	↓
Stress Awareness	7	↓
Mentally Healthy Workplaces	16	↓
Preventing Violence at Work	11	↓
E-learning courses	Complete (in progress) 2018/19	Trend
Alcohol and drugs in the workplace	4 (36)	↓
Mentally Healthy Workplaces	38 (37)	↓
Preventing violence and aggression	63 (14)	↓
Snow and ice clearing	29 (5)	↓
Working with Computers	301 (92)	↑
Managing stress	32 (10)	↓
Extinguishing Fires	233 (131)	↑
Introduction to OHSW	204 (72)	↓
Occupational Health	47 (3)	↓

3.3.5.3 The general trend is a significant decrease in attendance at health and safety training whether it is delivered face to face or by e-learning. This training is an important element in improving safety culture and safety behaviours.

3.3.5.4 Training of staff is one of the criteria that the HSE will always ask for during inspections or accident investigation. In many cases, training is a legal requirement and corporate health and safety training addresses our most serious risk. Services will be asked to commit to ongoing programmes of health and safety training in their updated plans.



3.3.5.5 A Managing Health and Safety in Highland Council was aimed at 3rd tier managers, the majority of whom have now attended. A new course – Supervising Health and Safety in Highland Council – was offered towards the end of 2018/19 with no uptake to date. This will also be promoted to the new Services.

3.3.5.6 A number of new certificated Health and Wellbeing courses have been offered to staff, at no cost, via Skills Network Scotland as of November 2018.

Level 2 Certificate in:

- Counselling Skills
- Information, Advice or Guidance
- Understanding Autism
- Awareness of Mental Health Problems
- Common Health Conditions
- Falls Prevention Awareness
- Principles of Dementia Care
- Understanding Behaviour that Challenges
- Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health
- Understanding Nutrition and Health
- Understanding the Care and Management of Diabetes

Level 3 Certificate in:

- Understanding Autism
- Understanding Mental Health

Further information is available at www.highlandcouncil.theskillsnetwork.com

4.0 Check

4.1 Monitoring performance

4.1.1 Ensuring and encouraging compliance with OHSW policy and associated guidance, as a minimum standard, is at core the core of the proactive work of the OHSW team whilst also promoting a culture of continuous improvement. The quarterly CSC receives reports on the Council's health and safety performance as well as that of the contracted-in occupational health service.

4.1.2 Benchmarking, peer support and sharing of experience and policy and guidance is a core part of the North of Scotland Health and Safety group. This group is comprised of health and safety senior officers from CNES, Orkney, Shetland, Moray, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils. A sub group has recently been established to share information and resources for the management of HAVS across these Councils.

4.2 Investigate accidents, etc.

4.2.1 There were 1246 incidents to staff reported in the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, compared to 1915 in the previous year. This year's trends and rates compared to the previous 5 years are presented in the table below:

	2012/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014/ 2015	2015/ 2016	2016/ 2017	2017/ 2018	2018/ 2019
Total employee accidents	746	886	937	1196	1915	1171	1238
Fatalities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Working days lost	N/A	N/A	1348	1237	916	555	557
Major injuries	1	6	10	7	8	9	6
Over 7 day injuries	15	12	12	14	11	8	17
Total reportable to HSE	16	18	22	21	19	17	23
Accident Injury Rate (AIR)*	158	215	213	261	244	145	219


*AIR = (reportable injuries/no. employees)*100,000

4.2.2 The majority of the incidents were reported as Violence and Aggression: 750 were reported by schools, a reduction on last year's figures. All incidents of violence in schools are reviewed by the Additional Support Team.

4.2.3 The severity of the outcome of the accidents has increased – as noted in the increase in the number of over 7 day absence injuries and those reported to the HSE.

4.2.4 In terms of benchmarking, the AIR (2.19) places the Council in equal 3rd place when compared to the 5 neighbouring Councils in the North of Scotland who have been able to provide information. This is down from 2nd place in the previous year.

4.2.5 Only 8 near miss incidents were reported over this time period. Whilst this is a slight increase from last year, it is considered essential that the Council



makes more use of incident and near miss reports, results from accident investigations, inspections etc. to ensure sufficient learning from these and that appropriate responses are made to prevent recurrence of incidents and loss. This will be raised with Services over the next year.

4.2.6 In addition, nine cases of the occupational disease Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) from 2 Services were reported to the HSE. The Council was served with an Improvement Notice from HSE in 2015 for failure to manage HAVS: affected services have been urged to review practices in this area.

4.4 HSE Involvement

4.4.3 HSE Intervention

4.4.3.1 The HSE investigated an accident where an employee fell from a school roof. No formal action has been taken against the Council, but the employing Service has been asked to:

- review training and instruction re working at height
- review the role and responsibilities of the responsible premises officer

4.4.3.2 An alert regarding the possibility of asbestos in gauze mats used in science classes was issued by the HSE. Although none of the Council's current providers have been identified as being involved, advice was issued to schools that stock of gauze mats which could not be identified as being from a safe source should be presumed to contain asbestos and disposed of in accordance with hazardous waste guidance. A number of pieces of equipment have been subsequently removed - primarily because there was no labelling available.

4.4.3.3 Guidance specific to managing stress in Education (Talking Toolkit) was developed and issued by HSE. This was shared with Education for use. It was also adapted (by OHSW Team) for use in the Council's Care teams.

4.4.3.4 The HSE investigated an incident at an Inverness Primary School where a pupil was injured climbing a fence just after the school had closed for the day: this resulted in a Notice of Contravention (and subsequent Fee for Intervention) being issued to the Service.

4.4.3.5 As a result of the incident Property Management team are conducting an inventory of similar fences across the school estate. The selection of fences should be based on a risk assessment which takes into account the risk of

impalement should someone fall e.g. from steps.

4.5 Occupational Health

4.5.1 Iqarus Occupational health took over the contract in 2016 following their buy-out of RS Occupational Health and were again awarded the Highland Council/Highlife Highland contract in 2019.

4.5.2 A total of 718 management referrals were seen by occupational health between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. This represents a decrease from the 905 referrals in the previous year. Service use can be broken down as follows:

Service	No. Referrals
Corporate Resources	48
Care and Learning	411
D&I	116
Community Services	143

4.5.3 The main reason for referral to occupational health is for mental health issues, 61% of management referrals are classified thus by the medical staff. This is a decrease on the rate of 45% of cases in 2017-2018 and the 50% in 2016-2017. There is a requirement for staff who are absent with mental health issues to be referred immediately, as early intervention is viewed as crucial to recovery and getting back to work. It should be noted that not all referrals (for any condition) are made when staff are off ill: some are referred while staff are still at work in order to prevent absence.

4.5.4 Where work related stress has been identified, the management report aligns the cause to the HSE Stress standards (demands, control, support, role relationships and/or change) and this way the employee and the manager can focus on these areas specifically. Managers are advised to complete Stress Risk Assessments as part of the return to work process.

4.5.5 Statutory health surveillance is required for all employees who are exposed to certain defined hazards (such as noise) or to certain processes such as working with vibrating equipment. Health surveillance is any activity which involves obtaining information about employees' health and which helps protect employees from health risks at work. There is also a requirement to offer night workers a health assessment. The table below shows the health surveillance activity in this period.

Community Services	2018/19
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Audiometry	700
HAVS Tier 2	564
HAVS Tier 4	10
Skin	668
Respiratory	682
Hep B	8
D&I	2018/19
Audiometry	21
Respiratory	30
Skin	28
HAVS Tier 2	25
HAVS Tier 4	300
C&L	2018/19
Eyesight	20
Whisper Test	20
Respiratory	1

4.5.6 Did not attend appointments (DNAs) are those where the employee fails to give more than 24 hours' notice of being unable to attend their appointment – in many cases there is no communication from the employee at all and they do not turn up. Both manager and employee receive notification of appointments and managers are expected to discuss this with the employee.

4.5.7 Under the terms of the contract, the Council is charged the full appointment cost for DNAs. The table below shows a breakdown of DNAs by service for 2018/19.

Service	Management Referral	Physio
Corporate Resources	2	1
Care and Learning	42	21
D&I	7	9
Community Services	14	28

4.5.8 The 124 DNAs is an increase on the 113 DNAs from the previous year; however, the 65 Management Referrals represents 9% of appointments,



compared to 12.4% from the previous year. As any DNS is costly, a number of steps have been introduced to try to keep this number as low as possible.

- the OHSW team now text employees 48 hours prior to their appointment to remind them of the details;
- managers are requested to remind employees of their appointment and double check the time/date is suitable;
- managers are asked to report as to why the employee DNA'd.
- OHSW team now monitor repeat physio appointments.

4.5.9 DNAs will continue to be monitored at Central Safety Committee.

4.6 Fire safety

4.6.1 A working group has been set up, chaired by the Director of Community Services to review the Council's arrangements in place for fire safety to ensure the safety of tenants and premises occupiers by considering:

- **Physical provisions** made for fire safety (e.g. fire detection and life protection systems and fire prevention measures installed in properties)
- **Precautions** provided to inform means of escape (e.g. information and guidance given to tenants and building occupiers) and provision of fire risk assessments
- **Resources** to address any improvements

4.6.2 The prioritised programme of fire risk assessments for Council workplaces has been reviewed, with an emphasis now on all schools being assessed at least once. Large office premises and depots/workshops/garages are the next priority.

5.0 ACT

5.1 Achievements


5.1.1 Updates to the health and safety and management documentation included:

- Guidance on First Aid at Work
- Manual Handling
- Risk Assessment
- Guidance on health and safety consultation
- Guidance on health surveillance

5.1.2 In partnership with colleagues in HR and Learning and Development, the Mental Health Reps training has continued, with additional training for this group of staff on topics such as resilience. This "virtual" team was awarded Council Team of The Year in the 2018 Quality Awards.


5.1.3 The OHSW Team were involved in providing advice to a number of projects including the Depot Rationalisation Project.

5.1.4 Portable Appliance Testing: A review of the Council's approach to portable appliance testing is now underway: there is evidence that we are testing some



items more frequently than is required. The review is focussed on the testing frequency of types of rather than a blanket annual retest approach. There is no legal requirement to test all portable electrical equipment annually: the frequency should be based on a risk assessment.

- 5.1.5** The OHSW team is leading on the development of an open water safety strategy and policy in line with the Scottish Government and Water Safety Scotland guidance.
- 5.1.6** The OHSW team has assisted colleagues in Environmental Health develop a checklist for schools to help ensure that the hire and use of inflatable play equipment (e.g. bouncy castles) is as safe as possible. This work was undertaken following two separate fatal accidents involving children and inflatable equipment in England.
- 5.1.7** Development work is being undertaken to identify the requirements for an electronic health and safety management system: initially this will enable the capture and manipulation of accident data/trends. This work is being enabled by ICT and Highlife Highland.
- 5.1.8** 4 Council staff were presented with their TUC health and safety diplomas on 31st October. 4 staff from Council partner organisations were also recognised on the day. This is the accumulation of many hours of work and study for these staff – access to such training is a result of the Councils’ Partnership and Charter arrangements for safety representatives.
- 5.1.9** A number of awareness sessions have been attended by Head teachers in an attempt to streamline the reporting of accidents to pupils. There was a history of over-reporting in this area: only accidents to pupils as a result of poor supervision or resulting from the condition of the building/premises are required to be reported to the OHSW team.
- 5.1.10** An employee wellbeing survey was issued to all staff in August
- 5.1.11** Nineteen Council teams took part in last year’s summer step count challenge. A total of 30237 miles were covered, with 67578877 steps. The winning Council team was Fallen Arches from D&I in Alness with 2427 miles (5424387 steps). The team was placed 13th in the national competition.
- 5.1.12** The health, safety and wellbeing campaigns this year included:
- Fire Door Safety (video to check fire doors are suitable)
 - Suicide Prevention Week (Intranet/poster campaign)
 - Mental Health Awareness Day (Intranet/poster campaign)
 - Cyber Security – Little Book of Big Tips
 - Prostate Cancer Awareness
 - Wearing lanyards whilst driving
 - Use of voltage testers
 - Stay safe in winter

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- Alcohol awareness week
 - Gas safety – boilers
 - Mental health
 - Suicide awareness

5.1.13 A talk on the variety of mental health support for employees was presented to Elected Members in November 2018.

5.1.14 A seminar for HR and Payroll staff on supporting staff going through cancer was delivered by McMillan Cancer Support. This was hopefully the first of a series of such sessions from health charities on supporting staff with long time conditions.

5.1.15 An awareness session for managers and HR staff on Supporting Staff with Autism was delivered by the local charity, Autism Initiatives. This provided a number of ideas and techniques to assist in keeping those staff with a diagnosis of autism in work. Communication and environment are two of the most important areas for development and reasonable adjustments.

5.1.16 The OHSW team provided continued support to the radon management group which focus on measuring and managing radon levels in all Council workplaces in high/medium radon levels.

5.1.17 The OHSW team also achieved 100% attendance at Area and Service health and safety consultation groups.

5.1.18 The development of a security manual is also underway to give staff additional advice and information on how to stay safe and protect buildings whilst the National security threat stays at Severe.

6.0 OHSW Work plan for 2019/20

6.1 The OHSW work plan 2019/20 is attached.