North Lanarkshire Council

Corporate Health and Safety

Policy Arrangement

Section 1 – Health and Safety Culture

Corporate Services
Human Resources Division

Corporate Arrangement Section: Health and Safety Culture
Issue no. 1.1   **Review date**:   1/03/14   **Reference:** AS1

Arrangement Section 1 – Health and Safety Culture

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Management Checklist

Large Type Version of this document is available from the Corporate Health and Safety Team

Braille and audio versions of this document can be provided on request

Further guidance on this matter can also be obtained from the Corporate Health and Safety Unit, Civic Centre, Motherwell, Telephone No. 01698 302368/92.

Health and Safety Culture – Managers Action Checklist

Managers, as a part of the overall leadership team, play a pivotal role in the development and commitment to the health and safety culture of their teams. Workers respond positively to managers who are open and honest in how they lead and manage them and value loyalty and commitment especially when it involves their health and safety.

All team members should demonstrate, through their words and actions, high standards of health and safety.

The standard a manager accepts and displays is often the standard that their team members will follow and mirror. A manager who turns a blind eye to, or encourages short cuts in work practices, does not convey to their team their own commitment to safe work practices.

To guide and contribute to a stronger health and safety culture, managers should ensure they can influence and support teams by demonstrating:

- ☐ a visible commitment to health and safety in the workplace;

- ☐ effective and prompt communication of any health and safety messages, concerns or issues through active listening and consultation;

- ☐ an understanding of the health and safety issues in the workplace;

- ☐ involvement in workplace activity and locations;

- ☐ making the time to visit teams and hear about their ideas, issues and concerns;

- ☐ the inclusion of health and safety in any team planning meetings, discussions and as a part of the day to day business.

1.   Introduction

In order to create any organisational culture (whether it be for achievement of quality standards, safety standards or profit) it is necessary to go through a process by which every person is made aware of the organisations priorities and objectives so that they apply these priorities when making decisions.

The role of a health and safety culture is therefore to ensure that every person in the Council will individually make decisions which are in line with Council commitment and objectives in regard to Health and Safety.

The HSE in the publication H.S. (G) 65 - 'Successful Health and Safety Management' say that, "Organisations need to define the responsibilities and relationships which promote a positive health and safety culture, and secure the implementation and continued development of the health and safety policy". Structures and processes are needed which:

- establish and maintain management control within an organisation;

- promote co-operation between individuals, safety representatives and groups so that health and safety becomes a collaborative effort;

- ensure the communication of necessary information throughout the organisation; and

- secure the competence of employees.

To that end, the Council will ensure that Health and Safety is an integral part of the overall management culture and seek to develop a positive attitude to Health and Safety among staff by:

- Visibly demonstrating a clear commitment to improving health and safety performance.

- Promoting co-operation by recognising that all staff have an important contribution to make to effective health and safety management and providing opportunities for participation and involvement in health and safety activities, for example health and safety committees, quality improvement teams, risk assessment.

- Ensuring the communication of necessary information throughout the Council.

- Securing the competence of employees by:

     (a)   Including health and safety in recruitment procedures.

     (b)   Implementing systems, which will identify health and safety training needs arising from recruitment or changes in staff, procedures or systems of work.

2.   Establishing our Culture

3.1   Visibly demonstrating a clear commitment to Health and Safety

Several years ago the CBI produced a document called 'Developing a Safety Culture' in which three of the key principles were:

- There must be leadership and commitment from the top which is genuine and visible

- There must be acceptance that improving health and safety performances is a long term strategy which requires sustained effort and interest.

- Health and safety should be treated as other corporate aims, and properly resourced.

In order to develop a safety culture, commitment to health and safety by Councillors, Chief Executive and Executive Directors must be such that employees are left in no doubt that health and safety has equal priority with the other important objectives of the Council.

It is too easy to state a commitment to health and safety whilst making it almost impossible to implement effective programmes because of setting conflicting organisational objectives.

Not only must health and safety objectives be compatible with high level Council objectives but they must also be compatible with Service objectives as they are cascaded down through the organisation.

3.2   Management Control

It is important to demonstrate commitment but it is also essential to be realistic. Although implementing health and safety control measures to prevent accidents will be cost effective in the long term, there is a short term outlay and finite resources. Obviously therefore, all health and safety deficiencies cannot be rectified immediately.

It is vital however, that managers are in control of the situation and seen to be *in control*. A key part of the process of establishing control is to set performance standards which link responsibilities to achievement of objectives, recognising that the achievement of objectives is based on specific defined work with measurable output. There should be knowledge of what is wrong, how it can be fixed and when it can be fixed. Essentially, a programme or plan of action based on risk assessment should be set out and communicated to all relevant employees. This plan should be reviewed periodically and items added or removed (when addressed) on an ongoing basis. This should ensure that resources are targeted at the higher risk areas and that progress is seen to be made. (See AS2 – Health and Safety Planning)

Control arrangements will only be effective if health and safety is resourced on an equal priority with the essential services of the Council and if good performance by supervisors and managers is seen as vital in career progression and personal development of the individuals.

3.3   Promoting Co-operation

Participation by employees helps in the control of risks by encouraging ownership of health and safety problems and subsequent solutions. Pooling knowledge and experience through participation, commitment and involvement means that health and safety really becomes "everybody's business".

It is a legal requirement for all employees of the Council to be consulted about health and safety issues (AS17 - Safety Representatives and Safety Committees).

The Council would seek to go further than the strict requirements of the law and encourages consultation and involvement of employees in different ways. They may, for example, help set performance standards, devise safe systems of work, help with procedures and instructions for controlling risks in their area of work and assist in undertaking safety inspections. The Council encourages the training and development of employees to enable them to undertake risk assessments at their place of work.   This includes specific assessments under various regulations, for example, Manual Handling, Display Screen Equipment and COSHH.

Initiatives to promote involvement of employees could include use of hazard report books, suggestion schemes or safety circles (similar to quality circles) where health and safety problems can be identified and solved. All these could develop enthusiasm and draw on employee expertise.

3.4   Communication

If the Council's commitment to health and safety is to be clearly demonstrated the following key information needs to be communicated effectively both corporately and by each Service:

- The meaning and purpose of Council and Service health and safety policies.

- The vision values and beliefs which underlie them.

- The commitment of senior management to their implementation.

- Plans, standards, procedures and systems of work.

- Factual information to help secure the involvement and commitment of employees.

- Comments and ideas for improvement.

- Performance reports.

- Lessons learned from accidents and incidents.

These methods are normally used to promote information.

3.4 (i) <u>Visible Behaviour</u>

Executive Directors and senior managers, can communicate powerful signals about the importance and significance of health and safety objectives if they lead by example. Equally, they can undermine the development of a positive health and safety culture through negative behaviour. Employees at all levels soon recognise what their own managers regard as important and act accordingly. Successful methods which signal commitment include:

- regular health and safety tours. These are not detailed inspections but a way of demonstrating management commitment and interest and to see obvious examples of good or bad performance. They can be planned to cover the whole site or operation progressively or to focus attention on current priorities in the overall safety effort;

- chairing meetings of Service health and safety committees;

- active involvement in investigations of accidents, ill health and incidents. The level of seniority can be determined by the potential severity of the event.

3.4 (ii) <u>Written Communications</u>

It is important that there is a good system of providing information at Council and Service level.

The Council Health and Safety Manual includes:

- The health and safety policy statement

- The health and safety responsibilities of the Chief Executive and Chief Officials.

- The health and safety arrangements.

In the arrangements section of this manual, the standards set by the Council for ensuring compliance with health and safety legislation will be set out and guidance on the implementation of the standards will be given. All elements of the manual are available via Connect.

More detailed Health and Safety Manuals or Files should be set up in each Service to include the Service health and safety policy, arrangements, procedures, codes of practice, performance standards etc. which control the risks associated with the work of the Service.

The information contained in these manuals etc. must be communicated to the relevant teams to ensure that they have full knowledge of the control measures relevant to the work they are undertaking. This may be achieved by a number of means, for example:

- Include information in job specifications or systems of work

- Provide an employee booklet

- Include in training courses, tool box talks etc.

- Produce 'safety cards' for each activity where there is a risk.

In essence, every employee must be provided with relevant information on the risks to their health and safety identified by risk assessment and the control measures which are in place to control the risks.

The use of the electronic briefing note "safet-e-briefing", issued each month to heads of service, can also be used to highlight the standards expected of managers and supervisors.

3.4 (iii) <u>Discussion</u>

Opportunities for employees to have a face to face discussion enabling them to make a more personal contribution are to be encouraged. These may include:

- formal health and safety committee or other consultative meetings

- planned meetings (or team briefings) at which information can be cascaded. These can include targeting particular groups of workers for safety critical tasks;

- health and safety issues on the agenda at all routine management meetings (possibly as the first item);

- monthly or weekly 'tool-box' talks or 'tailgate' meetings at which supervisors can discuss health and safety issues with their teams, remind them of critical risks and precautions and supplement the organisation's training effort. These also provide opportunities for employees to make their own suggestions about improving health and safety arrangements.

4.   Competence

If all employees are to make a maximum contribution to health and safety, there must be proper arrangements in place to ensure that they are competent. This means more than simply training them. Experience of applying skills and knowledge is another important ingredient and needs to be gained under adequate supervision. Managers need to be aware of relevant legislation and how to manage health and safety effectively. All employees need to be able to work in a safe and healthy manner. It may also be necessary to examine the abilities of contractors where they work close to, or in collaboration with, direct employees. Good arrangements will include:

- recruitment and placement procedures which ensure that employees (including mangers) have the necessary physical and mental abilities to do their jobs or can acquire them through training and experience. This may require assessments of individual fitness by medical examination and tests of physical fitness or aptitudes and abilities;

- systems to identify health and safety training needs arising from recruitment, changes in staff, plant, substances, technology, processes or working practices;

- the need to maintain or enhance competence by refresher training; and the presence of contractors' employees, self-employed people or temporary workers;

- systems and resources to provide the information, instruction, training and supporting communications effort to meet these needs;

- arrangements to ensure competent cover for staff absences, particularly those with critical health and safety responsibilities;

- general health promotion and surveillance schemes which contribute to the maintenance of general health and fitness (this may include assessments of fitness for work, rehabilitation, job adaptation following injury or ill health or a policy on drugs or alcohol).

IS26 - Health and Safety Training for Managers/Supervisors is a corporate information sheet that will help determine the levels of training each individual should have.

5. Conclusion

Many of the features of effective health and safety management are indistinguishable from the sound management practices advocated by proponents of quality and business excellence. The general principles of good management are therefore a sound basis for deciding how to bring about improved health and safety performance.

The benefits derived from establishing a positive health and safety culture as set out in H.S. (G) 65 – Successful Health and Safety Management and the useful information contained in Safety for Senior Executives (ISBN 09013 57235) are worthwhile publications designed to equip management for the tasks which lie ahead.

A positive health and safety culture across North Lanarkshire Council is seen as a cornerstone upon which other health and safety policy arrangements will rest and it is the purpose of this document to foster such an attitude in management, and the workforce generally.

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Promoting a positive health and safety culture

The culture of an organisation makes the greatest contribution to its health and safety performance. Unfortunately culture is not an easy concept to measure or manage. A good health and safety management system can go some way to setting the scene for developing a good culture, but it goes much deeper than that.

What is a health and safety culture?

The Health and Safety executive suggest that the safety culture of an organisation is the "product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organisation's health and safety management."

Safety culture is not considered to be a difficult idea to grasp, but it is usually described in terms of concepts such as 'trust', 'values' and 'attitudes', terms that are often difficult to achieve and evidence. It is accepted that you can judge whether an organisation has a good safety culture from what its employees actually do rather than what they say.

North Lanarkshire Council strives to implement a strong health and safety culture and seeks to have the following viewed as the norm within the organisation.

- Visible management commitment at all levels in the Council;
- Good knowledge and understanding of health and safety throughout the organisation;
- Clear definition of the culture that is desired;
- Lack of competing priorities with health and safety;
- A realistic idea of what is achievable whilst being challenging;
- Visible evidence that investment is made into health and safety, including the quality of the working environment, equipment provided etc;
- Being proactive so opportunities for improvement are dealt with before problems arise;
- Good communication up, down and across the organisation;
- A fair and just discipline system;
- Meaningful involvement of the workforce in all elements of health and safety.

What can be done to achieve an ever improving safety culture?

The Council continues to seek improvement in all the areas outlined above but it is not possible to improve culture directly. Instead, it is necessary for everyone in the organisation to work together to improve factors that can have a positive influence on culture. For example:

- Increase the amount of time managers spend visiting the workplace (not just after an accident);
- Improve manager's non-technical skills (e.g. communication);
- Increase levels of workforce participation in safety related problems and solutions;
- Promote good job satisfaction and moral;

- Promote a 'just culture' where blame is only used where someone takes reckless risks;
- Participate in a competence assurance program to ensure everyone throughout the organisation has the skills they need to work safely.

The attainment of a positive health and safety culture will lead to a reduction in workplace accidents, a more efficient work arrangement, a happier more productive workforce and a reduction in costs for everyone.

All employees have a role to play in the pursuit of a positive safety culture and to help achieve this and look after your own health and safety and those that are present around you then you should aspire to do the following:

- to take reasonable care of your own health and safety
- to take reasonable care not to put other people - fellow employees and members of the public - at risk by what you do or don't do in the course of your work
- to co-operate with your manager, making sure you participate fully in all provided training and understand and follow the company's health and safety policies
- not to interfere with or misuse anything that's been provided for your health, safety or welfare
- to report any injuries, strains or illnesses you suffer as a result of doing your job, your employer may need to change the way you work. You should also report any other circumstances or concerns you have about health and safety in your workplace.
- to tell your manager if something happens that might affect your ability to work, like becoming pregnant or suffering an injury.
- if you take medication that makes you drowsy, you have a responsibility to tell your employer so that the work you do can be temporarily modified to keep you and those around you safe.
- bring forward any ideas that you have improve the health and safety of those in the workplace.

Concerns/ideas about health and safety procedures should be raised in the following manner.

1) Talk to your line manager

2) If you are unable to talk to your line manager, then raise the matter with your Service Health and Safety Team

3) If you are unable to talk to your Service Health and Safety Team then talk to the Corporate Health and Safety Team whose role is to set the overall agenda for an improving health and safety culture.

Trade Union health and safety representatives can also be approached for advice and assistance

(Extract from IS56 – Promoting a Positive Health and Safety Culture)

Schedule 1 - Impact Assessments

Document Title: Corporate Arrangement Section - AS1 Health and Safety Culture

Date: 11/01/2013   **Review Date:** As circumstances dictate, and in any case with document

Environmental Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant environmental impact; no detrimental impact has been identified

Equality Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant equality implications; no significant issues have been identified.

General Comments: This document is a strategic guidance document, relating to the promotion of a health and safety culture within the workplace. It is associated with the Council's health and safety policy and the Council's general aim to ensure an embedded health and safety culture exists affecting all persons working for or making use of Council Services. Nothing in the document serves to have any negative impact on either equality issues or the environment. In general, associated documents will encourage positive consideration of both these areas to ensure all members of the workforce and community are afforded access, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the same opportunities for a healthy and safe workplace as well as a sustainable environment.