

# HEALTH AND SAFETY HANDBOOK

**March 2023**

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Introduction

As a Harlow Council employee you need to be aware of our health and safety arrangements. This guide has been prepared to provide you with details of general health and safety arrangements and how you can play your part in keeping your workplace safe.

It is our policy to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of all persons working both on Council premises and delivering Council services.

Although the Chief Executive has overall responsibility for health and safety, implementation is delegated to individual services via the Directors and the Wider Leadership Team.

Managers must ensure that all work environments are safe and have systems in place to assess risk, report accidents, aggressive incidents, and hazards, and implement appropriate control measures.

The promotion of health and safety measures is however a mutual obligation for management and employees at all levels.

The Chief Executive, through the line management structure will ensure that the Council's Health and Safety Policy is implemented.

All employees also have a responsibility for safety and if you find anything that you think is unsafe or may become unsafe report it to your Manager straight away, they can then take action to make it safe.

### Associated Documents

Safety Policy

Kaonet > Health & Safety

## Useful Contact Numbers

### Health and Safety Team

Jackie Davies – Senior Corporate Health & Safety Officer 6499

E mail: [safety.officer@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:safety.officer@harlow.gov.uk)

### Environmental Health / Health & Safety

Norah Nolan – Interim Environmental Health Manager 6132

### Unison

E mail : [unison@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:unison@harlow.gov.uk) or by telephone on 6654

# Health and Safety Handbook

Index	Page
Introduction	2
Accident and Aggressive Incident Reporting and Investigation	4
Alcohol and Drugs	5
Asbestos	6
Contractors	7
Disabilities	8
Display Screen Equipment (DSE)	9
Driver Safety and Workplace Transport	10
Electricity	11
Fire Safety	12
First Aid	13
Hazardous Substances	13
Health Surveillance	14
Home Working	14
Lone Working and Personal Safety	15
Manual Handling	16
New and Expectant Mothers	16
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	17
Risk Assessment	18
Risk Assessment Terminology	18
Safety Co-ordinators and Safety Representatives	19
Working at height	19
Safety Committee	20
Slips, Trips and Falls	20
Smoking	21
Temporary or Casual Staff and Volunteers	21
Training	22
Violence and Aggression	23
Young People	24

## Accident and Aggressive Incident Reporting and Investigation

All employees must be aware that:

- All accidents must be reported using the Accident/Incident form – There is one for Staff use and another for reporting an accident to a member of the public which is also accessible for the public to complete themselves directly online – Contact Harlow will assist with all online reports going onto the Achieve recording system
- For staff accidents the employee concerned will ensure that the relevant parts of the form are fully completed
- Line Managers **must** complete Part 4 of the staff form and then forward to the Health and Safety Team
- Managers must investigate all accidents to staff
- Aggressive incidents, involving an employee being subjected to verbal, physical, aggressive or intimidating behaviour must be reported to their relevant Line Manager, who has access to the Staff Safety Register, (SSR). A process will commence where upon there may be a Cautionary Contact added to the register to warn other members of staff of the potential risk in any further correspondence.

Some accidents/incidents are reportable to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). This is done by notifying the Health & Safety Team on extension 6499. The types of accidents that are reportable include:

- If an accident results in an employee being absent from work or unable to carry out their full range of duties for over 7 days
- Major injury such as fracture (other than to fingers, thumbs or toes), amputation, dislocation, loss of sight (temporary or permanent)
- Immediate hospital treatment for more than 24 hours
- Death either immediate or within 12 months of the workplace accident
- Dangerous occurrence as defined by the regulations
- Occupational disease as defined by the regulations
- An accident to a person not at work such as visitor, member of the public, that requires hospital treatment, (routine observation and reassurance are not included as reportable)

Accident/incident investigation is part of the process in reducing workplace accidents, incidents and injuries. In the first instance accident investigation for minor incidents will fall to the relevant Line Manager and completion of the Line Managers report on the accident/incident form is usually sufficient. For reportable accidents the Health & Safety Team will undertake an investigation, liaising with the Insurance Section and relevant Team.

The purpose of any accident/incident investigation is not to lay blame but to identify causes and develop strategies to prevent recurrences.

It is equally as important to report any near misses to ensure that an effective history is recorded. Identifying potential hazards through near miss reporting can reduce or stop accidents/incidents happening in the first place.

### Associated Documents

Accident Reporting Policy  
Accident Investigation Policy  
Aggression in the Workplace Policy  
Report Forms  
Guidance to Completing Forms  
Staff Safety Register Policy

Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet> Health & Safety

## Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and drug use before or during work can have a serious impact on a business. This not only includes lateness, absenteeism, loss of productivity and poor performance. More importantly carrying out safety sensitive work, such as driving, under the influence of alcohol or drugs will significantly increase the risk of an accident.

Alcohol and drug use reduces a person's physical co-ordination and reaction speeds. It also affects thinking, judgment and mood.

If an employer knowingly allows an employee, who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, to continue working and this places the employee or others at risk or results in an accident, then the employer could be prosecuted.

In the Harlow Council Staff Handbook dated 01 December 2000 pages 3.34 – 3.37 state the Harlow Council policy on drugs and alcohol. Both the drugs and alcohol sections have paragraphs which state:

“You are expressly forbidden to consume alcohol when at work. You should not consume alcohol immediately before work or during your lunch break to the extent that it will affect safety in the workplace or efficiency.

The only exception is when employees are attending a formal function where limited consumption of alcohol has been authorised by a senior manager. At such times employees will be expected to behave responsibly.”

“You are expressly forbidden to bring illegal drugs into the workplace, or to use them while at work or supply or sell them to other employees. This prohibition also extends to the misuse of substances such as glue or solvents or prescription drugs.

You should not attend for work if you are under the influence of any drug, whether legal or illegal, which could affect your work performance in any way.

Harlow Councils Disciplinary Procedure states that:

‘Being incapable of adequately performing duties as a result of the abuse of alcohol or illegal drugs’ will be considered as gross misconduct.

If you have any concerns regarding issues relating to alcohol or drugs please contact Human Resources for further advice.

### Associated Documents

Disciplinary Procedure

Kaonet > Human Resources

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Asbestos

The law places specific responsibilities on employers and controllers of premises to manage asbestos. Below is some information on asbestos, this is not a comprehensive guide. Before starting any work in a Council property please check the Councils policy on asbestos and the risk assessments relating to asbestos. These are available on the Kaoent. The Contracts & Compliance Team can assist further in this area as required.

### What is Asbestos?

There are three main types of asbestos commonly known as white, brown and blue asbestos. They cannot be identified just by their colour but by laboratory analysis.

Historically asbestos has been used extensively in buildings, including Council Housing, due to its thermal insulation, fireproofing, physical strength and low cost.

The most severe health effects, including Mesothelioma, Lung Cancer and Asbestosis, were not evident until years after the first exposures allowing the asbestos industry to grow and establish itself.

### Asbestos containing materials (ACM's) can include:

- Insulation boards
- Some cement products including roofing materials, wall cladding and bath panels
- Acoustic and thermal insulation products
- Fire retardant materials
- Textured coatings

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2006 has been introduced to better control the risk from Asbestos and ACM's in Commercial properties. Commercial properties specifically include the common parts of flat blocks and supported housing complexes.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places a specific duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees. This responsibility includes ensuring staff, that are required to work in Council managed premises, houses and flats etc. are not exposed to asbestos and ACM's.

If left undisturbed and intact asbestos containing materials will not pose a danger to health. If you think you have asbestos in your workplace or have any concerns relating to asbestos please contact the Housing Property Asbestos Surveyor on 6378.

### Associated Documents

Management of Asbestos  
Generic Risk Assessments

Kaonet > Housing Property Services  
Kaonet > Housing Property Services

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Contractors

A contractor is anyone who is brought in to carry out work for Harlow Council who is not an employee or an agency worker.

There are specific health and safety responsibilities for both Harlow Council and any contractors the Council use. They are there to protect the contractor, the Council, Council employees and anyone else such as visitors or members of the public.

All parties must co-operate to ensure that health and safety is properly managed, this will avoid things going wrong in the first place.

Work undertaken by a contractor for the Council is usually covered by a civil contract. It is good practise to write health and safety requirements into the contract. Health and safety responsibilities are defined by criminal law and cannot be transferred from one party to another by contract.

In any client/contractor relationship both parties will have health and safety responsibilities. Similarly, if a contractor subcontract all or some of the work to other contractors then all parties will have health and safety responsibilities.

Before starting any work, the Council will need to decide what work they want included in the contract and what work falls into preparation and completion phases of the contract.

The level of risk will depend on the type of work being done. Whatever the risks, the Council needs to decide what health and safety implications there are of the job required.

Before selecting a contractor, the Council will need to satisfy itself that the contractor has the skills and competence to carry out and complete the required work without risk to health and safety. Equally the contractor must also have the skills and competence to appraise the competence of any sub contractors used.

A risk assessment of the work to be done must be carried out. This task is best done by the Council and contractor together. They must then agree what preventative and protective steps need to be taken to allow the work to be done safely.

All parties must decide what information should be passed to each other about their work activities and any risks involved, including any safety rules.

During the period of work the contractors must be properly supervised and work managed by the Council. The greater the impact on health and safety of the work undertaken the greater the supervision and management responsibilities of the Council.

Work relating to Council house maintenance and grounds maintenance etc. is now managed by HTS (Property & Environment) Ltd.

Larger contracts for work such as building maintenance will normally require managing in accordance with the Construction Design and Management Regulations (CDM).

## Disabilities

Harlow Council has a duty to all staff with regard to health and safety. There is also specific legislation that applies to workers with disabilities.

Staff with long term health conditions or disabilities may require specific risk assessment to ensure that the work they do does not put them at risk of harm or further impairment.

By working together employers and disabled workers can get to grips with the disability and health and safety.

For the process to work best it is important to involve the disabled worker in all aspects of the assessment.

A PEEP, (Personal emergency Evacuation Plan), will be carried out by the Line Manager, assisted as required by Health & Safety, to ensure all possible preventions are in place for the member of staff with mobility impairment, to enable a safe and efficient evacuation of the building, whilst ensuring their own safety and that of other employees.

This will help prevent assumptions being made about the individual worker and their disability and help avoid staff hiding a disability or impairment that has health and safety implications for fear they will not keep their job.

For further help or information please contact the Health & Safety Team or Human Resources.



## Display Screen Equipment

Most staff at Harlow Council will use display screen equipment, (DSE), as part of their work and for some this will be part of their regular duties.

It is generally recognised that using display screens can be undertaken without undue risks to health, however it is appreciated that some employees may have general reservations and concerns.

Here are a few things to remember that can help you when using display screens:

- Adjust your chair and display screen to a comfortable position before you start work, this is particularly important if you share a desk with other people
- Your arms should be horizontal and your eyes should be at or above the height of the top of your display screen
- Make sure you have enough space under your desk to move your legs freely
- Your feet should be flat on the floor and your legs at right angles. If your feet cannot sit flat on the floor you may require a footrest
- Arrange your desk and screen so that bright lights are not reflected in the screen
- Use the brightness control on the screen to suit the lighting conditions in the room
- Make sure you have sufficient space to carry out the work to be undertaken
- Clear any clutter from your desk and only keep things on it that you use regularly
- Do not sit in the same position for long periods. Change your position at regular intervals, but avoid doing repeated stretching movements
- Adjust your keyboard for a good keying position, do not bend your hands up at the wrists when keying, try to keep a soft touch on the keys and do not overstretch your fingers

It is important to take regular breaks from using a display screen so rotate your work activities to allow for regular breaks. Whilst using a display screen look away from the screen from time to time and focus on something in the distance.

You should make full use of the adjustment facilities of your chair and display screen to get the best from them and in turn avoid any potential health problems.

### Associated Documents

Display Screen Equipment Policy

[Kaonet > Health & Safety](#)

Self Assessment Checklist

[Kaonet > Health & Safety](#)

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Driver Safety and Workplace Transport

Some jobs may require you to drive, this can either be your own or a Council vehicle.  
In all instances this advice will apply to all staff, volunteers, agency staff and Councillors.

### Driver Safety:

Before and during the journey

- Plan your route in advance so there is no need to stop for directions
- Ensure you have sufficient petrol, oil and water and you have checked the tyre pressures
- Have a means of communication in case of breakdown
- Keep doors locked, especially in slow moving traffic
- Do not pick up hitch hikers
- Do not use mobile phones whilst driving
- Do not drink alcohol or use drugs before driving
- Ensure you have appropriate car insurance and your vehicle is taxed and has a valid MOT if required
- Do not drive unless you have a valid drivers licence
- You must inform your Line Manager or Human Resources if you have any medical conditions or short term health problems, or if you are taking any medication that would impair your driving ability

Parking and leaving the vehicle

- Park in a well lit area
- Only park on a driveway if you have permission to do so
- Only park in restricted areas if you have the correct permits and do not park in such a way as to contravene the Road Traffic Act or any other regulations or restrictions
- Lock all doors and boot when leaving vehicle, even if you are away from the vehicle for a few minutes
- Do not leave valuables on display
- Have your keys ready on return to the vehicle and check the back seat before getting in

### Driving Council Owned Vehicles:

The Council has a small fleet of vehicles that are used by some services to carry out the functions of that service. They include ambulances carrying clients to the Leah Manning Centre, minibuses used by Community Services, a Re-cycling van and the Councils post van.

Employees will be required to complete a Driving at Work Declaration Form annually.

Due to DVLA changes, endorsements and penalty points are no longer recorded on paper driving licenses or counterparts. In view of insurance requirements, the Council may independently check these details in addition to requiring employees' confirmation on the Annual Declaration Form/New Employee Form.

Any employee driving a fleet vehicle that has an accident may be asked by the Health & Safety Team to carry out an external driving competency test. This would assess observation, reaction and driving skill and will be certificated for personal HR file. Refer to the Driving at Work Policy for more information.

### Driving your own Vehicle for Council Work

Many members of staff use their own vehicle for Council work and are paid a car mileage allowance.

If you fall into this category the Council will have an expectation that the vehicle is being properly maintained. It will be necessary for employees to sign an annual declaration confirming your insurance status, valid MOT (if req) and notification of any medical, physical or mental conditions that may affect your driving. Refer to the Driving at Work Policy for more information.

#### Associated Documents

Driving at Work Policy

Driving at Work Annual Declarations

Kaonet > Health & Safety

Kaonet > Driving at Work

## Electricity

Electricity kills and injures people. Around 1000 electrical accidents at work are reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) each year and about 30 people die of their injuries. Even non-fatal shocks can cause severe permanent injuries.

Most of these accidents can be avoided by careful planning and straightforward precautions.

The risk of injury from electricity is strongly linked to where and how it is used. The risks are greatest when used in harsh conditions such as in the wet, out of doors and in cramped conditions.

All electrical equipment can potentially be dangerous and should be given a visual check before use to ensure that there is no obvious damage. Extension leads are particularly prone to damage (cable, plug and socket), and can often be the cause of a trailing cable that can result in a trip hazard. Long term use of extension leads is an indication of insufficient sockets or sockets located in the wrong place.

Use of the risk assessment process can greatly reduce unacceptable risks from electrical equipment used in the workplace.

New electrical systems should be installed to an appropriate standard and maintained to a safe condition. Existing installations should be properly maintained.

Providing safe and suitable equipment that is properly maintained will reduce risks. All electrical equipment should be maintained to prevent danger. This should include visual inspections and where appropriate testing by a competent person.

If you suspect an item is faulty it must be taken out of use and clearly labelled 'DO NOT USE' and kept secure until it has been examined by a competent person.

Portable appliances will be subject of a test approximately every 3 years. Services will be required to maintain an up-to-date inventory of electrical equipment in order that the tests can be carried out. The inventory will also include personal work items of electrical equipment that are used for site visits.

Individual areas with more specialist electrical equipment will make their own arrangements for more frequent testing.

The electrical installation of Council buildings is subject to a periodic installation test as recommended by the Institute of Electrical Engineers. There is no mandatory requirement to have a PAT test schedule.

### Associated Documents

Electricity at Work

Kaonet > Health & Safety



## Fire Safety

### Evacuation

#### Do you know:

- What the fire alarm sounds like where you work?
- Where the nearest evacuation route is?
- How to raise the alarm?
- Where the assembly point is?
- Do you know when regular fire alarm checks take place?

#### If you do not know ask your Manager now

#### If you hear the alarm:

- Do not go back to collect personal items
- Close doors behind you
- Leave by the nearest fire exit
- Do not run or panic
- Do not use the lifts
- Go straight to the assembly point and stay there until advised otherwise
- Do not go back into the building until told it is safe to do so

### Fire Escape Routes:

Fire escape routes must be kept clear at all times. Internal fire doors stop fire spreading, these must be kept closed. Fire escape routes must never be locked when people are in the building.

On leaving the building, during an evacuation, any personal doorstops must be removed and doors closed.

### Which extinguisher should I use?

It can be dangerous to use the wrong type of extinguisher. The most common types of extinguishers found in Council buildings are detailed below. **All fire extinguishers are coloured red.**

Type of extinguisher	How it works	For use on this type of fire
Foam	Smothering and cooling	Burning liquids, chip pan fires, petrol fires
Dry Powder	Smothering	Burning liquids, electrical fires, pan fires
Water	Cooling	Wood, paper, cloth or wool
Carbon Dioxide	Smothering	Burning liquids and electrical fires
Fire Blanket	Smothering	Pan fires or when a persons clothes are on fire

**REMEMBER NEVER ATTEMPT TO PUT OUT A FIRE IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN TRAINED OR YOU DO NOT FEEL COMPETENT TO DO SO**

### Associated Documents

Fire Safety Policy  
Fire Safety Plans

Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety

## First Aid

### Do you know:

- What to do in an emergency?
- Who your first aider is?
- Where the first aid box is?
- Who you should report an accident or near miss to?

In the Civic Centre there are lists of first aiders in the kitchens on each floor.

There is a full list of first aiders on the Kaonet naming all the qualified first aiders and the sites where they work and their contact telephone numbers. The main first aid station with an AED (Defibrillator), is located in the first aid room on the ground floor of the Civic Centre, in the large orange grab bag.

It is important to report accidents so they can be investigated. Action can then be taken to prevent a similar accident happening to someone else. You should report all accidents to your Line Manager and you should also complete the relevant reporting form available on the Health and Safety page of the Kaonet.

### Associated Documents

First Aider List

Kaonet > Health & Safety

## Hazardous Substances

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) is in place to protect people from substances that can cause serious health problems.

A COSHH assessment must be carried out in order to justify the purchase and use of any substance hazardous to health. This assessment will include recording findings with regard to applications of the following hierarchy:

- Elimination of hazard
- Substitution of alternative less hazardous materials
- Risk reduction by using engineering controls
- Provision of sufficient information, instruction and training
- Use of personal protective equipment (as a last resort)

The COSHH assessment will have identified the control measures that must be in place and followed. All employees have a duty to ensure their own safety as well as others and must have had the necessary training and instruction to do this. Usually, a material safety data sheet will be readily to hand.

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Health Surveillance

Some jobs may require you to have health surveillance, this may be routine health surveillance due to the type of work you do, or specialist health surveillance carried out as a result of a specific task you have done.

Generally, the need for health surveillance will be identified as a result of risk assessment. If you think you require health surveillance, as a result of the work you do, speak to your Line Manager or contact the Health & Safety Team who can advise you further on health surveillance.

The types of routine health surveillance includes:

- Audiometry – hearing tests for employees exposed to loud noises
- Hand Arm Vibration – an assessment for employees using vibrating work equipment
- Lung Function – assessments for those working in dusty atmospheres
- Musculoskeletal – an assessment where manual handling or repetitive movements forms a significant part of a job

The types of specialist health surveillance includes:

- Hepatitis – immunisation where an employee is at risk of coming into contact with the Hepatitis B virus
- Mercury – a blood test where there is a risk of an employee coming into contact with mercury

Health surveillance for Harlow Council employees is carried out by Harlow Occupational Health Service.

## Home Working

Harlow Council has a responsibility for the health and safety of its staff at their place of work. If you work from home then this is your place of work, and a home working risk assessment must be carried out. An assessment will be required if you regularly work one or more days a week at home.

If appropriate and required, a Health & Safety Officer will visit you at home to ensure that the type of work you do at home does not put you or anyone else in the home at risk from the type of work being carried out.

You will only be considered as a home worker if your contract of employment reflects that you work all or part of the time from home. You should check with Human Resources if you are unsure as to your working status.

**Following the Covid 19 pandemic, (March 2020), a new way of working has been established in the form of hybrid working arrangements. Staff are working more flexibly from the office and home, in accordance with the work needs, and following discussions with individual Managers. Any queries, issues or concerns should be directed to your Line Manager and Health & Safety for any additional guidance and support as necessary.**

### Associated Documents

Home Working Policy

Kaonet > Health & Safety

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Lone Working and Personal Safety

### Lone Working:

Risk assessments must be in place in respect of lone workers.

Lone workers are employees who work by themselves without close or direct supervision and no other workers or people are present. This can include staff working in Council buildings out of normal office hours.

### Personal Safety:

Whether you are working on or off site here are a few points to remember to protect your personal safety:

- Do not leave personal belongings on view, this will only lead to temptation
- If you find or see something suspicious report it immediately
- If you are working late tell someone where you are, and remember to tell them when you leave
- If you are working on your own tell someone where you are and know how to summon help if you need to
- If you are going off site or out of the office leave details of where you are going and how long you will be. If your plans change let someone know
- Do not carry large sums of money or valuables
- If you have been provided with a form of personal alarm or other similar equipment ensure that you know how to use it and that it is in working condition, and where possible make use of this as a form of personal protective equipment

### Personal Safety (home visits):

- Refer to the Staff Safety Register, (SSR), to see if the property that you are attending is flagged as a Cautionary Contact – Precautions are in place for employees to follow with regard to personal safety measures, (visit in pairs, written correspondence, only to be seen by the Manager)
- If you are carrying out a visit introduce yourself and show your identification
- If carrying out a home visit do not enter if the person you expected to meet is not present. You should not enter premises if children or young adults are alone without any adult supervision
- If there is a dog present, ask the owner to remove the dog to another room
- Check exit routes and position yourself for easy removal from the area

If for any reason you feel uncomfortable or not confident with the situation withdraw and contact the office for advice or assistance.

### Associated Documents

Staff Safety Register  
Lone Working Policy  
Lone Working – Home Visits

Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety



# Health and Safety Handbook

## Manual Handling

Manual handling is defined as the transporting or supporting of any load, which also includes a person or an animal.

Some staff may be involved with manual handling as an everyday part of their job, for others there may only be an occasional need to carry out a manual handling operation. In all cases you still need to consider manual handling issues before you start.

Some general points to remember to help you lift or move items safely:

- Has a risk assessment been carried out for the task?
- Do you really need to lift or move this item?
- Decide how you will move it before you start?
- Can you split the load to make it lighter?
- Can you use mechanical means rather than a manual move?

### How to lift safely:

- Position your feet apart to get a stable base
- Bend from your knees not your back
- Get a firm grip of the item to be moved
- Keep the load close to your body
- Lift the item in a smooth manner

You should not attempt to move something if you do not feel able, remember to ask colleagues for assistance if necessary.

### Associated Documents

Manual Handling Policy  
Manual Handling – Generic Risk Assessments

Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety

## New and Expectant Mothers

There are specific laws that require an employer to protect the health and safety of new and expectant mothers, and whilst breast feeding.

Being pregnant does not prevent you from working, but in some workplaces, there may be hazards that affect the health and safety of new and expectant mothers and that of their child.

While you do not need to tell your employer you are pregnant, it is important for your health and safety that you notify them as early as possible so that a specific risk assessment can be carried out.

You may be at risk from different physical, chemical, and biological agents, working conditions and work processes. These risks will vary depending on your health and at the different stages of your pregnancy.

Risk assessments must also be carried out if you return to work within six months of giving birth or if you are breast feeding. You should tell your line manager in writing whether either of these applies so that risk assessments can be carried out.

## Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is any equipment designed to be worn or held by a person at work to protect against one or more risks.

PPE should only be selected following risk assessment of the task and where possible, measures should be implemented to control the risk at source. PPE should only be used if it is not reasonably practicable to control the risk by other means which are equally or more cost effective.

PPE should be appropriate for the hazard and provide the necessary protection from the risks. The choice of PPE should take account of the comfort of the wearer and whether it fits well enough to achieve the protection specified. It should also be effective to prevent exposure or adequately control the risk involved without increasing the overall risk. All PPE should comply with the relevant legal requirement on design or manufacture.

**The main types of PPE are:**

- **Head protection** such as crash helmets, industrial safety helmets
- **Eye protection** such as safety glasses or goggles
- **Foot protection** such as steel toe cap or anti-pierce soled boots
- **Hand protection** such as gloves that are for specific hazards
- **Body protection** such as stab vests
- **Respiratory protection** such as respirators, dust mask
- **Other** such as high visibility clothing

There are benefits in using PPE, it is often low cost, it can be used as a short-term measure for low risks and it is portable. Where an assessment shows that it is required then it must be provided free of charge.

However, there are also limitations in using PPE. It does not remove or reduce the hazard at source, most PPE is designed to fit the average person so may not fit all users, PPE will eventually fail if not renewed regularly and it can also introduce new hazards such as using ear protection in a noisy environment can inhibit the wearer hearing warning signals or other dangers.

When providing PPE ensure that the items selected are compatible with other forms of PPE that may be required for the same task i.e., hearing and head protection should offer the same protection when worn together. Ensure that the choice of PPE offers comfort for the wearer and should fit well enough to achieve the protection specified.

Staff using PPE should be given sufficient information, instruction, and training on the use, fit, maintenance and the limitations of the PPE. PPE that is well maintained and kept in an efficient state will offer most protection.

Staff should report any faults or defects with their PPE to their Line Manager immediately and should not carry out the task for which the PPE was provided for.

### Associated Documents

Personal Protective Equipment Policy

Kaonet > Health & Safety

## Risk Assessment

The law (Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999) requires every employer to assess risks in the workplace. The Chief Executive has delegated this task to individual Directors/Managers as part of their day-to-day management duties. The Health and Safety Team will provide guidance and assistance when required.

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what in your workplace could cause harm to people. You can then decide whether you have taken enough precautions or need to do more to prevent harm occurring. It is the first step to making the workplace safe and healthy and the aim is to ensure that no-one gets hurt or becomes ill. Risks to workers should be assessed together with the risk to any other people who may be affected by their work process.

### How to assess the risk in your workplace (5 steps to risk assessment)

**Step 1: Look for the hazards**

**Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how**

**Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done**

**Step 4: Record your findings**

**Step 5: Review your assessment and revise it if necessary**

#### Associated Documents

Risk Assessment Policy

[Kaonet > Health & Safety](#)

Generic Risk Assessment Forms

[Kaonet > Health & Safety](#)

## Risk Assessment Terminology

The following terms are used in risk assessment but do not be put off by them. They are common to all risk assessment processes and mean the following:

- **Hazard** – Something with the potential to cause harm. This can include substances, machines, methods of work and work organisation
- **Risk** – This is the chance or likelihood that someone will be harmed by the hazard (a trailing cable is a hazard - someone tripping over it is the risk)
- **Harm** – Is physical injury or ill health to those exposed to the hazard
- **Consequence** – The result of the hazard being realised, i.e. if harm occurs the consequence may be an injury
- **Control Measures** – Are any measures in place to reduce the risks in the workplace, for example, procedures, mechanical devices and personal protective equipment
- **Significant Findings** – These are identified hazards which pose serious risk to all people who might be affected by the activity

**Risk assessments should be practical and should involve all employees. Local knowledge is vital to enable the appropriate control/safe working practices to be put in place.**

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Safety Representatives

Harlow Council fully acknowledges the role of Safety Representatives and encourages their involvement in matters relating to health and safety at work as outlined in the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996.

Safety representatives are appointed by the recognised trade unions. To find out whom the safety representatives are either contact a UNISON official or Human Resources.

## Safety Committee

Harlow Council has a Safety Committee that is Chaired by the Assistant Director - Environment and which has representatives from each Team as well as UNISON.

The Safety Committee anticipates to meet at least four times a year and the minutes of the meetings are posted on the Kaonet and distributed to WLT and Council.

### Associated Documents

Minutes  
Membership

Kaonet > Health & Safety > Safety Committee  
Kaonet > Health & Safety > Safety Committee

## Working at Height

### General Safe Working Procedure

The Work at Height Regulations 2005 make it clear that if work at height is necessary, safe systems of work should be established, proper planning and organisation should take place, and appropriate equipment should be chosen and used.

Falls from height are the most common cause of fatal injury and the second most common cause of major injury to employees.

#### GENERAL

1. The two main hazards are employees falling when working above ground level and objects falling from a height.
2. There is no minimum height that should be considered safe. The most important consideration is the potential for harm rather than the distance someone or something might fall.
3. Employers should identify all activities that require working from height and carry out a risk assessment.
4. The assessment will initially be used to determine the most appropriate means of getting access to the point of work e.g. scaffolding, mobile tower, mobile elevated work platform (MEWP) or ladder etc.
5. Whatever method is used to gain access the assessment must identify suitable control measures to minimise the risk of people falling or items being allowed to fall.
6. Adequate information, instruction and training should be provided to everyone involved.
7. Separate instructions and procedures are in place for working on the roof of the Civic Centre where fall arrest systems are used (Please consult the Health and Safety Team or Facilities Management for further information).

### Associated Documents

Generic Safe Systems of Work

Kaonet > Health & Safety

## Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls on the same level are the most common cause of major injuries in workplaces and the second most common cause of over three-day injuries.

### Preventative Measures:

- Complaints of slip/trip hazards should be given a high priority
- Cables should not trail across walkways and if this cannot be avoided suitable cable covers should be used
- Floors around desks and walkways should be kept clear of obstructions
- Doors and drawers should be kept closed when not in use
- Uneven floor surfaces should be reported as soon as possible
- Spillages on non carpeted floors must be cleaned as quickly as possible as it will make the surface very slippery
- Always use the handrail when walking up or down stairs
- When working at height only approved steps or ladders should be used, never use furniture or other makeshifts

This list is not exhaustive but gives you an idea of how to take preventative steps to reduce the likelihood of slips, trips and falls.

### Associated Documents

Accident & Incidents Generic Risk Assessments      Kaonet > Health & Safety

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Smoking

It is illegal to smoke in any enclosed public places or workplaces. This includes work vehicles, but not privately owned vehicles used for work purposes.

Penalties can be imposed for smoking or allowing smoking in an enclosed public place or workplaces and work vehicles.

### Home visits:

It is good practise for employers to introduce policies on how to minimise the risk of employees being subject to second hand smoke during home visits.

Individual services must consider this issue in more detail and make arrangements to minimise the impact of second-hand smoke on employees during home visits. Managers must agree protocols for their service on how to limit staff exposure to second hand smoke.

This can include:

- Asking service users who are visited regularly not to smoke for a period of time before a visit and during a visit
- If work is being carried out on a premises, ask the person not to smoke in the room where work is being carried out and to open the windows in this room
- Staff should not be expected to make consecutive visits, or a sequence of visits, which may expose them to tobacco smoke
- Identify staff who have pre-existing health problems or any temporary conditions, where exposure to smoke could be detrimental. This can include asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardio vascular disease and pregnancy

Harlow Council acknowledges that some employees may wish to make use of electronic cigarettes ('e-cigarettes'), particularly as an aid to giving up or reducing smoking. E-cigarettes are battery powered products that release a visible vapour that contains liquid nicotine that is inhaled by the user.

Although they fall outside the scope of smoke-free legislation, Harlow Council prohibits the use of e-cigarettes in the workplace (except in designated smoking areas). Considerations for this decision can be found in the Smoke Free Workplace Policy.

### Associated Documents

Smoke Free Workplace Policy

Kaonet > Health & Safety

## Temporary or Casual Staff and Volunteers

Harlow Council has health and safety responsibilities to temporary or casual staff and volunteers.

Temporary staff and volunteers can face particular problems because they may not be familiar with the type of work they are doing or premises they are working in or its particular hazards.

The risks can be reduced through effective communication in areas such as risk assessment and health and safety information.

As well as specific information and training on the work to be carried out by the temporary staff or volunteer, you must also remember to provide a health and safety induction on things such as first aid arrangements and evacuation.

You should review the effectiveness of your health and safety arrangements for temporary staff and volunteers. The end of a placement is a natural time to do this, identify any problems and discuss the reasons for them. This will help you take steps to improve health and safety for the future.

### Associated Documents

Temporary and Casual Staff Policy  
Temporary and Casual Staff

Kaonet > Health & Safety > Policies  
Kaonet > Health & Safety > Generic Risk Assessments

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Training

In meeting its responsibilities Harlow Council is committed to the provision of an ongoing programme of health and safety related training for all parts of its workforce. Refresher and re-qualification training will be provided where retention of a particular certificate requires it. For all other courses refresher training will, if necessary, normally be provided every three to five years, alternatively, where appropriate and sufficient, tool box talks, guidance and supervision may be satisfactory.

The requirement for training will normally be determined in one of the following ways:

- As a result of the PPP process
- As a result of needs identified by the Health & Safety Team
- As a result of needs identified by a particular Service, often following the completion of risk assessments
- In response to new legislation

Your Manager, the Health & Safety Team/Environmental Health and the Human Resources Team are responsible for the coordination of health and safety training and in doing so will ensure that all courses are of a high standard as well as being cost effective.

Where practicable, courses will be tailored to meet the needs of the participants as well as being provided at the most appropriate time.

The main emphasis for health and safety training will be in the core areas of:

- Health and Safety
  - Introduction (CIEH) Level 1
  - Managing Safely (IOSH) Level 2
  - Supervising Health & Safety (CIEH) Level 2/Level 3
  - National General Certificate (NEBOSH) Level 3
- First Aid
  - Appointed Persons
  - First Aid At Work
- Fire Safety
- Manual Handling
- Conflict Resolution and Management (CIEH) Level 2
- Lone Working/Personal Safety

Other, more specific, health and safety related training will be provided as and when required.

All participants who attend training courses will receive an appropriate certificate, a copy of which will be forwarded to Human Resources for inclusion on the relevant personal file.

### Associated Documents

Training, Information and Monitoring Policy

Kaonet > Health & Safety



## Violence and Aggression

### Violence and Aggression:

Violence and aggressive behaviour is becoming more common place in the work environment. This can include:

- Physical violence or threats of violence
- Verbal abuse, shouting, swearing, spitting, ageist, sexist or racial comments
- Damage to property

Some instances of aggressive behaviour can be difficult to quantify and will be based on how the individual who experienced the behaviour feels about it, or whether they felt violated.

The most effective way of dealing with the possibility of aggressive incidents is to try and prevent them from happening in the first place.

Body language plays a vital role in the communication process. The body language exhibited by individuals can be used as a guide to the emotions they are experiencing.

### To signal non aggression:

- Back away to give more personal space
- Relax your posture
- Make eye contact but avoid staring
- Smile weakly with your mouth closed
- Lower the tone of your voice
- Use slower movements

Identifying the 'warning signs' is also a useful tool in reducing aggressive incidents as it gives you the opportunity to pre-empt and stop the incident occurring.

### Warning signs:

- Direct prolonged eye contact
- Facial colour changes (darkens)
- Head held back
- Individual will stand erect and appears to puff out their chest
- May make exaggerated movements, particularly with their hands
- Accelerated breathing
- Moves toward you

This information is not exhaustive and individual Services must consider this issue in more detail through risk assessment. The full policy on Aggression in the Workplace is available on the Kaonet.

If you have been subject to an incident of aggression or violence at work, you should inform your Line Manager who will record details on the Achieve system – this will be assessed to see if the incident warrants inclusion on the Staff Safety Register and the person being highlighted as a Cautionary Contact.

### Associated Documents

Aggression in the Workplace  
Aggressive Behaviour Risk Assessment  
Staff Safety Register

Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety  
Kaonet > Health & Safety

# Health and Safety Handbook

## Young People

A young person is an individual who has not yet reached the age of 18. A child is an individual under minimum school leaving age.

Young persons and children may be exposed to additional risks at work due to their lack of knowledge, experience and possible immaturity.

An employer has a legal responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of all its employees, taking into account the prior knowledge, experience and maturity of the individual. Employers have specific responsibilities to young people and so the degree of information, instruction, training, supervision and safe systems of work may be different than that required for experienced adults.

Training, coupled with proper supervision, is particularly important for young persons because of their relative immaturity and unfamiliarity with the working environment.

Young persons must be given raised level of information, instruction, training and supervision required to enable them to work safely.

### **The following must be carried out when employing young persons:**

- Risk assessments must be undertaken, taking into account the lack of knowledge, experience and possible immaturity of the young person
- Additional training, instruction and supervision should be provided until the young person has demonstrated a satisfactory degree of competence
- Careful attention should be made by both the young person and their line management to any restrictions placed on the type of work which may be undertaken

The above information is by no means exhaustive, and if employing young persons there are specific legal requirements that must be in place before a young person starts work. A young person may also be restricted by law from carrying out certain work activities or restricted from using certain pieces of equipment.

### Associated Documents

Policy

Kaonet > Health & Safety