



Shropshire  
Council

# Health & Safety

## Annual Report 2023-2024



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# Key results

This report will cover what Health & Safety activities have been undertaken, as well as highlighting any risks and identifying objectives.

	<p>The HSE (Health and Safety Executive) have <b>not</b> taken any formal or enforcement action against Shropshire Council.</p>
	<p>2418 for this year – this is lower than last year. This reflects the use of the Healthy Working module on the Cardinus system which has replaced a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) module on Leap. Course content on Leap has been reviewed and enhanced.</p>
	<p>‘Healthy Working’ is a module used for the online training and assessment programme for DSE users. This has now been “rolled out”, along with Single Sign On, and is actively being used. Risk levels are reducing based on the training and programme being followed. Work has been done to signpost managers to guidance and best-value procurement options whereby staff require DSE equipment as a result of assessment. Uptake and completion across directorates has been good. We are improving our reporting mechanisms so that service area specific reports can be provided in future.</p>
	<p>Continued to implement our Wellbeing Plan – “looking After Our People”, which is based on 5 key pillars of wellbeing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enablers of Health (senior management/line management engagement and support, policies and procedures, and social value)</li> <li>2. Mental Health</li> <li>3. Musculoskeletal health</li> <li>4. Lifestyles</li> <li>5. External risks to health (financial health, domestic abuse, caring responsibilities)</li> </ol> <p>Through delivering on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policies, procedures and guidance</li> <li>- Targeted support</li> <li>- Training and development</li> <li>- Communication and information</li> </ul>
	<p>Audits continue to be carried out across all Service Areas with follow-up support and advice where this is needed. Audits of radioactive sources continue to be carried out in schools held within the science department.</p>

# Key results, continued

We are confident that the arrangements, policies, training, and support that we provide ensure that Shropshire Council is compliant and most importantly focused on keeping our staff and the public safe. We are always looking for ways to improve, and this is just some of what we have done over the past year:

## Actions identified/undertaken

Reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Health, Safety and Welfare Group, with Trade Unions and service areas.

Contributed PPE data to the Covid public inquiry

Commenced process of appropriate disposal of out-of-date PPE. Veolia disposed of 2 container-loads of masks, gloves, gowns, face shields and also removed a significant quantity of expired liquid sanitiser. Stocks of remaining items, are being monitored and will be disposed of as an when they expire

The Health & Safety Team, work with Service Areas to produce and implement **Health & Safety management systems** including policies, procedures, and local arrangements. This is regularly discussed and monitored at quarterly Directorate meetings where targeted work specific to that Directorate is agreed.

Continued development of external contracts with associated Service Level Agreements (SLA) in place. This includes work with Academy schools, Town and Parish Councils and Social Housing partners.

Engaged with Service Areas to ensure that health and safety compliance is in place with each service area allocated a link officer to support and monitor. This is regularly discussed and monitored at quarterly Directorate meetings where targeted work specific to that Directorate is agreed.

Policies and arrangements continue to be updated on a rolling programme. These are approved and scrutinised if significant changes are made at the Bi-Annual Health, Safety and Welfare Group.

**227** Asbestos management and re-inspection surveys **completed**.

**271** sites monitored monthly for Legionella and **151** sites had water risk assessments **completed** on a rolling programme.



# Wellbeing



## Wellbeing Fayre

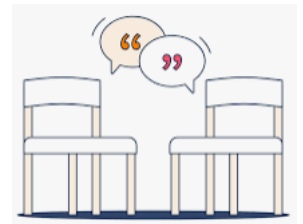
In January, we held our Wellbeing Fayre in the landing/gallery area of Shirehall which was a hive of activity as colleagues visited various internal exhibitors such as our Mental Health First Aiders and Wellbeing Champions, the Domestic Abuse Prevention Team, Healthy Lives Social Prescribing, Enable and the Affordable Warmth Team. There were opportunities for managers to book 1:1 appointments with Occupational Health and HR colleagues and our Health and Safety Team were on hand to answer any questions arising from the workstation demo they had set up. Shrewsbury Nuffield Health (providers of our fast-track physiotherapy service) were offering free health checks, gym passes, and physio chats and in recognition of our remote first hybrid approach to work, and for those colleagues who were unable to attend, there was a virtual webinar on nutrition awareness and a further opportunity for managers to book virtual HR and OH appointments the following week.

## Employee Wellbeing Resources Page

There were pockets of the organisation who have employees who cannot access the staff intranet, and therefore the Wellbeing Pages, a project group was established to address this in our bid to make wellbeing information more accessible and inclusive to our workforce. The outcome was an Employee Wellbeing Resources Page independent of the intranet, and accessible using personal devices, which specifically signposts to all of the internal wellbeing support. This has been promoted directly to specific service areas, as well as through managers via the Leadership Briefing. Our HR colleagues are also aware of this additional resource to signpost employees to if they are on long-term sick leave or being investigated/suspended.

## Lunchtime wellbeing drop in sessions

Lunchtime wellbeing drop-in sessions at office hubs across the county (Shirehall, Bridgnorth, Market Drayton, Oswestry) have given colleagues an opportunity to chat with the Wellbeing Officer, Mental Health First Aiders, and Wellbeing Champions about the wellbeing offer and resources available to them.



# Wellbeing continued

## Financial wellbeing

In 2023, we teamed up with financial education specialists Affinity Connect to deliver the 'Your Financial Wellbeing' course throughout 2023 and 2024. The course's learning objectives include:

- Helping employees understand their take home pay.
- Helping employees take stock of their current financial position, discuss the benefits of budgeting and exploring options of how to cut costs.
- Highlighting the different types of borrowing and how to manage debt and improve credit scoring.
- Helping employees understand the state pension and different types of workplace pensions
- Understanding the next steps and where to receive further guidance and investments.

Employee testimonies have been positive:

*"Even though I work in finance I found this course very useful for me personally, some good tips, very clear explanations. I enjoyed it and I will look into further courses available. Love that they also offer to help with any questions too."*

*"This morning's webinar was exceptionally well presented, and it has been really helpful to have these aspects of personal finance demystified."*



The HSBC 'Always On' webinars on key financial topics such as first-time buyers, cost of living, budgeting and savings continue to run on a rolling monthly basis along with free financial health checks.

## Social responsibility and social wellbeing

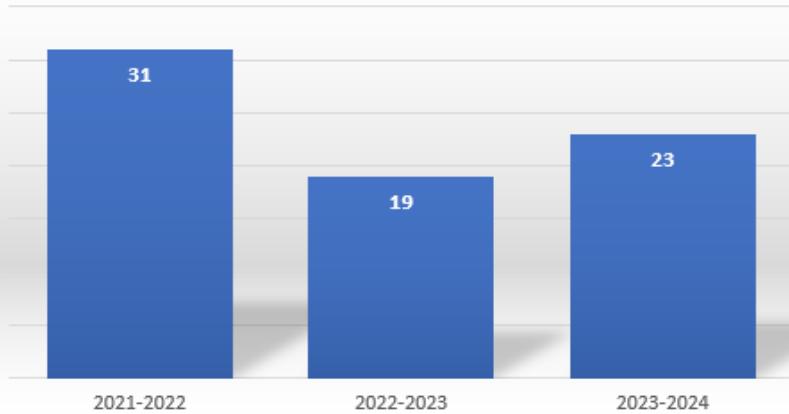
Promotion of the Employer Supported Volunteering Scheme:

With a focus on highlighting the wellbeing benefits attributed to volunteering and promoting the recently revised Employer Supported Volunteering Scheme (July 2023), the Wellbeing Officer worked with the Outdoor Partnership Team to offer some volunteering activities to employees between July – September 2023.

Another volunteering opportunity was launched with the Shropshire Wild Team in November 2023 as a rolling volunteering opportunity available throughout the year to both teams and individual employees in line with the promotion of the Volunteering Policy and the social value work that HR colleagues are delivering.

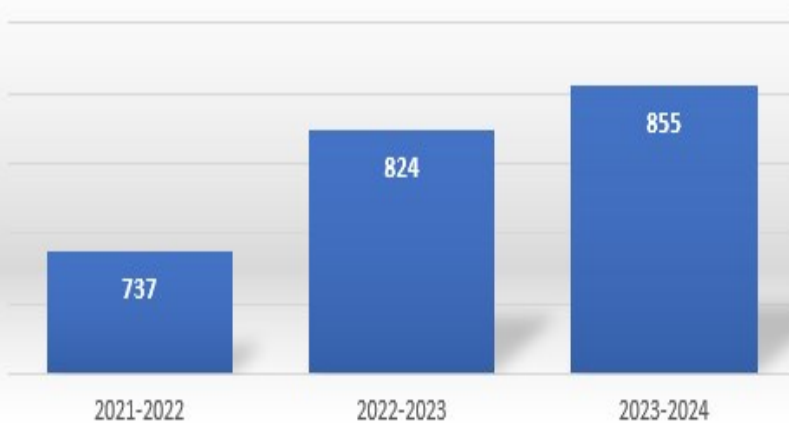
# Occupational Health

### IHR Requests Processed



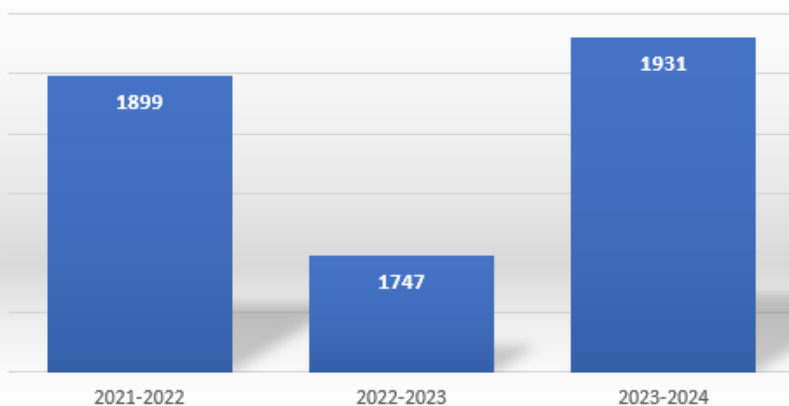
Ill Health Retirement - Requests for ill health retirement continue to be at the usual expected level, following the previous increase in the year after the pandemic.

### Management Referrals Processed



855 management referrals were processed during the period 1st April 2023- 31st March 2024, compared with 824 in the previous year. This provides both the manager and the employee with support regarding the physical or mental health of an employee and supports them to remain or return to work.

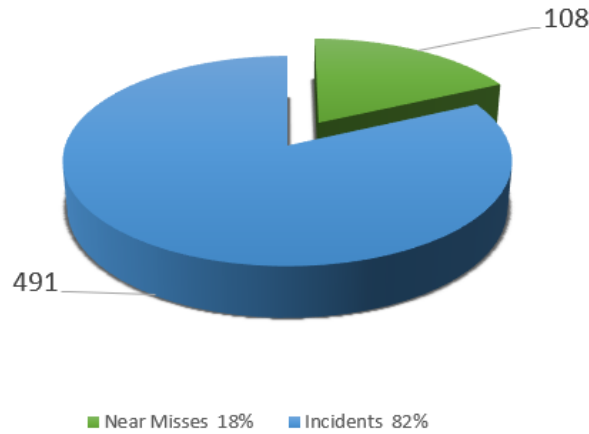
### Medical Questionnaires processed



Occupational health processed 1931 pre-placement questionnaires for employment clearance from 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024, compared with 1747 in the previous year. This process ensures that any health conditions or equality issues are raised and supported through risk assessment and reasonable adjustments.

# Safety Data

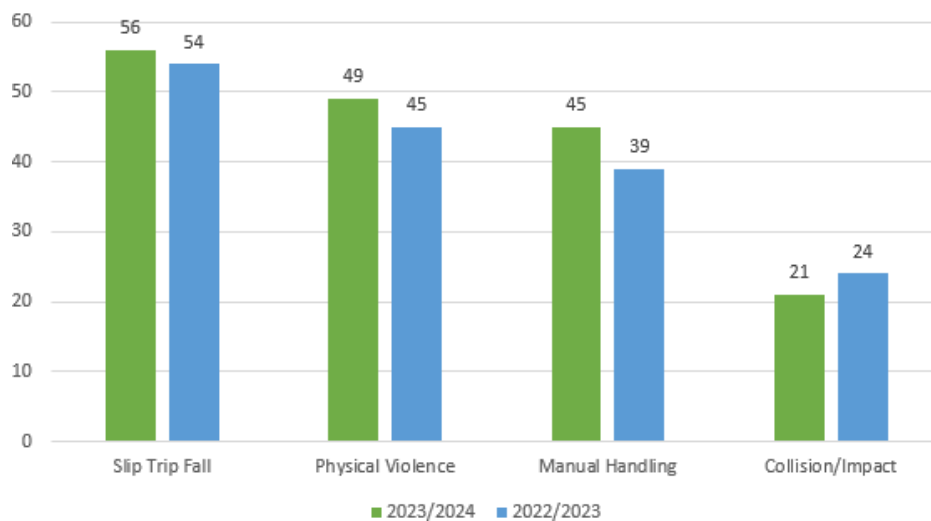
## Total Reported incidents



A local comparison benchmark of total employee accident data indicated that Shropshire were slightly lower against the average total accident incident rate.

Other Local Authorities:	11.7%
Shropshire Council:	4.5%

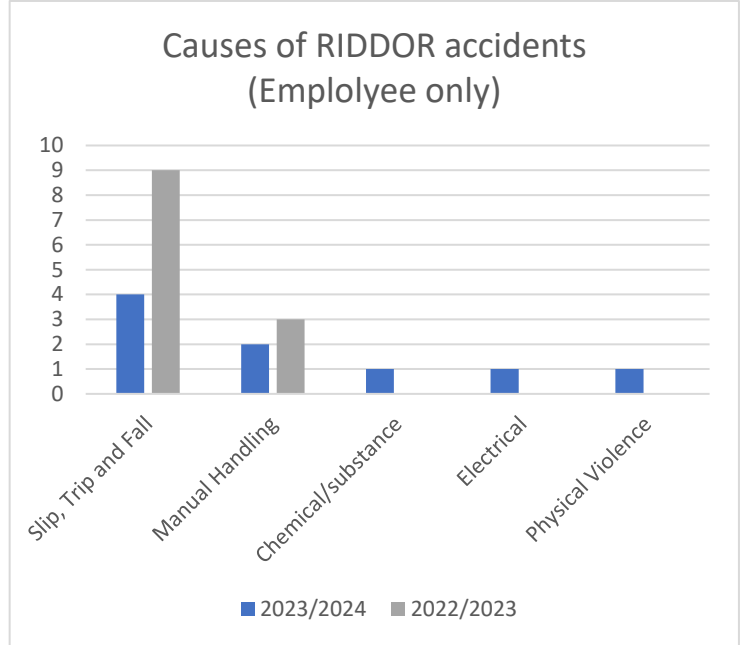
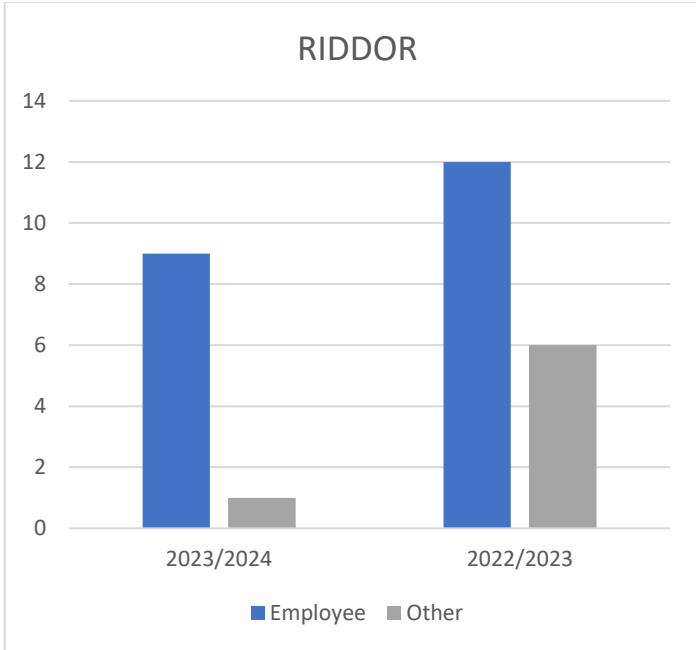
## Main causes of minor injuries to employees





# Safety Data - RIDDOR

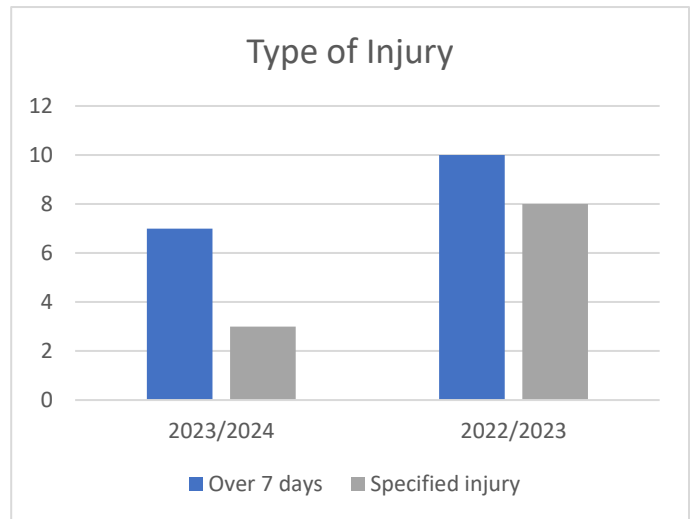
RIDDOR – The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations



All RIDDOR reportable incidents are fully investigated by the Health & Safety Team.

A local comparison benchmark of RIDDOR employee data indicated that Shropshire were slightly lower against the average total RIDDOR incident rate.

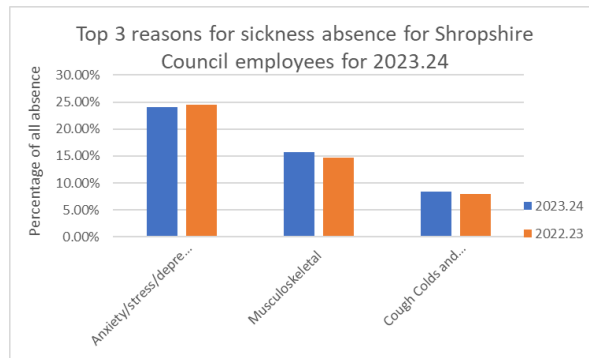
Other Local Authorities:	0.22 %
Shropshire Council:	0.16 %



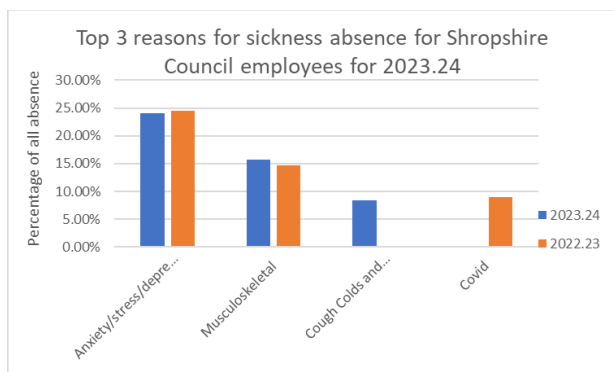
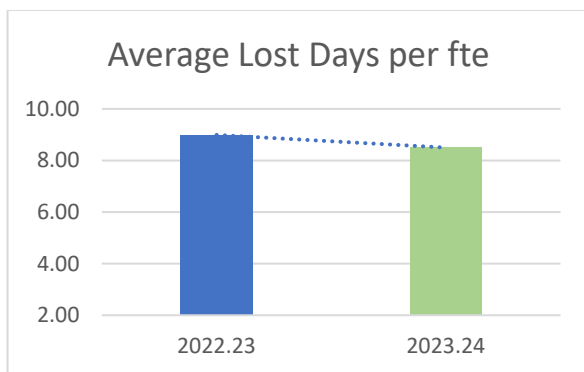
# All Workforce Absences

Sickness absence overall has decreased this year by approximately 5% in terms of total number of lost days. This has led to a reduction in the average number of lost days per fte from 8.99 average lost days per fte in 2022.23 to 8.5 average lost days per fte in 2023.24.

The top 3 reasons for absence for 2023.24 have remained very similar to that of 2022.23. The only major difference is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest reason for absence for 2023.24 was for cough, colds, and influenza whereas for 2022.23 it was Covid. However, given the lack of testing in the community now for Covid it is possible that within the cough's colds etc Covid could be present. Whilst coughs and colds were the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest reason for absence the actual percentage of all absences for this reason were very similar to last year. The demise of Covid this year has led to a greater spread among other reasons for absence.



Absences due to Anxiety, Stress, Depression, and other Psychiatric illnesses has remained at around 24% of all absence. Absences due to Musculoskeletal injury has increased but only by 1% of all absences.



Analysis of our sickness absence against our workforce has found that employees in the more frontline roles appear to have higher absences relating to musculoskeletal injury whereas employees in the more desk type roles have higher absences relating to anxiety, stress etc.

In October 2023 figures released by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD from a survey undertaken by themselves along with Simplyhealth reported sickness absence within the Public Sector as an average of 10.6 days lost days per employee over the past year with Mental health and stress reported to be a significant factor for the majority of organisations who participated in the CIPD survey (approximately 900 organisations from across sectors)

Our figures for sickness absence are reflective if not slightly more favourably to Benchmarking data that we have been able to source for 2022.23 which gave an average figure for average lost days per fte of 9.4 days with Stress and Mental Health related absences making up for 33% of all absences.

Health and Safety, HR and Occupational Health continue to work collaboratively on initiatives to work to reduce sickness absence such as targeted training, HR Surgeries for Managers, and an update to the current Sickness Absence Management Policy

# Key actions - What have we done?

## Actions identified/undertaken

Ongoing programme of engagement with service area management teams to discuss health and safety management issues and concerns on a quarterly basis. As examples of specific work across areas, in the past year we have worked on topics ranging from bed-rail management in care homes, RAAC investigations, school liaison on HSE Asbestos enforcement visits and events management. Additionally, any pertinent issues arising from audits and inspections undertaken by the team are presented to the Directorate Management for their input.

To fulfil contractual monitoring and support to Academies and customers under Service Level Agreements

Led a working group on management of Events Safety and also contributed to an on-going working group on Martyn's Law and its application across council premises.

Service area support on the appropriate management and control measures for Noise and Vibration in operational areas.

Ongoing delivery of **Safer Schools accreditation** scheme to ensure appropriate security and safety measures are in place. Additional Crime Prevention visits and advice across wider service areas in response to issues specific issues at sites.

Scheduled quarterly briefing meetings with the Portfolio Holder for Health & Safety.

Support for premises with advice and control measures to target spikes in anti-social behaviour.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) – The team liaised with Property Services Group (PSG) colleagues on the council's stance and response to RAAC in council premises. There was only one premise of concern, and appropriate actions were taken.

Shropshire Learning Gateway – a new version was launched and as part of this the team reviewed content and moved all relevant information across for schools.

HSE announced a national inspection programme across schools looking at Asbestos management. As well as our standard regular training programme, we arranged and ran extra training sessions with targeted support for schools for these visits. Five maintained schools were visited by HSE as part of this inspection programme and no significant recommendations for improvements were made.

# Key actions – Who have we worked with?

## Collaborative working with:



- Fire Safety with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Risk Management Team – Martyn’s Law, in relation to safety and security of public venues
- West Midlands Health and Safety Group and Local Government Association - National Health and Safety Practitioner Panel meeting to share and discuss best practice with other local authorities.
- West Midlands Wellbeing Group regional lead
- HSBC Financial Wellbeing
- West Midlands Health & Safety Group for Education
- Regular meetings with Union colleagues



**Shropshire**  
Fire and Rescue Service

# Key challenges - 2024/25

Health & Safety challenges to the council:

Challenge	Mitigating actions
Slips, trips, and falls 	Ongoing management and implementation of cleaning regimes, site inspections and awareness training for all staff. Ongoing review of incident data to identify any trends or premises of concern.
Verbal and physical violence	Review of incident data to identify any specific service areas of concern, availability of suite of training to upskill staff in awareness and coping mechanisms. Liaison with premise management and, if appropriate, utilise security company support.
 Mental health and Wellbeing of staff	Regular communication of availability of wellbeing initiatives and counselling support
Fire Safety compliance 	Ongoing training with staff, regular liaison, and meetings with PSG and Fire Service, monitoring of Fire Risk Assessment completion and progress with action plans.
Supporting schools with their Radiation risk 	Our Radiation Protection Officer carries out bi-annual audits to ensure the amount held on site is within a school standard holding, and that sources are managed and monitored according to L93, to meet the Ionising radiation regulations.
Asbestos/Legionella/Radon compliance	Ongoing training with staff, programme of risk assessment and monitoring. PSG Compliance Officer in post to support monitoring and compliance.
Stress	Team to play a key role in a council's working group looking at reported stress related absence and appropriate support mechanisms for managers and colleagues.
Council resizing	Ongoing support to service areas as the council potentially reduces in size in line with financial challenges. The team need to take a key role in ensuring health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities are recognised and understood and that staff at all levels receive the appropriate training in line with their roles, so that compliance can be maintained in these challenging circumstances.



# Key priorities - 2024/25

Key priorities	Timescales
<p><b>Auditing/compliance</b> Identification of weaknesses or gaps in arrangements and review of whether appropriate management arrangements are in place and confirmation that adequate risk control systems exist. (Activities and working environments)</p>	Ongoing
<p><b>Power BI</b> – development work to be completed, so that data can be reported on simply and effectively as a single version of the truth.</p>	Nov 24
<p>Roll out of Health and Safety <b>E-Learning</b> for schools via Leap into Learning, with the aim of augmenting, not replacing (required face to face training). Designed to simplify interim refresher training (work deferred from previous year).</p>	Nov 24
<p><b>Staff Protection Register (SPR)</b> – implementation of corporate system to coordinate and collate risk information relating to Potentially Violent Persons and premises of concern relevant to service areas.</p>	Oct 24
<p><b>Review of council’s Management Training courses</b> for Health &amp; Safety to enable managers to do it more simply and in time effective way. Course for School Leaders in development and options being assessed for corporate managers.</p>	Dec 24
<p><b>Hybrid/homeworkers</b> have suitable and sufficient workstations. Cardinus re-assessments will enable and support this.</p>	Ongoing

# Our objectives - 2024/25

Shropshire Council is committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of our employees, whilst ensuring that their work does not adversely affect the health and safety of others i.e., pupils, public, service users, contractors. In line with the Shropshire Plan our key objectives are:



- Providing professional and effective advice, guidance, training and monitoring on safe working practices and environments to all service areas considering new ways of working, changes in guidance and incident data.
- As the Council is embarking on a resizing programme, the team will work with services to monitor effects this downsizing may have on health and safety roles and responsibilities and advise and support services to continue to embed appropriate health and safety culture and processes.
- Continued Working with the Integrated Community Services (ICS) to develop a system wide employee wellbeing initiative for our health and social care workforce.
- Prevent and remove health risks arising in the workplace – ensuring Council meets its statutory responsibilities.
- Provide screening and surveillance services when early stages of ill health arise. We will work to support managers.
- To keep employees with health issues at work.
- Give independent and professional advice on staff unable to work due to long-term or short-term intermittent health problems.
- Lifestyle and wellbeing services increasing productivity and staff retention.
- We will continue to provide supportive health, wellbeing, and resilience interventions to our employees through our Wellbeing Plan. This will be critical as the Council downsizes and staff remaining may have wider remits than at present, so it is important a focus on their capacity and wellbeing is maintained.



- Strengthen our Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) brand to be flexible to meet customer's needs while keeping pricing reasonable and recovering our costs.



- Health and safety premises audits/inspections/interventions
- Undertaking health surveillance for meeting legislation – Noise, Hand Arm Vibration, Spirometry, night workers, food handlers.



- Support the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce to enable the Council to become the Council it needs to be. Ongoing engagement with management and staff is key to monitoring and supporting the health and safety compliance and the wider wellbeing agenda.
- Roll out of mandatory DSE Workstation Assessment training for office, home, and hybrid workers.
- Provide access to Occupational Health support.
- Consult and engage with Trade Union colleagues.
- Promote and revise H&S Intranet pages and Shropshire Learning Gateway.
- Ensure that staff with responsibilities for health and safety are competent.