

**SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH & SAFETY
STRATEGY**

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HRO (Policy & Safety)
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FOREWORD

The 'Modernising Government' agenda has provided us with challenges and opportunities. We have been assigned responsibility for providing the strategic lead in our communities, we have been empowered to promote economic, social and environmental well being for our Borough, and as part of the Best Value regime we are required to continuously improve service delivery.

Occupational Health and Safety Management is an essential part of the business that underpins all of the Council's activities and processes, and the effective management of employees is key to providing efficient and effective services.

We realise that developing the skills of our managers and employees and providing appropriate health, safety and welfare conditions are vital if we are to meet the challenges facing us and take advantage of the opportunities available to us. This Occupational Health and Safety Strategy sets out how we aim to achieve this.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Norman Vaulks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Norman Vaulks
Chief Executive Officer

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HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY

The Occupational Health and Safety Strategy is designed to promote health, safety, and welfare, and is a fundamental cornerstone of all of the Council's activities and processes.

The strategy is structured around the deployment of a Corporate Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

The management system provides the framework for managing Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) responsibilities and is based on HSG65 (Successful Health and Safety Management) and the international recognised occupational health and safety management standard OHSAS 18001 (Occupational Management System) and the British Standard BS8800 (Occupational Management System), which measure performance and ensure the achievement of continuous improvement and compliance with current legislation.

Significantly the strategy supports the following corporate values:

- ❑ *Be open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive*
The Occupational Health and Safety Management system is a transparent (computer based) system that is accessible to all Managers and employees. In time it will contain Health and safety information on all Council activities
- ❑ *Consult with service users, customers and partners*
The whole foundation of the Occupational Health and Safety Management system success is based on consultation with all stakeholders.
- ❑ *Invest in our employees*
The Occupational Health and Safety Management system invests in our employees by raising health, safety, and welfare, awareness, both upstream and downstream in the organisation structure. It also allows for the identification of specific training needs of employees.
- ❑ *Be responsible with and accountable for public finances*
The Occupational Health and Safety Management system ensures adequate control parameters are in place resulting in potential reduction in public and employee liability costs.
- ❑ *Achieve continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery*
The Occupational Health and Safety Management system is predominately a pro-active system that monitors performance and effectively and routinely leads to innovation and continuous improvement.
- ❑ *Take account of sustainability, risk management and crime and disorder*
The Occupational Health and Safety Management system format incorporates the use of risk management techniques as the basis of achieving its primary objectives.

The measurable benefits of the Occupational Health and Safety Strategy are:

- ❑ Potential reduction in the number of accidents
- ❑ Demonstration of legal and regulatory compliance
- ❑ Demonstration to other interested parties of the authority's commitment to health and safety
- ❑ Demonstration of an innovative and forward thinking approach
- ❑ Better management of health and safety risks, now and in the future
- ❑ Potential reduction in public and employee liability costs
- ❑ Improved health, safety and welfare arrangements
- ❑ More productive and healthy workforce

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

The strategy complements the actions and visions of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in their published document ***A Strategy For Workplace Health and Safety In Great Britain To 2010 and Beyond***. Their general statement reads:

Our vision is to gain recognition of health and safety as a cornerstone of a civilised society and, with that, to achieve a record of workplace health and safety that leads the world.

The mission of the HSC and HSE is to work with organisations to protect people's health and safety by ensuring that risks in the changing workplace are properly controlled.

They propose to achieve those aims by:

- ❑ Protecting people by providing information and advice, promoting and assuring a goal-setting system of regulation, undertaking and encouraging research and enforcing the law where necessary.
- ❑ Influencing organisations to embrace high standards of health and safety and to recognise the social and economic benefits.
- ❑ Developing new ways to establish and maintain an effective health and safety culture in a changing economy, so that all employers take their responsibilities seriously, the workforce is fully involved and risks are properly managed.
- ❑ Doing more to address the new emerging work-related health issues.
- ❑ Achieving higher levels of recognition and respect for health and safety as an integral part of a modern, competitive business and public sector and as a contribution to social justice.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CORPORATE PLANNING

The Council's overall aim is to secure quality services for local people and all Council services are geared towards making the Borough a more healthy, prosperous and attractive place in which to live, work, or visit, and a place with strong communities.

In 2003 the Council adopted the four ambitions of the Community Strategy and revised the corporate values, as follows:

Corporate Aims, Community Outcomes and Values	
<p>A Healthy Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Safeguarding public health ❑ Promoting independent living ❑ Creating leisure opportunities ❑ Promoting cultural activities 	<p>A Prosperous Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Promoting business and employment opportunities ❑ Maximising learning opportunities
<p>An Attractive Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Ensuring a cleaner, greener environment ❑ Improving towns, villages and the countryside ❑ Reducing waste and managing natural resources 	<p>A Borough with Strong Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Securing quality affordable housing ❑ Promoting safer neighbourhoods ❑ Engaging local communities and promoting local democracy
<p>And in doing so we will ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Be open, accessible, equitable, fair and responsive ❑ Consult with service users, customers and partners ❑ Invest in our people [employees] ❑ Work in partnership with others ❑ Be responsible with and accountable for public finances ❑ Achieve continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery ❑ Tackle disadvantage and promote social inclusion ❑ Take account of sustainability, risk management and crime and disorder 	

The three year rolling Corporate Plan is the main business plan for the Council, setting out the ambitions and priorities for the future. The Corporate Plan is supported by a Medium Term Financial Plan and is to be complemented by a Workforce Plan. Together these documents will help determine where and how the Council can best use its limited resources to provide quality services and value for money.

The Council's Performance Management arrangements ensure the corporate ambitions and priorities are communicated to all employees and elected members.

Contained within the Corporate Plan are the key strategic performance indicators of the Council. The strategic indicators are the means by which the Council will monitor its overall performance.

SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

To achieve the corporate ambitions and values set out in the corporate plan and the national aims set out in the HSC/HSE strategy, the Council will:

- ❑ Move away from re-active performance measurement and introduce pro-active measures that identify foreseeable hazards and risks, these will be notified as

non-conformances and be subjected to corrective action reports, which must be closed out in acceptable time limits.

- ❑ Adopt a quality based focussed approach, using risk management techniques such as root cause analysis. (*Root Cause Analysis is – A powerful risk management tool used to identify, record and visually represent the possible causes of a problem*)
- ❑ Develop a continuous improvement ethos, and innovative partnerships, to achieve the principles of pro-active management of health risks.
- ❑ Raise awareness and stimulate all sectors of the organisation by working with others - employees, trade unions, management, insurers, loss adjusters to achieve provision of good occupational health and safety.
- ❑ Train all personnel in all aspects of health and safety and will make clear that effective health and safety management is a collective responsibility in which individuals must play their part.
- ❑ Regularly report and monitor the success of the safety performance by producing recommended action and improvement plans, and defined programmes with clear milestone achievements.
- ❑ Adopt new legislation as and when published by the HSC/HSE or other legislative bodies and disseminate the information to all appropriate employees within the council.
- ❑ Adopt and promote the health of employees by encouraging exercise, healthy eating and other activities that improve the quality of life, welfare and well being, and improving individual and organisational performance of all personnel employed by the council.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SAFETY COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

To communicate this message effectively, the Council has developed a clear transparent, open two-way communication system between political management, the executive and its employees; this has been achieved via a hierarchical reporting system.

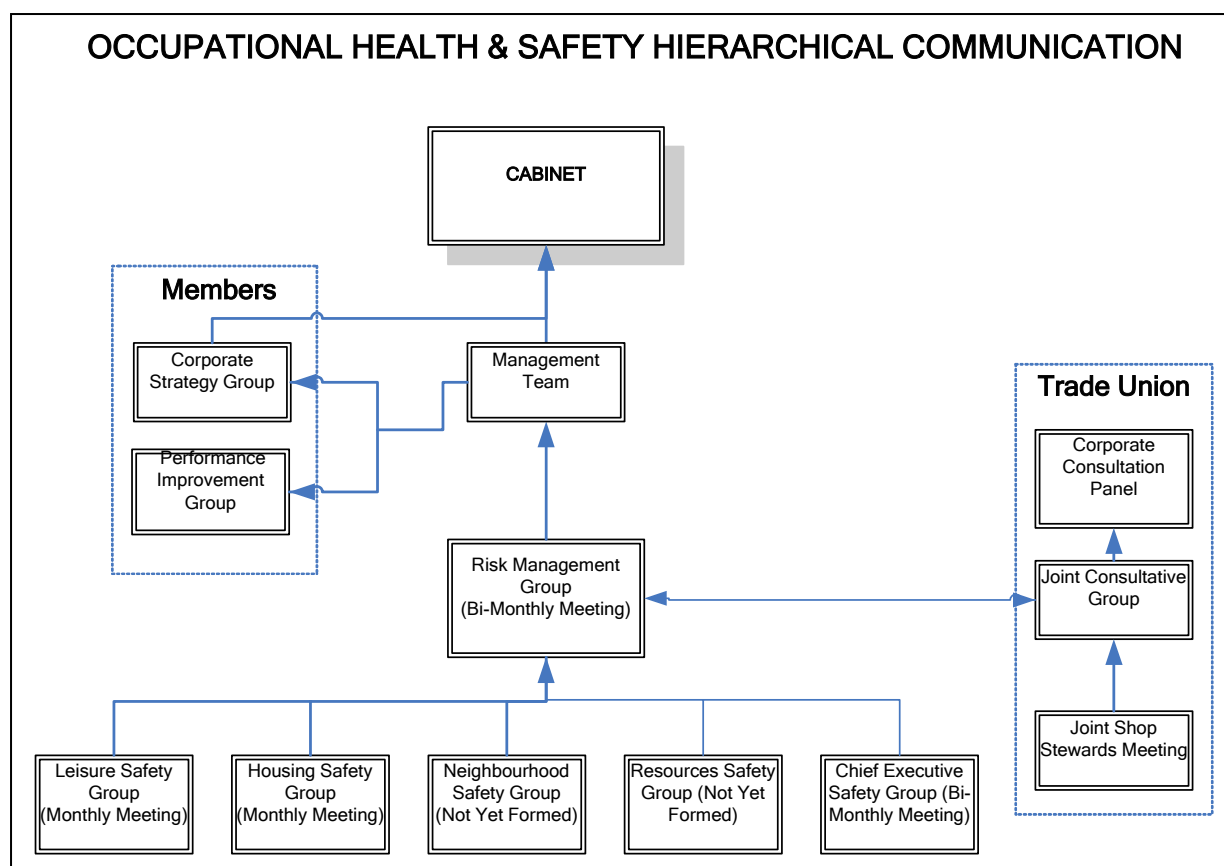
At the political level, Cabinet approves Occupational Health and Safety policy, and the Cabinet Member – led Corporate Strategy and Performance Improvement Strategic Working Groups monitor progress against it.

The Management Team helps to refine policy and closely monitors performance via detailed statistical and graphical analysis of the related work programme and accidents.

The Risk Management Group develops policy and manages the practical application of occupational health and safety through a series of department safety groups.

Finally, key occupational health and safety issues are consulted upon via the Council's recognised trade union consultation framework.

The hierarchical arrangement is shown diagrammatically below.



HOW WAS THIS STRATEGY DEVELOPED?

This strategy was developed from the findings of the Occupational Health and Safety Gap Analysis report and refined via the Corporate Risk Management Group

The gap analysis report was used to benchmark the Council against the international assessment specification standard OHSAS 18001 Occupational Management System.

The gap analysis report covered the following eleven disciplines:

- Policy and Organisation*
- Employee Consultation*
- Information, Instruction & Training*
- Performance Monitoring & Review*
- Risks Assessments*
- Occupational Health & First Aid*
- Work Equipment*
- Safe Systems of Work*
- Fire Safety & Emergency Procedures*
- Personal Protective Equipment*
- Workplace*

The report's findings were based on the Council's overall activities and processes in all areas. Some individual areas proved to have good systems in place that would have merited higher performance indicators within the overall scoring scheme,

however the report averaged the strengths and weaknesses of all areas of activity, in determining the overall positioning on the scoring chart.

The scoring charts were based on 20% incremental panels, and the positioning of the completed panel determined the percentage performance overview for that sector. The positioning is subjective, but is based on the evidence that had been produced or was available.

The gap analysis report was used to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the Council's Occupational Health and Safety Management.

The report identified specific non-conformances that were prioritised in line with their representative findings in relationship to current legislation and best practice principles.

The priority coding is based on the following action requirements;

- **Priority 1**
Recommendations, which are critical and must receive management attention, or planning within 3 months. Where action cannot be commenced, an action plan must be written with clear stages and expected completion times.
- **Priority 2**
Recommendations, which are important and must receive management attention with a view to completion within 6 months.
- **Priority 3**
Recommendations which are desirable and must be completed within 12 months, but which do not have the potential to cause substantial impact.

THE WAY FORWARD

The detailed findings of the gap analysis report provide the basis for this strategy and become the determining factor on the way in which the Council will move forward to achieve corporate aims and objectives.

A separate Occupational Health and Safety Work Programme identifies the non-conformances associated with the eleven health and safety disciplines, and defines what is needed for the occupational management system to succeed, by identifying the requirement for developing strategic and operational policies and procedures appertaining to health, safety and welfare.

Furthermore the action plan identifies milestones to enable performance to be measured on each actionable indicator.

HOW WILL THIS STRATEGY BE MONITORED

For this strategy to be effective there is a need to set and monitor key performance indicators.

These performance indicators will allow the Council to benchmark its activities and processes and cover such things as:

- ❑ Accident, Investigation trends analysis
- ❑ Non-conformance and Corrective Action reports percentage close outs
- ❑ Employee and Public Liability Claims
- ❑ Monitoring of absence and sickness

Reports will be fed into the Risk Management Group (RMG) as part of that agenda, and the minutes from the RMG along with recommendations, and the detailed reports themselves. will be forwarded to the Management Team, Corporate Strategy Group and Performance Improvement Group, for consideration and then to Cabinet for approval, as necessary.