

Test Valley Borough Council
Annual Health and Safety Performance Report
2020 – 2021

1.0 Introduction

Test Valley Borough Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy requires an annual report on health and safety performance and planning.

The Government's 'Revitalising Health and Safety' strategy document requires all public bodies to summarise their health and safety performance plans in annual reports, and that government (including local government) be exemplars of health and safety best practice.

This report summarises significant health and safety management activities over a twelve month period (April 2020 to March 2021) covering key achievements, council-wide statistics and developments for the year ahead.

The objectives of this report are to demonstrate Test Valley Borough Council's commitment to:

- Making public the Council's performance on health and safety, by publishing health and safety performance data;
- The ongoing effective implementation of the Council's health and safety policy, organisation and its associated arrangements;
- Monitor and measure health and safety performance, with a view to highlighting areas where the Council performs well and also areas for improvement;
- Openness and accountability in all of the council services; and
- Our responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy environment for service users, members of the public, employees and contractors.

2.0 Executive Summary

The Council's health and safety function has delivered on its objectives during the year. A few highlights of the year are listed below:

- The sourcing and provision of sufficient levels of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enable staff to continue safely in their roles with the ever-present risk of Covid-19.
- The introduction of a Driver Safety Handbook alongside an update to the Driving at Work Policy.
- An almost 50% decrease in the number of accidents and incidents reported year-on-year.
- Two positive interactions with representatives for the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) who were checking the safety measures the Council had put in place to protect staff and customers from Covid-19.
- A positive response from the annual health and safety audit questionnaire, indicating greater compliance to health and safety policies and procedures.

The Council's continued ability to manage health and safety in a good and proportionate manner reduces the likelihood of non-routine inspections by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

3.0 Risk Exposure and Strategies for Control

Health and safety is part of the council's Risk Management Strategy, focussing on the risks of injury and ill-health potentially arising from the range of activities which deliver the Council's services. The range of health and safety risks identified includes;

- Lone working
- Violence and aggression towards staff, from the public
- Transport and road risk
- Electrical safety
- Fire
- Manual handling
- The use of display screen equipment (DSE)
- Slips, trips and falls
- Work related ill health, including work related stress
- The health and safety management of contractors
- Mental health

The past 12 months has required the Council to expand on the policies in place surrounding pandemics, and although this is not a subject that traditionally falls under the health and safety 'umbrella', it does directly impact the health of council staff and the safety function of council operations.

This year saw an update to the Council's Driving at Work policy and the introduction of a Driver Safety Handbook for any staff that drive on council business.

The continuation of home-working throughout the year also prompted a review of the Homeworking Policy, the creation of an adapted Homeworking DSE (Display Screen Equipment) Assessment and the need to supply additional accessories to enable the safe, pro-longed use of IT equipment such as laptop stands, keyboard and mice.

The Council continues to develop and implement appropriate strategies and systems to identify and record foreseeable risks and reduce them to as low a level as is reasonably practicable. These strategies are subject to periodic review and appropriate remedial measures or adjustments are made as necessary.

3.1 Monitoring

Risks are controlled using both proactive and reactive monitoring of the Council's health and safety performance.

Reactive monitoring is triggered by events including injuries, ill health, reports of damage or complaints whereby action is taken to prevent a reoccurrence. (See section 3.4 for a breakdown of incidents)

Proactive monitoring includes audits, risk assessments, site inspections and appropriate health and safety training. A couple of key areas are detailed below.

This year saw proactive monitoring from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) The Council received a visit in person and a second telephone consultation, from representatives of the HSE who were checking that the Council was adhering to the Coronavirus legislation and guidance that was in place during 2020/21.

Annual Health and Safety Questionnaire Findings

The annual questionnaire was sent to Heads of Service and all forms were returned confirming that procedures were in place to maintain good health and safety standards.

A few services confirmed in their submissions that they were still completing DSE assessments for homeworkers and were obtaining driver information, due to the update in policy.

Below are listed any service that highlighted other outstanding actions

Action	Service(s)	Action completed?
Review of lone working / site visits policy	P&B	To be completed when staff return to office
Task risk assessments completed and reviewed, Documented H&S procedures available, PPE issue log up-to-date	C&L: Parks & Countryside team	Further work required for site specific risks and Lone working procedures still need review
Task risk assessments under review for Housing, PPE issue log to be updated	H&EH	Completed
Task risk assessments and training records under review	IT	General IT assessment currently being reviewed. All other actions completed

Workplace Inspections

The Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Group members have been tasked with performing regular inspections of their respective working areas. Inspections of the operational depots at Portway and Bourne House are conducted on a monthly basis by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager.

3.2 Corporate Training

Due to the Coronavirus, face-to-face training has not been possible over the previous 12 months, however First Aider training was completed in the periods between lockdowns.

Fire warden training was due but had to be postponed, and will now take place in the 2021/22 financial year, along with ladder training and manual handling, should there be sufficient numbers.

The Environmental Service and Property and Asset Management Service carry out their own specific health and safety training as required for their staff roles.

3.3 Financial Resources

The annual budget is used to fund council activities such as staff training in health and safety matters and to enable the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Manager to be trained and kept abreast of developments in health and safety law and safety management practice.

The expenditure of this budget for the last 3 years is given in the table below:

Expenditure on Health and Safety

Purpose	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
First Aider training and equipment	£1941.15	£2338.08	£1835.72
Equipment	-	£1093.45	£2789.82
Other safety related training	£2874.00	£1602.00	-
Total	£4815.15	£5033.53	£4625.54

The equipment purchased in 2020/21 included Personal PPE packs, disposable gloves, masks and sanitiser for Covid protection.

Fire warden refresher training was due in 2020/21 but had to be deferred.

3.4 Accident/Incident Data

For the period 2020/21, there were a total of 40 incidents. Of this total, 3 accidents were reportable to the HSE, 6 were verbal abuse or violent incidents and 31 were non-reportable incidents (these included 4 near misses).

Comparisons for the last 3 years are given in the table below:

Overview of incidents

Type of incident	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of non-reportable accidents	35	50	27
Total number of accidents reported to the HSE	2	1	3
Total number of verbal abuse / violent incidents	22	23	6
Total number of near miss incidents	7	5	4

3.4.1 The total number of incidents reported has almost halved year-on-year.

- 3.4.2 The reportable incidents that were notifiable to the HSE were all due to ‘an accident that resulted in an employee being absent from work for more than 7 days’, as a result of a minor injury.
- 3.4.3. As would be expected, there are more accidents within the Environmental Service due to the hazards and risks associated with the work that is undertaken.
- 3.4.4 There were 2 aggressive incidents that resulted in the individuals being added to the Violent Marker List.
- 3.4.5 The greatest number of aggressive or violent incidents is usually attributed to the Property and Asset Management Service and this is mainly directed at the parking Civil Enforcement Officers. There were no incidents recorded in the 2020/21 period.

A full breakdown by service is given in the table below:

Overview of incidents by service

Service	Non Reportable		Reportable		Aggressive / Violent		Near Misses	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
Chief Executives (incl. HR)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community & Leisure*	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Environmental	36	24	1	2	0	1	2	4
Finance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing & Environ. Health	0	0	0	1	8	2	0	0
IT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legal & Democratic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planning & Building	4	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
Planning Policy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Property & Asset Management**	5	1	0	0	11	0	2	0
Revenues (incl. CSU***)	1	1	0	0	3	2	0	0

* Includes incidents to the public at TVBC owned leisure facilities and at The Lights

** Includes incidents to the public at TVBC owned properties e.g. the Guildhall and tenants within TVBC run buildings e.g. Beech Hurst

*** Includes incidents to the public whilst in the reception areas

4.0 Wellbeing and Mental Health Overview

This function is overseen by Human Resources, who have provided the summary below:

Sickness absence due to mental health conditions:

- April 2018 – March 2019: Days Lost = 379
- April 2019 – March 2020: Days Lost = 326
- April 2020 – March 2021: Days Lost = 593

Actions taken by TVBC since 2018:

Since 2018, with the support of senior management, there has been an increased focus on promoting employee wellbeing across the organisation. An Employee Wellbeing Group was formed in June 2018, which has been proactive in promoting employee wellbeing across a spectrum of topics, from mental and physical health to financial and social wellbeing.

The group's initial efforts predominantly focused on raising awareness and de-stigmatising mental health. This was supported with the signing of the 'Time to Change' pledge by the Chief Executive and Council Leader in May 2019. The group developed a wellbeing brand, 'Get Well, Stay Well', and delivered a range of initiatives and activities across the organisation. This included the introduction of Mental Health First Aiders, mental health talks with external specialists, training for employees and managers, the development of a dedicated Wellbeing intranet site, health checks and mindfulness sessions.

Since their inception, the Wellbeing Group and Mental Health First Aiders have continued to be proactive in promoting positive attitudes towards mental health and extending the scope of the support available to employees. As an organisation, we have continued to run regular activities, training opportunities (including e-learning modules) and campaigns across the organisation. In addition, we have seen the opening of a Wellbeing room for employees at Beech Hurst and the extension of our Employee Support Service to include six local counsellors located across the borough.

More recently, in response to Covid-19 pandemic, a number of additional measures have been introduced over and above our regular offerings to address the particular issues arising from the pandemic. These include:

- A range of on-line learning opportunities targeted at employees and managers, across topics such as, dealing with anxiety, building resilience, sleep, happiness, and stress management.
- Access to a wellbeing platform (BeingWell) with a focus on sleep support.
- Promotion of healthy work habits to support those working from home.
- Introduction of a directory of local services to support employees in accessing specialist services.
- A printed guide to support positive mental health during the pandemic, developed primarily for non-office based employees.
- Regular drop-in sessions held with a local counsellor and Mental Health First Aider in Portway and Bourne House depots.
- Access to an Employee Assistance Programme via an external provider, VivUp, providing a 24/7 helpline, on-line self-help guides, MindPal App, financial savings from a range of retailers. (This was offered for free on a trial period and the Council is exploring whether it would be beneficial to continue with this package).

5.0 Key Challenges for 2021/22

Focuses for the current year include:

- Covid-19 has again made an impact into the start of the new financial year. As processes start to revert to 'normal' there will be challenges around the future of office work, with hybrid working practices being established whilst at the same time maintaining a safe working environment for customers and staff visiting the offices.
- Ensuring that health and safety remains a focus for all and that staff use the resources available to them.
- Ensuring that training needs of staff are prioritised after being deferred for the previous year.
- A revision of the 'Health and Safety' intranet page, due to the forthcoming change to the Council's file management system.
- Making further use of the resources available through our insurers i.e. 3rd party audits and reviews, to ensure that the Council is reducing risk and working to 'best practice'.