

Occupational safety & health annual report 2023-24

1. Context

This retrospective report is primarily concerned with Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) performance during the period April 2023 – March 2024.

During this period, we embarked on significant organisational change that will have affected the ways in which OSH is overseen and supported. While day to day OSH is managed by accountable line managers, these colleagues were supported by and to some extent supervised by, the in-house professional OSH Adviser.

It was also recognised that the employment of a dedicated OSH professional could in some circumstances lead to a certain abrogation of responsibility. The decision taken by Members in July to remove the cost of employing a specialist OSH Adviser meant that without this resource, policy and processes required revision to ensure and provide assurance to senior management and Members that OSH is being well managed.

In October, the post of OSH Adviser was disestablished when the existing post holder's employment ended. This report also outlines the changes to specific OSH management matters in this transition period.

2. Governance

It is a legal requirement to have a suitable occupational safety and health policy setting out an organisation's intentions, administration and arrangements to deliver occupational safety and health. A revised version of the OSH Policy which considered the organisational restructure of 2023 and disestablishment of the OSH Adviser was ratified at the meeting of the Performance and Resources Committee on 26 January 2024.

The Head of People Management chaired the quarterly meetings held on:

4 April 2023	10 October 2023
11 July 2023	16 January 2024

The representation of all services at the Health and Safety Committee together with Trade Union and Staff Committee representation continued. Including the chair, there are eighteen representatives.

The committee meeting in October was used to consult with safety representatives on key OSH areas subject to change.

- A member of the senior management team (SMT) will chair the committee in future.
- As well as being a consultative group to meet our statutory requirements, the committee will move to become an accountable, operational group.

- The responsibilities of the Safety Representatives as noted in the OSH Policy did not change however, they will be more pro-active and undertake certain tasks such as updating OSH documentation.
- Using the existing list of sites visited by the OSH Adviser a rolling programme of site visits each quarter to be created. The Corporate Property Facilities Manager was identified as the most appropriate person to co-ordinate and facilitate the inspections in conjunction with the Duty Holder at each site. The Facilities Manager to provide an update on site inspections at each Health and Safety Committee.
- A range of OSH matters are common to work in the National Park and are addressed by generic controls. We have in place 19 generic risk assessments available for these topics which are widely available. In the absence of the OSH Adviser, we needed to identify ownership to maintain updates. The following teams were identified as having lead responsibility for each topic and will be required to review the risk assessment annually, or after a related incident, and provide a scheduled summary report to one of the Health and Safety Committee meetings in 2024-25.

Outdoor working	CMPT
Tools and equipment	CMPT
Underground and overhead services	CMPT
Work at height	CMPT
Work on or near highways	CMPT
COSHH	Corporate Property
Fire Safety	Corporate Property
Working on or near water	Engagement Team
Lone Working	MFFP
New & Expectant Mothers	People Management
Occupational Stress	People Management
Young Person & students	People Management
First Aid at Work	People Management
Display Screen Equipment	People Management
Manual Handling	People Management
Personal Safety (violence/aggression)	Planning
Driving at Work	Ranger Team
Animals	Ranger Team
Trees	Rural Estates

- Incident report forms to be passed to the appropriate line manager initially, and then submitted to the HR inbox/office in People Management service. There the form will be assessed if any further investigation is needed and if the incident is reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).
- To meet our statutory requirement to obtain competent OSH advice, the Safety Representatives were consulted on a draft brief to be used to invite quotes for provision of strategic OSH advice, as necessary, for a three-year period. Five local IOSH accredited consultancies were invited to quote. National Parks Safety Service (NPSS) consultancy was successful and the contract commenced on 1 April 2024.

3. OSH management system – training

Day to day, routine management of OSH matters is the responsibility of all employees. All new starters are required to complete two online courses as part of their induction:

- Introduction to Health and Safety
- Fire Safety

All line managers have particular responsibility for ensuring that OSH requirements detailed in policy, procedures and risk assessments, are properly understood and complied with. A significant component of this responsibility is ensuring that suitable and sufficient levels of information, training, qualification and supervision are provided and maintained.

Globally recognised Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) accredited management training was introduced in 2019 and it was made available to all managers and key post holders.

Two IOSH Managing Safely courses were run in June and July. The total number of staff accredited is 38. When the new SMT is in place the OSH skills profile for the management structure will be reviewed to identify any training gaps.

4. Accidents and incidents 2023-24

Here, in common with other National Park Authorities, we continue to enjoy a low accident rate. Causes of accidents are familiar and only minor work-related injuries have been experienced. For 2023-24 there were no reportable incidents (i.e. RIDDOR).

People affected	
School visits	7
Staff	11
Visitors	13
Volunteers	5
	36

Type of incident	
Cycle incidents	5
Fire safety	1
Health-related	13
Manual handling	1
Motor accidents	2
Personal safety	7
Slips, trips and falls	7
	36

For details of date, location, category and incident see appendix 2.

It was noted at the H&S Committee in January 2024 the low numbers of reported incidents indicate under reporting. This discussion initiated a review of the incident reporting procedure with draft proposals and forms to be considered at the meeting of the committee in April 2024.

5. Health and wellbeing

Since April 2022, wellbeing and sickness reporting has been a standing item on the committee agenda when we achieved Silver level of the 'We invest in wellbeing' accreditation.

The Policy on sickness absence was reviewed and revised this year to include 'trigger points' which are used to prompt action over a sickness absence record. The set of absence triggers helps identify short-term and persistent absence records that give cause for concern. These are:

- 3 or more instances of short-term sickness absence in a 12-week rolling period.
- 4 or more instances of short-term sickness absence in a 12-month rolling period.
- 20 or more days in a rolling 12-month period (pro-rata if you're part time).

Our performance target is a maximum of 9 days per year per staff member. The total amount of days lost to sickness per full time equivalent (FTE) for 2023-24 was 5.94 (0.97 in Q1, 1.5 in Q2, 1.7 in Q3, and 1.77 in Q4).

In 2023-24, there were 254 occurrences of sickness absence. The top reasons for absence occurrences were:

Coughs/colds	75 occurrences	
Other	42	(includes illnesses such as chronic fatigue syndrome, and UTIs)
Covid	29	

In total, 8,255 hours were lost to sickness absence. The top loss of hours was due to:

Other	42 occurrences
Stress	5
Coughs/colds	75

There were seven staff with long term sickness absences in this year, three of which involved recovery from a planned operation.

In total 1.4 days were lost per staff member as a result of mental health related illness. This equates to 23% of time lost, and a significant increase on 14% in the previous year. In 2022-23, there were eight staff with absence due to mental health. In 2023-24, again there were eight staff with mental health related absence however, one absence became long term which spiked the overall time lost.

Staff gained access to a new employee discounts and health & wellbeing platform in March, which includes free confidential counselling and 24/7 Virtual GP service. Staff continue to have access to the mental health platform, Neurequity, as well as resilience coaching from Ultimate Resilience, and Derwent Rural Counselling. Menopause awareness training sessions held in November were well attended.

6. Workforce survey results – March 2024

Staff and volunteers are surveyed annually to seek feedback on a number of key functions including health and safety. The survey is anonymous. It was open from 1 March to 1 April 2024.

Response rate for staff was 62% (144 out of 233) and volunteers was 20% (244 out of 1243)

Three key questions relating to safety and wellbeing generated the following response:

Staff	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
I feel safe in my work environment	0	4	13	63	64	144
I know the relevant H&S policies and procedures relating to my work	1	1	7	85	50	144
I feel my wellbeing at work is considered a priority	2	23	19	72	27	143

Volunteers	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
I feel safe when volunteering	2	0	12	91	139	244
I know the relevant H&S policies and procedures relating to my work	2	4	18	116	104	244
I feel that my wellbeing while volunteering is considered a priority	2	0	37	93	111	243

The results overall provide reassurance of a strong safety and wellbeing culture within our workforce.

7. Objectives for 2024-25

Priorities for the committee in 2024-25 were discussed at the January committee meeting. The SMT were consulted on the draft objectives and confirmed at the next committee meeting in April.

1. Management has sufficient health and safety knowledge and competence to ensure compliance with our legal obligations
2. Post organisational restructure the Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee functions effectively
3. The Authority has a robust process for reporting and monitoring incidents and near misses
4. All staff have an overview of good fire safety practice and what to do in the event of a fire alarm or a blaze.
5. All staff know how to set up their workstation and adjust their immediate environment to minimise risk of injury

For details on activities and measures, please see appendix 3.

8. Recommendations

- The work summarised in this report, to deliver good and continuously improving OSH management here at the Peak District National Park Authority throughout 2023-24, is recognised.
- Proposals for specific matters to be addressed, associated with the organisational restructure in respect of OSH management in 2024-25, are noted.

Theresa Reid – Chair of Health and Safety Committee - Head of People Management