Somerset Council

Health & Safety Policy Manual – Workplace Health, Safety And Welfare HS 020

Organisation	Somerset Council
Title	*Workplace Health Safety and Welfare HS020*
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Owner	Strategic Manager Health and Safety
Protective Marking	OFFICIAL-Unclassified
Primary Legislation	

Policy Governance

The following table identifies who within Somerset Council is Accountable, Responsible, Informed or Consulted with regards to this policy. The following definitions apply:

- **Responsible** – the person(s) responsible for developing and implementing the policy.
- **Accountable** – the person who has ultimate accountability and authority for the policy.
- **Consulted** – the person(s) or groups to be consulted prior to final policy implementation.
- **Informed** – the person(s) or groups to be informed after policy implementation.

Responsible	Corporate Health and Safety Unit
Accountable	Chief Executive
Consulted	HR, Unions, Health Safety and Wellbeing Steering Group (HSWSG)
Informed	All Members, employees, contractors, volunteers and 3rd parties

Version History

Revision Date	Author	Version	Description of Revision
April 2015	Graham Holmes	n/k	Final Revision V01
May 2018	Graham Holmes	V01	Review no significant changes V02
April 2021	Julie Rutter	V02	Review and update

Document Notification

Approval	Name	Date
Corporate Health and Safety Advisor	Graham Holmes	*April 2021*
Director of HR	Chris Squire	*April 2021*
Chair of HSWSG	Chris Squire	*April 2021*

POLICY ON A PAGE

Somerset Council will ensure that it provides safe and healthy working conditions for all its employees, volunteers, visitors and contractors.

In order to comply with the above this policy provides; the Council's rules that must be followed, the standards to be maintained and signposts to further guidance. It also highlights the risks to users, clients and the Council and the potential consequences of unauthorised access.

This document will be available to: **All Elected Members, Somerset Council Staff, 3rd Party Contractors, Secondees and Volunteers.**

Key Messages

- SC will comply with its obligations under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992.
- SC will ensure that all workplaces are regularly monitored through workplace inspections.
- SC will ensure that it provides suitable and sufficient welfare facilities.

This "policy on a page" is a summary of the detailed policy document please ensure you read, understand and comply with the full policy.

Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare

This document forms part of Somerset Council's Corporate Health And Safety policy manual, which is available on the CHSU SharePoint.

Services may supplement this policy with their own specific guidance.

1 Purpose of Policy
2 Responsibilities
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5 F20 – Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Inspection Form

1 Purpose of Policy

In the H&S policy statement (HS 001), the Council commits itself to providing safe and healthy working conditions for its employees. This policy explains how this will be done.

This policy is based on requirements set out in the Workplace Regulations 1992. It considers matters affecting the health, safety and welfare of employees:

- health (e.g. how the workplace is heated, ventilated, lit and cleaned).

- safety (e.g. how the workplace is laid out, maintained, kept tidy and safe, how traffic routes are kept safe and unobstructed -– to prevent accidents such as falls, slipping, tripping or striking against objects.

- welfare (e.g. the provision of clean and suitable toilet and washing facilities, and rest and eating facilities).

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Somerset Council will:

Comply with its obligations under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 to provide a safe and healthy workplace environment for its employees, ensuring in particular that:

- any changes to workplace arrangements (e.g. layout) will be the subject of full consultation with employees and their representatives

- regular monitoring of workplace conditions, in the form of routine inspections, takes place
- the needs of those with disabilities are considered in application of this policy, as stated under Regulation 2(3) (suitable for all, including those with disabilities).

2.2 Directors will:

- have systems and delegated responsibilities in place to ensure that the responsibilities in 2.3 are carried out in their Services.

2.3 Managers with premises or workspace responsibilities will:

- Complete the form HS F20 on a regular basis or their own equivalent form and also if there are any changes made to the work environment.
- When commissioning any maintenance or repairs to the premises:
  - ensure that any maintenance tasks undertaken are undertaken by competent people
  - consult the asbestos register before undertaking any maintenance tasks
  - check to ensure that maintenance work is completed to the standards required.

- Upon being notified of a problem by an employee:
  - investigate the problem, remembering to consult affected employees
  - take such corrective or remedial action as is deemed necessary
  - advise the employee of the course of action taken and the actual or expected outcome.

2.4 Employees will:

- not allow waste materials to accumulate in their working area and keep their workstations tidy
- act in accordance with information and training relating to housekeeping in the workplace
- notify managers if any new workplace hazards are observed
- properly use procedures and equipment provided for their workplace health, safety and welfare.

3 Managers guidance on a healthy and safe workplace

3.1 Temperature and ventilation
3.2 Lighting
3.3 Room dimensions
3.4 Workstations
3.5 Welfare facilities
3.6 Maintenance of the workplace
3.7 Housekeeping and cleaning (including management checklist)
3.8 Floors and traffic routes
3.9 Falls and falling objects
3.10 Doors and windows

3.1 Temperature in indoor workplaces

The law states that the workroom temperature should be at least 16ºC. There is no legal maximum temperature. However, it also says that employees must have *reasonable comfort* without the need for additional clothing. Most people in light sedentary occupations tend to feel comfortable between 19ºC and 25ºC.

In parts of the workplace other than workrooms, such as sanitary facilities or rest facilities, the temperature should be reasonable in all the circumstances including the length of time people are likely to be there.

For those workers working in extreme hot/cold environments, a risk assessment should be undertaken assessing factors such as body activity, the amount and type of clothing, duration of exposure, ambient temperature and radiant heat; and if the work is outside, sunlight, wind velocity and the presence of rain or snow.

What do managers need to do?

- Make thermometers available to enable temperatures to be measured throughout the workplace. These need not be provided in each workroom.
- Identify through consultation with employees, areas in the workplace where the working temperature is too cold or hot.
- Where it is not practicable to control temperature problems at source, provide alternative measures such as cooling or heating equipment.
- In extremely hot weather, fans and increased ventilation may be used instead of local cooling. Ensure that such appliances are safe and without risks to health (e.g. that they do not introduce an additional fire hazard).
- Windows or other openings may provide sufficient ventilation but, where necessary, mechanical ventilation systems should be provided and regularly maintained.
- Monitor the situation in cases of extremes of weather. Please see policy HS 033. As with other areas of health and safety, it should be managed by a co-operative approach between managers and employees, with reasonable

adjustments made to increase the comfort of employees where practical. Individual circumstances and medical conditions of employees should also be managed sensitively by a co-operative approach between both manager and employee. Such measures may include:

- Introducing work systems to limit exposure, such as flexible hours or early/late starts to help avoid the worst effects of working in high temperatures
- relaxing formal dress codes

How can employees make it more comfortable in the workplace?

There are a number of things that employees can do to improve thermal comfort in the workplace:

- Dress sensibly depending on how hot or cold you are.
- Use window blinds (if available) to cut down on the heating effects of the sun.
- Use a desk or pedestal fan to increase air movement.
- In warm situations, drink plenty of water (avoid caffeinated or carbonated drinks).
- If possible, work away from direct sunlight or sources of radiant heat.
- Take regular breaks to cool down in warm situations and heat up in cold situations.
- Raise the issue with your managers or, if you can, with your union or other workplace representatives.
- Do not impede the air flow around air duct outlets and radiators as this reduces their effectiveness.
- Open higher windows for ventilation whilst maintaining thermal comfort.

3.2 Lighting

Every workplace must be provided with suitable and sufficient lighting. Emergency lighting must be provided where necessary to facilitate escape or to enable processes to be safely shut down where there is no natural light.

- Enable and encourage the use of natural light wherever possible.
- Take precautions against glare.
- Ensure that lights are positioned to avoid risks to health and safety (e.g. risk of fire).
- Ensure that supplementary lighting is provided as necessary.

3.3 Room dimensions and space

Key points:
Workrooms should have enough free space to allow people to move about with ease.

The volume of the room when empty, divided by the number of people normally working in it, should be at least 11 cubic metres. All or part of a room over 3m high should be counted as 3m high. 11 cubic metres per person is a **minimum** and may be insufficient depending on the layout, contents and the nature of the work.

The figure of 11 cubic metres does not apply to rooms being used for meetings and similar purposes.

3.4 Workstations and seating

Workstations should be suitable for the people using them and the work they do, and able to be swiftly vacated in an emergency to reach a place of safety.
If work can or must be done sitting, seats which are suitable for the people using them need to be provided. Seating should give adequate support for the lower back, and footrests should be provided for workers who cannot place their feet flat on the floor.

- Arrange workstations so that each task can be carried out safely and comfortably (including the need for swift exit).
- Ensure that arrangements take into account the special needs of the individual worker.
- Review the arrangements for changes of personnel and work tasks.
- Provide seating for employees where their tasks allow it and provide footrests where required.

More information regarding workstations and seating for computer users is in the DSE Guidance for Managers document in policy HS 030.

3.5 Welfare facilities

Every workplace needs to have 'suitable and sufficient' welfare facilities. Welfare facilities are those necessary for the wellbeing of employees while at work. They include toilets, drinking water, rest/change facilities and somewhere to eat and drink during breaks.

Sanitary conveniences and washing facilities

These need to be conveniently situated for use by employees. Employees should not be expected to walk long distances to access these facilities or need to be exposed to the weather to access them. They need to be well lit, well ventilated and at a suitable temperature bearing in mind the time that employees are expected to be using the facilities. There must be provision for washing of hands after use including hot and cold (or warm) water, soap and a sanitary way of drying hands. The workplace regulations recommend the required number of cubicles and washbasins per number of staff, with a similar guide issued for schools also. Facilities must always be kept clean through regular cleaning.

Staff working in remote places without suitable plumbing and a water supply or temporary worksites still require access to suitable facilities such as chemical toilets, water containers, portacabins containing sanitary conveniences with running water.

Drinking water

Employees must always have access to an adequate supply of clean drinking water, the temperature of which is dependent on the working environment and type of work activity, during their working day. The facility for providing this water must be hygienic consisting of either an upward pointing water jet or by providing suitable cups. Bottled water dispensers are acceptable as a secondary supply.

Accommodation for clothing and facilities for changing

When employees are required to wear a uniform or protective equipment which necessitates the removal of their own clothing, a place suitable in capacity and with seating must be provided for this. Enough changing rooms must be available for the number of people expected to use them. The place provided must consider that privacy will be required for employees that need to change. Suitable provision must also be made for the storage of clothing belonging to the employee during the workday.

Where work clothing (including personal protective equipment) becomes dirty, damp, or contaminated due to the work, it should be accommodated separately from the employees own clothing. If it becomes wet, the facilities should enable it to be dried by the beginning of the following work period, unless other dry clothing is provided.

Facilities for rest and to eat meals

Suitable facilities must be provided for employees to take breaks and to eat meals. This area must be clean enough to allow employees to eat and drink without risk of contamination. The work area can be used as such a facility provided it is kept hygienically clean and has suitable surfaces upon which to place food, with washing facilities nearby. Employees should not be subjected to excessive disturbances

during breaks for example by contact with the public. A canteen can also be used as such a facility so long as its use carries no obligation to purchase food. Wherever hot food cannot be obtained in a reasonable distance from the workplace, employees need to be provided with a means of heating food or water for hot drinks. Consideration must be given for employees that may be pregnant or are nursing mothers. Rest areas for these persons should, as far as possible, include the facility to lie down. Smoking is not to be permitted in any area used as a rest facility, and in fact any enclosed public place or workspace, as this is against the law. Somerset Council has a smoke free policy and does not allow smoking on any of its premises except for designated smoking areas Smoking (sharepoint.com).

3.6 Maintenance of the workplace

Key points:
The workplace and associated equipment and devices must be maintained in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. Records must be kept of all maintenance.

Maintenance is required for any equipment and devices which would cause a risk to health, safety, or welfare if a fault occurred. This includes emergency lighting, fencing, fixed window cleaning equipment, anchorage points, devices for restricting the opening of windows and powered doors, etc. If a potentially dangerous defect is found, the defect should be rectified immediately or steps taken to protect anyone who might be put at risk, for example by preventing access until the defect can be put right or equipment replaced.

3.7 Housekeeping and cleaning

The terms cleaning and good housekeeping are closely linked but have different meanings.
Cleaning is broadly defined as the '*removal and proper disposal of dirt and debris*', while housekeeping is '*keeping a place for everything and everything in its place*'.

What does the law say?

The Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) requires the Council to maintain its workplaces and premises in a safe condition, which includes adequate cleaning and housekeeping arrangements.
Also, the Workplace (Health and Safety and Welfare) Regulations require:

- floors to be suitable, in good condition and free from obstruction,
- that the premises, workplace and furniture, furnishings and fittings must be kept sufficiently clean, and that
- it should be possible to keep the surfaces of floors, walls, and ceilings clean.
- cleaning intervals will depend on the use of the area, but spillages must be cleared up immediately, especially where they pose a slipping hazard.

Aside from these legal reasons, housekeeping and cleaning are an essential part of accident and occupational ill-health prevention.

The effects of untidiness and poor housekeeping

Where a workplace is dirty, or is untidy with spillages, or debris, and where equipment has been left where it was last used, a number of hazards exist, leading to the risk of accidents.

When a regime of tidiness isn't applied, the following tends to occur:

- **Increased risks of avoidable slips, trips, and falls.** These are often caused by obstructions or contaminated floors and form the most common category of reported incident in SC.
- Increased fire risks, together with the secondary effects of damaged equipment and the deterioration of the fabric of the building.
- **A casual attitude** soon develops amongst the workforce

Low standards often result from poor working practices and/or organisational deficiencies within the workplace.

Examples of poor working practices include:

- untidiness
- lack of thought and consideration by the individual
- ignoring rules and procedures.

Why does poor housekeeping happen?

Poor housekeeping tends to result from:

- badly designed systems of work
- insufficient space for work activity
- inadequate storage facilities
- lack of training or information
- poor supervision
- infrequency or inefficiency of cleaning arrangements.

4 basic precautions

- Remove waste materials on a daily basis.
- Put away things after use, especially at the end of the day or work period.
- Keep your area of the workplace clean, e.g. your desk, phone and computer.

Keeping the workplace tidy minimises the risk of accidents.

Examples of poor housekeeping:

- discarded boxes, cartons, packing materials and personal protective equipment
- poor storage of equipment, furniture, products and materials
- substances left out after use
- work surfaces littered with discarded tools

It is easier not to put items away after use in the hope someone else will, but this defeats the objective of a clean, tidy workplace.

Isn't this just common sense?

Of course good housekeeping is common sense, but you can't depend on everyone always behaving sensibly, so regular, planned, systematic checks of the workplace are essential.

3.8 Floors and Traffic Routes

'Traffic route' means a route for pedestrian traffic, vehicles, or both, and includes any stairs, fixed ladder, doorway, gateway, loading bay or ramp.

Key points:
Workplace floors and traffic route surfaces must be suitably constructed for their intended uses and be kept free from obstructions, articles or substances likely to cause slips, trips or falls.
They must not have any holes or unnecessary slopes, be uneven or slippery, and must be provided with adequate drainage where necessary.
If a floor is known regularly to become slippery when wet, then a non-slip surface must be installed where reasonably practicable.

Traffic routes must be organised to ensure that pedestrians and vehicles can move around safely.

Where necessary, parts of the workplace, including in particular doors, passageways, stairs, showers, washbasins, lavatories and workstations, should be made accessible for disabled people.

To allow people and vehicles to move safely, the best approach is to keep vehicles and pedestrians apart by ensuring that they use entirely separate routes. If people and vehicles share a traffic route, use kerbs, barriers, or clear markings to designate a safe walkway and, where pedestrians need to cross a vehicle route, provide clearly marked crossing points with good visibility. Set appropriate speed limits, and make sure they, and any other traffic rules, are obeyed. Make sure the shared route is well lit.

It is often difficult for drivers to see behind their vehicle when they are reversing; as far as possible, plan traffic routes so that drivers do not need to reverse. This can be achieved by using one-way systems and drive-through loading areas.

Criteria for defects such as subsidence, unevenness, potholes, collection of surface water, cracks and ruts should be determined and set, and maintenance systems developed to undertake repair when these limits are exceeded.

3.9 Falls or falling objects

Suitable and effective means must be taken to prevent persons or goods falling from a height. Where there is a risk of

- falling either from a height or into a tank containing dangerous substances or
- of objects falling onto people,

You need to:

1. install appropriate fencing or covers to prevent falls
2. clearly indicate the danger
3. Where fencing or covers cannot be provided, or have to be removed, install a safe system of work including access restrictions, instruction, supervision, training and, where appropriate, permit-to-work systems and the provision of PPE including safety harnesses etc.
4. Where it is not possible to prevent falling objects, provide appropriate personal protective equipment.
5. Ensure that changes of level that are not obvious are marked to make them conspicuous.
6. Ensure that materials and objects are stored and stacked in such a way that they are not likely to fall and cause injury.

3.10 Doors, Walls and Windows

a) Safety glazing

Injuries involving a laceration or similar from collision with glazing can be serious. We must prevent these types of accidents and ensure that we implement the instructions below:

Key point:
If there is a danger of people coming into contact with a transparent or translucent surface it must be made of safety material or protected against breakage

For full details about SC safety glazing requirements, read the SC Property Standard

This Standard explains the requirement in Building Regulations that all glazing fitted in **'critical locations'** in a building should either: -

- break safely, if it breaks
- be robust or in small panes

- be permanently protected with a screen or barrier

b) Openable windows and the ability to clean them safely

Key points:
If any window or skylight is capable of being opened then it must be safe to open, close or adjust, and must not cause a risk once opened.
Windows and skylights should be designed so that they may be cleaned safely.

When considering if they can be cleaned safely account must be taken of the ease of access, the equipment used as well as devices fitted to the building.

- Assess whether the action of opening, closing or adjusting any window, skylight or ventilator presents any risk to safety.
- If any windows and skylights are not capable of being cleaned safely then suitable provision must be made to permanently resolve this problem.

c) Doors and gates

Doors and gates must be suitably constructed and where necessary fitted with safety devices.

- Doors and gates that swing both ways and conventionally hinged doors on main traffic routes should have a transparent viewing panel.
- Sliding doors and gates must be fitted with devices to prevent them from leaving their tracks.
- Upward-opening doors or gates need to be fitted with an effective device to prevent them falling back.
- Power-operated doors and gates should have safety features to prevent people being struck or trapped and must be able to be operated manually unless they open automatically during a power failure.

4 Links

- www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg244.pdf Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare: A Short Guide for Managers
- www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/L24.htm L24 Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 — Approved Code of Practice
- Welfare at work – Guidance for employers on welfare provisions - www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg293.pdf
- SC Corporate Property Standard – Safety Glazing, Issue 5:
- Thermal comfort HSE - Thermal Comfort: Homepage
- DfE advice template (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Appendix 1

Governance Arrangements

Policy Compliance

If any employee is found to have breached this policy, they may be subject to Somerset Council's disciplinary procedure.

Where it is considered that a criminal offence has potentially been committed, the Council will consider the need to refer the matter to the police.

If you do not understand the implications of this policy or how it may apply to you, seek advice from the Corporate Health and Safety Unit.

Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed as it is deemed appropriate, but no less frequently than every 36 months.

Policy review will be undertaken by rolling programme established by the CHSU and agreed by the HSWSG