

Minutes of Meeting
Lead Health & Safety Officers Network Meeting
On-line Meeting (via MS Teams)
Tuesday, 10 November 2020, 10:00am

Present:

North Tyneside Council (NTC) – Anthony Laing (AL) – Chair and Minute Taker
 Darlington Borough Council (DBC) – Joanne Skelton (JS)
 Gateshead MBC (GMBC) – Susan Smith (SS)
 Durham County Council (DCC) – David Gray (DG)
 South Tyneside MBC (STMBC) – Stephen Bell (SB)
 Stockton Borough Council (SBC) – Derek MacDonald (DM)
 Northumberland County Council (NBCC) – John Froud (JF)
 Sunderland City Council (SCC) – Geoff Scrafton (GS)
 Newcastle City Council (NCC) – Paul Mann (PM)
 Middlesbrough Council (MC) – John Armstrong (JA)

Item	Discussion	Action
1	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Newcastle City Council (NCC) – Katherine Chapman (KC)</p>	
2	<p>Minutes from 8 September and matters arising</p> <p>Minutes agreed.</p> <p>Item 3: In the absence of LS, DG provided an update in relation to Torro 5 mowers. The manufacturer has replaced all steering wheels on all Torro 5 mowers and so far there have been no further incidents or problems. GS asked if this was just at Durham or if this was across the board. DG to double check and confirm back to the group.</p> <p>Item 5: Members were asked to check and feedback on any other proprietary grave shoring suppliers or systems used for Muslim burials. This was addressed through circulation of information following the previous meeting. JF and DM confirmed the use of Teleshore.</p>	DG
3	<p>Torro 5 Mowers</p> <p>Update provided as per the review of the previous minutes. See above.</p>	

4	<p>Audit System Updates</p> <p>Following pros/cons information provided by AL after the previous meeting GS queried the costs of the Airswab system.</p> <p>AL to advise the group on how many users NTC have registered to use the Airswab system.</p> <p>JS advised that DBC found that the audit module within Airswab was not living up to expectations and that the off the shelf product requires a lot of extra work to get it to where it needs to be and they currently don't have the team to deal with that. A working group has been established with other users to develop the audit the module to get it to where it needs to be.</p> <p>JS advised that there was an internal system for auditing at MC when he arrived which didn't fit the bill. MC are looking at a system called My Compliance which is cost effective and offers a number of customisable solutions. This is currently running at a cost of approximately £6k. JS to provide an update on the incident reporting element of this system at the next meeting.</p> <p>SS informed that GMBC had been looking at Airswab and other products in the market having tried without success with their own internal IT to develop inhouse systems for incident reporting and action tracking. GMBC have positive feedback based on research of Airswab. Using i-Auditor for FRA's.</p> <p>PM made a request on behalf of KC re the process for selecting audits. PM advised that audits are thrown out to teams and based on return a selection of premises and tasked based audits are carried out. KC would like to know if other LA's had a more formal process in place.</p> <p>GS advised that SCC have an audit schedule whereby every premises would get a full audit within three years. Premises that have previously had a good audit score and have performed well would be re-audited again on a three-yearly cycle. Those returning a poor audit score would be re-visited annually. This would include every service and every school. The system at SCC is currently suspended due to Covid-19 currently.</p> <p>AL echoed the same process at NTC as described by GS above. Some audits are being carried out remotely, but audits have been very much superseded by Covid Assurance Visits in light of buildings re-opening and services being stood back up.</p> <p>JF advised the same at NCC. While it is the ideal that those services returning a poor audit score would be revisited every year – JF doesn't really have the resource in reality and are trying to stick to the three-yearly programme where possible.</p>	<p>AL</p> <p>JS</p>
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	<p>GMBC – self audit approach in schools, and any queries or doubts resulting from other visits would result in a more in-depth audit visit. For other premises they have an annual audit plan based on all of the Council procedures and cross referenced this against the service areas and focused on the higher risk areas through the spring and autumn. This has not been possible to continue with this year due to Covid -19. Significant incidents and HSE intervention would also trigger audits. Each service area is also asked to submit an annual performance report and they have to identify high risk issues which is also used to inform auditing.</p> <p>JS advised that inspections rather than audits were the norm at MC when he arrived. Now have a premises health and safety plans which have been issued with a training plan and this will be fully implemented by 2021 where they will allocate non-conformance / non-compliance against those plans. High risk areas will be audited based on risk.</p> <p>DG advised at DCC they focus on the risk-based approach and develop their auditing plans according.</p> <p>DM described that SBC operated on a three-yearly risk rated cycle of audits. All high-risk areas were audited annually, other low risk rated areas were audited three yearly. This worked well initially but low risk areas took the view that they didn't need to do anything for the intervening three years. As such they have reverted back to annual audit plan. This is on hold due to Covid-19.</p> <p>JS from DBC also have an audit schedule and a plan which is a risk-based approach. Either two or three yearly audits and self-assessments for the lower risk areas. This is updated throughout the year based on incidents or HSE intervention. Schools receive an annual audit.</p>	
5	<p>Fees for Intervention</p> <p>None reported.</p> <p>GS advised that SCC had received call from HSE in respect of late reporting. HSE appear to be having a push reporting of RIDDOR reportable time frames.</p> <p>DG reported 6 / 7 schools in Durham have received on site spot checks from the HSE and double that in terms of schools receiving phone calls. Focus around risk assessment, drop off arrangements, movement, dining rooms and ventilation.</p> <p>JF advised that schools in NCC have also received calls and visits and a focus on staff wellbeing and ventilation and the need to maintain natural ventilation in the absence of mechanical ventilation.</p> <p>DM not aware of any visits from inspectors in SBC.</p>	

	<p>NCC have received two visits from the HSE. One visit to Environmental Services. A second visit was carried out to an office block by a third-party company, Engage, A Marston Regulatory Services, operating on behalf of the HSE.</p> <p>GS advised that the same company conducted a visit to the Port of Sunderland. HSE carried out visits to 4/5 schools without carrying out prior telephone checks. Feedback was positive in each case.</p> <p>GMBC reported that the HSE had conducted in-depth telephone checks with schools.</p> <p>The group discussed the reporting of Covid-19 cases due to workplace transmission in light of high rates of community transmission.</p> <p>The group discussed the changes to the CEV category of staff following the most recent lock down where staff members express that they wish to continue coming to the workplace. Members discussed the review and updating of risk assessments. GMBC described that they have included OH referrals and a caveat at the end of the RA.</p> <p>NCC request that OH sign off RA's for vulnerable workers and the H&S team focus on reasonable adjustments within the workplace using an NHS model of RA. HR are also working with PH on this as well.</p>	
6	<p>Recruitment and Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GMBC – closing date for SS's post was the 6 November. Sifting applications in order to short list. Also recruiting for a Health and Safety Officer to fill gap for non-Covid workload and got agreement to recruit for a 12-month contract. Also recruiting for a Health and Safety Support Officer FTE. • NCC Succession planning for JF's role and looking at restructuring to maximise resource. • SCC – recruitment for a Senior Health and Safety Adviser role due to a member of the team retiring. Hoping for approval by the end of the week to go out to advert. • NCC – temporary officer role has ended and have appointed an Assistant Health and Safety Officer in an FTE role. • NTC looking to appoint an Infection Prevention and Control Support role in a reactive role sitting between the Emergency Planning Team and the Health and Safety Team. • STC – trying to recruit to a 12-month temporary role. Trying to appoint suitable candidates is proving difficult at the present time. 	

7	<p>Exchange of Information / Council Updates</p> <p>GS advised that the FRA schedule at SCC had been impacted due to Covid-19 and that those responsible for premises didn't want officers attending premises due to Covid secure arrangements. GS advised that they had produced a priority schedule which has been presented to TWFRS who were very complimentary of it. A template has been produced for responsible persons to complete above and beyond the normal periodic review form which will enable the team to defer their FRA schedule for up to a year and be confident that nothing has changed within the building since the last full FRA.</p> <p>SS advised that they had also done and a review and identified any FRA's that were out of date and any high-risk sites and FRA's were carried out in the school holidays. Other high-risk sites are being done remotely and with the completion of a return template by the responsible person.</p> <p>GS is interested in the specification of a PA system as part of the new Durham County Hall. DG to come back to GS after speaking with Kevin Lough.</p>	<p>SS</p> <p>DG</p>
8	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>GS is looking to put a member of his team through a Fire Risk Assessor course. GS would like to arrange a course with the FPA or another company and wondered if there are sufficient numbers to warrant doing this. Anyone wanting to explore this to discuss with GS. JA to provide information to GS on training courses and GS to update at next meeting.</p> <p>SS advised that this would be her final meeting as part of the group due to her forthcoming retirement. The group would like to thank SS for her contributions and hard work as part of the group and as the manager at GMBC and wish her a very long and happy retirement.</p>	<p>ALL</p>
9	<p>GDPR</p>	
10	<p>Date of next meeting – Tuesday 9 February 2021 at 10am. Derek MacDonald to chair the next meeting.</p> <p>Following meetings: Tuesday 11 May 2021 Tuesday 7 September 2021 Tuesday 9 November 2021</p>	<p>DM</p>