



ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT 2021-2022

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1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of health and safety activity during 2021/22, including progress with the Council's agreed health and safety priorities for the year, as well as an analysis of health and safety accidents and incidents. It identifies the key health and safety risks facing the Council, reflecting on both the organisational, local and national context and sets out the Authority's health and safety priorities for 2022/23.

2021/22 saw a number of significant changes in relation to the Council's health and safety management systems and structures. These changes were informed by an internal audit of health and safety across the Council which provided a limited assurance opinion. In response to this, strengthened governance arrangements have been introduced alongside a new Health and Safety Policy and incident reporting system. The internal audit highlighted specific concerns in relation to buildings related safety matters and responsibility for this area transferred to the Council's Corporate Landlord function as part of the resultant structural changes. – The Health and Safety Team is continuing to work closely alongside the Corporate Landlord and in partnership with the Trade Unions to review and strengthen arrangements in this area.

During the past year, the Council has also reviewed its arrangements in relation to health and safety within Bury's Maintained Schools and developed and issued a model Schools' Health and Safety Policy and assurance arrangements in consultation with school leaders and Professional Associations.

Health and safety activity for much of 2021/22 has continued to focus on arrangements to manage the risk posed by Covid-19 and respond to the changing national guidance and local infection rates. This work included the development of a generic Covid-19 risk assessment and focused work on infection prevention and control measures in key Council buildings, as well as continued support to Council departments and to individuals. All legal restrictions related to Covid-19 ended in March 2022. However, the Council has continued to ensure robust arrangements and guidance are in place in accordance with the latest government and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on managing the spread of respiratory infections in the workplace. Alongside this, focus has continued addressing the health and safety implications of agile working for Council staff, with the continued roll-out of a comprehensive health and safety toolkit for agile workers.

During 2022/23, the Council's health and safety priorities will continue to focus on embedding and strengthening the core basic requirements of a robust health and safety management system, informed by the recommendations from the internal audit referenced above and a comprehensive programme of service level risk assessment needs reviews. Alongside this, there will be an increased emphasis on training and work to strengthen and embed a culture of health and safety risk awareness and management across the Council.

2. 2021-22 Health & Safety Performance

2.1 Progress against 2021/22 Objectives

This section provides an update on the health and safety priorities for 2021/22 agreed through the last annual report.

1. Governance, Consultation & Communication

- a) Improved communication and engagement in relation to health and safety to increase individual and collective awareness of risks, roles and responsibilities.
(To commence with communication of the new Health and Safety Policy)

Following approval of the Council's new health and safety policy 4 staff/manager drop-in sessions were held in February and March 2022 to publicise the launch of the policy and the new accident/incident reporting and recording system, as well as to provide an opportunity for managers and staff to raise questions and concerns. Health and safety has also been included regularly within all-staff broadcast emails to raise awareness of the topic in general as well as key changes in expectations for staff and managers. As part of the Council's developing arrangements for employee engagement and leadership development, and in support of embedding a strengthened health and safety culture, a range of further activities are planned for the year ahead.

- b) Strengthening governance arrangements, including recommencing meetings of a Corporate Health and Safety Joint Consultative Committee and formal quarterly reporting

The Health and Safety Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) has been reintroduced to ensure improved governance of health & safety and has received quarterly reports on health and safety performance. There is a direct line to the Council's executive team from this group via the Deputy Chief Executive. The trades union are now working closely with the council's health & safety team, in particular through a series of joint inspections of council buildings, which includes direct communication with employees during the inspections. A school's health & safety committee has also been established to strengthen governance and Trade Union engagement in relation to health and safety in maintained schools.

- c) Development of quality assurance and feedback systems, including a clear quarterly reporting cycle through the Council's Executive Team and Health and Safety JCC which will include tracking of investigation outcomes and actions.

Work on improving the standard of quality assurance and feedback reports began at the start of this reporting year in the form of quarterly reports and this annual health & safety report, which are provided to both the Council's Executive Team and Health and Safety JCC. This process and the quality and analysis of reporting will be further improved on throughout the next year, supported by the new online incident reporting system and a clearer process for monitoring the outcomes of health and safety investigations and audits.

- d) A review of internal reporting arrangements. This will include stronger quality assurance of reports and assurance of the delivery of required follow-up investigations and actions

A new electronic accident/incident reporting and recording system was developed, implemented, and communicated to all staff. This will improve the quality of assurance reports and better inform future investigations and corrective actions. Day-to-day operation of this system is being managed by the Council's new Business and Executive Support Service who work in partnership with the Health and Safety team to ensure incidents are considered and wider issues and risks addressed in a timely manner. Work is ongoing to further develop and embed this system, which will include the ability to provide more detailed and regular reports to Trade Union colleagues in relation to incidents.

2. Robust Safety Management Systems

- a) Provision of continued support for control of Covid at work including response to any national changes

Throughout 2021 and into the start of 2022 the Country was working under Government restrictions introduced as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As of March 2022, all remaining restrictions were lifted. The Health & Safety Team continue to advise Bury Council senior management and support staff in-line with the latest government guidance and HSE advice. The Council has continued to maintain a generic Covid-19 risk assessment to provide the basis for all activity and risk management considerations across the Council.

Alongside the above work in relation to infection control and prevention there has been a continued emphasis on mental wellbeing, including the further roll-out of the Council-wide EAP, increased guidance and support for managers and targeted work with priority service areas.

- b) Supporting the development of facilities management and CDM arrangements

During the 2021-22 year the Health and Safety Team supported the Corporate Landlord function in relation to Fire Risk Assessment and Covid-19 secure requirements in areas such as building ventilation and working space.

Arising from the Bradley Fold fire investigation report an audit of Construction Design and Management (CDM) arrangements within Bury Council is due to be undertaken following an internal audit of Architectural Services.

- c) Developing and implementing health and safety arrangements to support agile working

A comprehensive agile working "Health & Safety Tool" was developed and implemented during the 2021-22 year for completion by all agile workers in partnership with their line manager. This toolkit is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains up-to-date and reflects learning from the practical implementation of agile working.

- d) Provision of clear health and safety standards for schools; for monitoring implementation and compliance; and for appropriate action when problems arise

A new Schools' Health and Safety Policy has been launched, alongside supporting documents to confirm the practical expectation of school leaders and to signpost available support. A Schools' Health and Safety Committee has also been established including representatives from the Council alongside School Leaders and the Trades Union. The intention is that the Policy and supporting documents will be reviewed annually and schools asked to confirm that appropriate arrangements are in place.

- e) Ongoing maintenance of relevant guidance and standards

Relevant guidance and standards have been introduced through new policies for Bury Council and School's as well as guidance around specific hazards e.g. Covid guidance on safe working arrangements. A full and comprehensive review of all health and safety guidance will begin during the coming year.

- f) A programme of scheduled and risk-based Health and Safety audits

A member of the Health and Safety team has now completed accredited Health and Safety Audit training (ISO45001) and a risk-based annual audit schedule for 2022/23 has been developed, informed by the outcomes of individual Service Risk Assessment Needs Checkers.

- g) Work to strengthen the analysis and understanding of industrial injury and work-related absence and ill health.

A much-improved electronic reporting and recording system is now in place and will be monitored for its effectiveness in the analysis and understanding of work-related absences. Improvements to the Council's system for recording sickness absence were also launched in April (ITrent) which will allow improved absence monitoring and include automated notifications in relation to absence which may require reporting or consideration in line with health and safety policy and legislation. This new system will also allow improved data reporting and analysis over the coming year.

- h) A review of national and internal health and safety management standards (BS ISO 45001 and 45003) and accreditation options to identify any lessons that can be learned and to consider whether it would be beneficial to seek accreditation

Following an initial review, the recommendation is that the Council does not seek to formally adopt one of these health and safety management standards at this point. This position will be reviewed in twelve months time once the organisational arrangements and culture in relation to health and safety have further matured.

3. Effective Training and Development

- a) Development of health and safety tools which cover key information, risk assessment procedures and identification and agreement of management arrangements for agile working, office based work, and higher risk activities

See point C above re: Agile working policy support and new Health & Safety Policies. There was also a 'Risk Assessment Needs Checker' document produced and distributed to all Bury Council Heads of Service to assist with the targeting of support and to prioritise areas for auditing and training needs. Complementary tools for office-based staff and high-risk services have also been produced and are being finalised with a view to role out in the first half of this financial year.

- b) Review of health and safety training and development arrangements and standards

A high-level health and safety training approach has been developed and agreed and delivery of this work is a key priority for the year ahead. This covers both specific training for high-risk areas as well as a significantly enhanced approach to essential training for all staff and managers.

The Health and Safety Team have also worked with Heads of Service in the Operations Department and completed a detailed training needs assessment. Following this 3 IOSH accredited training packages are in the process of being rolled out.

2.2 Investigations, Incidents, Absence & Claims

1. Investigations

Three formal health and safety investigations took place during 2021/22 and learning from these has been taken forward via the relevant services.

A high-level investigation into a fire at the Bradley Fold Depot was undertaken. Failings in the control of contractors were identified through this investigation and improvements were recommended. These improvements are being taken forward, supported by a thorough review of the management of contractors via the Council's Architectural Services function.

An investigation was carried out following a sign pole snapping and highways maintenance damaging a cable when trying to make the rest of the column safe. Several improvements are being carried out to procedures, safe system of work, risk assessment review and refresher training for all operatives involved in this type of activity.

An investigation was undertaken which involved the same school when a pupil, who has an allergy to egg was accidentally exposed to it on two occasions.

- Incident 1 happened in the school canteen when a panini containing egg was accidentally served to the pupil
- Incident 2 happened during a food technology lesson.

Both services involved consequently reviewed their arrangements for the management of allergens and relevant staff undertook additional training. The Food Standards Agency was contacted for advice and they subsequently responded to confirm that they were happy with the actions taken.

2. **Accidents, Incidents and Near-Misses**

During the 2021-22 year there were **159** reported accidents/incidents/near misses/dangerous occurrences and hazard reports.

- There were 65 reports involving members of the public
- There were 89 reports involving employees.
- 2 hazardous situations reported
- 1 near miss
- 2 dangerous occurrences.

10 of these incidents had to be reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

- There were 4 over 7-day absences related to injuries at work
- There were 4 Fractures to bones
- There were 2 where a pupil was taken to hospital following the incident

Trends

The number of reported incidents in 2021/22 is a significant increase on the previous year (105 to 159) and RIDDOR reportable incidents also saw an increase (6 to 10). However, comparison here should be treated with caution as the implementation (and continuation) of home working arrangements during 2020/21 had a notable impact on the number of incidents recorded during that year. The Council has also significantly improved its reporting systems and processes over the last 12 months which will likely have had an impact.

One notable variation in the number and nature of reported incidents does however relate to those involving Work Related Violence, which increased from 6 in 2020/21 to 16 in 202/22. (This category includes assaults, behavioural, verbal abuse, and intimidating behaviour). This is an area of suggested priority for the year ahead.

More detailed analysis of the 2021/2022 incident statistics is provided at *Appendix 1*.

3. **Sickness Absence**

The Council lost an average of 14.69 days per full-time equivalent employee due to sickness in 2021/22. This is an increase on 14.14 days during the previous year. – In considering this position it is worth noting four key points:

- Mental health related absence continues to be the most significant cause of sickness and accounts for around 26% of days lost, followed by musculoskeletal problems at circa. 16%

- Sickness absence levels vary significantly across Departments with the most significant levels in the One Commissioning Organisation (22.15 days) and Operations (17.61 days)
- The introduction of absence managing self-service through iTrent will significantly improve the accuracy and timeliness of data on sickness absence
- The impact of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 has significantly affected sickness levels at year-end. As of December 2021, the average days lost per FTE measure was 12.79 days, a significant decrease on the previous year. During January, Covid related absence increased from contributing 18% of sickness cases to 35%.

Addressing sickness absence is a significant area of focus for the HR Department at present who will work closely with the Health and Safety Team on this.

4. **Employers Liability Claims**

There were 4 employers liability claims received during the year. The total reserve against these 4 claims was £27,846 as opposed to 1 claim in 2020-21 at a cost of £6,580.

3. National Priorities and Changes

In reviewing health and safety performance during 2021/22 and setting priorities for the year ahead, it is important to consider the national landscape and the priorities of key regulatory and sector bodies. HSE have identified the following priorities which are particularly relevant to local government:

- Wider ownership of health and safety – “health and safety is everyone’s business”
- The need to tackle ill-health at work, especially:
 - Occupational lung disease
 - Musculoskeletal disorders
 - Work-related stress

During 2021-22 the following pieces of H&S legislation were amended:

- All remaining domestic coronavirus restrictions were lifted in March 2022 and guidance issued on “living with covid-19”.
- Towards the end of the 2021-22 reporting year the HSE identified the area of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete as an area needing further investigation since this substance was widely used in the construction of schools, colleges, and other buildings from the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties.

The following changes in legislation are anticipated to take effect in this financial year:

- Fire Safety Act – this received Royal assent in April 2022, no implementation date has been publicised yet. The new Act strengthens the responsibilities of the “responsible person”. It also has implications relating to construction, regarding the use of fire-retardant materials mainly in housing applications
- PPE Regulations (revisions) – extends the liability to limb (b) workers e.g agency workers/casuals
- COSHH Regulations (revisions) – changes to Occupational Exposure Levels (OEL’s) lowers the level of exposure for certain substances which could impact on services that use such substances.

4. The Year Ahead (2022-23)

During 2022/23, the Council's health and safety priorities will continue to focus on embedding and strengthening the core basic requirements of a robust health and safety management system, informed by the recommendations from the internal audit referenced above and a comprehensive programme of service level risk assessment needs reviews. Alongside this, there will be an increased emphasis on training and work to strengthen and embed a culture of health and safety risk awareness and management across the Council.

The Health and Safety team will work collaboratively with staff, managers and the Trade Union in delivering on the proposed priorities set out below.

1. **Covid-19** -The Council will continue to monitor the situation regarding covid secure working arrangements and risk assessments and update guidance and working arrangements as required.
2. **Health and Safety Auditing** - An annual programme of in-depth health and safety audits will be undertaken across the financial year, with the aim of undertaking one audit per quarter in-line with the ISO 45001 standard. The audit location will be risk-based, informed by the service risk assessment needs checkers, with the initial audit undertaken in the Waste Management service.
3. **Accident/Incident Reporting System** – We will continue to develop the electronic system with a view to improving the system and the quality of reporting and promote the reporting of incidents of all types including near misses and dangerous occurrences.
4. **Training** - We will deliver a comprehensive programme to improve both the generic and specialist training available to Council staff, informed by the Service Risk Assessment Needs Checker process. (The outline plan is included at Appendix 2)
5. **Information, Procedures & Guidance** – We will review and update H&S Policies, Procedures & Guidance documentation with priority being given to the new Work-Related Violence documentation. This has been highlighted as a priority area due to the increase of incidents in this current year. – The intention is to fully review 15% of all Health and Safety guidance during this year.
6. **Schools** - We will work to embed the new arrangements for Schools' health and safety and provide support and guidance where appropriate, working through the new Schools' Health and Safety Committee.
7. **Health and Safety Communications & Awareness** – We will develop a programme of communication, engagement and awareness raising activities to strengthen understanding, awareness and confidence around health and safety, particularly in relation to Council leaders.
8. **First Aid** – We will undertake a review of First Aid provision within Bury Council.

5. Conclusion

During 2021/2022 a large amount has been achieved as set out above. There has been an increase in reported and reportable incidents, this however should not be a cause for concern and has likely been significantly impacted by the change in Covid restrictions. There remains more to do to ensure the Council has fully robust health and safety management arrangements in place and a safety aware culture and the priorities set out above are intended to provide a r robust framework for this work.

Appendix 1 Accident/Incident Statistics

During the 2021-22 year there were **159** reported accidents/incidents/near misses/dangerous occurrences and hazard reports.

Reported Accidents/Incidents for 2021-2022		
1	Members of the public	65
2	Employees	89
3	Hazardous situations	2
4	Near miss	1
5	Dangerous occurrences	2
	TOTAL	159

10 of these incidents had to be reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

Breakdown of RIDDOR reported incidents		
1	Over 7-day absence	4
2	Fractures to bones	4
3	School pupil taken to hospital	2
	TOTAL	10

Breakdown of incidents involving employees reported by Department 2021-2022

Breakdown of incidents by Department		
1	Operations	59
2	Children & Young People	12
3	One Commissioning Organisation	9
4	Corporate Core	7
5	Business Growth & Infrastructure	2
	TOTAL	89

Breakdown of incidents involving employees reported by Department 2020-2021

Breakdown of incidents by Department		
1	Operations	22
2	Children & Young People	4
3	One Commissioning Organisation	15
4	Corporate Core	1
5	Business Growth & Infrastructure	1
	TOTAL	43

Breakdown of incidents involving members of the public and clients 2021-22

Breakdown of incidents by Department		
1	Operations (Leisure)	50
2	One Commissioning Organisation	14
3	Corporate Core	1
	TOTAL	65

Breakdown of incidents involving members of the public and clients 2020-21

Breakdown of incidents by Department		
1	Operations (Leisure)	1
3	One Commissioning Organisation (Adult Care)	12
	TOTAL	13

Breakdown of incidents involving employees by cause 2021-22.

Breakdown of incidents by cause		
1	Work Related Violence	20
2	Road traffic collision	4
3	Work related stressors	1
4	Hit against or by an object	15
5	Slip, trip or fall	16
6	Exposure to hazardous chemicals	3
7	Manual handling	14
8	Exposure to physical agent	3
9	Exposure to biological agent	1
10	Trapping/crushing incident	2
11	Medical condition	1
12	Animal related attack	4
13	Fall from height	1
14	Hazardous situations	2
15	Near miss	1
16	Dangerous occurrences	2
	TOTAL	89

Breakdown of incidents involving employees by cause 2020-21

Breakdown of incidents by cause		
1	Hit against or by an object	4
2	Trapping or crushing	4
3	Handling, lifting, or carrying	7
4	Slip, trip, or fall (on same level)	13
5	Fall from height	2
6	Contact with sharp object	2
7	Exposure to physical agents	1
8	Violence, aggression, behavioral, threats, intimidation, etc.	6
9	Other	2
	Total	41

Appendix 2 Health and Safety Training Plan

HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING PLAN

Training is an important part of any organisation's Health and Safety Management system. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) takes a wide view of the nature of training:

"Training isn't just about formal 'classroom' courses – it can be delivered in a number of ways, for example:

- informal, 'on the job' training
- written instructions
- online information
- simply telling someone what to do.

Employees must be given information about the risks involved in their work, and the steps that need to be taken to reduce or remove those risks."

The plan below covers proposed corporate actions in relation to Health and Safety training. These will need to be supplemented by local activity and role specific training flowing from local service needs and risk assessments.

Area of Training / Development	Current Position	Actions
Mandatory training for all and Awareness Raising		
Communications and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regularly updated health and safety intranet• Broadcast messages linked to new policy and incident reporting process• Staff and manager 'drop in' sessions held to support policy launch	<p>Plan for a focused month promoting health and safety awareness and training to be included in refreshed annual communications calendar.</p> <p>Roll-out of programme of Toolbox Talks across Operations.</p>
E-Learning	The following courses have been identified as required:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen monitoring and tracking arrangements for mandatory e-learning

Area of Training / Development	Current Position	Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving for work – Mandatory for anyone who carries out journeys that meet the driving for work criteria. • Asbestos Awareness – Mandatory for anyone who manages buildings or contracts which involve structural disturbance to building materials • First Aid – Mandatory for anyone who works out of Council premises • Fire Awareness – Mandatory for anyone who works out of Council premises • Manual handling – Strongly recommended for anyone who carries out handling, moving, carrying activities at work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a compulsory ‘all staff’ Health and Safety E-Learning module including an off-the-shelf course supplemented by local information on Council policy and procedure.
Health and Safety Toolkits. – Guides to provide core risk assessments and training through guidance and information	Toolkit in place for agile workers	Toolkits to be finalised for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office based staff • H&S management in higher risk services
Leaders and Managers		
Core training for all managers	Briefings held related to new Policy	Core module to be included in new corporate management programme, to launch in September 2022
Briefing for senior leaders		Intention to schedule an externally facilitated session in Q3 2022/23 and circulate HSE guidance for leading health and safety at work https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg417.pdf

Area of Training / Development	Current Position	Actions
Corporate Support to high-priority specialist training areas		
First aid training	E-learning recommended to all employees and required for office-based staff.	Ensure robust training provision to meet the Council's core first aid training needs.
Specialist training for high risk services in Operations	<p>A programme of accredited training for Operational Services is planned to be delivered by a member of the health and safety team. Courses are tailored to service needs and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOSH Managing Safely (3 days) • IOSH Managing Safely Refresher (1 day) • IOSH Safety, Health and Environment for Construction Managers (4 days) <p>Ad hoc courses delivered by the health and safety team are made available on request covering Manual Handling, Ladder Safety etc.</p>	IOSH Safety, Health and Environment for Construction Managers (4 days) to also be available to Facilities Management, Architectural Services, Engineers staff who do not hold an equivalent qualification or who require refresher training.
Anti-social behaviour/Violence, threats, and intimidation at work		The Council's anti-social behaviour/Violence, threats and intimidation policy and arrangements are currently under review. Following this work will be progressed to put in place appropriate training and support.
Review feedback from H&S risk assessment needs and training assessments to identify training needs	Annual risk assessment needs checker distributed to all services with completion deadline of 14 th March.	Consider if / where additional support is needed based on completed assessments.