

Minutes of Meeting
Lead Health & Safety Officers Network Meeting
On-line Meeting (via MS Teams)
Tuesday 9 May 2023, 10:00am

Present:

North Tyneside Council	Anthony Laing (AL)
Darlington Borough Council	Joanne Skelton (JSk) Minute taker
Durham County Council	David Gray (DG)
South Tyneside MBC	Stephen Bell (SB)
Stockton Borough Council	Derek Macdonald (DM)
Northumberland County Council	John Froud (JF)
Sunderland City Council	Geoff Scrafton (GS)
Newcastle City Council	Simon Shaw (SS)
Middlesbrough Council	Gary Welch (GW)
Redcar & Cleveland Council	John Summers (JS) – Chair

Item	Discussion	Action
1	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Middlesborough Council – Anne Pennock (AP) Katherine Chapman – Newcastle City Council (KC) Kevin Lough – Durham County Council (KL)</p>	
2	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>Minutes from the meeting on 14 February 2023 agreed as accurate.</p> <p>Matters arising – discussion on buckle guards. DVSA have backed down on with regards enforcement position, however advice regarding use remains. SB will share an update with the group once spoken to a colleague who has done further work on this.</p>	SB

3 **Views on Representation/Attendance on the National LGA H&S Panel**

SS raised on behalf of KC whether the group want to have a representative on the national panel. The meetings are held 3 times a year and the HSE are in attendance, which allows for a direct line of communication. GS clarified that KC volunteered to represent the NE a number of years ago.

The group agreed to consider rotating the attendance by a member of the NE group and to ask Maureen for the dates for the coming year and which will be shared, and volunteers requested. There is a meeting today but unfortunately, it's too late to send a rep.

JS

Further dates for LGA confirmed as

Tuesday 18 July 2023 14:00–17:00 and
Tuesday 21 November 2023 14:00–17:00

4 **Fees for Intervention**

SS updated the group on a further and final invoice (£5,974) from HSE for FFI in relation to the fatal accident bringing the total to £11,500.

JS informed the group that Redcar are expecting an inspection from the HSE in June of their Tramway.

DG discussed how DCC are supporting a school following a visit from the HSE regarding management of radon. The school are waiting for FFI. A report has been submitted to senior management in Durham regarding the issue and the need for resources to manage, DG/KL will update the group at next meeting.

DG/KL

HSE are showing interest in the management of radon, with several LAs experiencing visits by the HSE, picking this up particularly when visiting to inspect Radiation Protection Arrangements in schools.

JF spoke about their experience and the need to revisit radon assessments every 10 years. The group could share information on results of assessments.

SB informed the group that there is some 2010 guidance from the health protection agency. Request to the group to share any more up to date guidance.

All

5. **Recruitment and Staffing**

JS – Redcar have a vacancy for a H&S Officer (changed from H&S compliance) and have since had quite a bit of interest.

SS – Newcastle also has a vacancy for a H&S officer, and received 48 applications and are interviewing 6.

GW – Middlesbrough are currently advertising for a H&S Adviser (£34,000 – £36,000)

JF – Northumberland looking to recruit to the H&S Manager post, 30 applicants, interviewing 3. Some good candidates that would have been suitable for a H&S Officer post.

AL – North Tyneside are looking to recruit and Assistant Adviser post (£25,000-£26,000).

It would appear that the difficulties we've all experienced over recent years with the lack of suitable candidates have passed and the quality of candidates is improving.

6 **Exchange of Information / Council Updates**

JF discussed a recent incident involving a housing contract. Excavating in the back garden and an elderly man fell into the excavation. The HSE investigated and said the council should have checked the contractors RAMS, JF have challenged this as this would be a huge undertaking, should be risk based, potentially capital improvement works and document important to document the rationale for this process.

SB stated that South Tyneside have a process for reviewing construction documentation and would look at RAMS for higher risk projects.

SS – Newcastle incident where a ride on mower went over an edge, with a drop of 3 foot. How do other LA's approach this, cut back from the edge, use robots. Discussion re possible methods and the need to risk assess sites to determine the most appropriate method.

9 **Any Other Business**

SS – raised the seatbelt buckle guard issue. Newcastle's procurement team have been contacted by Dimensions regarding their position as Gateshead have issued an instruction not to use.

Not aware that any other LAs have been approached by Dimensions, and a further discussion took place regarding lack of clarity from DfT etc. and the need to complete RAs to determine the most appropriate/suitable measures whilst transporting service users with special needs.

DG – Asked if any LA has had recent interest from the HSE relating to HAVS. SS Newcastle reported one carpal tunnel, and one HAVS. SB one HAVS JS not reported for a while however it had been identified a stage 2 diagnosis from a number of years ago is now showing stage 0. AL HSE investigation in 2021, records had not been passed over following TUPE, however not taken further as internal arrangements all ok. JSk 2 carpal tunnel reports in the last year, provided HSE with records as requested and no further action.

GS – Sunderland have experienced 'auditors' visiting a couple of council sites, they come in and record what they find on site and the interactions with staff, which have resulted in aggression. Security teams and staff have been given advice on how best to handle the situation including the auditors' rights to film but requesting the image/footage is not posted online. GS will share a link to the YouTube site for information. GS

- 10 **Date of next meeting** – Tuesday 12 September 2023, 10:00am, MS Teams.

Volunteers to Chair and to take the minutes are required.