



To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 15th June 2022

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: 2021/22 Annual Report on the Health, Safety and Wellbeing activities 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 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 (21/22).
- 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 outlines the Council's commitment to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees during the COVID-19 pandemic and public health crisis, and takes into consideration our response to the Scottish Government's strategy document "*Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis*"
- 1.4 The health and well-being activities support the aims of the council's People Strategy: 'Our People Our Future 2021-2026' document.

2. Recommendations

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

3. 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 through the COVID-19 pandemic and especially during the initial 6-week national lockdown, and subsequent lockdowns our workforce faced a new and demanding working environment that required different ways of working, the provision of new services for local people and considerable organisational change delivered at pace. This increased the factors that can and has influenced the safety and physical and mental wellbeing of our employees.
- 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 also plays a key role. 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.
- 3.3 The Health and Safety team are an integral part of the council's emergency management team, providing clear guidance in response to Government, NHS and Health Protection Scotland policies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The team collaborates across local authority boundaries to share knowledge and best practice.

Key areas of activity

4.0 Covid 19 response and recovery

- 4.1 Throughout the pandemic, which has impacted over the full year of this report, the People and Organisational Development, Health and Safety team, have worked collaboratively with council services, Trades Unions, RVJB, One REN, and services' external partners including the NHS to provide a rapid response during the pandemic. This was to ensure activities were thoroughly risk assessed, with a particular focus on protecting key workers. Controls were being reviewed dynamically in response to emerging guidance and public health advice.
- 4.2 PPE provision - at the start of the pandemic, a corporate personal protective equipment group, led by the H&S team, was established with representatives from key services across the council. This group continues to ensure that stocks of PPE are maintained at a reasonable level and available for those who require it.

The group monitors new and emerging guidance to manage impact and ensure resilience. Towards the end of March 2022, the group activity has significantly reduced, due to confidence in the availability of stocks.

- 4.3 A key priority was to support the safe return to the workplace of all employees in line with national and Scottish Government guidance. This required careful risk assessments to be carried out. To support employees to return to the workplace safely, the health and safety team developed a COVID age risk assessment, underpinned by Occupational Health support. The process included careful consideration of individual circumstances and identification of specific health conditions and concerns to provide an indication of susceptibility of complications resulting from COVID-19 infection. This has been used to support Occupational Health referrals and control measures within the workplace to ensure employees can return to a safe working environment.
- 4.4 To support the resumption of services and COVID-19 secure workplaces the H&S team are key members of the recovery process. The H&S team developed a HAZID document to allow detailed assessments of building and site layout to best incorporate new safety measures such as physical distancing, ventilation and cleaning regimes. This has been and, will continue to be, the standard applied to all council premises as they are reopened for employees and local people. Completion of the HAZID requires the collaboration and expertise of a cross-service team including property services, facilities management and health and safety. This information has also been shared with the Health and Safety Executive.
- 4.5 To support the safe return of the school estate, the HAZID process was extended to headteachers at all Renfrewshire schools and nurseries, supported by visits to premises by the H&S team. A COVID-19 secure checklist was developed with each Headteacher to direct preparations for the opening of each establishment and ongoing management of a safe learning environment. The health and safety team continue to support the school estate and monitor the impact of any updates to the COVID-19 guidance introduced by Scottish Government.
- 4.6 The H&S team were actively involved in the planning, setting up and ongoing support to the NHS vaccination centres (Linwood, Johnstone, Renfrew and Paisley) as well as supporting the mobile testing unit at sites across the whole of Renfrewshire.
- 4.7 Preparation began in December 2020 to ensure a COVID secure election process for Scottish Parliament Elections in May 2021. This was to protect staff and voters. All polling places were risk assessed and inspected prior to the election. The count venue was assessed and set up to minimise covid 19 transmission. The H&S team were a key stakeholder throughout all the election processes.

- 4.8 Protecting mental health and wellbeing has been a key priority for the H&S team. The team works closely with the communications and marketing team to regularly engage with the workforce and to provide access to a wide range of mental health and wellbeing support and services. This has included development and supporting information for the wellbeing hub on the council website for all employees to access; enhancements to the staff counselling service to include specialist Post Traumatic Incident support for employees affected by COVID-19; mental health awareness training for managers and supervisors updated and promoted widely through the wellbeing hub; and a dedicated COVID-19 telephone line to provide quick and effective support for council employees to discuss health concerns. All contributing to our absence management strategy.
- 4.9 To ensure employees were working safely from home, display screen equipment (DSE) training was refreshed and DSE assessments were updated. The H&S team supported employees with specialist virtual assessments where needed.

5 Accident/Incident trends.

- 5.1 The Council has an ongoing commitment to eliminating accidents, so far as is reasonably practicable and encourages employees to play their part in achieving this important objective. Each Service's health and safety planning group and health and safety committee/group involving employee representatives, are required to focus on the apparent causes of accidents. This will assist in the development of strategies and local accident reduction programmes. The following sections detail incident data for all services.
- 5.2 A comparison of all incidents recorded for employees, for the years 20/21 and 21/22 is detailed in table 1 below.

Table 1

Service	20/21	21/22
Chief Executives	0	1
Childrens Services	86	183
Communities and Housing Services	9	6
Environment and Infrastructure	34	76
Finance & Resource Services	3	9
Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	65	48
Council overall	197	323

5.3 Due to diverse nature of the service delivery models, employees work in varied work situations both within the council and RHSCP. The most commonly presented type of incidents that occurred during 21/22 include:

- Slip Trip and falls.
- Incidents involving animals.
- Violence and aggression.
- Falls from height.
- Struck by objects.
- Lifting and handling, and
- Road traffic incidents.

5.4 There is a requirement to report certain types of workplace incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013(RIDDOR). COVID-19 workplace transmission became a reportable category in 2020 and is reflected in the overall numbers. During 21/22 the council reported a total of 82 incidents. The table 2 below is a summary of RIDDOR Notifications by service, as reported by the H&S team.

Table 2

Service	21/22
Chief Executives	0
Childrens Services	39
Communities and Housing Services	0
Environment and Infrastructure	29
Finance & Resource Services	2
Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	12

6.0 Other activities

6.1 Health and safety training - in order to provide as much continuity as possible to the workforce, the provision of face-to-face health and safety training has been partially replaced by a digital programme, with a particular focus on the safe and correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Display Screen Equipment (DSE assessments) for those in the workforce who must continue to work from home. Over the period, using the online system, 1425 employees have been trained on health and safety related courses, this includes topics such as fire, manual handling and ladder safety awareness.

6.2 Throughout the reporting period, the H&S team have also supported one-to-one training on topics such as accident incident reporting and stress risk assessment.

- 6.3 Policy development - as part of the organisational response to suppressing COVID-19 and to support our workforce to work safely in new ways, several health and safety policies have been/are being revised and additional policies have been developed. With the appointment of our new Chief Executive a revised and updated Corporate Health and Safety Policy was approved in December 2021. Other Policies and Guidance reviewed and updated included
- Guidance on unmanned aircraft (Drones)
 - Guidance on completing a workplace stress risk assessment
 - Guidance on the Control of Legionella Bacteria in hot & cold-water systems
 - Guidance on New & Expectant Mothers
 - HAZID and workplace specific risk assessments
 - School's checklists
 - COVID-Age risk assessments
- 6.4 Health and safety engagement - to ensure a collaborative approach to health and safety with employees, the Corporate Health and Safety Committee (CHSC) continue to progress health and safety issues. This committee has representation from services and trade unions. During this reporting period, for a time we moved to a weekly meeting to allow for direct discussion and collaboration on all health safety and wellbeing measures relating to the pandemic. The meeting has now reverted to normal quarterly meetings although contact is also made through the normal channels of emails, joint site meetings and discussion on specific issues.
- 6.5 The H&S team continue to provide specialist support to services across and council, including the corporate procurement unit, and to support insurance claims, Subject Access Reports and Freedom of Information requests.

A comparison of SAR/FOIs, completed for the years 20/21 and 21/22 is detailed in table 3 below.

Table 3

SAR/FOI	20/21	21/22
	47	76

Contractor vetting during 21/22 continued. This supports the corporate and services procurement processes. This is a vital step, to ensure we engage contractors who can demonstrate the appropriate level of health and safety standards and competence. Many reviews required further vetting to deal with CoVID-19 risk assessments. Table 4 below details the activity.

Table 4

Contractor vetting	21/22
High Risk	210
Low risk	43

- 6.6 With the introduction of the People Strategy: 'Our People Our Future 2021-2026' the development of health and wellbeing initiatives has required a refocusing of the H&S teams activities. The council continues to retain the NHS, Healthy Working Lives, Gold Award. The team has been developing activities and informing employees both, online and on site, about general and specific wellbeing issues. Topics include financial and wellbeing support mechanisms, smoking cessation and mental health and well-being activities.

A significant focus has been on supporting employees with mental health advice and support. This has included the training of nearly 70 Mental Health First Aiders to assist employees in the workplace.

To continue to drive the well-being activities, a corporate health and well being group has been established, this group has membership from across all services as well as having trade unions representation also. The group meets quarterly.

The H&S team have continued attendance, representing the council at national well-being groups.

- 6.7 During 21/22 the H&S team supported the Early Learning and Child Care Centres to complete 45 flight risk assessments. This was to ensure appropriate control measures were identified and applied where needed.
- 6.8 A revision of the sleeping risk assessment for residential properties was undertaken by the H&S team in conjunction with officers from the HSCP and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
- 6.9 To support the safety of elected members, the H&S team undertook a review of their surgeries, this was completed using the national guidance issued following the tragic incident involving Sir David Amess.
- 6.10 The H&S team, have been working closely with services and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service throughout 21/22 to prevent further opportunities for wilful fire raising in our premises.
- 6.11 The H&S team are active members of the Incidents and Alerts Safety Officer network, which is a national NHS group relating to the safety of equipment and processes. We attend meetings and issues alerts as, and when, needed.
- 6.12 The H&S team have supported the HSE during their national campaigns and interventions, the most recent being welfare for construction peripatetic workers.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - Continuing to improve health and safety performance will reduce accidents/occupational ill health 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 should ultimately 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 pnegative 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** – Working in safe manner can reduce incidents which could stop accidental releases to the environment.

List of Background Papers None

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