

# Our Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy Statement 2024/25

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.

Our People Plan links to the Council plan with a vision of creating a confident, empowered, and inclusive workforce. We actively promote a strong and positive health, safety and wellbeing culture, aiming to ensure effective policies and practices are in place that support workforce wellbeing where everyone is actively engaged.

To help us meet our duties and ensure we are promoting a strong and positive wellbeing culture, 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 will 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 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 incidents and 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 Committee 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 health, safety and wellbeing governance structure are assigned and communicated at all levels.

Directors are responsible for the effective implementation of this Health and Safety Policy and supporting arrangements within their area of responsibility.

Assistant Directors are responsible for ensuring suitable arrangements are in place to identify hazards, assess risks and implement suitable controls to effectively eliminate or manage them to reduce risk to the lowest level practicable.

Together, they will ensure sufficient resources and workforce training is made available to achieve our goals.

## Worker Participation and Engagement

We will 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 arrangements will be implemented by Council Officers and overseen by the relevant senior management teams through operational and recognised health and safety committees. Our Health and Safety governance structure is provided in chart form as an appendix to this policy.

Our governance structure ensures that discussion, consultation and participation takes place at all levels on health, safety and wellbeing matters.

We collaborate and co-produce initiatives with Trade Union employee representatives and involve them in the development, planning, implementation, performance evaluation and actions for continuous improvement.

This includes:

- Setting clear objectives to maintain and continually improve our health, safety and wellbeing performance.
- Producing clear documentation and information which is made available in a variety of delivery formats.
- Regular updates to, and strategic steer from, elected members and in particular our Cabinet Portfolio Holder.
- Providing health and safety related training in a variety of delivery formats.
- Inviting our recognised Trade Union Colleagues to co-chair health and safety committees with senior Council Officers.
- Effective communication with other stakeholders and interested parties on health safety and wellbeing matters.

## Clear Responsibility and Accountability

Our governance structure ensures that health and safety leadership is provided at the most Senior level and throughout our structure. We will not delegate our legal responsibility for the day-to-day control of risk even if third-party expertise, advice, or services are used. We are committed to deliver and request the highest standards for all those we work with.

## Effective Health and Safety Governance

We have established robust governance and performance management arrangements to ensure cross cutting organisational safety objectives are achieved. Each forum develops 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 employees, members, and contractors at all levels. Corporate health and safety procedures are reviewed, updated, and approved by the Committee following co-production and consultation.
- **Senior Officer Governance** - The Senior Officer Health and 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 are not resolved through other discussions.
- **Directorate Level Governance** - Each Directorate has established Health and Safety Committee arrangements and appointed an Assistant Director or Senior Officer to organise and chair these on a regular basis (at least quarterly) with Trade Union representatives invited to co-chair and attend.  
They will prepare action plans for continuous health and safety improvement which will be kept under regular review and if required expanded upon to describe the various functions and arrangements for health and safety to address specific risks within the Directorate.  
A schools specific health, safety and wellbeing committee is in place. 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, safety and wellbeing 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 and safe working procedures they identify are communicated and implemented. They will maintain written records of these assessments and ensure regular review particularly following incidents and significant changes.
- **Learning and Development** - We will ensure that organisational training and development plans fully reflect the requirement for the provision of adequate training and instruction, as necessary for health, safety, and wellbeing. These plans will be regularly reviewed to ensure their effectiveness. Suitable induction resources have been developed by Organisational Development for Managers use. Employee induction for new starters will be site specific and cover relevant training required, emergency arrangements as well as informing them of the findings of risk assessments and information on safe ways of working which are under the terms and conditions of their job roles.
- **Individual Responsibility** - Health and safety is everyone's responsibility and all elected members, employees, 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 our services.

Legal compliance in all areas is deemed to be the minimum standard to be attained.

Failure to follow agreed procedures or safe working practice will be taken seriously. Where required, additional information, communication, support and training will be actioned. Breaches of current legislation, our health, safety and wellbeing policy, working procedures or arrangements will be managed through the Council's disciplinary or legal procedures.

To ensure our legal compliance we will:

- Ensure health, safety and wellbeing performance and culture is kept high on our corporate agenda with effective monitoring in place to measure performance.
- Implement effective audit, monitoring and inspection arrangements.
- Benchmarking our performance against similar organisations, industry best practice and nationally recognised key performance indicators.
- Learn from accidents, incidents and significant near misses by ensuring suitable investigation/ follow-up actions are undertaken.

## Effective planning – Identifying Hazards and controlling risk

As far as reasonably practicable, 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.

Corporate Health and Safety procedures 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, emergency preparedness, documentation, procedures for managing contractors and any reviewing changes.
- **Do** - we assess risks and set effective risk control measures, consult our workforce, and obtain competent advice, obtain suitable tools, equipment, plant and machinery, and train and supervise employees. We utilise 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 including 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:

- Professionally qualified employees to provide “competent persons advice” on occupational health and safety management support to all council service areas including maintained schools and elected members.
- A professional occupational health service
- Effective training programmes, communication, and awareness campaigns.
- Internal and external communications
- 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 progressed throughout the year to maintain and further raise the profile of effective health, safety and wellbeing.
- Suitable documented information made freely available to all interested parties which can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

**Performance Management and Ongoing Learning**


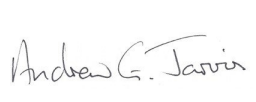

To ensure adequate health and safety standards and continual improvement. Governance and performance management systems are in place to monitor progress against the Corporate and Directorate Health and Safety Action Plans, audit findings and monitoring of accident and work-related ill health data.

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	Councillor Andrew Jarvis Deputy Leader and Health and Safety 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 2024/25.

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

Dated 4 June 2024

Next Review Date June 2025