

Cyngor Gwynedd – Report to Gwynedd Council's Cabinet

Item title:	Annual Report Safety and Health Welfare
Cabinet Member:	<i>Councilor Menna Jones</i>
Relevant officer:	<i>Ian Jones</i>
Meeting date:	10th October 2023

1. Decision sought:

This report is presented to the Cabinet as it is essential that members have a strategic overview of the current situation for the purpose of effective health and safety and wellbeing management. The Cabinet is asked to approve the report in order to demonstrate satisfaction with the report.

2. The reason why the Cabinet needs to make the decision:

The Cabinet is asked to approve the report in order to demonstrate satisfaction with the report.

3. Introduction and Rationale

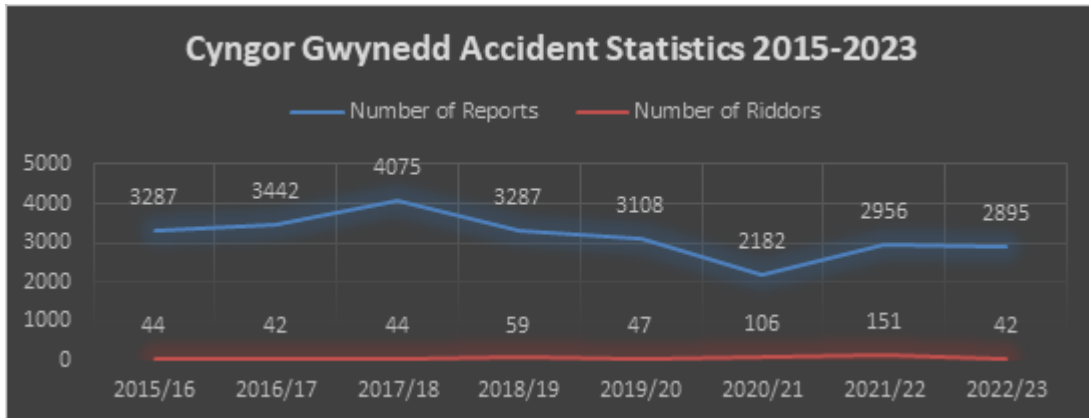
This report is intended to outline the main issues that arose in health, safety and well-being during the year under review.

The impact that the last two years with Government's guidelines on COVID and the subsequent impact on staff wellbeing continues to have a significant effect on the Council's Health and Safety agenda. With services re-establishing themselves with the new normal, and staff going through a transition period of hybrid working within the offices and at home it was necessary to support managers/team leaders in adapting during this stage.

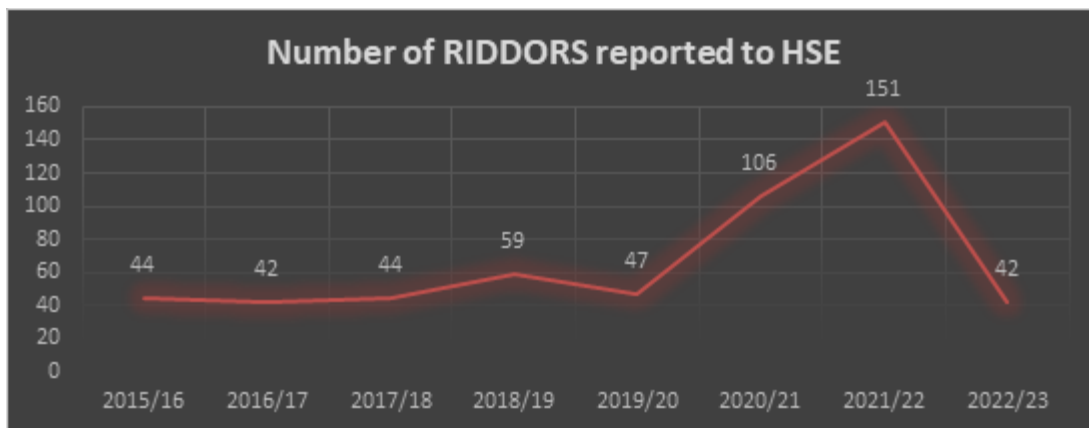
After so much change however, it is an opportunity to re-consider and re-define where we are as a Council and in that regard, a strategic review on Health and Safety is a priority within the Council.

Accident figures

The table below provides an overview of all incidents reported to the Health Safety and Welfare Service along with the number that were a RIDDOR reportable incident and accident (2015/16 to 2022/23). RIDDOR incidents are the most serious incidents that have occurred internally involving Council staff, or where members of the public have been injured on Council premises, that required reporting to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Last year, temporary adaptations to RIDDOR that made it a requirements to report cases of staff contracting COVID at work (or where there were reasonable grounds to believe) were repealed. This is the reason for the significant increase in figures for 2020/21 and 2021/2022.



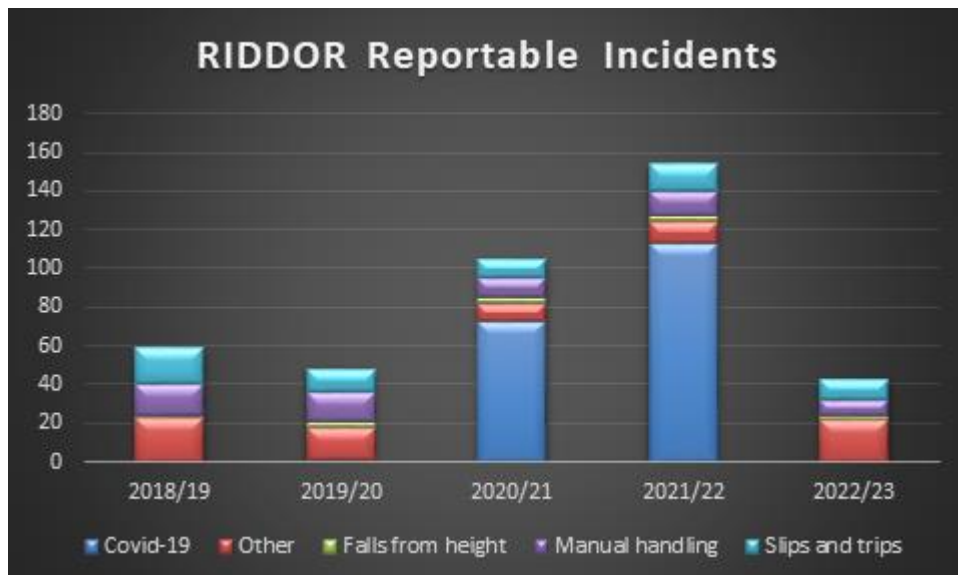
Number of accidents / incidents and near misses reported along with RIDDOR



Events reported by RIDDOR 2015-2023

No Covid-related RIDDORS were reported last year. While incidents where it might be reasonable that employees may have infected another employee or service users with coronavirus through widespread workplace transmission need to be reported during the pandemic, this has now been withdrawn by the HSE. Therefore, any persons, which could be staff or service users/public are not reported.

There is no trends to report in the reason for the increase, except to note that the pattern that's existed corporately, and nationally, for many years continues, namely that manual handling, and slips and trips are the two main causes for accidents. The incidents categorised as 'other' vary from physical attacks against staff, to health conditions that have been caused by the work, to vehicle accidents.



This chart outlines the number of RIDDOR cases that have been reported to the HSE over the past 5 years.

It should be noted that intensive work continues in on manual handling, specifically so where absence rates are higher due to moving and handling injuries such as the Waste Service. Internal e-learning modules have been developed and are shared with staff from all Departments to support and reinforce the work of the manual Handling Trainer for whom there is a very high demand for her time and has to prioritise her work.

Enforcement and compliance

In the last six months we have had two visits from the enforcement agency for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who enforce health and safety law nationally. Both were visits part of the Health and Safety Executive's national work programme, one due to the increase in accidents in the waste industry and the other regarding how schools were managing asbestos in their buildings, and in schools particularly.

At the beginning of the year, Inspectors visited two schools, Ysgol Y Moelwyn in Blaenau Ffestiniog and Ysgol Dolbadarn in Llanberis. The inspections went well and Inspectors were generally very satisfied. However, they did send a follow up letter about one or two minor issues. As a result, an intervention fee of approximately £600.00 was incurred.

In March, an Inspectors conducted an unannounced inspection at the Coed Ffridd Arw site in Dolgellau. They inspected the site and interviewed the staff present. They also asked for written information such as risk assessments, safe work systems and training records. This time the inspectors were happy with the visit, they recommended small things that the service have started to put in place and no further action was required.

Work programme

COVID has had a significant impact on the Health, Safety and Well-being Service's work program for the third year in a row as Government guidelines changed constantly during the previous years, and new arrangements needing to be established almost overnight to respond to those changes. This year the demand has been dealing with the new normal, with Departments adjusting their services accordingly and needing competent advice in health and safety whilst doing so. One of the main focuses has been the need to ensure that workers are working safely at home as Cyngor Gwynedd still has a duty of care to ensure the workstations comply to the legal standards. As a result, 2063 questionnaires were sent out to the workers asking for information about their workstations. 73% of the workforce responded, of these, 239 required further assessment by the Health and Safety Unit e.g., because they were experiencing pain or discomfort while using their workstation.

An IOSH Leading Safely course was held for the Senior Management Team at the beginning of 2023. A discussion during the course indicated that the direction the team would like to go with health, safety and wellbeing was to aim for at the integrated level across Cyngor Gwynedd. The integrated level is what has been identified by IOSH as a standard to be achieved across the industry where health, safety and welfare is integrated into all aspects of the Council. From this information we are currently carrying out a gap analysis with the intention of discussing this with the Head of Department so that a work program can be created and this work will be the main focus of the corporate strategic priority project.

Work to review the health, safety and well-being electronic systems has begun where two external companies have been considered and consideration has been given to creating a

system using our internal experts. This work continues with the intention of being able to share the two options and show these to the departments very soon.

One requirement in order to reach a higher model of health and safety management is that all Managers receive suitable and sufficient health and safety training. To this end, IOSH's Internal Safe Management course is available to all managers who manage people, sites or projects in Gwynedd Council. Following an initial 3-day course the manager is expected to attend a one-day course every three years. During the COVID period these courses did not run, therefore it was decided that it was important to try and catch up with this training. In 2019 the service held 30 days of training on the IOSH courses, this year the team's target is 53 days.

In addition to running more courses, the health, safety, and well-being team carried out a gap analysis of the managers in each service who had or needed to attend the IOSH Managing safely course or the IOSH Refresher course. This information has been sent to the heads of service.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing team have continued to carry out inspections within the Highways Engineering and YGC department through the COVID pandemic because they are following the ISO 45001 health and safety standard. All other inspections were postponed during this period due to the amount of work the pandemic created for the team. The team intend to work on the future programme for internal audits and to commence these as soon as resources are available.

The meetings established in the first year of the Pandemic between the employer and the Trade Unions continued this year and now there is open discussion about a range of health and safety issues. This has been one very positive development since COVID and discussions have been constructive and fruitful.

ISO 45001 accreditation by BSi

Due to the change in the Departments of Cyngor Gwynedd, namely the waste collection/waste management moving to the Environmental Department and YGC and the Highways and Department merging there has been a change to the ISO 45001 standard. Both YGC and the previous Highways and Municipal Department held the 45001(Health and Safety), 14001 (Environmental) and 9001(Quality Control) standards. Since the changes the waste services that have moved to the Environmental Department have decided to create their own management system and not continue with the ISO accreditation. The Highways Department and YGC continue at present to have separate systems, but are in the process of merging all the systems across the whole Department.

Occupational Health

The Occupational Health team has been central to supporting the County's vulnerable workforce throughout the pandemic. By now, the Unit has fully restored its work programme and restarted the Health Surveillance program after HSE put a stop to the program nationally during the COVID pandemic.

These tests are a legal requirement for staff to undertake if they are exposed to health risks at work e.g., hearing / breath or vibration tests. The team are working with all Departments in carrying out the Health Surveillance checks across all three areas of Cyngor Gwynedd

following the success in getting a booth for the Dwyfor area so that hearing tests can be carried out there. This is in addition to booths in Dolgellau and Caernarfon that are already in place.

The well-being support for staff has continued and the past year has seen the highest levels of referrals to the Physiotherapy Service and the Medra Counselling Service since they were established. Both the contracts with the counselling and the physiotherapy service are up for renewal and work is being conducted with the procurement service to go out to contract during the summer of 2023.

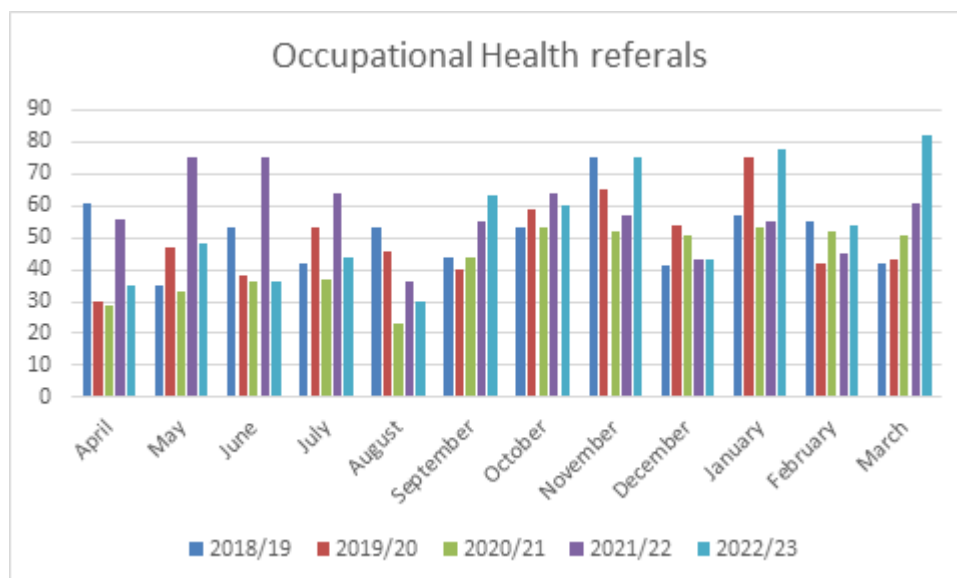
Work is now underway to re-commence following the covid a more proactive work in the mental health field in particular, the service has recognized the need to train all managers on the iAct course. This course is aimed at supporting employees to improve their mental wellbeing and supporting employees when they are going through a period of mental health problems. Between January and June 2023, 93 managers have been trained in this course.

The table below contains the referrals to the Unit over the last five years. As it is demonstrated in the graph, the number of referrals particularly November 2022 and January and March 2023 showed a marked increase in referrals.

Mental Health and Musculoskeletal continues to be the main cause of sickness absences within Cyngor Gwynedd, with an increase in mental health over the years:

639 staff were referred during 2022/23 to compare with 555 during 2021/22

Out of the 639 that have been referred, 238 of those are mental health referrals, which has increased compared to the 2021/22 figure which was 219.



4. Representations of Statutory Officers

4.1 Chief Finance Officer

The report conveys information to the Cabinet and the decision sought does not create a spending commitment. No comments from the perspective of financial propriety

4.2 Monitoring Officer

Comments on the Decision Sought and the Reason for the Decision
The report should be approved by Cabinet to demonstrate satisfaction with the report.

Appendices List

Background Documents List