

To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 13 June 2024

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: 2023/24 Health, Safety and Wellbeing achievements and future plans within Renfrewshire Council.

Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the health, safety and wellbeing arrangements and performance of Renfrewshire Council in effectively managing health, safety, and wellbeing for the period 1 April 2023 to 31st March 2024.
- 1.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended) place duties on the Council to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health of their employees and others that could be affected by work activities.
- 1.3 This report demonstrates the council's continued commitment to ensuring the health, safety, welfare, and wellbeing of our employees. It supports the aims of the "Our People, Our Future" strategy document, the councils' values and contributes to the delivery of best value outcomes.
- 1.4 This report takes into consideration the HSE's strategy documents "Protecting People and Places" and "Helping Great Britain Work Well".
- 1.5 Managing health and safety in the workplace is not only morally and legally responsible, but it also makes good financial sense. Reducing workplace accidents and ill health saves on compensation claims, medical expenses, and legal fees while increasing productivity and efficiency. This should encourage retention of employees as they feel valued and ultimately positively impact on Renfrewshire Council's reputation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The board notes the attached report on the health, safety and wellbeing arrangements and performance of the council.
-

3.0 Background

- 3.1 A safe and healthy organisation is one that successfully balances the needs of individuals with the needs of the organisation. It is recognised that, over the past year, the council has been exploring different ways of working to reflect the financial position and the final elements of recovery from the pandemic. This, in turn, continues to drive organisational change and influence the council's safety culture.
- 3.2 Health and safety at work is not only about health and safety management, occupational health and promoting healthier lifestyles, it is recognised that the way in which work is organised and how people behave, is significant to nurturing positive outcomes. To be truly effective, health and safety must be an everyday process and an integral part of the workforce culture at all levels across the council.

4.0 Key areas of activity

- 4.1 The Health and Safety team (part of People and OD), continued to work collaboratively with key stakeholders, including Trades Unions, Services, and external partners including One Ren, Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board (RVJB), Scotland Excel and the NHS.
- 4.2 The Health and Safety team were actively involved in supporting the NHS mobile vaccination team for covid, flu and shingles vaccinations within the community during 2023/24.
- 4.3 Protecting mental health and wellbeing has been a key priority for the Health and Safety team. The Quality of Working Life (Stress) Risk Assessment (QWLRA) is an important tool to identify perceived workplace stressors and to generate an action plan that may remove or reduce the impacts of the perceived stressors. A review of our guidance has taken place and a revised document was implemented in consultation with employee representatives and management.
- 4.4 The council has an ongoing commitment to reducing incidents, so far as is reasonably practicable and encourage employees to play their part in achieving this important objective. Each Service health and safety committee/group involving employee representatives, are required to focus on the apparent causes of incidents.

Further to this, weekly meetings with the service health and safety coordinator and the Health and Safety team have been established and this will assist in the development of strategies and local accident reduction programmes.

- 4.5 Over the reporting period (2023/24) there were 2948 incidents reported in total, compared to 1883 reported the previous reporting period (2022/23). The incident total includes employees, service users, members of the public and contractors. The biggest presenting issue facing the council as a whole, is an increase in the violence and aggression incidents reported (reflecting the national picture). The majority of these incidents are identified by the service users and/or pupils. Post covid, incidents recorded against employees have resulted in more minor injuries being reported and the type of behaviours displayed that have increased include verbal abuse, use of weapons and physical contact. The Health and Safety team are currently working with national safety practitioner groups to identify strategies and incident reduction programmes.
- 4.6 The council has a duty to report certain incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). The table below is a summary of employee RIDDOR Notifications during the reporting period:

Service	Number of reports
Chief Executives	0
Childrens Services	13
Environment Housing & Infrastructure	15
Finance and Resources	0
Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	5
Total	33

To ensure we meet our statutory requirements of the RIDDOR regulations, the Health and Safety team have undertaken a number of training sessions, in collaboration with our Businessworld colleagues across a number of council services and this will ensure timeous reporting and data collation.

- 4.7 Health and safety training is vital to ensure everyone is familiar with their responsibilities. The provision of face-to-face health and safety training has been further complimented this reporting period by an enhanced digital programme. There are a number of courses offered, and the most attended were: Accident/ incident reporting, Display Screen Equipment, Evacuation process for Renfrewshire House, Fire Alarm investigation, Fire Warden, Manual handling, violence and aggression. Over the reporting period there were a total of **5547** course completions.

Service	Number of completions
Chief Executives	306
Childrens Services	1405
Environment Housing & Infrastructure	1468
Finance and Resources	907
Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	1248
Total	5547

Throughout the reporting period, the Health and Safety team have also supported bespoke training on topics such as accident/incident reporting, needlestick injuries, fire safety in care homes and lone working.

4.8 To support everyone to work safely, a risk-based review of all our policies and guidance documents is under way, we will prioritise a refresh of the documents in line with statutory compliance as well as business needs. Several health and safety documents have been revised and include:

- Control of Smoking at working
- Control of Legionella

Other health and safety policies and guidance in the process of revision include; hand arm vibration, fire, violence and aggression, risk assessment, manual handling, and lone working.

4.9 To ensure a collaborative approach to health and safety engagement with employees, the corporate health and safety committee (CHSC) continues to progress health and safety issues that cannot be resolved at Service level. The committee has representation from Services and Trade Unions. During this reporting period the CHSC met 4 times.

4.10 The Health and Safety team continue to provide data for insurance claims, subject access requests (SAR) and freedom of information (FOI) requests. During 2023/24 **58** SAR/FOI data requests were completed and most relate to generic incident/accidents at work.

4.11 The Health and Safety team continue to evaluate contractor's and supplier's health and safety documentation when they apply for contracts with Renfrewshire Council, during the reporting period there were a total of **135** contractor evaluations that were completed, **43** Low Risk and **92** High Risk. This process continues to ensure correct governance arrangements are in place.

- 4.12 The council's occupational health provider, People Asset Management Ltd. Progress the occupational health surveillance programme. The programme continued throughout 2023/24 and has covered certain occupations within Building Services, Streetscene, Fleet and Roads, as well as school technicians and music teachers. Types of health surveillance carried out includes:
- Audiometry
 - Spirometry
 - Vibration
 - Nightshift worker questionnaires
 - Pre-employment medical screening
 - School Crossing patroller health checks.
- 4.13 The Health and Safety team have been supporting Building Services and Housing colleagues with needlestick injury training. This is linked to a council wide review of our blood borne virus risk assessment documentation. We have expanded this project into a council wide working group and refreshed the risk assessments where there may be occupational exposures generated through work-related activities. This has led to a programme of vaccinations for certain occupations that can be exposed to Hepatitis A and B within Building services and Renfrewshire Drugs Service.
- 4.14 The Health and Safety team continue to produce health and wellbeing guidance and campaigns to support the workforce. Topics covered during the reporting period include; walking groups, mental health promotions and a range of employee benefits.
- 4.15 The Health and Safety team have supported the planning arrangements and the delivery of events across Renfrewshire including gala days and other local events, some of the significant events supported include: Paisley Food and Drink Festival, Sma Shot parade and event, Renfrew Pipe band Competition, Halloween event, Remembrance Sunday events, Winterfest event in Paisley and the Christmas Lights Switch on events in Renfrew and Johnstone.
- 4.16 During the reporting period, the Health and Safety team were actively involved in supporting and responding to **5** visits from the HSE. One visit was in relation to the cardboard compaction equipment within the EH&I Household waste and recycling centre (HWRC), whereby the improvements suggested by the Health and Safety team were adopted across the other HWRCs. **4** school visits were in relation to the HSE's management of asbestos in schools' intervention programme. This involved the Health and Safety team, collaborating with officers from Childrens Services and Finance and Resources to provide the HSE with all the associated documentation and plans that demonstrates our effective asbestos management plans.

All the interventions above did not result in any type of punitive notice but did generate a fee for intervention payment (which is the lowest form of action). This was the result of the Health and Safety team taking significant action with the services to reduce the potential outcomes that may have resulted in a formal outcome.

- 4.17 There have been **12** audits jointly carried out with Scottish Fire and Rescue (SFR). The audits are a result of SFR attending call outs to our premises. We discuss, where possible, improvements to the fire safety arrangements. Across the estate, there have been very low-level impact fires which have not resulted in any significant damage or property loss associated and this can be attributed to the fire risk assessment process (and associated controls) driven by the Health and Safety team.
- 4.18 A corporate Fire working group, led by the Health and Safety team with representatives from services and trade unions, continue to review the arrangements and training needs across the council and external partners premises. This has led to the development of procedures for alarm activations as well as looking at improvements within premises.
- 4.19 The Health and Safety team continue to support the new ways of working arrangements being developed across the council. This includes reviewing floor plate designs and ventilation impacts. The team supported the relocation of staff from Abbey House to Renfrewshire House.
- 4.20 The Health and Safety team continue to support the council's construction activities through scheduled monthly meetings with the property services team and others. The team continue to be involved in meetings/site visits for the Paisley Town Hall project and the Paisley Arts Centre project, the schools new build (the new Paisley Grammar) and refurbishment projects (school kitchens) including extensive support to the Dargavel additional classrooms project, Oakshaw Church, steeple refurbishment and weathervane removal project, the WIFI extension project, The Paisley Cultural Hub project as well as other smaller projects.
- 4.21 The council offered the flu vaccine out to all staff not covered under the criteria for an inoculation from the NHS. We worked with our OH provider from October to December 2023 to deliver face to face inoculations for staff. As part of this programme, we worked closely with our partner organisations (One Ren, RVJB and Scotland Excel) to include their staff.
- 4.22 The Health and Safety team continue to drive improvements within the workplace and have instigated a number of working groups, with representatives from services and trade unions on the following subjects: asbestos management, working at height, hand arm vibration.

The groups reports and outcomes will feed into policy development, safer working methods and support the governance arrangements. The group activities will also be reported to boards and the corporate health and safety committee.

4.23 During the reporting period, the Health and Safety team were actively involved in supporting Childrens services, early years team to develop and implement a flight risk, risk assessment document (FRRA). This was in response to incidents whereby younger children were able to get out of the premises unaided. The FRRA was undertaken across all Early Learning and Childcare Centres, (38 visits in total) and suitable controls were identified and implemented. Each FRRA generates an action plan to ensure the appropriate controls are implemented.

5.0 Future Plans

5.1 The HSE have selected priority programmes which concentrate on hazards or sectors where improvements are needed. The HSE's priority programmes that may impact on the council are:

- Dust;
- Legionella;
- Musculoskeletal disorders;
- Work related stress;
- Planned Preventative Maintenance;
- asbestos;
- construction related activities; and
- Raising awareness of the need to prevent injury to members of the public from accessing large commercial waste and recycling bins.

In addition, we recognise and apply the HSE's aims to their workplace strategy: 'Helping Great Britian work well'.

- *those who create risks have a responsibility to manage them.*
- *action should be proportionate to the risks that need managing.*

The overall aim within the council is for services to continue to address concerns in relation to the above issues and incorporate these into their health and safety action plans which should include relevant performance indicators. This will ensure that health and safety continues to be a significant driver and may result in enhanced health and safety performance.

5.2 The council will continue to work in partnership with our occupational health provider People Asset Management and our employee counselling provider Timefortalking, in reviewing and developing health and well-being programs with the focus on supporting attendance at work.

Over the next twelve months, key areas to be targeted in relation to health safety and wellbeing are:

- continued monitoring of ill health trends and analysis;
- promotion of occupational health services to support employees to remain at work, including physiotherapy;

- targeted promotion across the council, to increase the use of the employee counselling service by those identifying as males.
- health education and training of employees on occupational health related subjects for example occupational exposures or mental health awareness;
- provision of expert advice and development of occupational health-related procedures or guidance as required;
- continuation of the health surveillance plan.

5.3 In order to continue to promote and sustain a positive health, safety and well-being culture, further objectives have been set for 2024/25 which includes:

- The Health and Safety team will resume the audit and workplace inspection programme within services;
- continuing to examine the presentation of accident/ill health statistics within Businessworld ERP and how this may be improved to give clearer information and to encourage their use by services to provide a focus for proactive accident prevention programmes;
- continuing to promote, provide, develop, and expand the health and safety and well-being courses in line with the business needs;
- continuing to promote the mental health awareness and the use of the Quality of Working Life (stress) risk assessment Council wide to minimise work related stress;
- driving safety cultural change within the council through a challenge culture and safety felt leadership.
- Reviewing the safety risk assessment and legal registers to ensure compliance and governance with new and existing legislation.
- Linking health and safety interventions to support the four main themes contained within council's health and well-being plan.
- Horizon scanning to ensure we adapt and control new and emerging technologies in the workplace such as artificial intelligence or green initiatives.

In order to provide additional assurance with respect health and safety governance, capacity and structures an independent assessment of the service will be undertaken over the course of 2024.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Organisations that successfully manage health and safety recognise that the relationship between controlling risks and general health is at the very centre of the organisation itself. Within Renfrewshire Council, this approach rests on the principles in the HSE document HSG 65 “Managing for Health and Safety” to which the Council is committed for all Services. The standard clearly states that managing health and safety successfully is founded on effective systems which:

- set and develop policy;
- plan for health and safety;
- implement and operate the plan;
- check and introduce corrective actions when appropriate;
- review overall performance; and
- work towards continuous improvement.

By ensuring the application of these principles in partnership with all employees, Renfrewshire Council will continue to be seen as an exemplar employer.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - Continuing to improve health and safety performance will reduce accidents/occupational ill health/claims and associated costs.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - This report supports the council’s commitment to the health, safety, and wellbeing of employees.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – This report and plan supports the objectives contained within the community and council plans.
4. **Legal** - The council will continue to comply with current health and safety legislation.
5. **Property/Assets** - Having a robust health and safety management system in place and an effective risk control system can reduce the risk of property damage and potential loss of premises which could be caused by fire for example.
6. **Information Technology** - Not applicable.

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report as it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** - This report supports and demonstrates the council's commitment to ensuring effective health and safety management.

9. **Procurement** - Finance and Resources, HR, and Organisational Development (FAR, H.R. and O.D.) health and safety section has a valuable input to the Council's procurement system.

10. **Risk** - This report supports the overarching management of risk within Renfrewshire Council.

11. **Privacy Impact** - Not applicable.

12. **Cosla Policy Position** - Not applicable.

13. **Climate Risk** – Good health and safety practices support environmental controls.

List of Background Papers None

Author: Steven Fanning, Strategic Lead Partner (Health and Safety)
steven.fanning@renfrewshire.gov.uk
07747790211