

**Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council****HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2011 – MARCH 2012****1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report outlines the current state of health and safety matters during the year from April 2011 to March 2012.
- 1.2 This year has been marked by both low and high points. Regrettably, the council was prosecuted for a breach of health and safety legislation (see section 3). However, on a positive note there was a successful outcome to the Health and Safety Executive's inspection of waste and recycling services delivered or managed by the council.

**2. POLICIES AND GUIDANCE**

- 2.1 An update of the General Health and Safety Policy was commenced with the intention of it being presented for approval at the Corporate Health and Safety Committee meeting on 12 March 2012. However, it was held in abeyance pending an external health and safety audit due in April 2012, in case the auditor made any further recommendations for inclusions or changes to the policy. It will now be presented at a Safety Committee meeting later in 2012.

**3. HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE LEGAL INTERVENTION**

- 3.1 In December 2011 the council pleaded guilty to charges of failing to ensure the health and safety of the public and failing to manage health and safety, and was fined the sum of £20,000 plus costs.
- 3.2 This case had arisen due to an incident in April 2009 when members of the public were exposed to carbon monoxide due to failure to maintain the gas boiler in a community centre. Following extensive internal investigation of the incident, a range of measures were put in place to ensure that this cannot happen again.

**4. TARGET 100**

- 4.1 Target 100 is the Council's corporate health and safety system. Training for users continued with a further four courses during the first half of the year

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and refresher training in February 2012 for those who wanted a skills update or who had become new users.

- 4.2 Usage of the program is monitored by monthly system audit reports which are presented and discussed at the Corporate Health and Safety Committee.
- 4.3 During the year, a considerable amount of work has been done to embed the use of Target 100, including 1:1 sessions, workshops and a "Tidy Target 100 Friday".
- 4.4 Benefits to health and safety, and thus to the Council, from the use of Target 100 include –
  - Easier access to a group of global assessments intended to standardise risk assessments for common risks.
  - Immediate access for users to a comprehensive library of health and safety information, which is kept updated by Business Safety Systems.
  - Immediate notification of changes in legislation.
  - An auditable trail showing who has used the system, how often and for what.
  - A more effective means of recording health and safety training courses, including the ability to attach copies of the training material used, course manuals and certificates, as well as attendances.
  - When the accident and incident reporting section is introduced, as well as a more efficient reporting process, the system will give a clearer indication of trends in accidents and comparison of accident types within or between services.
- 4.5 When the program was introduced, it was decided to concentrate initially on the risk assessment and action plan modules. However, during 2012/13 this will be extended to include accident and incident reporting. This will greatly improve the efficiency of accident reporting, since the Corporate Health and Safety Officer will receive an automatic e-mail notification whenever a report is added, which will speed up the investigation process and, where relevant, reporting to the Health and Safety Executive.

**5. HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING**

- 5.1 The following health and safety training was completed during the year:
  - Basic Health and Safety Refresher – 26 further courses
  - Corporate Induction – 4 courses
  - Skills Update for First Aiders – July 2011
  - Target 100 Users – August 2011
  - Display Screen Equipment User Training – August 2011
  - Streetscene/Waste Services Refresher – January-February 2012

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- Target 100 refresher courses for users – February 2012

5.2 Further training courses planned for 2012/13 include Safe Use of Ladders/Work at Height, Defibrillator refresher, First Aid refreshers for the Museum, Cemetery and Crematorium and a full First Aid At Work course to provide additional First Aiders for the Depot and other work areas.

**6. ACCIDENT REPORTS**

6.1 During the year 35 work-related accidents were reported, in the following categories –

- Musculo-skeletal 5
- Hit fixed/other object 8
- Slip/trip/fall 10
- Cuts/bruises/grazes 9
- Other 2
- Animal attack 1

Three of the musculo-skeletal injuries were reportable to the HSE as Major Injuries (one broken bone in foot, one hairline fracture of ankle and one chipped bone in wrist).

6.2 These three reportable accidents resulted in a total of 60 days lost from work, with an average of 0.1 days lost per employee. This is a considerable improvement on last year's figure and is comparable with those recorded in previous years –

Year	Number of accidents	Number reportable	Total days lost	Average days lost per employee
2006/07	36	3	88	0.14
2007/08	35	2	73	0.11
2008/09	30	3	71.5	0.11
2009/10	38	1	18.5	0.03
2010/11	31	4	150	0.23
2011/12	35	3	60	0.10

6.3 The average days lost per employee is half that of the latest available annual statistics published by the Health and Safety Executive for 2009/10 of 0.22<sup>1</sup> average days lost through work-related injury per employee (source: HSE Statistics 2009/10, <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh0910.pdf> ).

6.4 Additionally, two dangerous occurrences were reported, as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the HSE's statistics for the year 2010/11 were not available at the time of writing this report.

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- Part of a ceiling outside the Civil Enforcement Officers' room in Civic Offices collapsed, due to the weight of construction rubble which had not been cleared when the toilets in the Council Suite were remodelled some years ago.
- A vision panel with attached beading fell out of the door between the staffroom and kitchen at the old Jubilee Pool. On investigation, this could only have happened by the panel being violently hit or pushed out. Despite considerable efforts made by the Leisure Operations Manager, it was never determined exactly how or by who this was done.

6.5 Eight verbal abuse/violence reports were received, as follows:

- One was as a result of information passed to the council by Aspire
- Five were incidents of abusive behaviour by members of the public towards council employees
- Two were more serious incidents involving intimidating and threatening behaviour, both of which resulted in the police being informed.

6.6.1 In February 2012 an incident occurred when a council employee collapsed and unfortunately died in the workplace. Although this was not in any way work-related, it did test the council's response to a traumatic incident.

6.6.2 It is pleasing to note that all available first aiders responded promptly to the call-out and acted in accordance with their training, including a defibrillation attempt. After the event, Human Resources wrote to all who had been involved in any way, offering counselling support if needed.

6.6.2 Members can be assured that everything possible was done, both at the time for the individual, and afterwards for those who had been involved.

## 7. HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTIONS

7.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Officer, as part of her annual work plan, undertakes routine inspections of Council premises to identify and advise on any health and safety matters within the workplace. The following workplace inspections have been carried out during the year –

- Park pavilions
- Bradwell Crematorium
- Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre
- Midway Car Park
- Civic Offices
- St. George's Chambers
- Knutton Depot

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- Madeley Rural Hub
- Depot Transport Workshop

7.2 The Corporate Health and Safety Committee members also undertake inspections of Council premises to identify any Health and Safety matters, in order to remedy or alter the matters identified. Members of the committee carried out the following inspections:

- Jubilee Pool (the old pool)
- Guildhall
- Jubilee 2

7.3 Following the above inspections, reports were sent to the premises manager or other responsible officer outlining the findings and advising on any necessary corrective action.

**8. KNUTTON DEPOT**

8.1.1 The Knutton Lane Health and Safety Committee held meetings on 6 June, 6 September and 8 December 2011 and 8 March 2012.

8.1.2 Projects in hand arising from the meetings include:

- Installation of the few remaining signs from the traffic improvement plan
- The preparation of round-specific risk assessments for Collection Services
- A policy and schedule for winter gritting of council premises
- Provision of hepatitis B vaccinations as outlined in section 8 below

8.2 The few outstanding items of work from the Depot traffic management plan were completed during the first half of the year. A repeat in-house audit was carried out on 21 December 2011 by the Head of Operations and the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and the traffic management plan was signed off.

8.3 The Depot will be included in the external audit arranged by the Head of Environmental Health Services.

8.4 The Health and Safety Executive undertook an inspection of the Council's waste and recycling service in March 2012, which is reported fully in section 10 below.

8.5 The Transport Manager is arranging for an external audit of the Transport Workshop, which will take place in May 2012. Any health and safety-related

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advice arising from the audit will be planned and implemented as part of the ongoing Depot improvement programme.

- 8.6 Further work to be implemented during the year 2012/13 will include the introduction of a noise and vibration assessment and monitoring programme for Streetscene. This was identified in the light of an internal noise measurement report and also following advice from the HSE Inspector who conducted the inspection of the waste and recycling service. A working group has been set up to oversee the project and progress will be reported at the Depot and Corporate Health and Safety Committees.

**9. HEPATITIS B VACCINATION PROGRAMME**

- 9.1 Work on the hepatitis B vaccination programme has continued during the year. Letters were sent out to all employees who had been identified as being at risk of contact with the hepatitis B virus due to their work activities. 61% of those circulated accepted the offer of vaccination.
- 9.2 These individuals were initially asked to contact their General Practitioner to see whether they would be prepared to carry out the vaccination free of charge. A very few GPs agreed to do this but the majority of employees will require the council to arrange vaccination through an occupational health provider.
- 9.3 At the close of this year's report an invitation to quote for the provision of this service was being prepared and will be sent to selected occupational health providers.

**10. HSE INSPECTION OF WASTE/RECYCLING SERVICES**

- 10.1 In 2009 the Health and Safety Executive announced that between October 2010 and October 2013 they would be conducting a national inspection intervention, visiting every Local Authority in the country to inspect their procurement and management of waste and recycling services. Their aim was to improve health and safety within the industry by reducing the incidence of injury and ill health.
- 10.2 Officers from the Council attended the launch of the HSE's guidance on procuring/managing waste services in January 2010. The information gathered from this event was used and implemented in preparation for the visit.
- 10.3 In February 2012 the Corporate Health and Safety Officer was contacted by an HSE Inspector to arrange the inspection, and accordingly it was agreed that she would visit the council for 2 days on 5 and 6 March, with a further

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visit to Acumen, the council's recycling contractor, to be arranged at a later date. Meetings were arranged with the Chief Executive, Executive Director Regeneration and Development, the Heads of Service and Business Managers for Operations and Recycling and with Union representatives. She also undertook an inspection of the Depot and viewed the collection rounds in operation and talked to the crews.

- 10.4 The HSE were very pleased with the Council's management and delivery of the collection service. The inspector gave some verbal advice but did not feel that it was necessary for her to make any material intervention by writing a letter. This is a very positive outcome for the Council.
- 10.5 The successful outcome to the inspection reflects the hard work which has been put in over the last few years by many officers to raise the profile of health and safety within the Council and particularly in improving the safety culture at the Depot.

**11. CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

11.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Committee held four meetings during the period, on 7 June, 13 September and 12 December 2011 and 12 March 2012.

11.2 Projects in hand arising from the meetings include:

- The ongoing programme of workplace inspections.
- Continuing to drive forward the use of Target 100, as outlined in section 4 above.
- Monitoring progress on the Hepatitis B vaccination programme.
- The trial of the Guardian24 lone worker protection system.
- The introduction of a Use of Violent Warning Markers policy and database maintenance programme.
- A review of lone working arrangements at the Council.
- Monitoring progress on the Streetscene noise and vibration project.
- Monitoring the statutory inspection and testing programme carried out by Facilities.

11.3 The committee also discussed the following items, throughout the year:

- Accident statistics
- New/forthcoming legislation
- Statutory inspections/testing
- Workplace inspections by the Committee
- Standing agenda items on safety at other sites
- Review of policies
- Information from outside sources such as Trade Unions

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- Hepatitis B vaccination programme
- Facilities inspections
- Monitoring of Target 100
- Health and Safety Executive reports/information

**12. FORTHCOMING LEGISLATION/HSE GUIDANCE**

- 12.1 The proposed amendment to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (the extension from 3 days to 7 days of the absence period which triggers the accident report to the Health and Safety Executive) was approved and became law in April 2012. In addition to the reports given to the Safety Committees, a briefing paper was circulated to all Heads of Service and Business Managers and an announcement was put on e-voice to notify all staff.
- 12.2.1 The Health and Safety Executive's proposal for recovering costs incurred when visiting organisations will go ahead but will not commence until October 2012 at the earliest. Organisations who materially breach health and safety law (that is, where the inspector issues a letter or formal notice following a visit) will be charged at a rate of £124 per hour.
- 12.2.2 Had cost recovery been in operation when the HSE inspected the waste and recycling services, there would have been no charge to the Council as the inspector did not feel it necessary to issue a letter.
- 12.3 The Health and Safety Executive have also set up an independent regulatory challenge panel to look into complaints about advice given by their inspectors which the complainant feels is incorrect or which goes beyond that which is required to adequately control a risk.
- 12.4.1 The Government's review of health and safety legislation (the Lofstedt report) which was about to commence at the close of last year's annual report, was completed and its recommendations for consolidating and simplifying health and safety legislation accepted. The Work At Height Regulations are one of those which are to be reviewed – there are quite a lot of council employees who use ladders for access purposes.
- 12.4.2 At the close of this year's report it has been announced that an update has been commissioned to report on progress by the end of January 2013 and if necessary revise the deadlines for full implementation of the proposed changes. The effect of this on the Council will become clearer once the outcome of the report is known.
- 12.5 The Corporate Health and Safety Officer will monitor the Health and Safety Executive and other websites and will ensure that council officers are notified in good time of any matters which will have an effect on its work activities.



**13. WORK PLAN 2011/12**

13.1 The Corporate Health and Safety Officer's work plan for 2012/13 is attached as Annex A.

13.2 The major challenges for the year are identified below –

- Implementation of the accident reporting component of Target 100
- Completion of the hepatitis B vaccination programme
- The introduction of a noise and vibration assessment and monitoring programme for Streetscene
- Completion of the planned programme of health and safety audits and inspections
- The delivery of health and safety training courses to external organisations
- A review of lone working arrangements at the Council and participation in the Guardian24 lone worker protection trial

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