

CYNGOR GWYNEDD – Report to Cyngor Gwynedd Cabinet

Title of item:	Health, Safety and Well-being Annual Report
Cabinet Member:	<i>Councillor Menna Trenholme</i>
Relevant Officer:	<i>Ian Jones</i>
Date of Meeting:	15 October 2024

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

This report is submitted to the Cabinet as part of health and safety management arrangements within the Council. It is essential that Cabinet members have a full overview of the Council's standing in this important area.

2. Decision Sought:

The Cabinet is asked to accept the report and approve the recommendations.

3. Introduction and Rationale

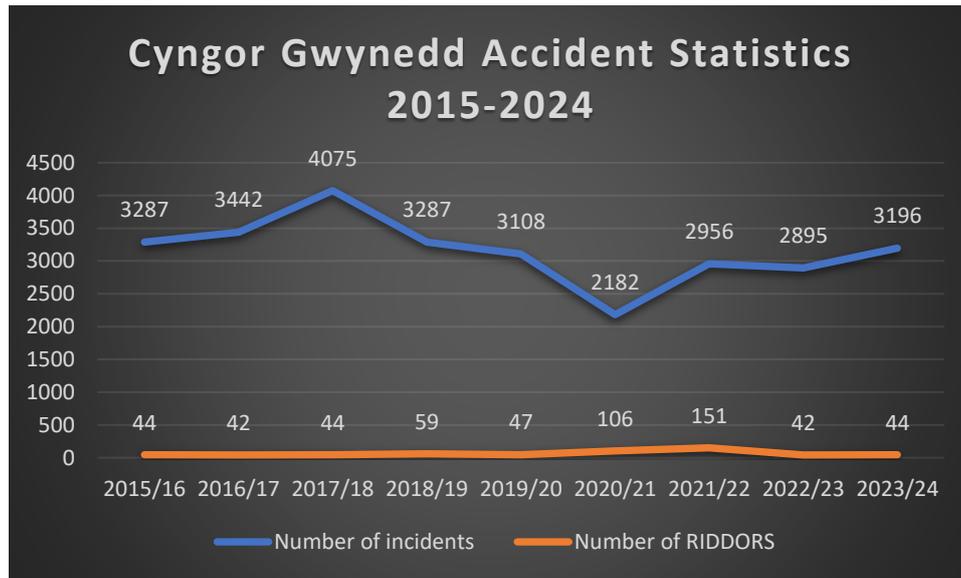
This report is intended to outline the main issues that arose in health, safety and well-being during the year in question.

The impact of two years of Government guidance on COVID and the aftereffects of that on staff well-being continues to have a significant impact on the Council's Health and Safety agenda. With Services re-establishing themselves to the new normal, and staff going through a transition between hybrid working within the offices and at home, there has been a need to support managers/team leaders in adapting to this phase.

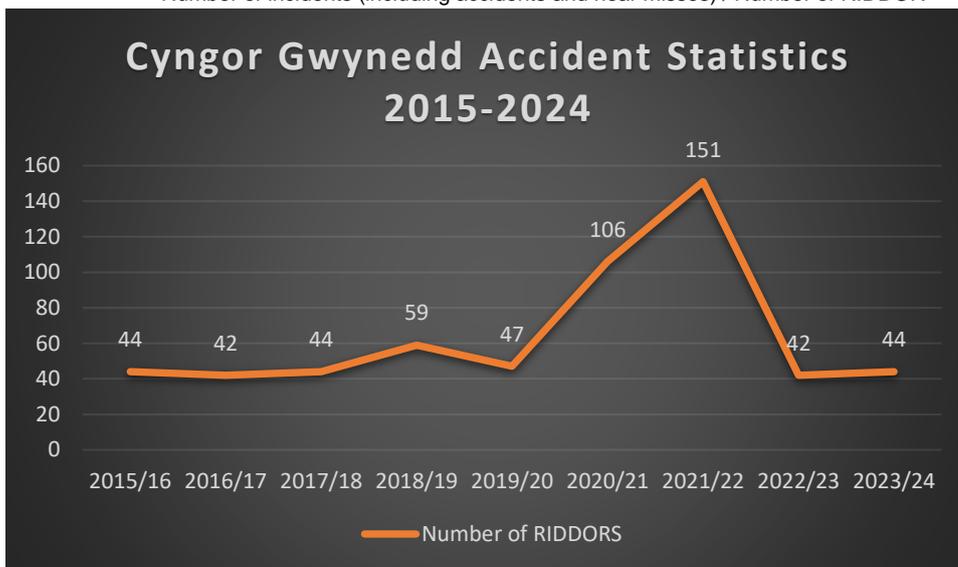
After so much change however, there is an opportunity to re-consider and re-define where we are as a Council and in that regard, a strategic review on Health and Safety is a priority plan in the Council's plan.

Accident figures

The table below provides an overview of all incidents reported to the Health, Safety and Well-being Service along with how many of these were a reportable incident under the RIDDOR regulations (2018/19 to 2023/24). These are the most serious incidents that have occurred internally involving Council staff, or where members of the public have been injured on Council premises, which required reporting to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). In 2021/22, an element of the RIDDOR regulations was deleted which had made it a requirement to report cases of staff contracting COVID at work (or where there were reasonable grounds to believe so), which was the reason for the significant increase in figures for 2020/21 and 2021/2022.



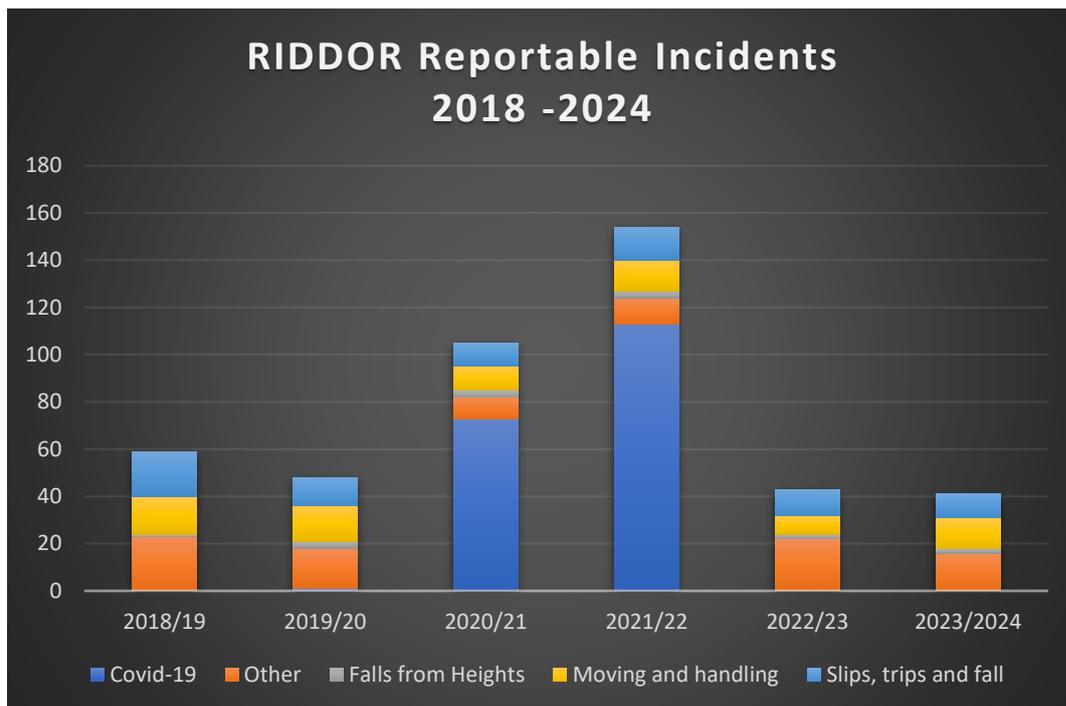
Number of incidents (including accidents and near misses) / Number of RIDDOR



Incidents reported under RIDDOR 2015-2023

There is no one trend to report as the reason for the increase, except to note that the pattern that has existed corporately, and nationally for many years continues, that manual handling, and slipping and tripping are the two main causes of accidents. Incidents categorised as 'other' range from physical assaults against staff, to health conditions caused by work, to vehicle accidents.

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



As reported last year, work to strengthen our manual handling training arrangements continues, to address manual handling injuries to support our corporate Manual Handling Trainer. The work takes place in services where absence rates are higher due to manual handling injuries, such as the Waste Service, and where there are high risks to our service users such as residential services and community care. We have already reported the development of two internal e-learning modules which have now been shared with staff of each Department through the Corporate E-learning Portal. In the Waste Service a new training package has been developed which is short training (toolbox talk) along with eligibility checks that can be carried out at work sites and with the specific equipment and objects that the workers move and handle every day. Over the next year it is planned to propose a similar regime for the residential and community care services (in the Children and Adults Departments).

Enforcement and compliance

In March 2024, we had a visit from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which enforces health and safety law nationally. This was on the basis of a national campaign by HSE to review asbestos management, specifically within schools. They also visited during the previous two years as part of this campaign.

They visited three schools this time, namely Ysgol Beddgelert, Ysgol Llanbedr and Ysgol Ardudwy. The audits went well and although the Inspectors noted that the Council had robust asbestos control procedures, they wrote to the authority with some recommendations. This meant that the Council received an intervention fee of around £300. The Health and Safety Unit and Property Service created a joint work programme to address the recommendations and present it to the Inspectors.

In February, HSE made enquiries about an accident in November 2023 when a user service fell and was taken to the hospital. They asked a host of questions to the Health and Safety Unit and the Provider Services, and a timely response was sent. There is a possibility that, after HSE reviews the responses, there will be a follow-up

visit in 2024/25, but up until April 2024 they have not come back to us reporting that they want to visit.

Work programme

During 2023/24, Cyngor Gwynedd recognised, where jobs allowed, employees could continue to work hybrid, which is partly in the home and in the office. This arrangement was no longer on the basis of government enforcement due to covid, and was therefore still a temporary arrangement. The awareness-raising work continued in terms of the importance for everyone using a computer to review their place of work and to ensure all employees have the tools and accurate information.

A workstation self-assessment was sent to 2063 employees in 2022-23, with 73% responding. As a result, 239 employees had received further assessment from the Health and Safety Unit. By the end of 2023-24, the number who had received a request to complete a workstation self-assessment was 2175 (including staff turnover), and the percentage who had completed was 86%. As a result, a further 65 assessments were carried out by the Health and Safety Unit. In the coming year, we will use the information from the self-assessments and further assessments in 2022-2024 to create a programme of work over the next few years – we will target the departments that received the highest percentage of further assessments as a priority.

As a follow-up to the previous year's IOSH Safe Leadership course to the Senior Management Team, a session was held this year dedicated to reviewing and prioritising the Council's risks. There was open discussion about the current situation and the risks that had been prioritised. As part of the presentation there was also further discussion on the safety models, which are specific models that have been identified by IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health). In the next year, work will begin to create a box analysis and in turn this will provide each department with an outline to progress to create a programme of work. This work will allow the Council to move to the integrated safety model.

One of the requirements to reach the advanced model of health and safety management is to ensure that all managers receive suitable and adequate health and safety training. To this end, the IOSH Managing Safely course is delivered in-house by the Advisors to all managers, who manage people, sites or projects. The course is run over a period of 3 days followed by a one-day review of the course every three years. During the COVID period the courses were not held from 2020 until 2022 due to legal restrictions. On this basis, the importance of catching up with the training was noted. In 2019, pre-Covid, the service conducted 30 days of training on IOSH courses. During 2022/23 11 training dates were held, due to legal restrictions but in 2023/2024 55 training days were held. This is an increase of 83% on 2019 but a 400% increase from the previous year 2022/23.

As well as running more courses, the Health, Safety and Well-being team carried out a box analysis of the managers in each department/service outlining managers who had or needed to attend an IOSH Managing Safely course or an IOSH Managing Safely - Refresher course. With this information, management and leadership teams were able to prioritise the right individuals to attend the courses.

Work to review the health, safety and well-being electronic systems has begun jointly between the Health, Safety and Well-being Service and the Information Technology Service. The new system will allow the Council to continue with the statutory

requirements in a more effective way and give management more control to manage hazards and risks within their departments and services.

The Health, Safety and Well-being team has continued to carry out inspections within the Highways, Engineering and YGC department throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. This department is one accredited to the ISO 45001 standard and there are strict rules on the frequency of inspections by this accreditation. All other inspections during this period were postponed due to legal restrictions and the additional work that the pandemic created for the team. As part of the new health and safety electronic system, mapping will begin in the next year. The intention is to create a system to programme inspections, identify improvements from the inspections and then carry out a work programme and ongoing monitoring system across the Council.

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

ISO 45001 accreditation from BSI

ISO 45001 accreditation is one that is internationally known as a specific system of health, safety and well-being management. The system now exists in only one department within Cyngor Gwynedd which is the Highways, Engineering and YGC Department. The system is monitored externally by a BSI company every 6 months and during the reporting period no significantly higher issues were raised during the visits.

Due to changes within the organisation Highways and YGC run two ISO 45001 systems. Discussions have taken place with BSI and within the department to see if both systems can be incorporated. Meanwhile the advisor within the department continues with inspections, a discussion forum, and ensuring the department's risk register is up to date.

As the ISO 45001 system is an international one and one that is known as the industry standard within the field, the Council's new electronic system will be based on the principles of this system.

Occupational Health

The Occupational Health team has had quite a challenging year, mainly due to high workforce turnover during the year. Despite this, the service has continued to prioritise individuals and while some have waited a little longer to receive an appointment the Unit has triaged referrals and put recommendations / advice in place for the individuals and Managers. The service has coped with the challenge and has now appointed specialists who are in the process of being trained in the unit's procedures.

Due to the situation that has been noted, unfortunately the health surveillance programme has slipped but work is now taking place to catch up with this work over the next year. We have hired an individual specifically to complete the tests within Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionydd. These tests are a legal requirement for staff and the main purpose of carrying them out is to identify if individuals are exposed to health risks at work e.g. hearing / breath or vibration tests.

New agreements have been formed with companies that won the tender to provide a physiotherapy and counselling service. One of the main changes within the agreement is the procedure that the companies need to collect statistics to report back on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The intention with this information is to create a report to enable the Head of Department and service managers to recognise patterns and seek solutions to the core problems. It must be stressed that it is patterns that will be identified and confidentiality for these individuals will not be compromised.

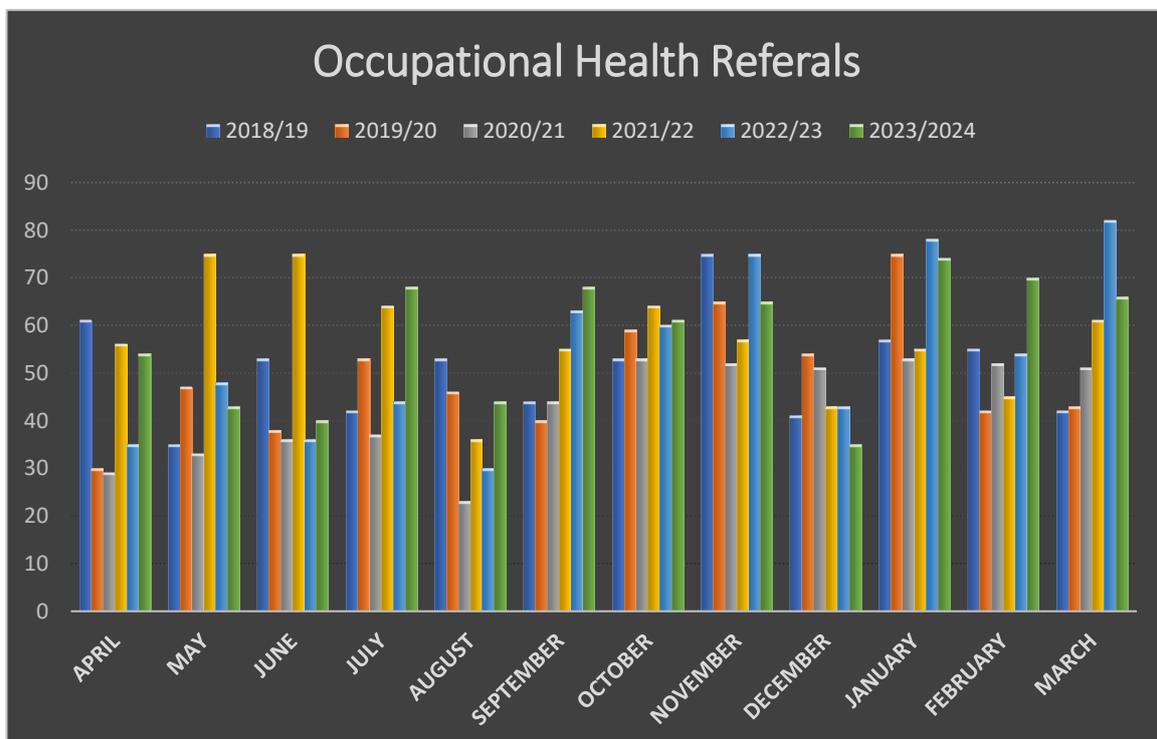
Proactive work in the mental health field continued with 16 courses and 152 managers / team leaders attending an i-act course in 2023/24. Employees who have started within the service attended the training course and courses will re-start in early September/October.

With a number of changes within the Council and also in the wider world, continuing to care for the well-being of our employees has highlighted the need to increase our duty of care and also provide the best for the residents of Gwynedd. As part of the campaign we have been able to employ a part-time, temporary individual to start work looking at the programme over the next year and to look at Cyngor Gwynedd's well-being strategy.

The table below contains the referrals to the Unit over the last six years. As shown in the graph, there is a noticeable increase in referrals in July 2023, September 2023 and February 2024.

Mental Health and Musculoskeletal continue to be the leading cause of sickness absences at Cyngor Gwynedd, with increases in mental health over the years:

- 688 staff were referred during 2023/24 compared to 648 during 2022/23
- Of the 688 referred, 269 of those are mental health referrals, which is an increase of 191 on the 2022/23 figure.



4. Views of the Statutory Officers

4.1 Chief Finance Officer

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

4.2 Monitoring Officer

The report explains that Cabinet has a role within our health and safety framework. It is appropriate that it receives the information contained here while giving assurances about our arrangements in this important area.

List of Appendices

List of Background Documents