

Corporate Health and Safety Annual Report

1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 For legal and moral purposes, Sefton Council is required to actively manage and monitor health and safety. The primary legal constraints arise out of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This report provides an overview of the Council's health and safety performance from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Attention is drawn to key issues that have arisen during this period and highlights ongoing priorities to be addressed.
- 1.2 The priorities for the year 2020/2021 include:
- embedding risk assessment across Council departments
 - clarifying and strengthening governance arrangements
 - improving health and safety risk management by targeting effective training.
- 1.3 Throughout the report the term 'Health and Safety' is used and should be read within the context of occupational health and safety issues for which Sefton Council (the Council) has responsibility under both statute and common law.
- 1.4 The Council's Health and Safety Policy was revised during the 2018/2019 financial year and will be presented again to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) for consultation before being approved by Cabinet in April 2022.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council continues to focus on improving the health and safety management system and support by reviewing existing arrangements and improving governance.
- 2.2 The Health and Safety team consisted of one health and safety adviser, with an additional adviser joining late May 2020. The team support nearly 8000 staff across schools and service areas, plus agency workers, contractors and volunteers. A temporary administrator was recruited in January 2021, to provide additional support during the pandemic. The position was filled by a CIPFA Trainee who moved to the finance team in August 2021.
- 2.3 The team deliver a range of services across all Council departments including schools. These services can be divided into three main areas: policy and communication, operational reactive response and active monitoring.
- 2.4 Information, guidance and support regarding the risk of the transmission of COVID-19 and impacts on staff has been significant, as services adjust to varying national restrictions.
- 2.5 Consultation arrangements are working well, with the Corporate Health and Safety Committee playing a key role in conjunction with the Departmental Health and Safety Committees.
- 2.6 The health and safety position within Sefton Council has demonstrated encouraging progress during the financial year. The Council's accident reporting culture is improving and showing signs of increased proportionate investigation and implementation of suitable controls. The on-line incident reporting system continues to be well utilised.

- 2.7 The Schools Service Level Agreement has been reviewed as well as the inspection and audit processes revitalised. Several inspections were undertaken throughout the financial year; however, these were limited due to rising Covid-19 rates and restrictions put into place by the Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.8 Health and safety objectives and key performance indicators are continually reviewed. Progress against the objectives has been impacted by the requirement to respond to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. This will be managed by the continual review and reshaping of the service delivery to assist the Council to meet its obligations and to provide managers and staff with the relevant support.
- 2.9 Progress has been made on providing risk assessment training to all managers who have responsibility for completing risk assessments.
- 2.10 The growth of the Health and Safety team will increase the advice, guidance, monitoring and support available for managers and staff across the Council, improving the appropriateness and effectiveness of the health and safety management system.

3 Covid-19 Pandemic

- 3.1 The Health and Safety Team were actively involved during the pandemic from the outset playing a strategic and operational role providing support, guidance and assistance to Schools, Senior Management and Service Team colleagues. The Health and Safety team worked closely with Public Health colleagues to ensure that advice provided to operational team was given in line with Government guidance.
- 3.2 The Health and Safety team were also included in the cell structure of the Council's response. Protecting staff has been key to our approach although guidance from the Government changed frequently as the pandemic progressed clear communication has been key in sharing the latest position as well as the . Support and guidance on the how to work safely for example on developing risk assessments has been provided at pace to the Service teams as well as joint working across the Council with Senior Managers including in particular Public Health.
- 3.3 The pandemic has had two impacts firstly in reinforcing the importance of an effective health and safety structure in the Council is in preventing injury and harm to employees, contractors and the public. In addition the response to the pandemic has impacted on the delivery of planned improvements during the financial year.

4 Organising for Health and Safety

- 4.1 The Council has a Health and Safety Team within Corporate Resources who provide health and safety advice to Members, Officers, school governors, headteachers, partner organisations and contractors. To provide additional support during the Covid-19 pandemic further temporary resources have been recruited.
- 4.2 The Health and Safety Team liaise with other services and teams within the Council regarding Occupational Health, Insurance, Emergency Planning, Human Resources and Public Health. The Team has potential additional assistance from Health and Safety Co-ordinators within each of the Service areas. The additional assistance has enabled the Health and Safety Team to assess how risk assessments are embedded they are throughout the Council.

5 Consultation and Communication

- 5.1 Employers have a duty to consult with their employees and representatives on health and safety matters. The process for consultation with Trade Unions and staff in Sefton is direct and through the Health and Safety Committee structure, as outlined in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy.
- 5.2 The overarching Corporate Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly and is chaired by the Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services. Sub-Committees meet at least bi-annually. The table below shows the Health and Safety Committee and its sub-committee meetings held during the 2020/2021 financial year.

Corporate Health and Safety Committee	22 Sept 20, 09 Dec 20, 15 March 21
Sub-committees:	
Adults / Children Social Care	23 Nov 20, 22 Feb 20
Communities	Monthly – last Friday of each month.
Corporate Resources / Strategic Support / Public Health	15 Sept 20, 06 Nov 20, 24 Feb 20
Economic Growth and Housing	07 Sept 20, 26 Nov 20, 10 March 21
Locality Services / Highways and Public Protection	02 June 20, 24 Nov 20, 25 Feb 21

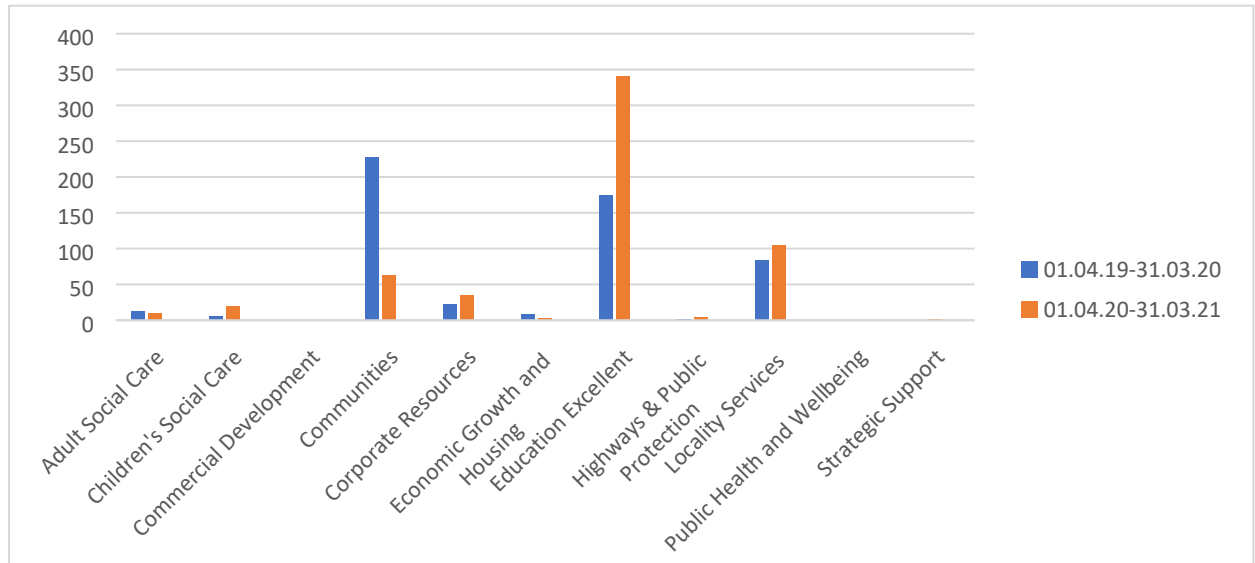
- 5.3 Regular meetings are held with Education Excellence and the STJCC (School Teachers Joint Consultation Council) and involve staff, Head Teachers and Trade Unions.
- 5.4 A standard core agenda for the various health and safety sub-committees has been revised and issued to Heads of Service. This provides a consistent approach across the Council to manage health and safety matters. A focus for the Committee's during 2020/21 has been focussed on ensuring that all managers have received risk assessment training and then followed it up with the completion of risk assessments as well as the response to the pandemic.

6 Liaison with Regulatory Bodies

- 6.1 The Council has routinely liaised with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) during the financial year on the reporting of RIDDOR related incidents and COVID-19 spot checks. The HSE continue to monitor the Council's COVID-19 arrangements.

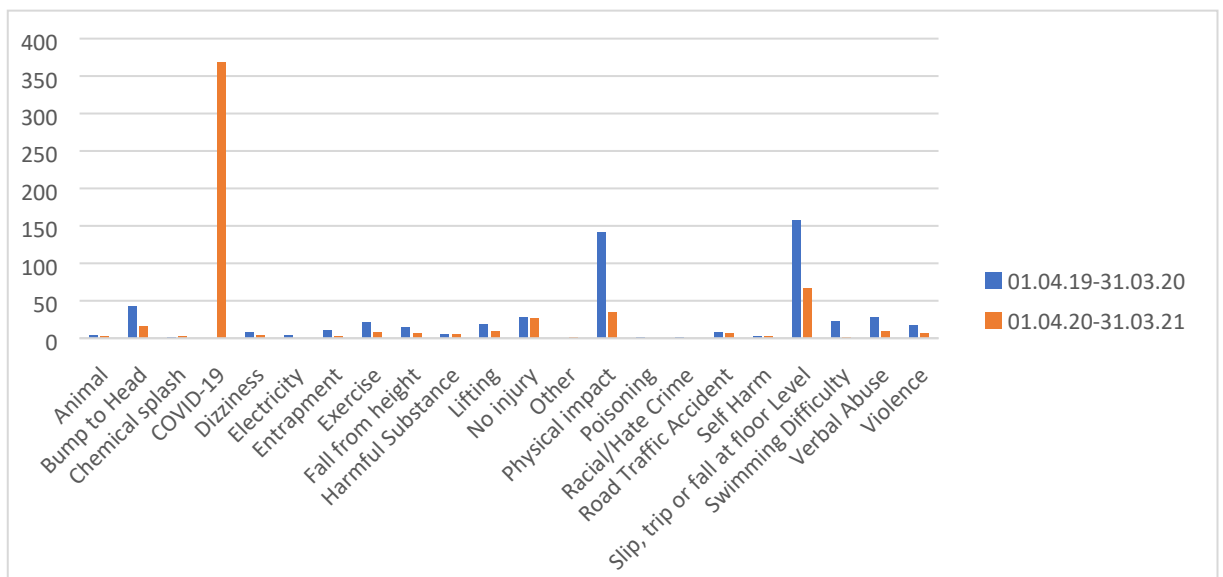
7 Accidents and Incidents

- 7.1 The Health and Safety Team continue to manage the Council's on-line incident reporting system which is used by all service areas.
- 7.2 The aim of reporting is to ensure suitable proportionate investigation leading to the implementation of effective controls and monitoring to prevent re-occurrence. High levels of reporting could demonstrate a positive reporting culture or a high risk.
- 7.3 Graph 1 below shows the accidents and incidents reported between 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021. It also shows the accidents and incidents from the previous financial year (1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020).



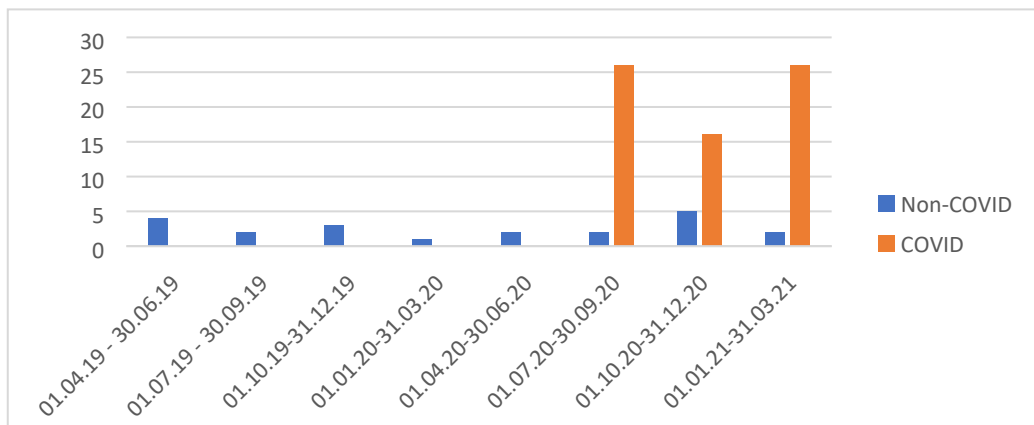
Graph 1 - Accidents and Incidents Reported Across Service Areas
01/04/19 – 31/03/20 and 01/03/20 – 31/03/21

- 7.4 Analysis of the reports raised highlights areas services areas that have remained open albeit with restrictions during the pandemic, including Communities, Education Excellence and Locality Services.
- 7.5 Information affecting Adult Social Care and Children’s Social Care staff health and safety is often provided during meetings and therefore not captured formally. Support is being provided to managers to encourage accident and incident reporting, proportionate investigation and prevention of reoccurrence where possible.
- 7.6 Graph 2 below provides an overview of the causes of accidents and incidents raised and highlights the increase in COVID-19 cases across the Council service and educational settings. A comparison of results with the previous 12 months is clearly identified.



Graph 2 – Causes of Accidents and Incidents Reported
01/04/2019 – 31/03/2020 and 01/03/2020 – 31/03/2021

- 7.7 Managers are asked to report all COVID-19 cases, whether or not they are due to workplace transmission. This has assisted in the assessment and review of the health of staff and others and service delivery.
- 7.8 Slips, trips, falls and physical impact accident reports are consistent with the reopening of service areas. Analysis suggests that figures were lower due to restrictions and limited operations throughout the pandemic.
- 7.9 Education Excellence and Communities record the highest number of accident and incident reports. This could be due to the number of staff and interactions with children and the public. Data shows that the slips, trips, falls and physical impact accidents commonly arise from pupils during playtime sessions rather than Council employees.
- 7.10 Adults and Children’s Social Care see the fewest number of reports submitted. This could suggest a poor reporting culture, as communications with the service staff have implied incidents of verbal abuse have not been reported on the system.
- 7.11 The Health and Safety Team continue to monitor the RIDDOR accidents reported by Managers to ensure they are correctly reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and investigated with appropriate interventions implemented to prevent re-occurrence where possible. Graph 3 below details the number of accidents and incidents reported under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) for the period from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021. This is to highlight the current upward trend in RIDDOR reports, mostly due to the pandemic.



Graph 3 – RIDDOR Reports – Comparisons by Quarter
 Highlighting COVID-19 and other reports
 01/04/2019 – 31/03/2021

- 7.12 A new addition to the reporting requirement under RIDDOR, introduced during Quarter 1 2020, is to report certain instances of COVID-19. The reporting requirements relating to cases of, or deaths from, COVID-19 under RIDDOR apply only to occupational exposure, that is, as a result of a person’s work.
 - an accident or incident at work has, or could have, led to the release or escape of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence
 - a person at work (a worker) has been diagnosed as having COVID-19 attributed to an occupational exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a case of disease
 - a worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a work-related death due to exposure to a biological agent.

The council are still required to maintain its normal records for instances where the case may not strictly fall into these categories.

- 7.13 Areas during 2020/21 that were significantly affected by workplace transmission of COVID-19 were Education Excellence, Communities and Locality Services, where front line staff continued to support Council services to vulnerable families and individuals. Managers and Head Teachers continued to review Central Government, national and local Public Health and health and safety guidance, risk assessments, the suitability of control measures and monitoring arrangements.
- 7.14 Other RIDDOR reports included fractures due to slips and trips, road traffic incidents and injuries from working on machinery. Some examples are mentioned below:
- A third-party vehicle hit an object being handled by an employee and then hit the employee at very low speeds, knocking them off balance. They suffered relatively minor injuries to the body and hand.
 - An employee lost footing whilst using a piece of machinery, causing the machinery to cut their hand. They attended hospital for treatment and remained off work for over seven days.
 - An employee slipped whilst dismantling from plant / equipment. They fell backwards, landing on their shoulder and back, resulting in ligament damage. They were advised to rest then attend physiotherapy.
 - A member of the public slipped indoors, resulting in a fracture to their arm. They were escorted to hospital by ambulance and received treatment.
 - In February 2021, a member of the public received hospital treatment for a serious cut to their hand.
- 7.15 The health and safety advisers continue to raise awareness of the benefits of reporting via the Departmental Health and Safety Committees.

8 Training

- 8.1 The Corporate Learning Centre continue to offer a health and safety programme of health and safety courses. E-learning has increased due to the pandemic and restrictions placed on attending classrooms for adult learning.
- 8.2 The one-day Educational Visits Coordinator courses planned for 2020 and due to take place at the Corporate Learning Centre are to be rescheduled as online courses and will take place in 2021. The course covers aspects of the law related to educational visits, risk assessments of visits and the administrative requirements associated with off-site educational activities. The course is aimed at new and existing EVCs in schools and will enable them to plan and manage their school's educational visits and off-site activities in line with National Guidance, this in turn will help them fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
- 8.3 Online health and safety training was provided to School Governors in November 2020. It was delivered by the Council's insurance broker, Gallagher Bassett.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Following the training completed during 2019/20 the focus of operational teams has been on the refresh of the existing building, operational and generating COVID-19 risk assessments. This has taken place with support and guidance of the Health and

Safety Teams. There was considerable support provided during the School re-opening in May/June 2020 with guidance and working with both Schools and Unions to ensure that there was confidence in the processes to be adopted.

- 9.2 The Health and Safety Advisers, with significant support from the Assurance Team have undertaken a review of submitted risk assessments, providing feedback to managers and Head Teachers.
- 9.3 Considerable support is being provided to Council Service Teams departments and this remains challenging for all involved.

10 Sefton Schools

- 10.1 During this financial year, the Schools Service Level Agreement for health and safety and the inspection regime, which forms part of the service, was reviewed. A revised methodology was introduced to provide a risk-based audit regime that aims to provide assurance to the School's governing bodies as well as the Council that the Schools had an effective health and safety system in place.
- 10.2 The inspection programme ceased due to Covid-19 in March 2020, however support has been ongoing for schools who are remaining open for children of key workers and at-risk children. Inspections and audits recommence gradually from April 2021.
- 10.3 Self-assessment, online meetings and the submission of email evidence has been written into the methodology to support the audit process if restrictions are re-introduced.

11 Objectives, KPIs and Priorities 2021/2022

- 11.1 There are three Health and Safety objectives included in the Corporate Health and Safety Policy which was approved by Cabinet in April 2019:
- Embedding risk assessments across the Council's functions and service area
 - Clarify and strengthen the governance arrangement for health and safety
 - Improve competence of all staff to improve risk management by targeting effective health and safety training.
- 11.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been developed to reflect the key current risks within the health and safety framework, the current operating environment in the Council and the delivery of key objectives.
- 11.3 As a result, audits and assurance monitoring have identified a wider understanding and availability of risk assessments, the need for identification of hazards, appropriate controls, monitoring, consultation and training to reduce the risk of injury, ill health and other losses including risk to loss of service delivery. The Health and Safety Team are continuing to support managers.
- 11.4 Continued progress on the completion and review of risk assessments has continued throughout the year, for both general workplace hazards and the transmission of COVID-19. SharePoint pages facilitate the sharing of risk assessments between the Health and Safety Team and Trade Unions.
- 11.5 Corporate minimum standard documents are being created to support the health and safety management framework. These documents are a reference to improve

management and staff knowledge levels and provide guidance on health and safety compliance.

- 11.6 The Health and Safety Team are working with the Workforce Learning and Development Team to review existing health and safety training provision. A training needs analysis exercise is ongoing and due for completion in the Autumn of 2021.
- 11.7 A suite of online health and safety training is now in place. The Health and Safety Teams are providing small team and one to one training via MS Teams. On-line Educational Visits Co-ordinator and school governor training has continued throughout the year.