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## **Report of Corporate Management Team**

Report of Kevin Lough, Occupational Health and Safety Manager.

### **Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide.

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the Council's Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) performance for Quarter 1 2021/22.

### **Executive summary**

2. As the country entered into new phases of COVID recovery, the Health and Safety (H&S) and Occupational Health Services (OHS) continued to provide significant organisational support and interventions.
3. The county hall vaccination hub was able to achieve the target date of 24 April for the provision of second COVID vaccinations to health and social care staff to council and external providers.
4. A range of activities were undertaken during the quarter which involved significant planning and preparation in relation to COVID safety measures. These included county wide election polling stations, count venues, administrative support locations and the commencement of face to face council meetings and committees.
5. Further proactive work was undertaken during the quarter in relation to employee mental health and wellbeing. A range of interventions, including development of a new staff survey and promotion of world mental health awareness week were provided throughout the quarter. These were led by CMT and EMT officers and ensured that employee support was again highlighted during the COVID restrictions.
6. The city safety group and county wide open water safety group convened during this quarter to review open water safety interventions. A new city centre action plan was developed and agreed by city safety group members, with assessments and inspections of county wide open

water locations continuing to be undertaken. National drowning prevention week was also promoted by the council and partners of the county wide open water safety group.

7. Incident statistics show a continued decrease overall for the quarter compared to previous quarters of 2020/21. There were four specified RIDDOR reported injuries which are statistically high for a single quarter. Three of these incidents were in school settings which all related to falls and one in an operational depot involving a pedestrian struck by a moving vehicle.
8. There were two fire related incidents during Quarter one, with no injuries or property damage sustained. CDDFRS undertook four audits of council premises during the quarter with positive outcomes and premises being broadly compliant with legislative standards.

### **Recommendation(s)**

9. That Audit Committee note and agree the contents of this report.

**314**

Accidents, incidents and near misses reported  
(229 in Q4 2020/21, 259 in Q3, 208 in Q2)

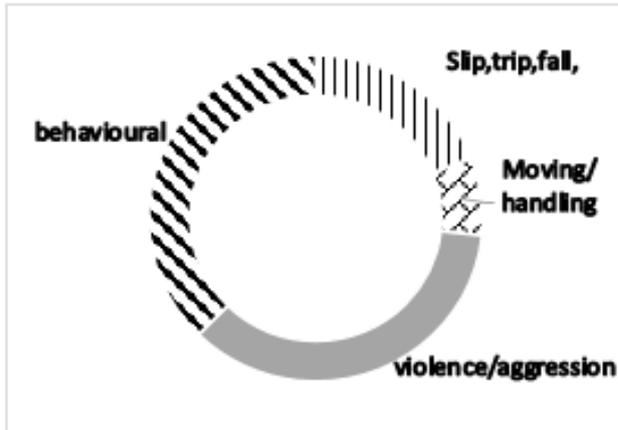


**95%**

Of all reported accidents are either no injury or near miss



**Main Accident/Incident Causes**



4 RIDDOR 'specified' injury, and 7 over 7 days absence RIDDOR injuries

**169** Health Surveillance appointments attended



30 psychological work related incidents in Q1 2021/22 (compared to 16 in Q4 2020/21, 41 in Q3, 17 in Q2)

• Better Health at Work *Maintaining Excellence* Award status application progressing

2 fire related incidents



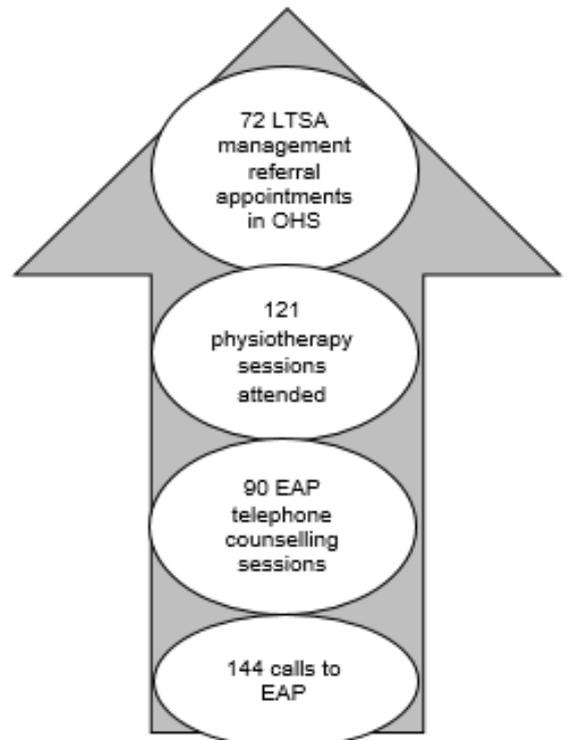
4 CDDFRS inspections of council premises



1 Joint H&S/TU Safety Rep inspections

**0**

Enforcement related actions or advice from HSE/CDDFRS following inspections and audit activity at various DCC sites



## **Background**

10. The HSWSG has been established to ensure that suitable priority is given to the management of HS&W within the council. The group monitors the development, implementation and review of the Corporate H&S Policy to ensure that it is consistently applied throughout the council and that performance standards are achieved. Key reporting topics, including COVID, are detailed below.

## **COVID 19 H&S Update**

11. During Quarter one, the governments COVID roadmap steps two and three were achieved. Whilst this meant a lifting of some restrictions, work related controls measures in relation to hands, face and space remained, with additional emphasis also being placed on fresh air and ventilation of indoor spaces in particular. There was however a delay in the introduction of step four of the roadmap with this now being scheduled for implementation in quarter two.
12. Working from home arrangements were still in place and particularly as step four of the government roadmap being delayed, primarily due to the emergence of a new delta COVID variant which saw infections rates rise rapidly towards the end of quarter one. Updated risk assessments, advice and support were again provided across all council services and schools to reflect changes the implementation of steps two and three of the roadmap.
13. Lateral flow device (LFD) testing remained in place across a range of community based sites and within schools. The councils occupational health service also continued to provide employee PCR testing to support the established 119 NHS testing service.
14. Continued work with NHS partners during the quarter resulted in the completion of the vaccination process within the hub at county hall training venue. This hub, which was established to provide second dose vaccinations to health and social care staff, was the second vaccination facility to be set up by the Council and closed on schedule on 24 April. Occupational health clinical nursing staff from the council supported with the provision of vaccinations and management of the vaccination facility along with NHS partners.
15. Extensive work was undertaken to ensure that elections related activities were COVID secure. Polling stations, count venues and other administrative sites were risk assessed and control measures were identified and implemented. Training for election staff and polling station inspectors was delivered to ensure that polling stations were set up to COVID secure standards and equipment such as screens, face coverings, hand sanitiser, gloves and signage provided across the county. Count venues were also set up specifically to achieve COVID

secure standard and this involved segregation of count staff by use of screens, spacing of seating, hand hygiene controls and face coverings. Promotion of LFD testing was also undertaken to ensure that election staff were as safe as possible. It was positive to report that the elections were delivered safely and there were no reported COVID infections relating to this activity.

16. During the reporting quarter there was also the reintroduction of some council and elected member related meetings and committees. Work was undertaken to ensure that meeting venues were COVID secure and meetings were held in appropriate venues to ensure that social distancing could be maintained. Spennymoor leisure centre was utilised following the elections for full council meetings and county hall committee rooms risk assessed and also used for meetings purposes.

## **Fire Incidents**

17. There were two fire related incidents at Council premises or staffed premises or on-board Council vehicles during Quarter one. These were at:

- Bowburn Primary School
- The Croft Community School Annfield Plain

### Bowburn Primary School

18. At approximately 15:00hrs on Friday 30 April 2021 the school fire alarm system actuated, and the school was evacuated. Senior staff members investigated the fire alarm panel located in the school foyer. This identified that the activation originated in the school sprinkler pump house. Upon investigation of the pumphouse located externally to the main building, it was found that a sprinkler head had activated causing the alarm.
19. Some training of school premises staff was undertaken on the morning of the 30 April 2021 by the contractor and it is understood that a heater fitted to prevent frozen pipes in the pumphouse was switched on during this training session. An engineer attended site and isolated the sprinkler head that had activated. This resulted in the sprinkler system being out of commission until an inspection of the pumps and associated equipment located in the sprinkler pumphouse had taken place. A fire watch was put in place during unoccupied hours until the sprinkler system was recommissioned.
20. The main cause of this incident was a defective thermostat that controls the wall mounted convector heater to prevent burst pipes during cold spells. A contributing factor was the lack of commissioning

run for the heater and associated equipment which if carried out would have identified the problem prior to the handover of the building.

### The Croft School

21. It was reported that at approximately 10:30hrs on Tuesday 15 June 2021 a young person set fire to a piece of toilet tissue in the sink of the boy's toilets. This was discovered by a staff member who was checking the area.
22. This was the first fire incident that pupil had been involved in. There was no damage caused by this fire incident. The pupil has on previous occasions brought matches and lighters into school. Following the incident, the pupil was excluded from school but has since returned. His parents/guardians have been informed regards the incident and asked to make access to matches and lighters difficult. The pupil is now checked as they first come into school for lighters/matches etc.

### **Fire Inspections – County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service**

23. There were four Fire and Rescue Service inspections of Council premises during Quarter one. These were at the Gala Theatre, Hickstead Rise Children's Home, Spectrum 8 Offices and Chester - le - Street C of E Primary School. The outcome of the inspections was that the premises were broadly compliant with fire safety legislation.

### **Enforcement Body Interventions & Significant Incidents**

24. HSE inspectors did not undertake any inspections or enforcement activity during the quarter. There were no further reported COVID cases of workplace related disease during quarter one.
25. Four RIDDOR specified injury reports were made during this quarter. Three of these related to fall incidents in schools and there was one incident involving an operative who was struck by the vehicle they had exited as a passenger. To date there has been no further contact by HSE inspectors regarding these RIDDOR reportable incidents.

### **Employee Health and Wellbeing**

26. The employee better health at work group met regularly throughout this period and identified ongoing interventions and communications which were again aimed at raising awareness of support and interventions available and ensuring employees were able to access this where required.

27. World mental health awareness week 10-16 May was promoted and championed by CMT members and senior managers across the organisation. Several communications activities were undertaken to support the awareness campaign and ensure employees were informed and made aware of support and guidance available.
28. The employee better health at work group commenced planning for an employee engagement survey. The survey which forms part of the requirement of the Better Health at Work maintaining excellence award, would repeat the survey undertaken in 2020 as part of the gold award criteria. This would provide further insights into employee health and wellbeing and support an organisational action plan for the maintaining excellence award evidence portfolio.
29. The annual employee assistance programme report was produced by Health Assured. Content of the report was noted by the employee better health at work group and actions taken forward accordingly.
30. Occupational Health Service (OHS) also continued to deliver employee related management referral services during the quarter and supported employees and their managers during the process. A full breakdown of occupational health triage and testing is detailed in the supporting OHS quarter one report.

### **Occupational Health Service**

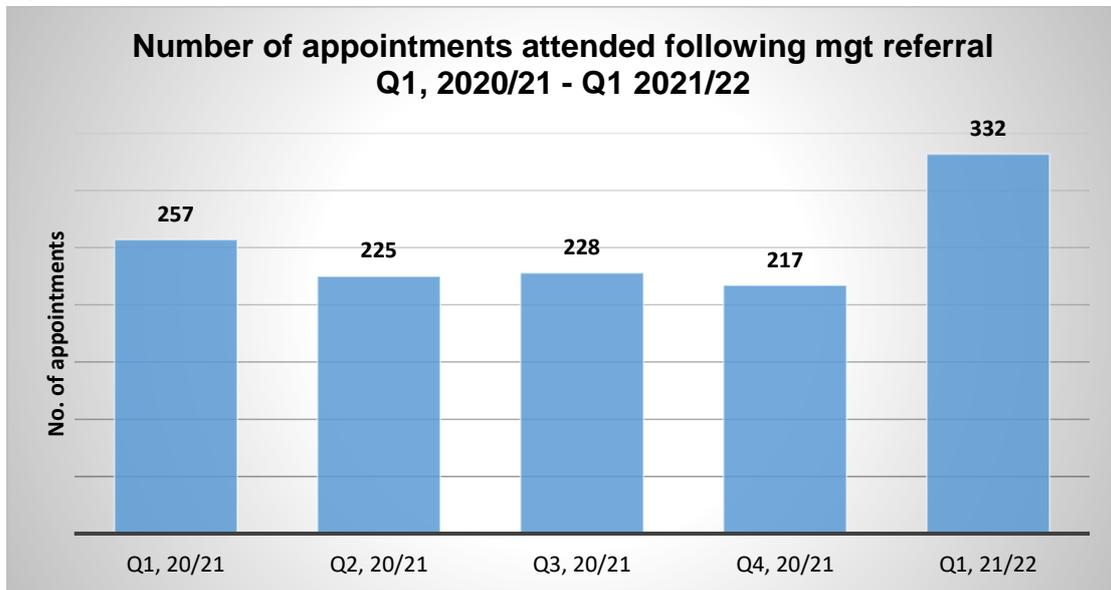
31. On 8 June the OHS department successfully relocated to Annand House, Meadowfield, this was achieved without a break to service delivery as appointments were carried out remotely during the relocation.
32. The OHS continues to provide face to face appointments at Annand House with a COVID risk assessment in place to enable delivery of essential OH services including immunisations, inoculation injury follow-up which includes a blood test, physiotherapy, drivers medicals and statutory health surveillance.

### **Management Referrals**

33. During Quarter 1, 332 employees participated in clinical consultations with the OHS, following management referral in relation to Long Term Sickness Absence (LTSA), Short Term Sickness Absence (STSA), Management Concerns (Man Con) Reviews, and Re referral appointments, Long Term Sickness Absence/Short Term Sickness Absence (LTSA/STSA) and Covid. The number of referrals in Q1 this

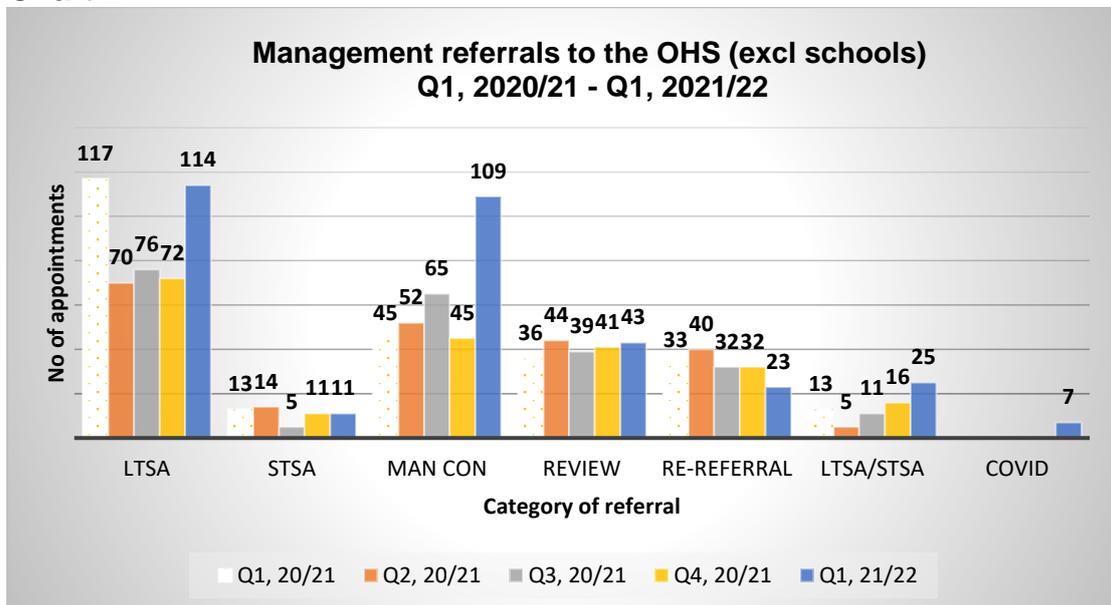
year has risen significantly from the Q1 2020/21, an increase of 75 referrals which represents a 29% increase.

Chart 1



34. Chart 2 shows the categorisation of management referral appointments attended.

Chart 2



35. During Quarter 4, 72 employees were seen for LTSA of which 25% (n=18) stated to the OHS that they consider the underlying cause to be due to work related factors. Of the 18 employees, 89% (n=16) identified this was due to 'psychological' reasons, 11% (n=2) identified as 'musculoskeletal'.

36. Chart 6 shows the cause of absence categories for non-work related LTSA seen in the OHS, 30% (n=28) were due to psychological reasons and 29% (n=27) were due to musculoskeletal problems. Non-work-related reasons for referral have not been reported previously.

Chart 4

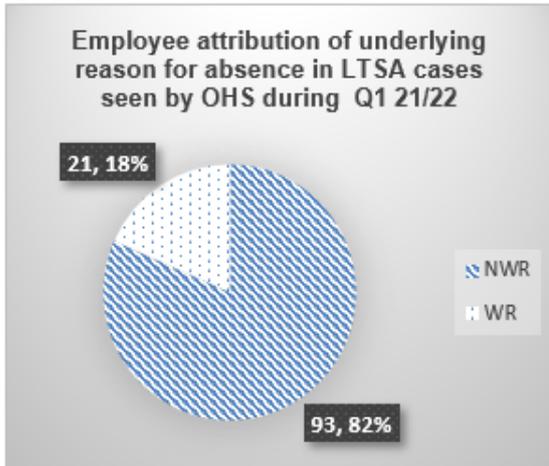


Chart 5

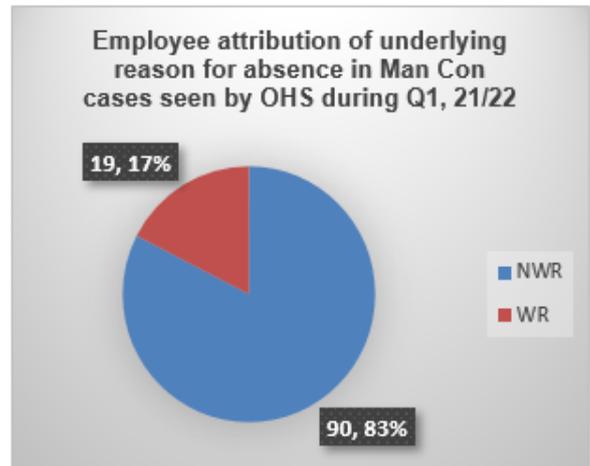


Chart 6

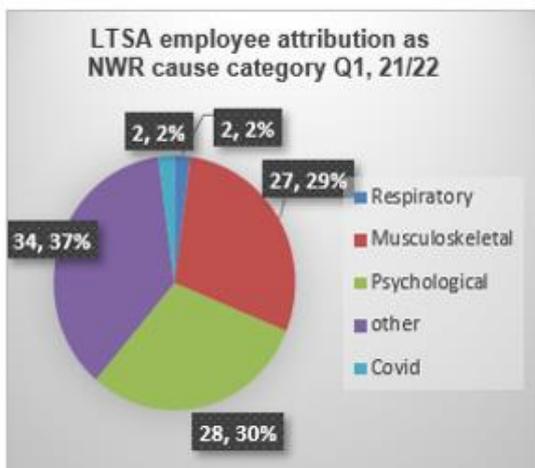
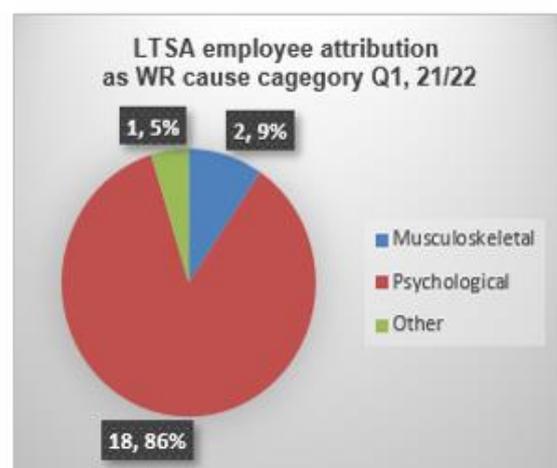


Chart 7



37. Management concern referrals are made when the employee is not absent from work and advice is required relating to work that is affecting the employees' health or their health is affecting their work. The reason for these referrals to the OHS has not been reported previously, however this information is useful in identifying the cause of employees difficulties prior to an absence from work and enable action to be taken if possible, to address any patterns. (chart 5)

## Support Services

38. During Quarter 4, the OHS provided the following additional support services. See Table 1.

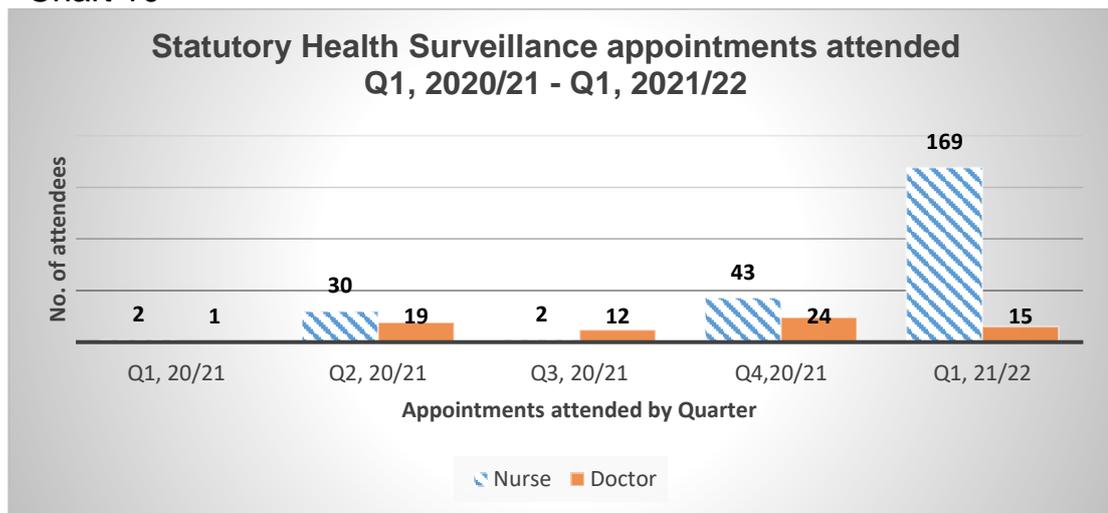
Additional Support services accessed via the OHS	A&HS	CYPS	NCC	REG	Res	CM	Service not detailed	Q1	Q4	Q3	Q2	Q1
								21/22	20/21	20/21	20/21	20/21
								Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Number of routine physiotherapy referrals	7	8	11	9	5	0	-	37	40	21	27	29
Number of routine physiotherapy sessions	16	15	50	22	18	0	-	121	111	109	110	89
Number of 'face to face' counselling referrals	0	1	0	0	0	0	-	1	0	0	0	1
Number of 'face to face' counselling sessions	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	37
Total number of calls to the EAP	14	60	8	0	15	0	47	144	128	135	121	29
Telephone EAP structured counselling cases	2	8	1	0	4	0	7	22	18	11	8	6
Telephone EAP structured counselling sessions	18	41	2	0	14	0	15	90	50	52	33	29

39. The Occupational Health Service (OHS) has continued to provide Statutory Health Surveillance programmes to employees during the pandemic in line with the guidelines issued by the HSE in relation to health surveillance. The guidelines were updated on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and occupational health can now carry out audiometry, subject to a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to provide a COVID-secure environment, to meet the HSE guidelines face to face audiometry health surveillance for noise recommenced on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021. A risk assessment was carried out which included extra time between appointments to allow for cleaning and ventilation of the room, testing outside of the hearing booth, a Perspex screen between the employee and the nurse, appropriate PPE and hand hygiene. Initially hearing tests were carried out outside of the hearing booth, however this resulted in a high number

of inaccurate tests due to ambient noise therefore the risk assessment has been updated to allow the use of the booth with cleaning, ventilation and extra time. An additional temporary Health Screening Nurse has commenced to assist with health surveillance to ensure compliance with the regulations and address the increase in appointments needed.

- 40. During Quarter 1, a total of 184 employees attended OHS appointments for routine statutory health surveillance, 169 with an Occupational Health Nurse and 15 with the Senior Occupational Health Physician.

Chart 10



### Immunisation

- 41. During Q1 despite the current pandemic the OHS have continued to provide Hepatitis B immunisation to employees whose job role has been identified via risk assessment as requiring an offer of Hepatitis B immunisation, administering a total of 40 vaccines.

### Covid Response

- 42. During the restrictions in place due to the coronavirus outbreak the OHS have continued to provide Occupational Health provision to DCC and external contracts. This has been done remotely when possible and in line with guidance from the HSE, DVLA, Faculty of Occupational Medicine and the NHS.
- 43. Due to improved availability of covid testing via NHS 119 the OHS are no longer arranging covid testing for employees, however the service continues to signpost managers and employees to appropriate information when required.

44. The OHS continued to support the joint NHS and DCC Covid Vaccination Centre at County Hall during April 2021, providing nurses to carry out vaccinations and a clinical coordinator during the second phase of the vaccine delivery which is now complete.

<b>Occupational Health Activity Data DCC related activity</b> (note this data does not include Local Authority Maintained Schools).	<b>Q1 21/22 Total</b>	<b>Q4, 20/21 Total</b>	<b>Q3, 20/21 Total</b>	<b>Q2, 20/21 Total</b>	<b>Q1 20/21 Total</b>
<b>Appointment category</b>					
Pre-Employment/Pre-Placement assessments	464	307	323	373	154
Management referrals seen – Long Term Sickness	114	72	76	70	117
Management referrals seen – Short Term Sickness	11	11	5	14	13
Management Referrals seen -Long/Short Term Sickness	25	16	11	5	13
New Management Concern referrals seen	109	45	65	52	45
Review appointments seen	43	41	39	44	36
Re-referrals seen	23	32	32	40	33
Covid	7	-	-	-	-
Statutory Health Surveillance Assessments Attended (Nurse) ReaL	169	43	2	30	2
Music Service	0	0	0	0	0
School Crossing Patroller Routine Medicals	2	17	1	2	0
Driver Medicals (DVLA Group 2) e.g. HGV	13	1	11	7	16
Night Worker assessments (Working Time Regs 1998)	4	5	5	0	0
Immunisations against occupationally related infections	40	29	49	51	23
Inoculation injury OHS Assessments – where injury has been reported to the OHS	0	0	0	1	0
HAVS Postal Questionnaires sent	146	245	139	88	0
HAVS Postal Questionnaires returned percentage rate	40%	67%	81%	66%	0
Did Not Attend (DNA) for statutory health surveillance appointment (Nurse)	19	11	2	7	1
Music Service DNA	0	0	0	0	0
DNA – Management Referral appointments with the OHS (excluding health surveillance)	51	31	32	49	45

## Open Water Safety

45. The City Safety Group and county wide Open Water Safety Group both met during the reporting period. Both groups were supported by multiagency attendance and reviewed plans for risk assessment and controls for open water across the county, including the city centre.
46. A review of the City Safety group action plan was undertaken during quarter one and shared with partners who attend the group. This action plan will incorporate several interventions aimed at reducing open water related risks and will be monitored via the multiagency group. Amongst interventions identified, a review of previous RoSPA risk related controls will be undertaken and proactive assessment of new developments within the city centre. Focus will also be placed on student induction week and meetings have been scheduled to ensure that control measures are in place as per previous years.
47. The County wide open water safety group is also actioning a review of previous risk assessments that were undertaken in higher risk open water related locations across the county. This work would ensure that risks controls remain in place and added to where appropriate ahead of the summer holiday period. Planning work also commenced in relation to promotional and awareness activities in relation to the risks in relation to open water and in particular the councils dying to be cool campaign.
48. The Council worked with partners during June to ensure that the national drowning prevention week campaign was promoted and community awareness increased. A range of communications from the council, emergency services and organisations such as Northumbrian water were provided during the national campaign which ran from 12-19 June.

## Violence and Aggression – Potentially Violent Persons Register (PVPR)

49. At the close of Quarter one 2021/22, there were 55 live entries on the PVPR register. The 12 month rolling figures for PVPR live entries are as follows:

Year	Quarter	PVPR live entries
2020/21	2	83
2020/21	3	62
2020/21	4	63
2021/22	1	55

Number of Live Records	55
Number of Additions	12
Number of Removals	20
Number of Warning Letters Sent	3
Number of PVPR Appeals	0

50. Breakdown by service of PVPR views in the last quarter is as follows:

- CYPS - 52 viewed 65 times
- AHS - 56 viewed 65 times
- N&CC – 53 viewed 82 times
- REG - 90 viewed 142 times
- RES - 78 viewed 465 times
- Members- 15 viewed 18 times

### Corporate risks that may have an impact on Health and Safety

51. The below tables detail the Corporate risk that may have an impact on Health and Safety at beginning of 2021.

#### Health and Safety Related Strategic Risks

Ref	Service	Risk	Treatment
1	AHS	Failure/inability to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to high levels of staff absence, overwhelming pressure on services, and impacts on the safety and wellbeing of the wider community and economy.	Treat
2	CYPS	Failure to protect a child from death or serious harm (where service failure is a factor or issue)	Treat
3	REG	Serious injury or loss of life due to Safeguarding failure (Transport Service)	Existing controls considered adequate
4	AHS	Failure to protect a vulnerable adult from death or serious harm (where service failure is a factor or issue).	Treat

Ref	Service	Risk	Treatment
5	NCC	Breach of duty under Civil Contingencies Act by failing to prepare for, respond to and recover from a major incident, leading to a civil emergency.	Existing controls considered adequate
6	RES	Serious breach of Health and Safety Legislation	Existing controls considered adequate
7	REAL	Potential serious injury or loss of life due to the Council failing to meet its statutory, regulatory and best practice responsibilities for property and land.	Treat
8	RES	Potential violence and aggression towards members and employees from members of the public	Existing controls considered adequate
9	NCC	Demand pressures on the Community Protection inspections and interventions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and a potential Brexit may lead to an adverse impact on public health and safety in Co Durham.	Treat

### Statistical Information

52. The H&S team in conjunction with service H&S providers continue to record, monitor and review work related accidents, incidents and ill health. This data is captured through internal reporting procedures and the Corporate H&S Accident Recording Database (HASARD). It is important to note that when setting future performance targets this data should be utilised.

## **Main implications**

### Legal

53. Compliance with statutory legislative requirements reduce risks of enforcement action and/or prosecution against the council or individuals. It will also assist in defending civil claims against the council from employees and members of the public, including service users.

### Finance

54. Compliance with legislative requirements will reduce increased service delivery costs, financial penalties associated with H&S sentencing guidelines 2016 and successful civil claims against the council. Financial costs may be insured to some degree and uninsured in some cases, with poor outcomes possibly leading to increased insurance premiums. Financial implications also include staff absence associated with physical and mental ill health, staff training, retention, recruitment and productivity.

### Staffing

55. In relation to impact on staffing due to employee absence from injury or ill health, attendance management, employee complaints and grievances, recruitment, selection and retention of employees.

## **Conclusions**

56. The introduction of less COVID restrictions during this quarter resulted in further significant support related work for service across the council. H&S and OHS services worked in partnership with internal and external stakeholders to successfully continue to ensure that council services were delivered as safely as possible.
57. Planning and preparations for the local elections were successful in relation to participant safety, ranging from the administrative functions, count venues and polling stations across communities within the county. Work to ensure that reinstatement of council meetings and committees also went well with good levels of COVID controls in meeting venues.
58. Whilst concerning to see infection rates rising across the county, outbreak control teams were very effective in containing and managing outbreak situations. Additional meetings between internal and external stakeholders were convened and these were effective in the identification of emerging risks.

59. Resumption of services and activities inevitably meant that accidents and incidents would increase and this was the case for quarter one with in excess of 300 accidents, incidents and near misses reported. Four RIDDOR specified injuries were reported and these have all been investigated fully. Further monitoring of RIDDOR reportable incidents will take place due to the increased number in quarter one.
60. The council has again been proactive in its approach to mental health and wellbeing and additional communications, activities and interventions will supplement and enhance employee support from previous quarters.

### **Other useful documents**

Occupational Health quarter one 2020/21 Report

Health, Safety and Wellbeing statistical quarter one 2020/21 report

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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**Legal Implications** - Failure to comply with statutory legislative requirements may result in enforcement action and/or prosecution against the council or individuals. There are risks from civil claims against the council from employees and members of the public, including service users.

**Finance** – Failure to comply with statutory legislative requirements may result in enforcement action, including prosecution against the council or individuals. These enforcement actions may result in increased service delivery costs, financial penalties associated with H&S sentencing guidelines 2016 and successful civil claims against the council. Financial costs may be insured to some degree and uninsured in some cases, with poor outcomes possibly leading to increased insurance premiums.

**Consultation** - Service Grouping strategic managers and operational management staff have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** - Equality Act compliance ensures consistency in what the council and its employees need to do to make their workplaces a fair environment and workplace reasonable adjustments are required.

**Climate change**- None

**Human Rights** - The right to a safe work environment, enshrined in Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, links with numerous human rights, including the right to physical and mental health and well-being and the right to life.

**Crime and Disorder** – None.

**Staffing** – Potential impact on staffing levels due to injury and ill health related absence, staff retention and replacement staff.

**Accommodation** – The report references H&S related risks associated with workplaces some of which may have impact on accommodation design and provision of safety systems and features.

**Risk** – This report considers physical and psychological risks to employees, service users and members of the public. Risks also relate to the failure to comply with statutory legislative requirements, which may result in civil action being brought against the council and enforcement action, including prosecution against the council or individuals. These enforcement actions may result in financial penalties, loss of reputation and reduction in business continuity.

**Procurement** – None