



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Health
&
Safety

The Council, October 2020 Health and Safety Update

Date: 14 October 2020

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Key Issues of note

1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the mechanisms in place to ensure the University of Sheffield is meeting health and safety requirements and to highlight the actions being taken where these standards fail to be met.

Since the last report to Council, the focus of the Health and Safety Department has been almost exclusively dedicated to the management of Covid-19 and ensuring the safe return of staff and latterly students to campus. This report reflects that focus.

2. Coronavirus (Covid-19) Management

The most significant risk to staff in the last 5 months and the primary focus of the Health & Safety Department since the previous report in April 2020 has been the University response to the threat from Covid-19.

The University management of Covid-19 has been timely and proportionate and this report focuses primarily on the health and safety aspects of that more general coordinated response.

Key actions to ensure the safety of our staff and students have been:

- **Supporting Heads of Department in preparing risk assessments to allow return to research and subsequently the return to teaching.**
In preparation for a return of research staff to campus risk assessment pro forma were prepared to ensure that all relevant risks had been identified

and addressed and to ensure a high degree of consistency of approach in capturing and managing risks.

An online Covid-19 safety video was produced by the Health & Safety team that all staff were required to complete before being allowed back on campus. The video

The role of the Health & Safety Department was to support departments in assessing their multiple risks and ensuring these were being suitably addressed to prevent damage or injury, particularly in areas of reduced staffing levels.

A similar process was rolled out for the return of teaching staff to campus and in preparation for the return of students to the University.

- **Regular Return to Research and Return to Teaching Group Meetings**
The above groups were set up to ensure all stakeholders were involved in the return to campus process and that there was a clear and consistent set of messages being sent out through Corporate Communications based on the regularly updated advice of Government and Public Health England. The role of Health & Safety in these groups was to ensure that all legal compliances were being met and that all risks were being suitably assessed and managed.
- **Regular Meetings With Trades Union Safety Representatives**
Health & Safety and HR Representatives have met regularly with TU Safety Representatives throughout the return to campus process to consult on risk assessments and the implementation of safety measures that were being produced.

As teaching staff have prepared to return to campus for limited in-person teaching these meetings have moved from once per week to twice weekly to allow all concerns to be discussed.

- **Updated Guidance for staff who continue to work from home**
The University retains a duty of care for staff who are required to work from home and the Health and Safety Department produced updated guidance for staff to follow to reduce risks, particularly from use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) use at home.

In August 2020 when it became clear that the majority of staff would not be able to return to campus in the immediate future Heads of Dept. were given the facility of allowing staff to access, under safe arrangements, to take home essential IT equipment. This facility helped reduce the likelihood work-related upper limb disorders/RSI among staff working from home on inappropriate equipment.

As the lockdown situation is extended this guidance has been reviewed to include medium/long-term measures that can be taken to mitigate injury from home DSE work.

The measure of success of the above procedures is that there has only been one

confirmed case of staff-to-staff transmission of Covid-19 since staff returned to campus in June. There have been no confirmed cases of student-to-staff transmission at the time of compilation of this report. In the staff incident it was determined that the two staff members had failed to follow the social distancing requirements given out to them as part of their training prior to them returning to.

There have been a significant number of positive Covid cases in residences and in private accommodation. Public Health England and Sheffield City Council HPT regard these as 'community transmission' as they are attributed to the social activity of the returning students rather than the on-campus activities.

3. **Significant Accidents and Incidents and Trends**

There have been one significant accident in July 2020 where a member of research staff slipped on some algae and fractured her arm. On investigation, it was found that the algae had built up in an area that usually had heavy foot traffic, but due to lockdown, there had been little or no foot traffic.

Actions:

1. The accident was reported to HSE under the RIDDOR Regulations.
2. EFM ground staff carried out an inspection of all similar walkways for algal build-up.
3. Regular inspections of walkways will be carried out and recorded to prevent any similar build-up.