

To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 11 November 2020

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: 2020/21 Mid-Year Report on the Health and Safety activities within Renfrewshire Council.

Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the health and safety arrangements and performance of Renfrewshire Council in effectively managing health, safety and wellbeing for the period 1 April 2020 to 30th September 2020.
 - 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*"
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The board notes the attached report on the health, safety and wellbeing arrangements and performance in 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, 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. Factors that can influence 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.

4. Key areas of activity

- 4.1 Throughout the crisis, the health and safety team (part of HR and OD), have worked collaboratively with key stakeholders, including Trades Unions and services to provide a rapid response during the pandemic, ensuing activities being undertaken across services 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 Protecting mental health and wellbeing has been a key priority for the health and safety team. The team work closely with the communications and marketing service 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 of a 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.

The Quality of Working Life (Stress) Risk Assessment (QWLRA) is an important tool to help services manage absence. The council's stress policy and the management support tools for dealing with workplace stress have been updated to take account of the new COVID-19 risk assessment procedure.

- 4.3 PPE provision - at the start of the pandemic, a corporate personal protective equipment group was established with key services across the council and 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.
- 4.4 Reporting workplace COVID-19 transmission became reportable this year to the Health and Safety Executive under RIDDOR - the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013

The table below is a summary of RIDDOR Notifications by the health and safety team (1st April to 30th September 2020):

Service	Number of employee reports	COVID 19 category employee reports
Chief Executives	0	0
Communities, Housing and Planning	1	0
Children Services	1	7
Environment & Infrastructure	0	8
Finance and Resources	0	0
Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership	0	6

The table below demonstrates the Council's safety performance against the RIDDOR categories in this reporting period.

RIDDOR Category	Number of reports
Lifting and Handling	0
Physical Assault	0
Dangerous Occurrences	0
Slip, trip and fall	1
Fall from Height	1
Movement including Transport	0
Struck by Object	0
Covid 19 workplace transmission	21
Another	0

- 4.5 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 replaced by a digital programme, with a particular focus on the safe and correct use of PPE and DSE assessments for those in the workforce who must continue to work from home. New digital training also includes:

Fire warden training – an e-learning package is available for fire safety and we continue to provide advice to high risk areas such as care homes. Bespoke courses were delivered to several premises across the council including residential units. 118 staff were trained.

Violence and aggression training - this training allows delegates to understand the impact of violence and aggression in the workplace. 8 delegates were trained.

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

- 4.6 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 and include:

- Display Screen Equipment guidance
- Homeworking guidance
- Guidance for First Aiders
- Working in Vehicles
- HAZID and workplace specific risk assessments
- Schools checklists
- COVID-Age risk assessments

Other health and safety policies and guidance in the process of revision include; *Hand Arm Vibration, Fire, Violence and Aggression, Control of Legionella and Stress.*

New policies are available on the Intranet and staff section of the council website.

- 4.7 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, we moved to a weekly meeting to allow for direct discussion and collaboration on all health safety and wellbeing measures relating to the pandemic.
- 4.8 Business as usual support - the health and safety team continue to provide specialist support to services across and council and the corporate policy unit, and to Finance and Resources to support insurance claims, SARs and FOIs.

5. Resumption of schools and council services

- 5.1 A key priority has been to support the safe return to the workplace of all employees in line with Government guidance. This has required careful risk assessments to be carried out with all employees previously considered to be at a higher risk of illness due to COVID-19 and a detailed programme of support for those previously identified under the National Shielding List. 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 includes 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 work when guidance allows, and to a safe working environment. The health and safety team continue to reflect updated guidance in this approach and ensure individual risk assessments are updated.

- 5.2 To support the resumption of services and COVID-secure workplaces, the Health and Safety 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.
- 5.3 To support the safe return of teachers to the school estate from June and a return to full-time education for pupils in August, the HAZID process was extended to headteachers at all Renfrewshire schools and nurseries, supported by visits to premises by the health and safety team. This was carried out to enable both a blended teaching model to be implemented and/or a return to learning full-time. 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 – including the new 5 levels of protection introduced by Scottish Government.

6 Sickness Absence

- 6.1 Throughout the pandemic, HR and OD have been monitoring absence levels very closely and providing statistical information to the Emergency Management Team and reported to the Emergency Board.

Under challenging working arrangements and the rapid response required from the council to respond to lockdown, short term absences have reduced. This is likely to be due to 'working from home arrangements' allowing people to easily continue to work, even if they were feeling a little unwell.

Longer term absences have risen slightly compared to the same time last year but this may be due to anxieties around the initial impact of the Covid 19 virus on those employees who have underlying conditions that may have made them more susceptible to the impact from the virus.

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 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** - none

List of Background Papers None

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