OUR SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19
In 2016, Suffolk County Council (SCC) produced its third health and safety strategy covering 2016-19. This set out four themes to be developed over its three-year cycle to build on the positive work of the two previous strategies beginning in 2010.

This annual report for safety, health and wellbeing (SHAW) reviews the progress of this strategy as its three-year cycle comes to an end and a new SHAW strategy is launched by the Chair and Vice Chair of the SHAW Board, Executive Director Fire and Public Safety Mark Hardingham and Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection Richard Rout.
Summary

A range of work has been undertaken to develop the four themes and improve management of health and safety across the Council, which are outlined in this report. This work has happened during ongoing organisational change and continued financial pressures. Highlights include:

• Encouraging results from the 2018 staff survey that demonstrate an improving SHAW culture with the report commenting that ‘Health and safety perceptions have improved from an already strong position’

• An ‘Excellent’ rating in six of eight areas for the Public Health England’s Workplace Wellbeing Charter in 2019

• Continuing to check our contracts against our health and safety requirements for procurement and contract management

• Ongoing development of the Council’s health and safety support for its schools

• Review of guidance for key areas, including risk assessment, asbestos, mental health and personal safety as well the Council’s principal health and safety policy

• Implemented the Mental Health First Aid programme for the Council with 47 trained practitioners now in place across the county for staff to access

• The council has again received recognition from RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents), being ‘Highly Commended’ in the national Public Service & Local Government Sector Award category – effectively coming second in the country

This SHAW annual report reflects many achievements through the year but does not attempt to capture all that we do. These achievements are down to the continued hard work and professionalism of colleagues across the Council.

A positive and improving health and safety culture needs to be at the core of every successful organisation and the Council is no exception, this is at the heart of what the SHAW Board seeks to achieve on behalf of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).
Introduction

This report covers the 12-month period to 31 March 2019 and provides elected members, senior officers and all council staff with the SHAW Board’s progress and achievements during this time.

This report summarises the action that has been taken to protect our staff, contractors, clients and service users, pupils and members of the public.

Principles

1. The approach to the management of safety, health and wellbeing within the Council is stated in its corporate SHAW policy documents SHAW1, SHAW2 and SHAW3. The SHAW policy statement (SHAW1) is signed by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council.

2. This policy is supported by the SHAW Strategy which provides the focus for the primary activity of the Council to develop and improve the management of SHAW. This is supported by an annual action plan which is implemented and monitored through the SHAW Board on behalf of CLT.
Progress

3. The SHAW strategy for 2016-19 built on the previous strategies and had four themes, with each theme led by one or two members of the SHAW Board.
   - Procurement and contract management (Gavin Bultitude and Bryn Griffiths)
   - Schools (Joy Stodart and Tracy Lindeman)
   - Supporting Wellbeing Culture within SCC (Lynda Bradford and Dan Fearn)
   - Assurance (Paul Butcher and Tim Ryder)

4. The action plan for 2018-19 had 18 actions with 13 performance indicators. Progress has been monitored quarterly by the SHAW Board. Each theme lead has provided an update on progress over the year, summarised below.

PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

5. A significant proportion of the Council’s overall spend and activities are carried out by external contractors, not in-house services. The Council therefore must ensure, through effective procurement and contract management practice, that these services retain the good levels of health and safety that are expected of a public service.

6. SHAW guidance is well embedded into the procurement process and is now a consideration when evaluating the overall risks associated with any contract. This guidance is being updated to reflect the progress made. SHAW advisors have worked with the Procurement Team to support contract managers with workshops for Adult and Community Services (ACS), and Children and Young People Services (CYP).

7. Directorates continued their work to identify and score their contracts, e.g. Growth, Highways & Infrastructure had identified and scored 1,440 contracts including 1,200 bus contracts, and managers had confirmed that they were all compliant with the guidance. This was followed with more detailed audits of a sample of these contracts which provided additional learning.

8. In ACS, audits by the contracts team and H&S Advisor are currently taking place for all 24 extra-care sheltered housing schemes where SCC has resident placements. Previously, the contracts focus had been on residential and nursing care homes but recent fires at two extra care settings, as well as national intelligence from the fire and rescue service, has highlighted a need to ensure our residents are placed in settings with adequate fire protection and evacuation measures. In extra-care this also means having adequate staff at night to evacuate residents in an emergency.

9. There have been opportunities for contractors to attend Directorate Management Teams as part of the contractor engagement work. This allows the sharing of best practice as well as the chance to respond to challenges over specific issues.
SCHOOLS

10. Stress at work, and the mental health of staff within local authority schools, remained a concern in 2018-19. The increasing complexity of students’ needs, both within mainstream and specialist provision, appears to be rising and this has had a growing impact on staff wellbeing. Recent Cabinet approval for new specialist provision is positive, but as with all new build and related recruitment, this is still some time away. Therefore, this topic remains a concern and a priority for the coming year.

WORKING WELL FOR SUFFOLK

11. The Council has received a very positive report following its recent Workplace Health Assessment, scoring ‘Excellent’ in six out of eight categories. Commenting on the overall impression of the Council, the official assessment report included the comment: ‘The commitment made by Suffolk County Council to the health and wellbeing of its staff is of an exemplary standard and, for this, the work achieved so far is to be commended.’

12. Further work under this theme has included:

a. Implementing the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) programme with 47 trained practitioners, covering all directorates, now located across the county for staff to access.

b. The ‘5 Ways to Wellbeing’ campaign was launched in early 2018 and has developed well over the year with a range of activities and promotions in several SCC buildings. This work is currently being reviewed and assessed.

c. The Healthier Workplace Fund has included support for a range of wellbeing activities including:
   • The development of a running club at Landmark House
   • Fitness equipment for fire and rescue teams
   • Mindfulness sessions for CYP staff
   • A team activities box for ACS staff development days
SHAW CULTURE

13. The Staff Survey was carried out during May and June 2018 and demonstrated positive outcomes around SHAW perceptions from staff. This shows that the strategy and action plan is having a positive impact on staff and service users.

14. The new sickness absence policy went live in January 2019 along with new tools and manager training webinars:
   a. The Healthy Conversations absence portal has been launched to provide comprehensive information on the changes to the absence policy and Bradford Factor with a communications plan to support the rollout of the policy and guidance.
   b. Healthy Conversations Interactive Webinars have been made available for managers with an online Q&A forum. This has worked well with 579 managers participating in the webinars so far.

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE (HSE) ENGAGEMENT

15. There has been a good ongoing relationship with the HSE. They continue their investigation following an asbestos incident at a Suffolk school in September 2016. The Police and HSE concluded their investigation into a contractor incident in May 2017 following a swimming incident at a school. The contractor, a charity who hired the school’s facilities, was reprimanded by the HSE and no action was taken against the Council.
Performance

16. The SHAW strategy includes a core set of performance measures which provide a mechanism for the SHAW Board to monitor the ongoing performance of our key corporate risks. The measures include premises management, training, staff absence and the use of the occupational health service. There has been good progress through the year with most targets being met or nearly met. The measures have been reviewed for the coming year.

17. Vertas Property Management have a programme of premise visits each quarter which are used to monitor premises management compliance. In 2018-19 there were 323 visits undertaken to schools and non-schools (approximately 50% each). This data shows an improving compliance picture.

18. For the first time in five years, The Council saw a drop in corporate workforce absence: the number of days lost decreased by 5.5%

19. The number of people taking dedicated H&S courses has increased by 5% after several years of small reductions and overall the volumes are a good indicator of staff training. Work continues to promote those courses where attendance has been lower than expected.

20. In recent years the number of health and safety incidents has been declining which reflects the reduction in the size of the corporate and schools’ workforces along with a removal of higher risk functions such as care homes and highways. This year has seen a 12% increase which reflects work to improve reporting with schools and our children’s homes particularly. Nearly half of all incidents for both corporate staff and schools are related to physical assault/abuse/harm and slips/trips/falls of staff or service users. This is similar to last year, although the actual numbers have declined for schools but increased for corporate staff.

21. Some incidents are reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). There has been a small increase in RIDDORs this year, again reflecting the change to the process of managing incidents with schools as 24 of them are for our schools.

22. In October 2017 two new Occupational Health providers were appointed, one covering the corporate workforce and fire service, and the other for Suffolk schools provided through Schools’ Choice. These contracts are now well established and continue to provide good support to our staff.
Review

23. A workshop took place in November 2018 to review the current H&S strategy 2016-19 and prepare a new strategy for 2019-22. The workshop was informed by a comprehensive report providing a summary of the SHAW Board’s activity over the last eight years in its management of the H&S risks. The outcome was to maintain the four themes with each being led by members of the SHAW Board:

- Procurement and contract management (Gavin Bultitude and Bryn Griffiths)
- Schools (Joy Stodart and Tracy Lindeman)
- Supporting Wellbeing Culture within SCC (Lynda Bradford and Dan Fearn)
- Assurance (Paul Butcher and Tim Ryder)

Priorities

24. The 2019-20 action plan for the new SHAW strategy 2019-22 has been approved by the SHAW Board. This provides the key actions for each of the four themes. The action plan also includes a similar set of revised performance measures.

25. Priorities for this year include reducing levels of staff absence with an increasing focus on mental health and wellbeing along the further development of the Five Ways to Wellbeing programme. Further work will also develop how the Council procures and manages its contracts and contractors.

26. Our RoSPA submission provides us with feedback on areas for improvement. Over the six years of our RoSPA submissions this has been an improving picture, however there are some areas where further work is required. This includes risk assessments, which will be a focus for the coming year through the Assurance theme.

27. The four corporate themes will build on the work already undertaken in the past nine years. They will provide a clear focus for the work of the SHAW Board in managing changes to the way it provides for safety, health and wellbeing across the Council.