

This statement of policy on health and safety at work in Westmorland and Furness Council is made in accordance with section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Our Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy Statement 2023/24

Westmorland and Furness Council is committed to ensuring that Westmorland and Furness is a great place to live, work and thrive. Our Council plan summarises our vision, priorities and values and ensures that people are always at the centre of everything we do.

We promote and embed a positive and continually improving health and safety culture where everybody is actively engaged. We value individuals and are committed to leading and empowering our workforce. We support employee wellbeing and focus on a safe and healthy work environment that enables everyone to understand our high expectations to deliver safe services. We clearly define roles and responsibilities for all employees.

We ensure health, safety, and wellbeing is our top priority. To help us meet our duties, we prioritise the health, safety, and wellbeing of our employees and others who may be affected by our work activities. We comply with legal and moral requirements and aim, wherever possible to achieve best practice.

We incorporate health, safety and wellbeing into our day-to-day management systems and focus on the following key areas wherever reasonably practicable.

Strong and Visible Leadership

Elected Members will provide leadership on the council's commitment to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and members of the public who may be affected by Council services. Strong member leadership is an essential part of risk management and members are encouraged to report any identified risks for appropriate remedial action.

The Chief Executive provides overall leadership on health, safety, and wellbeing matters for the Council. The Director of Enabler Services is appointed as Chair of the Corporate Health and Safety Group and Director leading the Corporate Health and Safety function, deputising for the Chief Executive as required on organisational health and safety matters.

The Chief Executive ensures that responsibilities for relevant roles within the Council's occupational health and safety management system are assigned and communicated at all levels.

Our Directors are responsible for the effective implementation of this Health and Safety Policy and supporting procedures within their area of responsibility. Directors are responsible for the control and management of risk to identify, assess the associated risks and seek to eliminate them. Where this is not possible, Directors must ensure the risk is reduced or mitigated through suitable control measures to their lowest level practicable. Together we ensure sufficient resources and workforce training is made available to achieve our goals.

Worker Participation and Engagement

We communicate this policy to all employees and interested parties and publish it on the Council's website and ensure it is displayed in all workplaces and maintained schools.

This policy and its supporting health and safety procedures will be implemented by Council Officers and overseen by the relevant senior management teams through operational and recognised health and safety groups. The Health and Safety governance structure is provided as an appendix to this policy.

We will ensure systems are in place for consultation and participation on health and safety matters. This includes working with and the co-production of initiatives with Trade Union and workers representatives in the development, planning, implementation, performance evaluation and actions for continuous improvement of occupational health and safety.

This includes

- Setting clear occupational health and safety objectives to maintain and continually improve the H&S management system and our safety performance
- Producing clear health, safety and wellbeing documentation and information available via our intranet and internet sites
- Regular updates to, and strategic steer from, elected members and in particular Cabinet portfolio holder.
- Providing health and safety related training in a variety of delivery formats.
- Engaging and co-producing improvement initiatives with employees and recognised Trade Unions;
- Inviting our recognised Trade Union Colleagues to co-chair health and safety committees with senior Council Officers.
- Working closely with recognised Trade Union representatives on joint initiatives to aim for continual improvement.
- Effective communication with other stakeholders and interested parties on health safety and wellbeing matters.

Clear Responsibility and Accountability

It is vital that health and safety leadership is provided within the Council. We will not delegate our legal responsibility for the day-to-day control of Occupational Health and Safety risk even if third-party expertise, advice, or services are used. We are committed to deliver the highest standards and best environment for all those we work with.

Effective Health and Safety Governance

We have established robust health and safety governance and performance management arrangements ensuring cross cutting organisational safety objectives are achieved. Each group follows clear terms of reference.

Where gaps are identified, or performance does not achieve the required standards, action plans will be devised, implemented, and tracked by competent and accountable persons to ensure standards improve

- **The Corporate Health and Safety Group** - (co-chaired between The Director of Enabler Services and recognised Trade Union representative) will lead on corporate health, safety and wellbeing issues and engage with staff, members, and contractors at all levels. Corporate health and safety procedures will be reviewed, updated, and approved by the Corporate Health and Safety Group following co-production and consultation.
- **Senior Officer Governance** - The Senior Officer Health & Safety Group ensures an Assistant Director and Senior Management level forum for discussion and monitoring of cross cutting health, safety and wellbeing issues affecting the Council and our contractors. The group also debate and learn from issues that are relevant to more than one directorate; require corporate investment; or have not been resolved through other discussions.
- **Directorate Level Governance** - Directors are responsible for maintaining high standards of health, safety, and welfare within their own directorates consistent with this health and safety policy statement and in line with the Corporate Health & Safety Procedures Manual.

Each Directorate Management Team (working with recognised Trade Unions) will prepare an action plan for continuous health and safety improvement. This will be regularly reviewed and if required expanded upon to describe the various functions and arrangements for health and safety to address specific risks within the Directorate. We will work closely with all schools to ensure that they can access professional advice to enable them to achieve their health, safety and wellbeing objectives.

- **Safety Practitioners Group** - This is a forum for health and safety professionals to discuss and share health and safety experiences across the Council and wider professional sectors. This assists the development of corporate health and safety procedures and ensures that emerging issues can be escalated to the Corporate Health and Safety Group, Directorate Management Teams or Directorate Health and Safety Groups as appropriate.
- **Line Managers and Supervisors** - Managers and supervisors throughout the council have responsibility not only for their own health and safety but also for that of employees within their teams or those accessing the services provided. They will ensure that suitable and sufficient assessments of risk are carried out in relation to their operations, activities, and premises, and that the control measures which they identify are communicated and implemented, together with maintaining a written record of these assessments ensuring they are periodically reviewed particularly following incidents and significant changes.
- **Learning and Development** - We will ensure that departmental and individual training and development plans fully reflect the requirement for the provision of adequate training and instruction, as necessary for health, safety, and welfare, and that these plans are periodically reviewed to ensure their effectiveness. They will ensure that a suitable induction is provided where relevant. The induction will be site specific and highlight any risks that will be encountered by virtue of the duties, tools and site as required under the terms and conditions of their job roles.
- **Individual Responsibility** - Health and safety is everyone's responsibility and all elected members, staff, trade union representatives and contractors regardless of role have a duty to ensure healthy and safe working practices are followed, not only for their personal benefit, but also for those working around them or for customers in receipt of the service.

Legal compliance in all areas is deemed to be the minimum standard to be attained. Failure to adopt adequate procedures or safety practice will be taken seriously. Where required, additional communication, support, training will be actioned. Breaches of the health and safety policy, procedures and arrangements will be managed through the Council disciplinary procedures.

Our legal compliance will include:

- Setting up Health and Safety Committees at various levels of the council with up to date terms of reference, two-way communication, and regular engagement activities.
- A high corporate profile with effective performance and audit management systems;
- Benchmarking with others, and to learn from accidents, near misses and safety performance indicators.

Effective planning – Identifying Hazards and controlling risk

To achieve our aims we ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that we will provide safe premises and working environments, safe equipment and substances, and safe systems of work to comply with legislation and meet best practice. We have a clear set of Corporate Health and Safety procedures that outline the key elements of our health and safety management system arrangements in more detail.

We follow the 'Plan-Do-Check-Act' management approach to ensure our services and operational activities are compliant with legislation and implement and follow safe working procedures.

- **Plan** - we set our policy, plan for measuring performance, emergencies, preparedness, documentation, procedures for controlling contractors and any reviewing changes.

- **Do** - we assess risks and set effective risk control measures, consult our workforce, and obtain competent advice, obtain tools, equipment, plant and machinery, train and supervise staff. Utilising ICT and personal protection when required;
- **Check** - we measure performance, identify gaps, obtain ill health data and act on inspection and audit reports.
- **Act** - we routinely review our performance, identify gaps, and take appropriate action.

To promote better health at work we will focus on measures to ensure:

- Effective public health leadership with robust infection prevention and control measures in place;
- An effective work life balance or flexible working practices wherever possible;
- Promotion of healthy lifestyle (including physical activity, healthy eating, musculoskeletal improvements);
- Positive mental wellbeing (including the prevention of work-related stress).

Support Resources, Competence, Communication and Advice

We will provide the resources necessary to ensure suitable levels of competence, awareness, communications and qualified professional advice and support for our health and safety management system.

These include:

- Provision of professionally qualified staff to provide "competent persons advice" on occupational health and safety management support to all council staff including maintained schools and elected members;
- A professional occupational health service
- Effective training programmes, communication, and awareness campaigns;
- Internal and external communications relevant to OH&S management system arrangements
- Best practice health and safety standards expected and monitored for commissioned services and contractors that deliver services on behalf of the Council;
- Systemic audit and risk management controls devised, implemented, and monitored ensuring health and safety arrangements are suitable and sufficient.
- Communications and awareness events will be progressed throughout the year to maintain and further raise the profile of effective health and safety.
- Suitable documented information made freely available to all interested parties and can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Performance Management and Ongoing Learning

To ensure adequate health and safety standards are achieved, and continual improvement sought, governance and performance management systems are in place to monitor progress against the Corporate Health and Safety Action Plan, audit findings and monitoring of accident and work-related ill health data.

Wherever possible, health and safety performance and ways of working are benchmarked against available data, other Local Authorities, and wider industry best practice to seek to achieve continual performance improvements and ongoing learning.

The Corporate Health and Safety Team produce quarterly dashboard reports summarising key health and safety metrics for reporting to the Directorate Management Teams, Corporate Management Team and Corporate Health & Safety Committee.

Overall health and safety performance is reported annually to the Council's Cabinet by way of the Annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report. Interim updates are provided on a quarterly basis (or by exception as required) to the Cabinet Member who has portfolio responsibilities that include Corporate Health and Safety. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee could consider health, safety and wellbeing as part of their work programme to provide scrutiny of the Council's health and safety governance, performance, or research best practice from other organisations and make recommendations to Cabinet for continual improvement.

Review

This policy statement will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains fit for purpose and up to date.



Councillor Jonathan Brook
Leader of the Council



Councillor Giles Archibald
Health and Safety Cabinet
Portfolio Holder



Sam Plum
Chief Executive
Westmorland and Furness
Council

Further Information

This statement represents a summary of the Corporate Health and Safety arrangements in place for Westmorland and Furness Council for 2023/24.

More detailed information on our health and safety management arrangements can be found in the Corporate Health & Safety Procedures Manual which is published on the Council's intranet and is available on request.

