

# RYEDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL



## HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL **REVIEW** 2021 - 2022

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Ryedale District Council (RDC) has several responsibilities in relation to health and safety. The first extends to ensuring its people (employees, elected members, customers and contractors are protected and safe); that any work undertaken by the authority is done in a safe way that doesn't endanger the public; but also, that premises remain safe, and all statutory requirements are adhered to.
- 1.2 This review describes the progress the council has made over the 2021-2022 financial year with its commitments to health and safety alongside refreshing the action plan to support the council's objectives.
- 1.3 Annually the council is required to report its health and safety performance to Overview and Scrutiny Committee as stated within the organisation's Health and Safety Policy. This review fulfils that duty whilst also explaining the steps that will be taken over the next 12 months to continue to safeguard the business via the 2022-23 action plan
- 1.4 Effective delivery of the health and safety policy ensures that the council is compliant with a significant number of national policies. These are:
- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
  - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)
  - Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (1992)
  - The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations (1992)
  - The Manual Handling Operations Regulations (1992 amended 2002)
  - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) (2005)
  - RIDDOR (reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences) Regulations (1995)
  - The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations (1992)
  - COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) 2002
  - The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) (1998)
  - The Working Time Regulations (1998)

### 2.0 CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Responsible for defining the approach RDC takes to health and safety and demonstrating the corporate commitment to protecting its employees, the public and the business, the corporate health and safety policy was reviewed in February 2022. The policy defines the responsibilities assigned to key individuals and roles within the council. This review ensured that all latest legislation and regulations are adhered to alongside defining the practical means of managing health and safety within the organisation through an effective health and safety working group and dedicated trade union engagement.

2.2 In order to effectively communicate the principles of health and safety and to demonstrate the corporate commitment, the council also publishes a Health and Safety Policy Statement. This document summarises the full policy document by focussing on the key commitments to health and safety. These are:

- Satisfy all applicable legal and other requirements relating to health and safety, and give full regard to relevant public health guidance, to ensure we protect the health, safety and well-being of employees, Elected Members, customers and contractors
- Ensure that risks are properly assessed, controlled and mitigated and that best practice is followed
- Provide managers and staff with the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their duties safely and promote a positive health and safety culture across the organisation
- Adopt policies and working practices that safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of employees, and prevent injury and ill-health arising from the Council's activities, working environment and infrastructure
- Take due account of equality, diversity and inclusion issues in respect of health and safety
- Set health and safety objectives and regularly monitor their achievement
- Ensure that safety management systems are fit-for-purpose and simple to use
- Engage employees and Elected Members in the health and safety agenda, so they can play an active role in its delivery, across all aspects of the Council's work
- Consult with employees and their recognised representatives on health and safety issues and encourage a joint approach
- Require anyone commissioned by the Council to demonstrate their commitment to health and safety practices
- Adopt a zero-tolerance attitude to aggressive behaviour towards council staff and contractors working on the council's behalf
- Ensure that accidents, incidents and near misses are appropriately reported and investigated and, and that any learning points are acted upon to prevent reoccurrence.

2.3 In addition, the organisation has an action plan that ensures progress is made to deliver the policy statement objectives. The action plan covers the following areas:

- Covid-19- Pandemic response and sickness
- Health and safety management systems
- Risk assessments
- Training and awareness
- Monitoring
- Reporting
- Wellbeing

2.4 This annual report will focus on these actions whilst providing reference back to the health and safety policy and policy statement.

### 3.0 Covid-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND SICKNESS

3.1 Across the council, Covid remained a key priority both in terms of protecting employees but also keeping the public safe. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21 Government guidance was followed and many staff continued to work from home: with frontline essential services continuing to provide service with adaption and rotas in place.

3.2 Covid secure measures remained in place throughout 2020/21 which included providing supplies of, face masks, Perspex screens, hand sanitisers, cleaning fluid and desk wipes to mitigate the spread of the virus. Ryedale House also benefited from a 'Building Duty Officer' rota which managed compliance with covid safety rules such as maintaining safe social distancing measures, mask wearing, First aider duties and Fire Warden cover.

3.3 All home workers were required to complete an assessment of their workspaces and required actions tracked with progress towards effective resolution periodically checked. At the end of the year 57 actions were still outstanding from 36 employees, with a plan in place to review by the end of Q1 2022/23.

#### Sickness levels

3.4 Throughout the year sickness absence was largely driven by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and as would be expected absence was much higher in Q3 and Q4 due to the increased transmission rates and the development of the new omicron variant. Despite milder symptoms the impact of covid remained high in Q4 and the shift to 'living with Covid' means that it is likely to have continued impact on the health of staff in coming years akin to seasonal flu. Table 1 outlines the figures for 2020/21.

Table 1: Sickness levels across 2021/22

Description	Value/ Baseline	RDC Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Sickness Average days lost per person	Quarter 4 2020/21: 1.17	Data Only	1.09	0.98	1.75	1.65
Lost time rate (the percentage of total time available that has been lost to sickness during the noted time period)	Quarter 4 2020/21: 2%	Data Only	2.07%	1.66%	3%	3.21%

3.5 In spring 2021 Government provided a roadmap out of lockdown in England. As restrictions lifted, it was advised to maintain good habits which minimise transmission of Covid. The Test,

Trace and Isolate system continued along with safe practices to mitigate the spread of covid as staff returned to Ryedale House. The business retained its Building Duty Officer position, introduced a digital desk booking system and is reviewed risk assessments to ensure Ryedale District council premises continued to use safe and effective safety measures in a post-pandemic world in line with Government guidance as it was updated.

#### **4.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

##### **Revised policy and policy statement**

4.1 Acting as the governing documents for Health and Safety across Ryedale District Council the policy and policy statement had been approved previously in 2019; however, recommendations were made that necessitated a review in the 2021/22 financial year. These changes included assigning responsibility for health and safety to the Programme Director for People and Resources. Some structural changes were also applied which allowed for easier identification of the responsibilities of managers including the appointment of a Compliance Officer to develop new safe working procedures and a new Corporate Resources Manager to oversee the NYCC H&S shared services contract and delivery of the H&S action plan. The updated policy and policy statement were approved in February 2022.

##### **Safe working procedures**

4.2 The most important changes with regards to safe working procedures have taken place within the high-risk service areas of Streetscene and Waste Management. A review of the format and quality of the procedures identified a need for improvements and as a result, all safe working procedures have been scheduled for review and a programme of updating these has been created for delivery over the 2022/23 financial year.

##### **Accident reporting**

4.3 RDC records and monitors accidents and near misses and reports learning of these events to the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group. Across the 2021/22 financial year, the council reported the following in terms of accidents and near misses compared to 2020/21. Table 2 provided figures on accidents and near misses.

Table 2: Accident log figures

Year	Personal Accidents	Vehicle Accidents	Near Misses
2021/22	11	8	10
2020/21	8	6	1

4.4 As the world eased out of lockdowns and more normality returned compared to the previous year it was inevitable that the number of accidents would increase. Of the reported accidents, 10 can be attributed to Streetscene with just 1 for Building Control. No other accidents were reported from other departments.

- 4.5 The categories of accidents recorded at Streetscene have included lifting and handling injuries or 'other kind of accident', which included, a driver trapping their finger in a door and a rat bite. In all cases the accidents are reviewed by the service manager and lesson learned, through toolbox talks, which include discussion on procedures and training for safe handling, use of specialist equipment such as bump caps).
- 4.6 Demonstrating the effective way in which health and safety has again been managed over the year, the council is pleased to acknowledge that no reports have been made under RIDDOR. This continues the trend set in 2019/20 and consequently the authority has now gone three years without making a report.

The near misses have been predominantly within the high-risk areas of Streetscene; however, some have been some instances reported at Ryedale House. The near misses at Streetscene have include a few mechanical issues that could have caused injury including examples of mechanical breakdowns of lifting equipment on the wagons. In all instances appropriate action has been taken to ensure the vehicles operate safely. At Ryedale House, the near misses included a chair that broke and an incident concerning a potentially violent customer. In both cases action was taken to resolve the incidents and follow up actions taken.

## **5.0 RISK ASSESSMENTS**

- 5.1 The council undertakes a comprehensive number of risk assessments focussing on the management of in-service hazards and the management of its premises; especially in relation to fire safety and other compliance related issues such as legionella, asbestos, gas, electricity and lift safety.
- 5.2 All risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis, and within Q1 all Streetscene risk assessments were reviewed and met their anniversary dates. All other services had completed their risk assessment reviews by October 2021/21.
- 5.3 In terms of compliance issues the most notable risk assessments for completion are those concerning fire safety. These are often intensive reviews that assess several factors including escape routes, prevention and management of fires, locations of combustible materials and any operational facilities (such as fire alarm zoning).
- 5.4 Whilst most risk assessments were completed without the need for additional work, the assessment for Ryedale House flagged some concerns regarding the quantity of fire wardens as a result of staff leaving in 2020/21. The fire alarm system also required some updating in terms of the zoning to ensure there is effective management of the premises if a fire occurred. This work was identified late in Q4 and will feature in activity programmed in for 2022/23. In addition, the risk assessment review undertaken for the depot highlighted several potential improvements to provide greater levels of assurance, through a new inspection regime. These new measures include:
- Monthly checks of fire doors extinguishers, emergency lighting and asbestos
  - CCTV audits of the crews working
  - Increased site visits to check on the crews whilst on their rounds
  - Improved auditing of the office, workshops and pest control areas
  - Use of technology for fleet management

- Weekly fuel checks
- Life jacket testing (used by operatives during flood events)
- Reviews and controls improved for the flood grab bags and food boxes.

5.5 Senior officers within the depot have also issued two safety alerts on the back of accidents. The first concerned the wearing of PPE and its importance to helping protect operatives through their day-to-day work and the second concerning safe reversing practices concerning the HGVs. Finally, a new training matrix has been introduced for depot staff which will mean they complete a more comprehensive and robust package of mandatory and essential training alongside ensuring that individuals remain as up to date as possible with any training needs and requirements.

5.6 When undertaking the wider assessment of the office premises gaps were identified in the number of first aiders on site and their location around the organisation, this is in part due to staff turnover reducing the number of qualified staff employed by the organisation. Again, these gaps were identified late in Q4 as the business adapted to post pandemic working and recruitment and training of new first aiders to ensure there is effective coverage across the office will be completed in 2022/23.

## **6.0 TRAINING AND AWARENESS**

6.1 A number of key initiatives have taken place linked to improving the skills and knowledge of employees in relation to health and safety, with a number of activities linked to the safeguarding agenda and the potential harm that could befall the most vulnerable in our communities. A major exercise was undertaken to provide PREVENT training to frontline staff; which supports their awareness of radicalisation; this included the identification of right-wing ideologies within our communities, which is most likely the most prevalent extremism in Ryedale given its demographics. Whilst this training was delivered directly by the Home Office a similar extremism course is now mandatory for all new starters via the 'learning zone' eLearning portal.

6.2 All new starters are also required to complete mandatory health and safety training within their induction period. This covers fundamental health and safety principles alongside ensuring that they are aware of the organisational policy and relevant safe working procedures; in total 35 new employees completed this training as part of their inductions.

6.3 A number of training sessions have been delivered for staff through the NYCC contracted service. This training provided enhanced awareness and understanding of a number of compliance related issues alongside practical skills to help improve the quality of information held concerning health and safety risks. The training delivered under the contract included:

- Legionella training for relevant staff (six participants)
- Asbestos monitoring (four participants)
- Fire warden training (21 participants)
- Risk assessment workshops (eight participants)
- Coaching for individual managers on risk assessments (specifically for depot managers)
- Workshops on violence, aggression, and lone working (29 participants)
- IOSH managing safely (five participants)

6.4 Given the level of importance placed on health and safety across front line services such as Streetscene and pest control the subject has been the focus of a few toolbox talks, advice notes and bulletins. Over this year the team have received 4 'five-minute reviews' (simple quick refresher sessions based on learning from near miss or accident forms), covering the following:

- Wearing of PPE during collections
- Reversing of LGV vehicles
- Overfilling the glass slave bins on recycling rounds
- Clearing away loose recycling following recycling rounds

6.4 In addition, bulletins have been circulated covering the following health and safety priorities:

- Covid updates and safe ways of working
- Changes to the highway code for drivers to be aware of (x2)
- Vehicle pre-check protocols for drivers
- Keeping footways and driveways clear of obstructions following collections.

6.5 Finally, it is important that depot and staff working in higher risk areas of the business remain proficient with machinery and safe when undertaking their duties. A range of comprehensive training sessions have been delivered across the 2021/22 financial year that street scene and depot staff have completed:

- Emergency first aid training
- Working at height and ladder training
- Working at height and harness training
- Manual handling training
- Asbestos awareness
- Fire warden training
- Fire safety and practical fire extinguisher training
- Flood pump deployment training
- Water awareness and practical equipment training (for the purpose of fire and rescue)

## **7.0 MONITORING**

### **Trade union Health and Safety representatives**

7.1 Ryedale District Council has three dedicated health and safety representatives who are members of the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group. Under the terms of reference each meeting requires two of the three representatives to attend for the meeting to be quorate.

### **Performance management**

7.2 The Corporate Health and Safety Working Group undertakes performance monitoring to ensure the council is discharging its duties effectively, learning from accidents and near misses and sickness levels. Performance is benchmarked against regional and national data where appropriate.

## **8.0 REPORTING**

8.1 Performance reporting and ensuring effective oversight and management of Health and Safety is a key component of the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group. The group meets quarterly and discusses the key data linked to accident reporting, sickness and any policy or legislation changes. The group is led by the corporate Health and Safety lead (Programme Director for People and Resources) and allows for effective challenge on behalf of the trade union for any health and safety concerns they have. To make the group more effective and focussed, a review of the terms of reference is scheduled for 2022/23 and this will provide greater transparency across to the wider management group allowing the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group to be more visible across the business but also more accountable.

## **9.0 WELLBEING**

### **Staff champions**

9.2 Throughout the pandemic RDC had a dedicated staff champions group focussed on the development of wellbeing initiatives to support staff through the lockdowns. The group posted articles on the intranet with links to wellbeing resources such as maintaining physical wellbeing to organising practical initiatives to support healthier lifestyles such as weekly football sessions (when restriction easing allowed) to help support physical wellbeing. The business also undertook significant signposting to its health assured service providing dedicated assistance if people needed additional, professional support.

### **Mental Health and wellbeing**

9.3 Over the course of the pandemic not just physical health became a priority but also mental health and wellbeing as many people due to the Covid-19 pandemic felt isolation and removal of human contact. At RDC a number of initiatives continued to be delivered to support people through the year. The business trained 10 dedicated mental health first aiders and undertook campaigns on its intranet site alongside introducing a wellbeing engagement platform called RDC Connected to support colleagues with dedicated messaging and engagement around health and wellbeing. Managers and colleagues also supported one another through regular catch ups and team meetings.

## **10.0 PRIORITIES FOR 2022/23**

10.1 Ensuring standards are maintained and the business remains safe and compliant is a priority over the coming year. Given the challenges facing RDC with increased workloads due to local government reorganisation and a world that is learning to live with COVID it is essential that the business continues to act responsibly and finds ways to support its staff and adapt to any threats and risks. In order to achieve this the health and safety action plan has been reprofiled and identifies a number of key actions and priorities that the business will look to deliver. These include:

- Increasing the number of fire wardens and first aiders available across the business
- Completing six monthly workplace inspections
- Mainstreaming health and safety across service areas through inclusion of health and safety actions in the service planning process
- Review of all health and safety arrangements including risk assessments ahead of vesting day
- Review the function, membership and terms of reference attached to the Corporate Health and Safety Working Group
- Establish a programme of wellbeing initiatives to support colleagues through the final year of RDC ensuring they are prepared for change and reduce any negative mental impacts associated change management.