



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

2020 - 2021

Health and Safety Annual Report



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Executive Summary	2
2.0	Covid-19 Response	3
3.0	Health and Safety Training	5
4.0	Accidents and Incidents	6
5.0	Health and Safety Performance Measures	12
6.0	Health and Safety Plan 2021 - 2022	12

LIST OF TABLES, CHARTS & FIGURES

Chart A -	Trend in Accidents by Service Area	8
Table 1 -	Comparison by Accident Type 2019/20 - 2020/21	9
Table 2 -	Comparison by Service Area 2019/20 - 2020/21	10
Table 3 -	Riddor Summary of Accidents Reported	11
Table 4 -	Health and Safety Target Performance Indicators	12

INTRODUCTION

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of South Kesteven District Council's Health and Safety performance during the 2020/21 financial year.

Along with the existing requirements for compliance with current health and safety legislation, the Covid-19 outbreak created several additional health and safety challenges to maintaining services whilst ensuring the safety of all those working for and in contact with representatives of SKDC.

The council's health and safety performance overall in this period has been very good and a more detailed breakdown of the actions are within this report. During this period two separate unannounced visits have been made to SKDC premises by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for Covid safety inspections. On both visits the adherence to the guidance and the proactive approach to Covid safety by SKDC were noted.

Accident numbers for the council remain generally consistent with previous years although there has been a small increase and there remains an open investigation involving the HSE. Details can be found in Section 4

1.1 The Health and Safety Management Approach

Cabinet set the direction for health and safety, and it is important that Members are involved as health and safety responsibility is associated to all council undertakings. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) will remain responsible for ensuring sufficient time and resources, making sure these are available to council officers to fulfil health and safety responsibilities and provide staff with any additional support. Members and staff at every level retain a moral, legal, and financial obligation to adhere and actively support health and safety.

1.2 Corporate Health and Safety Role

The corporate Health and Safety Team's role has not changed. Its function has always been to provide support and advice to all staff and members of the council on matters of health, safety, and welfare and to provide and maintain safety policies along with a suite of corporate arrangements and guidance to improve understanding of safe practice and to provide internal checks and audits on safety related areas.

Identification and mitigation of risk at the earliest possible stage must always be the goal, but it should not stop there. Another part of the role is to encourage and promote constant review and learning from incidents, shared experiences of partners and examples of best practice. This is achieved in part by the continued participation in several groups made up of health and safety officers from across the County.

It is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Team to monitor accidents and trends, ensuring investigations are prompt and appropriate. Should it be required at any point the Health and Safety Team will notify the HSE, or other relevant bodies of any reportable matters and coordinate the council's cooperation and response.

Covid-19 related demands have had a significant impact on the focus and planned day-to-day health and safety works over the last 12-months. The Health and Safety Team has been heavily involved with providing Covid-19 specific guidance and support for various service areas as well as creating and maintaining Covid-19 specific building assessments, attending Tactical Coordination and Incident Response meetings, supporting every stage of the election process in the run up to holding the election as well as home working arrangements.

2.0 COVID-19 RESPONSE

The last year has been dominated by Covid-19 and the effect it has had on a global scale. Within a very short period the council had to examine how it could safely provide and maintain its key services during this pandemic. The level of control required to reduce the spread of the virus and protect both staff and members, as well as those who may have been in contact with them, meant the council had to develop and support new ways of working in both the physical and virtual worlds.

The council moved from a position of having around thirty home workers to supporting almost four hundred. The council very quickly provided hundreds of pieces of IT equipment, which included laptops, monitors, chairs, and desks to support home working staff and, for certain roles/individuals, meet its obligations under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations (DSE) and Equality law. Once it became clear that home working would be in existence for an extended period, the council had the responsibility to provide additional guidance and support on all aspects of home working, including general and electrical safety and the importance of mental wellbeing to all affected staff and to ensure that all home workers complete a Home Working Self-Assessment form. This is key to identifying potential hazards or gaps in equipment and future support, which is required to protect staff and services.

The council created a central store to provide and maintain sufficient levels of stocks to ensure key services could continue to operate. This included Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) and hand gels/sanitiser for staff and cleaning products for the operational buildings and the fleet of vehicles in use.

Several service areas were required to continue working; performing visits during the pandemic, which required the creation of Covid-19 specific procedures and risk assessments for service level activities. At a corporate level, all council operational buildings required a Covid-19 specific assessment to ensure they could operate safely in the new environment.

The available information and government guidance on transmission vectors and controls required to halt the spread of the virus changed rapidly as our understanding developed and these have been under constant review since March 2020. This is expected to remain as new variants emerge and the government roadmap plans evolve.

The potential impact on the mental welfare of both staff and members was identified and several actions were put in place to promote awareness and understanding. Regular communications, utilising social media, emails, Microsoft Teams, and team briefings were provided to keep staff and members informed at regular intervals and provide support on a range of subjects, including maintaining mental health and the need for work/life balance, wellbeing, and exercise. Staff were able to join virtual exercise classes and encouraged to interact with colleagues.

In addition to this, the council provides the Employee Assistance Programme and has several trained mental health first aiders. Both of these services can be accessed anonymously and have also been made available to members. In total there were 400 calls to the Employee Assistance program for support, this includes phone calls and use of the online portal.

The Council have commissioned 3 surveys exploring mental health and welfare during this period and the results from the pulse survey in January showed that staff felt they would benefit from sessions focused on mindfulness and mental wellbeing. In response to this, the Wellbeing Team ran a number of virtual 'Health Shot' sessions led by Get Sorted People, which focused on issues such as mental health, personal resilience, and physical wellbeing.

The survey results also showed that that staff mental wellbeing had worsened since the last survey, likely caused by the second national lockdown, and limited social contact. The Wellbeing Team ran a number of Employee Assistance Programme Awareness sessions led by Health Assured, for both staff and for managers. The Council are in the process of arranging these sessions in person for staff unable to access online. Wellbeing articles on a range of topics have continued to be shared with staff via email regularly, with clear signposting to available support included in these.

The formation of incident response teams within the council and officer attendance at Local Resilience Forum Tactical Coordination (TCG) and Strategic Coordination Groups (SCG), ensured that all staff and teams were informed of upcoming changes in guidance and made aware of interdependencies that could affect the council's ability to operate safely and efficiently. This allowed for potential impacts to be examined and controlled as soon as information became available.

2.1 Waste Collections

The collection of household waste and recycling was one service which faced a greater challenge operating under Covid-19 restrictions. The way in which the service operates, and the logistics required, meant that the full social distance of 2-metres could not always be met, and additional mitigations had to be implemented.

These included the creation of 'working-family-bubbles', designed to keep the same team working together to reduce the interaction of personnel and prevent any spread to the wider service. An increased cleaning regime was put in place for vehicles and buildings and robust monitoring of behaviours, hygiene standards and compliance with the required controls to protect the service.

The Waste Collection Team works to a risk assessment, which was created by a group of Health and Safety and Operational Collections Officers from across the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership. This assessment is based on the Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum Guidance (WISH) and has provided a safe and consistent approach to best practice working across the County.

A number of redeployed staff (including from Environment SK) and volunteers from other services came forward, receiving training in collections, when waste crews were unable to work as a result of staff needing to shield or isolate, or as a precaution when identifying symptoms of the virus. This has allowed SKDC to continue uninterrupted collections during the pandemic which has been a great achievement.

During the pandemic, the Waste Collection Department received a visit from an HSE Inspector as part of their obligation to inspect workplace Covid-19 safety. The inspector raised no concerns and was impressed with the controls and adherence to the guidance being displayed.

2.2 Housing and Repairs

The need to visit and support tenants, vulnerable persons and those in sheltered accommodation has remained throughout the Covid-19 outbreak and as with the waste team these visits and works required robust risk assessments, additional training, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in place to protect all those involved.

During the initial stages of the outbreak, it was decided that external works would continue and that only emergency internal repairs should be conducted, with strict controls and limited time frames for internal works in place. As the situation has evolved the types of work that can be performed have increased but remain under regular review.

Increased visits to sheltered schemes, heightened cleaning regimes and the restricting of access to certain areas have all been required and implemented to protect the safety of the residents, staff, and visitors to the sites. This also required additional officer time so that the controls and behaviours could be monitored for adherence.

2.3 Environmental Health and Neighbourhoods

The Environmental Health and Neighbourhoods Teams have worked throughout the pandemic providing statutory visits to businesses and performing safety inspections, carrying out enforcement actions and providing support and advice for businesses throughout the district and working with Covid-19 champions to promote the safety messages and government guidance. Staff faced a considerable uptake in workload and were required to understand and interpret a number of new sets of guidance. This has been a common picture with many service areas.

Due to the increase of people spending more time at home, this has resulted in a surge of fly tipping, antisocial behaviour, and neighbourhood disputes. Officers have had to manage more cases than previously seen and visit resident's homes to support and protect the physical and mental health impacted by this type of behaviour.

Enforcement officers were also redeployed to Covid-19 champion duties when car parking charges were suspended.

To work safely during the restrictions and still provide these services, as with the other higher risk and operational services, a set of comprehensive visiting officers guidance and risk assessments have been created and remain under regular review.

3.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING

Providing suitable training for employees is a legal requirement and essential to ensuring employees can work safely, this also provides management with a level of assurance that their teams are health and safety

competent and confident in their roles. Employee training needs are identified in one-to-ones, as well as previously defined training required for a particular role.

From the outset of the pandemic the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was very clear that Covid-19 would not be a defence against falling standards in existing safety provision and that the general duties of the employer remained. The ability to provide a range of training options online has allowed the council to continue to meet its legal and moral obligations in these areas.

A larger project of migrating all online training to a single provider and extending the range of topics is ongoing. While some topics will always require a face-to-face session to gain the most benefit the council must continue to maximise training through this virtual portal until such time as Covid-19 restrictions allow for more in person training.

As with previous years, Corporate Health and Safety organised the following training during 2020/21.

- Health and Safety (induction for new employees)
- Workstation Safety Plus (mandatory online training for all display screen equipment users)
- Fire Safety Plus (mandatory online fire safety awareness training for all new employees)
- Fire Warden (training needs for all council workplace premises)
- First Aid at Work (3-days and 2-days refresher)
- Conflict Resolution (training is provided as identified and required)
- COSHH Awareness (training for those working with hazardous substances, i.e. Cleaners)
- Mental Health First aider training
- Tactical and Strategic incident coordination training provided via the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum

4.0 ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

Services are responsible for reporting, recording, and investigating accidents and incidents that occur within their own service area and any involving the public. In significant incidents, Corporate Health and Safety may assume the lead on the investigation. The council must identify the root cause of an incident and reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence. All health and safety incidents must be submitted to Corporate Health and Safety, who oversee a central database and provide assurance to the council that suitable and sufficient investigations are taking place, proportionate to the level of incident.

4.1 Accident and Incident Trends

There has been a total of 49 reported accidents in 2020/21 which is an increase of 8 accidents from 2019/20. The total number is consistent with previous years' accident numbers and does not give any specific cause for concern.

Manual handling and slip, trip or fall incident numbers remain constant and are usually the most common causes of accidents within SKDC. With over 200 staff working in roles that require a significant amount of manual handling and work outside of an office environment, this is not unexpected.

The significant incident involving council contractors and Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM) remains open and HSE investigations are ongoing. SKDC have enquired with the HSE regarding the progress of the

investigation but the demand on HSE staff during the pandemic has had a direct result on the time being taken to complete this investigation.

4.2 Accident and Incident Numbers and Charts

Chart A shows the number of reported accidents/incidents over the last 3-years for internal council work-related activities and, in most areas, there is a clear reduction.

Covid-19 restrictions forced the closure of leisure and arts centres. It also meant a reduction in some services and saw a significant number of staff working from home and it is acknowledged that this has contributed to the lower numbers in some areas. There is a possibility that accidents have occurred in the home, but have not been reported, as the link to this being an accident at work was not recognised. As home working becomes part of the new normal the council must continue to positively drive the importance of accident and near miss reporting.

Street Scene has had an increase in numbers accounting for almost 80% of all recorded accidents and the sharpest rise is within the vehicle-related accident section. There are several contributing factors that must be considered in the increase of accidents.

Of the vehicle-related accidents recorded within Street Scene, a third have been caused by third parties either hitting SKDC operated vehicles or forcing SKDC vehicles to take avoiding action to prevent a more significant accident with greater potential for injury and loss.

There were also a number of what are classed as minor damage vehicle incidents. These include scratches to vehicles and wing mirrors because of vehicles having to manoeuvre in tight streets. It is not unreasonable to assume that the increase in the number of people working from home as a result of Covid-19 has seen an increase in the number of parked cars on the streets and have further hampered vehicle movements and contributed to the rise.

Table 2 provides a breakdown by service area and type of accident for the periods 2019/20 and 2020/21. The number of slips, trip incidents has also more than doubled to nine. Of these accidents six occurred during a two-day period of extreme weather and icy conditions.

Regardless of the context, the council is required to constantly review all its activities and procedures and to seek safety improvements wherever practical.

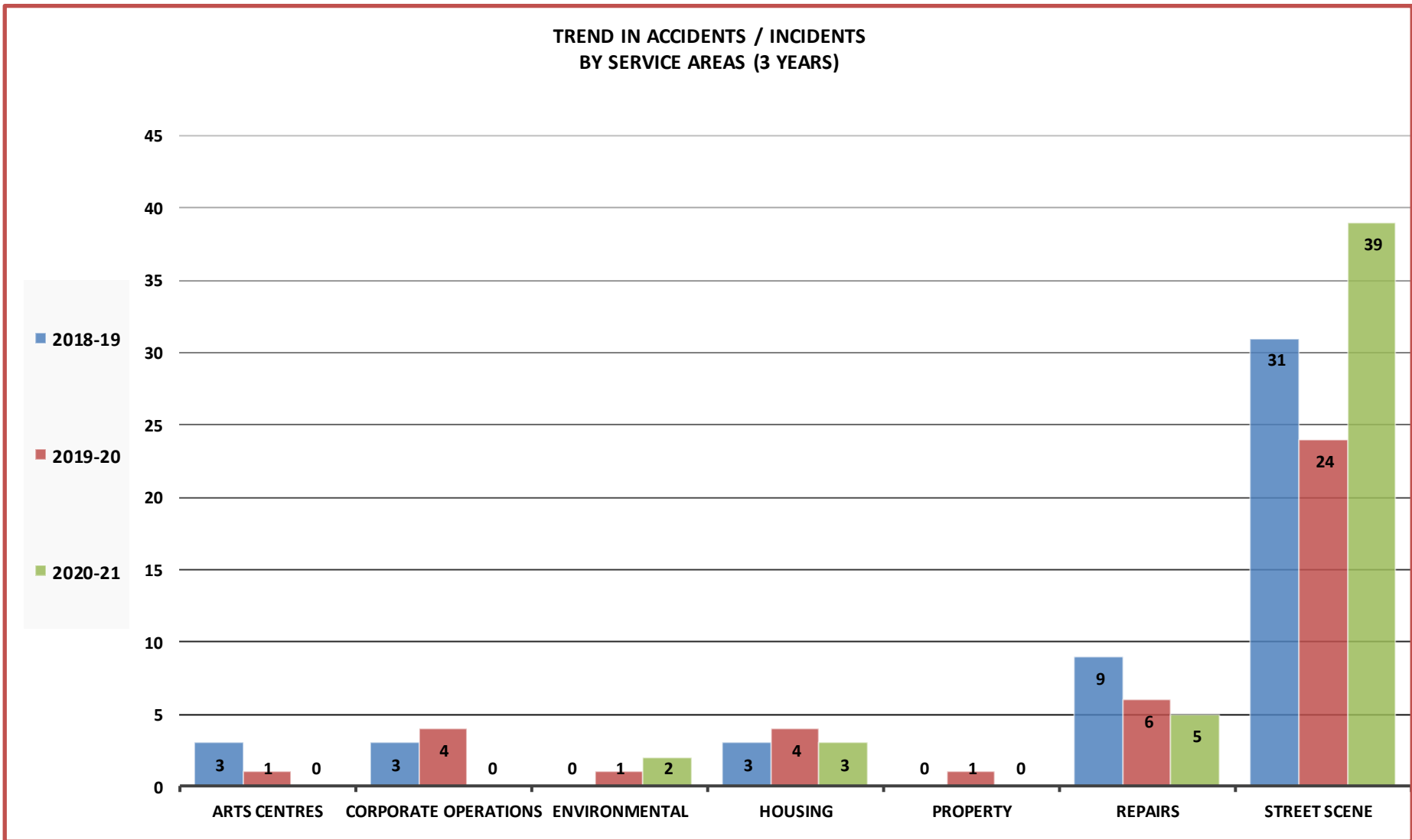


CHART A - This chart shows the accident numbers by Service Areas over the last 3-years.

CATEGORY	2019/20	% OF TOTAL	2020/21	% OF TOTAL
Bruising/Grazing	0	0	1	2
Cuts/Lacerations	8	20	2	4
Manual Handling	7	17	6	12
Minor Injury (first aid incident e.g. nose bleed)	2	5	0	0
Projectile	1	2	0	0
Serious Injury/Multiple Injury	1	2	0	0
Slips/Trips/Falls	11	27	11	22
Sprains/Strains	1	2	6	12
Unacceptable Behaviour	0	0	1	2
Vehicle Accidents (Injury)	1	2	1	2
Vehicle Accidents (No injury)	9	24	21	45
TOTALS	41		49	

TABLE 1 - Comparison by Accident Type 2019/20 - 2020/21

CATEGORY	ARTS CENTRE		CORPORATE OPERATIONS		ENVIRONMENTAL		HOUSING		PROPERTY		REPAIRS		STREET SCENE		TOTAL	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
Bruising/Grazing								1								1
Cuts/Lacerations	1		2		1						3		1	2	8	2
Manual Handling											1	2	6	4	7	6
Minor incident (nose bleed)			1												1	
Projectile											1				1	
Serious Injury/Multiple Injury													1		1	
Slips/Trips/Falls			2				3	2	1		1		4	9	11	11
Sprains/Strains												3	2	3	2	6
Unacceptable Behaviour						1										1
Vehicle Accidents/Incidents						1							10	21	10	22
TOTAL	1	0	5	0	1	2	3	3	1	0	6	5	24	39	41	49

TABLE 2 - Comparison by Service Area 2019/20 - 2020/21

4.3 Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations

RIDDOR regulations require certain specified accidents, ill health, and dangerous occurrences to be reported to the relevant enforcing authority, being the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The Council's number of reportable incidents under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

The Council was required to report five incidents this financial year. All of these are linked to Street Scene and have all been due to a 7-day or more incapacitation and are outlined below.

REPORTING OF INJURIES, DISEASES AND DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES REGULATIONS (RIDDOR)

SECTION	ACCIDENT	REPORTED	TRIGGER (Over 7-day incapacitation or specified injury)	PERSON EXPOSED	DESCRIPTION OF INJURY	HAZARD TYPE
Street Scene	2020-06-09	2020-06-16	12 Days	Employee	A stuck gate caused an operative to fall forward, hurting lower back and knee.	Slip/Trip/Fall
Street Scene	2020-10-20	2020-10-27	20 Days	Employee	Bulk load, neck injury due to sofa falling out of vehicle and hitting him on the head.	Manual Handling
Street Scene	2020-11-13	2020-11-13	9 Days	Employee	Slipped on plastic bag, causing loader to fall over with the bin, which caused a sprained ankle.	Slip/Trip/Fall
Street Scene	2021-02-11	2021-02-15	20 Days	Employee	Collecting bin when loader slipped on ice, falling hard onto his back.	Slip/Trip/Fall
Street Scene	29-03-2021	06-04-2021	124 Days	Employee	Neck and back injury linked to a vehicle incident. (Booked off until 30-07-2021 and then will be reassessed by his doctor)	Vehicle related Incident

TABLE 3 – Riddor Summary of Accidents Reported

4.4 Leisure Centres

Covid-19 restrictions have seen the leisure centres closed for a significant period and this, coupled with the lack of access to previous 1Life data following the change to LeisureSK Ltd means there are no significant figures or data that can be provided at this time. Moving forward LeisureSK will be able to provide information on accident rates and types for future reports.

Previous years have shown a consistently low accident rate across the four sites and the expectation would be for this trend to continue. While the drive will always be to reduce accidents to as low a number as possible, it must be acknowledged that given the range of activities and footfall across these sites accidents it is unlikely to ever achieve a zero-accident rate. LeisureSK Ltd have appointed an independent Health and Safety Contractor to assist the operation of the company and a Non-Executive

Director has been appointed as the lead Health and Safety person on the Board of Directors which demonstrates a clear commitment to the Health, Safety and Welfare of both staff and visitors to the sites.

5.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Along with the measures below, a quarterly dashboard of performance indicators is shared with the CMT and Heads of Service and covers accidents and incidents, quarterly monitoring activities and any trends identified or areas which require increased focus.

HEALTH AND SAFETY TARGET/PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Staff attendance at Corporate Health and Safety induction	100%	100%	100%
Number of staff RIDDOR notifications to the enforcing authority	3	19	5
Number of staff lost days as the result of accidents (based upon information received)	93	184.5	250

TABLE 4 - Target Performance Indicators

6.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN 2021-2022

Currently the HSE is predicting that workplace Covid-19 safety visits will continue into June 2022 and, with the potential for new variants Covid-19, controls will remain a key feature for the coming year. As businesses consider the move from response to recovery and more staff begin to work from office spaces and move around the community the effective management and control of the spread of the virus will be crucial to protecting the health and well-being of all those who work for and interact with SKDC.

The Corporate Health and Safety Team will continue to provide support and advice to all services on service level risk assessments and procedures as well as maintaining corporate guidance. The team will maintain and monitor relevant building-specific Covid-19 assessments as well as undertaking active monitoring of the controls and behaviours in council buildings and service areas.

In planning the recovery phase, the Council must ensure it continues to protect all its staff, elected members, visitors, and contractors from the spread of the virus. Council must also provide additional mitigation and support, where required, for those who may be more at risk from ill health effects. Those in the clinically/extremely clinically vulnerable groups, expectant mothers, and some members of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community may be more at risk from ill health effects and must be considered when designing the use of buildings.

6.1 Planned Internal Audits and Assessments

The impact of Covid-19 on the business needs of the council saw an increase in demand for Corporate Health and Safety support and a shift in the priorities of the Health and Safety team. The planned risk and COSHH assessments for 2020/2021 remain ongoing.

Several of the higher risk areas have been audited and have been provided with feedback and support. The remaining lower risk areas are scheduled to be completed in the next 12-months. The creation of risk assessments and the identification and mitigation of risk is a legal requirement and key to the prevention of injury or accidents and the preservation of health.

Several personnel changes have highlighted service level gaps in this skill set. The Corporate Health and Safety team will liaise with Heads of Service and CMT to identify and organise suitable training in the assessment of risk.

6.2 Review and Provision of Guidance

The Corporate Health and Safety Team provide and maintain a range of guidance documents to support managers and staff. All guidance is up to date and additional guidance for extended home working has been produced. The Health and Safety Policy document for 2021/23 is currently under review and awaiting approval and the Threat, Suspect Package, Bomb Arrangements has been revised.

6.3 Reporting of Accidents, Near Miss and Unacceptable Behaviour

Accident reporting, including incidents of unacceptable behaviour and near miss reporting, help the council to identify any potential gaps in policies, training and controls ensuring the council can learn from and strengthen its responses to further reduce the chance of injury, ill health, and accidents.

Accident numbers have seen a slight increase on last years reported numbers, but there has been a reduction in the number of days taken to report incidents, which was identified last year as an area that required improvement. In 2019/20 there were a total of twenty-one reported accidents which exceeded the 10-day period set by the council for the reporting and investigation of accidents. In 2020/21 there were six accidents reported late. This is a clear improvement, but the council must continue to drive this number to zero. This statistic is one that the council has control over.

This year has also seen a trend in the late reporting of unacceptable behaviour incidents. As with any accident or near miss it is crucial that these incidents are reported swiftly to allow all necessary actions to protect the health and wellbeing of those working for or with SKDC. The number of persons identified as requiring additional controls during interaction is low, but the type of unacceptable behaviour and threat being made has escalated. It is possible that this is also linked to the frustrations that people in the community have faced over the last 12-months, however, this cannot be ignored and will be monitored.

Accident and reporting statistics will remain a key performance indicator and area of focus. The Corporate Health and Safety team will continue to work with all areas to increase understanding on the importance and need for prompt and thorough reporting and investigation of all incidents as well as the reporting of near miss instances.