



Health & Safety Committee

Corporate Health & Safety Board Update

Date: 23 May 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All.

Contributors: Rich Clarke, Head of Assurance

Outline and recommendations

This report provides information to the Health & Safety Committee on matters of interest raised in previous meetings. It also summarises information raised at the Corporate Health & Safety Board including relevant incident statistics.

We ask Members to note the report.

1. Summary

- 1.1. The report includes an update on matters raised previously by this Committee, including the Council's Defibrillator Policy.
- 1.2. The report summarises relevant matters raised at the Corporate Health & Safety Board, including most recent accident and incident statistics.
- 1.3. The report also advises the Committee of work currently underway to revise the Council's Health & Safety delivery structure.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. We ask that Members note and comment on the report.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The Council has various legal, regulatory and ethical responsibilities in ensuring the continuing health and safety of all those to whom it owes a duty of care. The work of this Committee in general helps to ensure the Council meets its responsibilities, especially to non-domestic service users.
- 3.2. This report contributes to the Committee's understanding of health and safety

governance at the Council and so aids in the effective completion of its responsibilities.

4. Matters Raised at Previous Health & Safety Committees

Defibrillator Policy

- 4.1. The draft policy seen by this Committee last year has now received approval from the Executive Management Team (EMT). The policy sets out to support services who decide to acquire a defibrillator in making sure it receives adequate ongoing maintenance, as well as linking devices to The Circuit – a public register kept by London Ambulance Service to advertise their availability to help during an emergency.
- 4.2. We fed back comments from the Committee seeking a more ambitious policy that positively looked for opportunities to place defibrillators widely across the borough. Right now, we did not pursue that vision owing to a lack of clarity on the availability of corporate resource to ensure the devices would be consistently and definitely well maintained. Keeping the devices in good working order takes on even greater importance when advertising their availability through the Circuit.
- 4.3. However, the same EMT meeting also welcomed proposals to review expansion and co-ordination of the Council's health and safety resource (see section 5 of this report). EMT resolved to review the Defibrillator Policy in twelve months with a specific brief to consider whether developments in the Council's health and safety resource would support wider device acquisition and distribution.
- 4.4. With the policy now approved, we will shortly be launching it alongside staff encouraging services to review their interest in acquiring a defibrillator for staff or service users. Alongside that promotion, we will also invite staff to participate in the British Heart Foundation's "Every Minute Matters" campaign which provides further training on using defibrillators and providing emergency CPR.

Emergency Evacuations

- 4.5. We have continued the revised approach to emergency evacuations across the Catford Complex following last year's unplanned events. So far we have seen good levels of compliance with evacuations completed quickly and in good order. We have also included a review of all Council sites evacuation arrangements as part of routine health and safety inspections (see section 5).
- 4.6. Next steps will be to draw up a standard procedure for evacuations, including ensuring reasonably wide consultation on suitable dates. We will continue to report results of evacuation exercises to the Corporate Health & Safety Board.

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5. Matters Raised At Corporate Health & Safety Board

- 5.1. Owing to having a cancelled meeting in February, there have been two meetings of the Corporate Health & Safety Board since this Committee last met on 14 November 2023. Those Board meetings took place on 25 January and 29 April 2024. The information below draws from both meetings.
- 5.2. Each meeting followed a set of Directorate level health and safety meetings, all of which included Trade Union representatives. These included new meetings for Housing Directorate following the Council's bringing Lewisham Homes back in-house in October 2023.
- 5.3. The Board's standard agenda includes:
 - HR Report on Occupational Health & Welfare, including sickness absence.
 - Facilities Management Update, including compliance report on the corporate estate.
 - Actions from each Directorate meeting.
 - Statutory compliance report and incident reporting summary provided by the Corporate Health & Safety team.
- 5.4. Principal matters of interest for this Committee included:

Premises Inspections

- 5.5. Our new health and safety software has allowed for substantial improvement to our existing premises inspection work. Officers can now complete the inspection using cloud-enabled devices and provide the full report, including photographic evidence and required remedial actions, to premises responsible officers before leaving the site. Using common coding with facilities management colleague also supports tracking completion of remedial tasks that need maintenance support.
- 5.6. The full checklist used by the team includes more than 80 individual items including checking escape route clearance, planned maintenance routines, security arrangements, tree management, water and asbestos management, contractor and visitor control, onsite staff training records, fire evacuation arrangements and more.
- 5.7. We have now completed at least one inspection using the new software of all buildings in the corporate estate (that is, buildings where our staff work and/or from where we offer services; it does not include residential properties or the leased commercial estate). The table below shows the current inspection position of publicly accessible buildings:

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Building	H&S Issues Identified	Maintenance Issues Identified
2000 Community	4	1
43 Bromley Road	4	0
45 Bromley Road	5*	0
Barnes Wallis Community Centre	1	4
Bellingham Childrens Centre	6*	0
Bellingham Gateway	2	0
Broadway Theatre	0	11
Brockley Adult Learning	5	4
Brockley Cemetery	0	1
Catford Library	5	5
Civic Suite	3	2
Dacres Wood Nature Reserve	7	0
Deptford Adventure Playground	1	0
Devonshire Road Nature Reserve	4	0
Evelyn Children's Centre	2	1
Evelyn Community Centre	6*	0
Granville Park Adult Learning	11	2
Grove Park Adult Learning	0	2
Grove Park Cemetery	2	2
Hillcrest	4	1
Hither Green Cemetery & Crematorium	0	8
Home Park Adventure Playground	5	0
Honor Oak Adventure Playground	5	0
Honor Oak Community Centre	4	1
Honor Oak Surestart	7	1
Honor Oak Youth Centre	3	0
Kirkdale Resource Centre	0	1
Ladywell Cemetery	1	2
Ladywell Children's Centre	7	0

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Building	H&S Issues Identified	Maintenance Issues Identified
Ladywell Day Centre	7	1
Landmann Way Recycling Centre	0	3
Laurence House	0	2
Leemore Centre	9	3
Lewisham Registrars	0	1
Lochaber Hall	1	0
Meloit Centre	5*	0
Midi Music	2	2
Moonshot	6	4
Mulberry	7	1
Old Town Hall	0	4
Rockbourne Youth Centre	0	2
Scotney Hall	5*	0
Sydenham Centre (Naborhood)	4	2
The Dumps Adventure Playground	8	1
The New Generation Community Centre	0	8
Torridon Road Library	0	4
Woodpecker Youth Centre	1	1

- 5.8. None of the issues identified posed direct and immediate threat to staff or service users. Typical issues included the need to clear areas of obstructions, carry out and document testing of safety equipment and ensuring adequate signage and instruction. In five buildings (picked out with an asterisk next to their identified issues list), issues included the absence of a documented fire evacuation drill having taken place in the last six months.
- 5.9. We typically expect remedial issues to have been resolved by the time of the next quarterly inspection. For issues left unresolved, we would escalate these first to relevant Heads of Service in most cases, but potentially more urgent escalation for issues of greater concern.

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Health and Safety Resources

- 5.10. Following completion of the 2022/23 health and safety audit cycle we have been reviewing conclusions and considering how we organise and resource expert staff to support colleagues in meeting health and safety responsibilities. We are currently working on a proposal to regularise disparate resource across the Council into an organised structure based on risk. This is likely to lead to additional recruits to help deliver health and safety support.
- 5.11. At present this proposal is in an informal consultation phase, seeking feedback from services to understand their health and safety needs. By the time this Committee next meets in November we hope to have finalised and begun implementing this new structure.

6. Incidents

- 6.1. The Board (and relevant Directorates) also received information on reported incidents and change from last year. The table below summarises:

Directorate	Q3&4 2022/23	Q3&4 2023/24	Change
Chief Executive's	2	1	-1
Children & Young People (non-school)	9	4	-5
Schools	771	379	-392
Community Services	56	37	-19
Corporate Resources	63	42	-19
Housing	n/a	26	+26
Place	27	16	-11
Total (Corporate Only)	157	126	-31
Total (including Schools)	928	505	-423

- 6.2. There have been operational changes from year-to-year that would tend towards fewer incidents, such as the temporary closure of Lewisham Library. However, our initial working assumption for the drop in reporting (especially on schools) was linked to our move to a new reporting system in January 2024 midway through the period. But, on review, we found that explanation did not hold. We kept the 'old' system open during the handover and, after incorporating that data in the 'new' system numbers, still observed a significant drop in reporting. The table above combines old and new system, with more than 85% of incidents reported on the new system. The old system is now closed and we are liaising with service managers to support use of the new system, in particular working with colleagues in Schools liaison.

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- 6.3. A significant advantage of the new system is that it allows for live monitoring and reporting, plus much improved ability to tailor and query reports. Previously, analysis of incidents was largely a manual task which limited our ability to use the data to shape policy response. Now, we are able to analyse incidents across the full range of categories advised by the Health & Safety Executive. Note that the tables below are only for Q4 2023/24 (that is, since going live with the new system) so numbers will not align with the table above.

Summary and Detailed Cause	Incidents
Illness (see paragraph 6.4)	4
Injury	162
Near miss	9
Other (see paragraph 6.5)	5
Total (Summary Cause)	180
Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour	8
Accident (minor)	22
Assault by member of the public	3
Assault by a pupil/client on an employee	48
Assault by pupil/client on another pupil/client	17
Contact with moving machinery	2
Contact with moving object	26
Contact with fixed object	24
Exposure to fire or heat	1
Exposure to or contact with harmful substance	2
Exposure to or contact with hot material or substance	2
Fall from height	4
Human bite	5
Illness	4
Incident involving a vehicle	1
Injured while manual handling	6
Near miss	9
Slip, trip or fall on same level	40
Total (Detailed Cause)	180

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- 6.4. Typically, staff illnesses would be reported through our HR system (Oracle) as absences and not appear automatically in health and safety incident statistics. We would only expect reporting as a health and safety incident where the illness was clearly attributable to a workplace event. For example, an incident in the last quarter where an asthma attack was brought on by use of an aerosol in close proximity.
- 6.5. The “other” category includes, for example, a pupil experiencing a period of mental health distress but is ultimately driven by people who report incidents choosing to define under that category. Our new ability to see incident reporting data ‘live’ means we are better able to liaise with officers who raise incidents to ensure correct categorisation, which should limit use of ‘other’ or non-specific descriptions further.
- 6.6. The more serious are called ‘RIDDOR’ incidents. These come with compulsory reporting to the Health & Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. The number and nature of such incidents in the six months to 31 March 2024 is below.

RIDDOR Category	Council	Schools
Dangerous Occurrence	0	0
Major Injury or Condition	0	2
Member of Public to Hospital	1	0
>7 Day Absence	6	4
Pupil to Hospital	n/a	18
Prescribed Disease	1	0
Totals	8	24

6.7. The most serious incidents involved fractures arising from falls or slips. The Council documents all RIDDOR incidents and investigates as appropriate. There is, to the best of our knowledge, no external agency involvement in any of these incidents. From January 2024 we changed policy so that RIDDOR reporting goes through the Corporate Health & Safety team. This should improve consistency in RIDDOR reporting and better ensure incidents are appropriately investigated and lessons learned.

7. Financial implications

7.1. The report is to note. There are no financial implications arising.

8. Legal implications

8.1. The report is to note. There are no legal implications arising.

9. Risk implications

- 9.1. The risk of non-compliance with Health and Safety requirements is recognised in the Council's corporate risk register, along with service-specific related risks within Directorate registers. Operating effective oversight and governance of the Council's arrangements and their performance is a key mitigation in reducing the level of risk.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1. The report is to note. There are no equalities implications arising.

11. Climate change and environmental implications

- 11.1. The report is to note. There are no climate change and environmental implications arising.

12. Crime and disorder implications

- 12.1. The report is to note. There are no crime and disorder implications arising.

13. Health and wellbeing implications

- 13.1. The report is to note. There are no health and wellbeing implications arising.

14. Background papers

- 14.1. No background papers.

15. Report author and contact

- 15.1. Rich Clarke, Head of Assurance. rich.clarke@lewisham.gov.uk. Telephone (020) 8314 8730 (ext. 48730).

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