



Blackburn with Darwen Council Annual Health, Safety Report – 2020/21

This report focuses on:

Health & Safety:

- 2020-21 accidents, incidents & near miss statistics
- RIDDOR reports
- Health & safety performance highlights and challenges
- Proposed activity for 2021-22

Our Vision:

“Providing a healthy workplace for all, where all our employees can flourish and are able to make healthier lifestyle choices.”

Health and Safety Team

Blackburn with Darwen

Borough Council

October 2021

This report has been presented to the Audit & Governance Committee for its meeting on the 26th October 2021.

- 2020/21 proved to be a challenging year for all at Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council due to the onset of the Covid pandemic. 2021/22 has seen those challenges continue as the Health and Safety team continue to help fight the ongoing effects of the pandemic.
- Throughout the period, the team has visited many key buildings and services across the council's estate offering support and guidance via inspection.
- School and council departments were provided with ongoing assistance relating to the management of staff, both at home and at work, which included enquiries relating to clinically extremely vulnerable staff, pregnant staff, display screen equipment and workstation set-ups whilst working away from the office.
- The health and safety team provided risk assessment templates for buildings, processes and individual staff members during this time. This provided a foundation upon which managers could add further controls to ensure the assessments became site/process specific.
- Whilst the Schools SLA was unfortunately disrupted during the reporting period, the health and safety team remained in close contact with key school managers, providing advice and guidance in what was a disrupted and challenging year for the school curriculum.
- The Health and Safety Team seconded team members to provide knowledge and expertise to sub-groups, including Incident management, Education Response Team and the Social Care Covid Response Group. Its members have provided an integral front line response, offering visits, support and guidance to both these important sectors.
- The team supported the Public Protection Department by conducting Covid compliance visits to faith settings, including Madrassah's, as well as to local supermarkets. Other support offered to private sector settings included local veterinary surgeries and local businesses across the Borough.
- Covid advice and visits stretched into community groups and across some specialist education centres, where this support was well received.
- The Events Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) reformed at the end of March to coordinate events that were planned following the lifting of some restrictions. Members of the Health and Safety Team sat on the Covid sub-team of ESAG to advise on the submission of event plans and risk assessments.
- The Health and Safety team continue to communicate with other departments via various meetings, including LNCC, the Health and Safety Committee and Trade Union catch – ups.
- The Health and Safety team were integral to the planning process in the run up to local elections in May. Generic risk assessments were provided to all voting and counting venues, with guidance provided as to how officers could make those documents more site specific.
- As certain departments began to consider a return to work, the Health and Safety team worked in conjunction with the Covid Response Team to ascertain office capacities with a view to maintaining social distancing.



Advice was given in relation to gradual returns, establishing rota's and ensuring restricted pinch point areas such as toilets, kitchens and meeting rooms didn't become overwhelmed.

- A checklist was established to help managers oversee the return to work of employees safely.

Health & Safety Performance

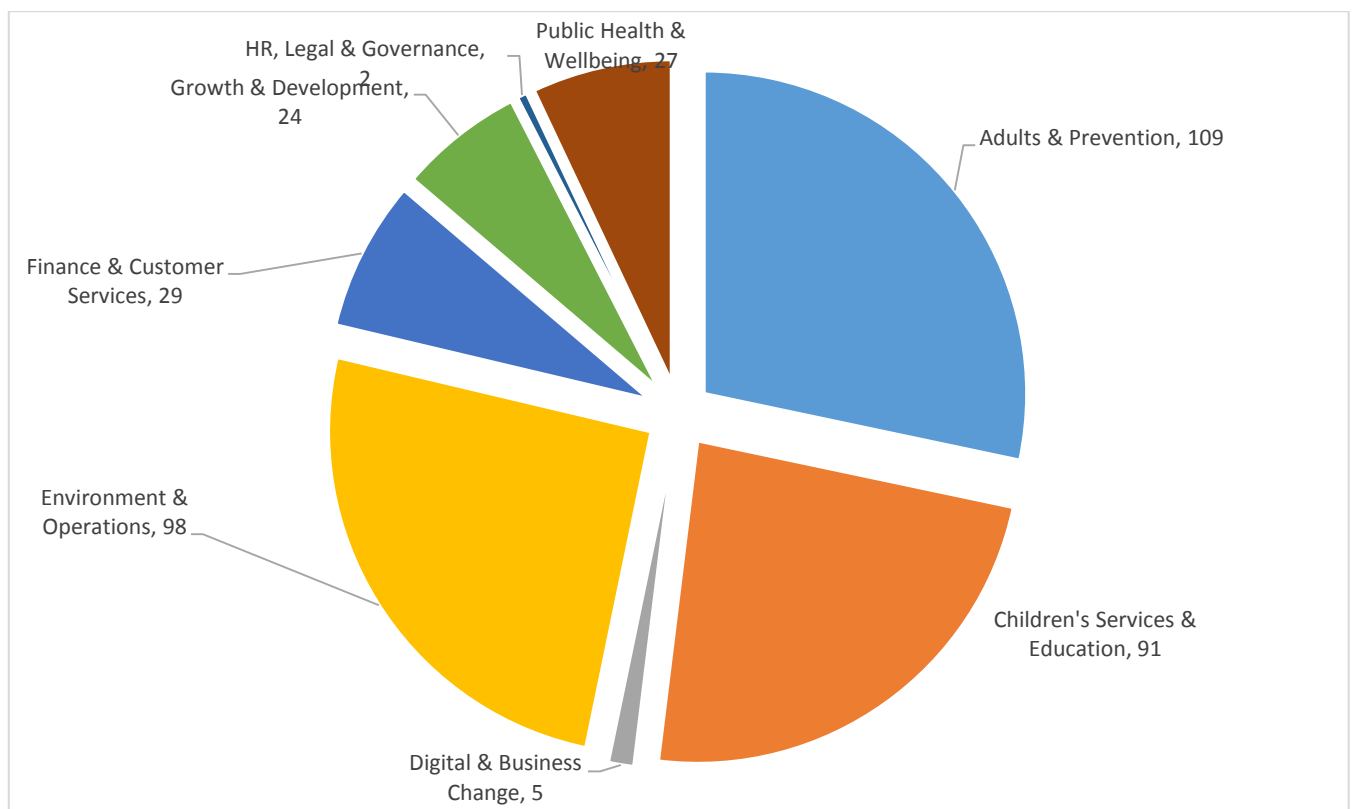
Accidents, Incidents & Near Miss Reports

There were 385 reported incidents in 2020/21, which is a significant decrease of 48% from 2019/20, where 735 incidents were reported. In the main, this is due to the number of services and buildings being closed or reduced due to the pandemic.

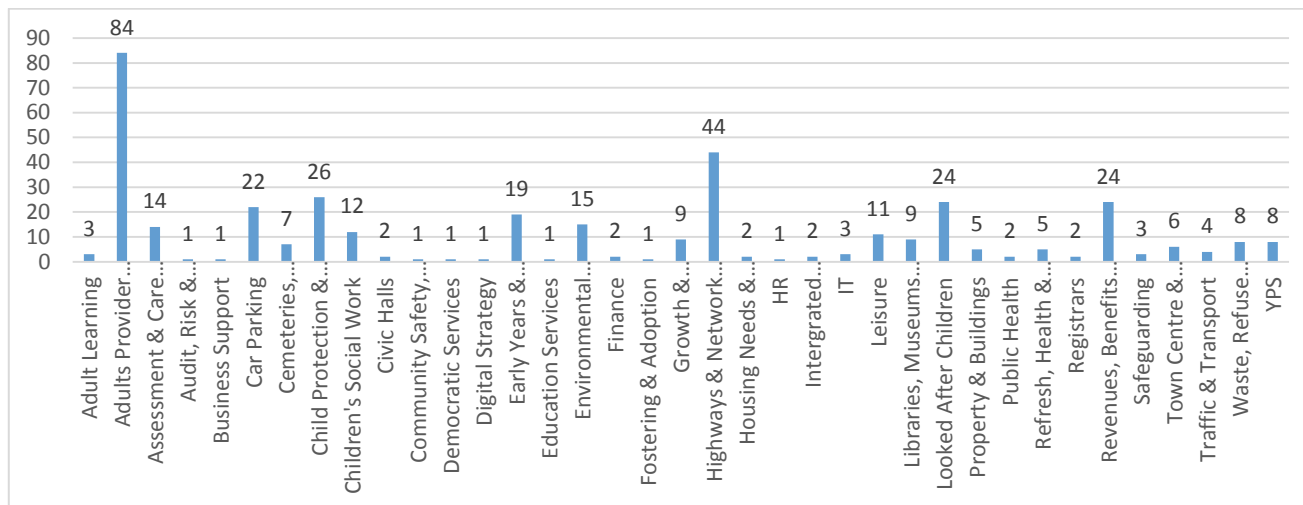
The Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team review each reported incident and, where necessary, further information is requested from departments to ensure that appropriate measures are considered and put into place to either reduce or eliminate the risk of reoccurrence.

Whilst figures may still be deemed on the high side, especially considering the reduced service, it should be noted that the higher risk departments and activities remained operational throughout the pandemic. Similarly, departments have been encouraged to report more than they had been doing in recent reporting periods, which will also be a contributing factor.

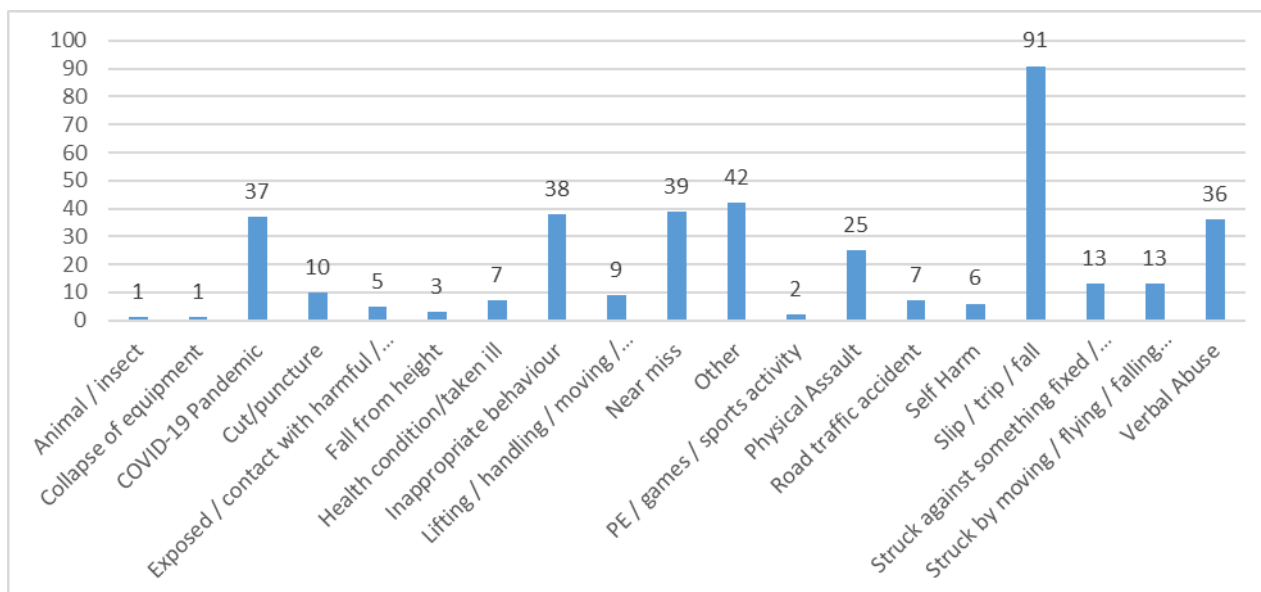
Incidents by Department



Incidents by Division



Incidents by Type



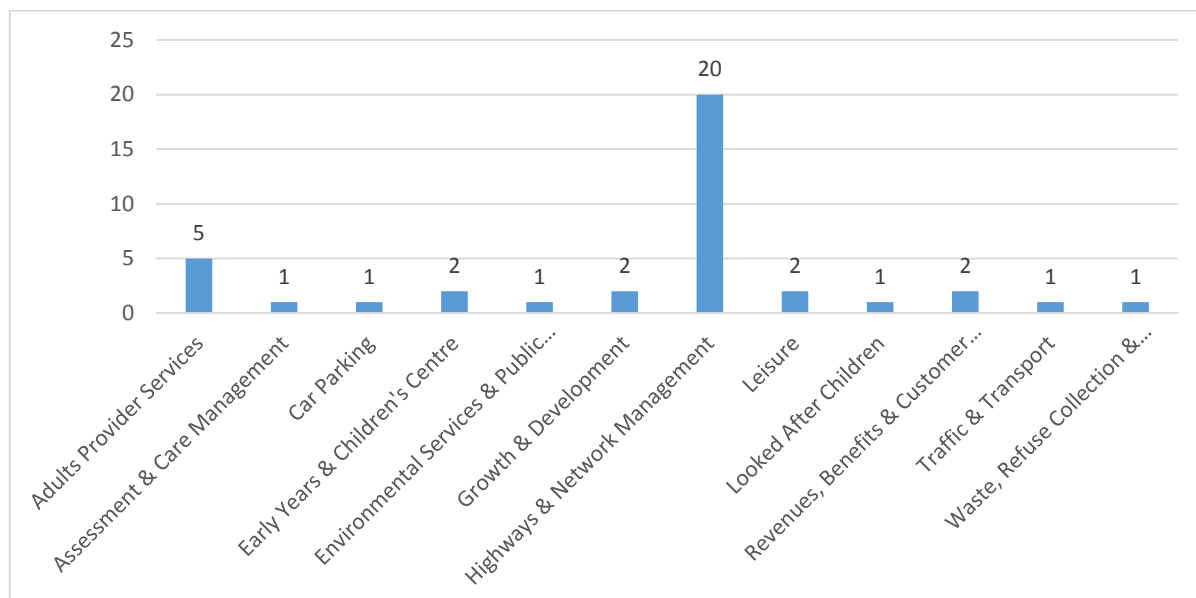
The above graph demonstrates that slips, trips and falls remain the highest contributory factor in council accidents, with the 'other' category remaining second. For the coming year's reporting, we are looking to break down this category further, thereby potentially reducing numbers in this category, but resultantly increasing elsewhere.

Covid-19 related incidents/illnesses are a new contributory factor that were not present in previous reporting.

In 2020-21 we had 39 near misses reported, against 139 in the 2019-20 period. Again, this reduction will be due to closed or reduced services.



Near Misses



RIDDOR

Cases reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

There were Seven (7) reports for 2020-21 made to the HSE, which are detailed below. In 2019-20 there were 8 cases reported.

Over Seven Day	Environment and Operations Twisted ankle - slip	Environment and Operations Slip injuring back	Environment and Operations Slip injuring back	Environment and Operations Slip injuring back and neck	Environment and Operations Movement injuring back	Third Party Contractor Vehicle incident - shock	Growth and Development Assault
Specified Injury	Refresh Health and Wellbeing Fractured Wrist fall						

RIDDOR reporting is a focus for the health team in 2021/22, with a view to reducing the overall numbers submitted. RIDDOR can be used as a positive means of MI. As an example, at the time of this report's completion (October 2021), there have been no RIDDOR's submitted to the HSE regarding our council buildings/operations since early May.

Health and Safety Significant Incidents and Challenges

Covid-19 has clearly been the main challenge for the council over the 2020-21 reporting period. It has proved both testing and confusing for the many council staff involved. Guidance has been ever changing and has often been unclear in its nature. Blackburn with Darwen has also suffered more than many other areas - and over a much longer period. This has resulted in Covid-19 being a continuing priority, putting a requirement on the health and safety team to dedicate its time and resources to this particular area. The result being, that progress has been restricted in other important areas of health and safety, allowing a more reactive response, as opposed the favoured pro-active.

Covid-19 has introduced new challenges that were not present in previous reporting regimes. There was a requirement for safe working practices specific to the virus. There were also additions to our incident rate and challenges around working remotely from home. Mental health issues were highlighted following a sustained period of remote working. Similarly, there are anxieties about returning to the workplace after such a period of being away. There was a need



for consistency and the requirement for the formulation of departmental risk assessments that had not been required previously.

Amongst the backdrop of Covid, the Health and Safety team supported the re-opening of the third and fourth floors in the Town Hall and the transfer of relevant staff from the Tower Block into the same. This had to be conducted in a controlled manner, having due regard to maximum capacities and implementing rotas to ensure staffing levels did not exceed the maximum, thereby increasing risk in the process.

Assaults and aggression in the social care sector remain a concern, as does aggression to both reception and civil enforcement staff. Health and Safety are also reviewing safe practices and procedures for slim line 'off road' sweepers following the overturning of one, having apparently driven through a large number of fallen leaves.

March saw the team's involvement in providing specialist advice to other key agencies following a significant leak from an underground petrol tank at a local filling station.

Focus for the next 12 months

Over the coming year the team intend to build on the positive work, ensuring health and safety is built in to the way the council operates. The key areas of focus and actions are:

1. *Continuing to assist with the Covid security strategy offering support and advice via site visits and helpline.*
2. *Enhancing communication with the wider council via health and safety advice notices / alerts on the intranet.*
3. *Continuing supporting schools through the Health & Safety SLA and support the LEA meet its Health and Safety obligations in Education.*
4. *Targeted campaigns to reduce accident numbers within the council – beginning with slips, trips and falls.*
5. *Assist managers with the return to the workplace with support to ongoing refurbishment work.*
6. *Create a positive health and safety culture to enable Directors and Senior Managers to take the lead.*
7. *Assisting managers to build more robust health and safety due diligence systems, both generally and in the wake of an accident.*
8. *Continue to analyse and utilise MI to shape the proactive work carried out by the team. Encourage reporting, in particular near misses, with a targeted approach to highest risk departments and those with low reporting figures.*
9. *Departments where violent or aggressive incidents are prevalent will be a focus for advisory campaigns by the team.*
10. *Provide assistance and work alongside other departments and groups to bolster systems and reduce negative publicity and claims – e.g. collaborating with insurance, Events Safety Advisory Group.*
11. *Programme of health and safety audits, monitoring visits and inspections to continue in the highest risk areas with action plans issued to ensure compliance.*
12. *The provision of health and safety assistance & advice, helping to rebuild and enhance systems at Davyfield Road, across the Leisure sector and crematorium.*

