



Hartlepool Borough Council

Health & Safety Service Plan 2025-26

HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2025-26

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INTRODUCTION

This Service Plan details how the health and safety service will be delivered by Hartlepool Borough Council.

The Plan accords with the requirements of the mandatory guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA).

In May 2013, HSE published the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code). The Code is designed to ensure that LA health and safety regulators take a more consistent and proportionate approach to their regulatory interventions. It sets out the Government expectations of a risk-based approach to targeting. Whilst the primary responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with the business who creates the risk, LA health and safety regulators have an important role in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks, supporting business, protecting their communities and contributing to the wider public health agenda.

This Plan sets out the Council's aims in respect of its health and safety enforcement service and the means by which those aims are to be fulfilled.

Whilst focussing primarily on the year 2025-26 longer-term objectives are identified, where relevant. Additionally, there is a review of performance for 2024-25 and this aims to inform decisions about how best to build on past successes and address performance gaps.

The Plan is reviewed annually and approved by the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Hartlepool Borough Council aims to:

- carry out our enforcement duties and deliver high quality services through the efficient and effective use of resources;
- supplement our enforcement role by providing targeted education and advice;
- encourage innovation through actively seeking out best practice and working in partnership with other agencies;
- actively contribute towards achieving nationally agreed strategic aims and objectives; and
- ensure our actions are consistent, proportionate and targeted and that we are transparent and open about what we do.

In its delivery of the service the Council will have regard to directions from the Health and Safety Executive, Health and Safety / Local Authority Liaison Committee (HELA), Approved Codes of Practice, the Regulators' Code, and any other relevant guidance.

1.2.1 Links to Corporate Objectives and Plans

This service plan fits into the hierarchy of the Council's planning process as follows:

- Hartlepool Council's Plan 2030
- Hartlepool's Community Strategy – the Local Strategic Partnerships (the Safer Hartlepool Partnership) and the Health and Well Being Board
- Health & Safety Enforcement Service Plan - sets out how the Council aims to deliver this statutory service and the Public Protection service's contribution to corporate objectives.

1.2.1 Overall Aim / Vision

The Council Plan sets out our vision for the future of Hartlepool in 2030:

Hartlepool will be

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)
- a place that is connected sustainable, clean and green. (Place)
- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)
- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

To contribute to the Council's overall vision, through this Health & Safety Enforcement Service Plan, the team has made a commitment to protecting and improving the quality of life for residents of Hartlepool through effective promotion and enforcement of health and safety legislation.

This Health & Safety Service Plan contributes towards elements of the Council Plan vision in the following ways:

- a place where people live healthier, safe and independent lives. (People)

By ensuring that businesses meet their obligations as regards health and safety the wellbeing of both employees and the public will be protected;

- a place that is welcoming with an inclusive and growing economy providing opportunities for all. (Potential)

By providing advice and information to new and existing businesses to assist them in meeting their legal requirements with regard to health, safety and welfare requirements, and avoid potential costly action at a later stage.

- a place with a Council that is ambitious, fit for purpose and reflects that diversity of its community. (Organisation)

By developing ways of communicating well with all customers, including business operators whose first language is not English, and ensuring that we deliver our service equitably to all.

To contribute towards the key outcomes of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation and to deliver effective customer focussed services, meeting the needs of diverse groups and maintaining customer satisfaction.

The Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. The Health & Safety Service Plan consequently aims to ensure that the same high standards of service are offered to all, and that recognition is given to the varying needs and backgrounds of its customers.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Profile of the Local Authority

Hartlepool is located on the north-east coast of England to the north of the River Tees. The Borough consists of the main town of Hartlepool, the seaside resort of Seaton Carew and a number of small outlying villages. The total area of the Borough is 9,390 hectares. The residential population is 95,336 (ONS 2023 Mid-Year Estimate) an increase of 2,765.

Across Hartlepool 96.5% of people identified with a White ethnic group (compared with 97.7% in 2011), 1.7% as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, 0.5% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 0.7% with Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and 0.6% with other ethnic groups.

Hartlepool is a unitary authority, providing a full range of services. To the south of Hartlepool is the wider Teesside conurbation which includes the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar and Cleveland, and which together with Hartlepool and Darlington makes up the Tees Valley sub-region. Bordering Hartlepool to the north is the administrative area of County Durham.

The borough has a long and proud history, with the original settlement of Hartlepool dating back to Saxon times. Originally, an important religious settlement the town's early development resulted from the existence of a safe harbour and its role as a port for the city of Durham and subsequent grant of a Royal Charter from King John in 1201.

The main phase of Hartlepool's expansion took place from the mid 19th Century with the building of a new railway and docks to serve the export of coal. The town continued to expand over the next 100 years as port trade increased and the development of heavy industries including steel making, shipbuilding and manufacturing. Like most industrialised towns in the north of England, Hartlepool has suffered over the last half century from structural reform of these industries and the town has had to look for new opportunities to diversify the economy.

Over the past 20-25 years, Hartlepool has experienced some transformational changes through public and private investment. This has included the transformation of the former South Docks area into a fabulous 500-berth marina where the town hosted The Tall Ships Race in 2010 and 2023.

The tourist industry impacts upon recreational opportunities, shopping facilities and leisure facilities including the provision of food and drink outlets. There are currently 1354¹ businesses in Hartlepool for which the Council is the enforcing authority.

2.2 Organisational Structure

Under the Council's governance arrangements, most day-to-day decisions are taken by five Policy Committees. These Policy Committees cover the following main service areas: -

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Committee
- Adult & Community Based Services Committee
- Children's Services Committee
- Neighbourhood Services Committee
- Regeneration Services Committee

The Neighbourhood Services Committee provides political oversight for health and safety law enforcement.

The Council is made up of four Departments:

- Children's and Joint Commissioning Services
- Adult and Community Based Services
- Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services
- Legal, Governance & HR

The health and safety service is delivered through the Public Protection section of the Development, Neighbourhoods & Regulatory Services Department.

2.3 Scope of the Health and Safety Service

The Council's Commercial Services team is a constituent part of the Development, Regeneration and Neighbourhoods Department and is

¹ Total number of premises as at 01/4/2025
Health & Safety Service Plan 2025-26 – Appendix 1

responsible for delivery of the health and safety service. Service delivery broadly comprises:

- Carrying out interventions including inspections;
- Investigating concerns/complaints regarding health and safety and associated issues;
- Investigating workplace accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences;
- Providing advice and information;
- Taking action (formal and informal) to ensure compliance with legislation;
- Responding to asbestos notifications;
- Registering premises and persons offering personal treatments e.g. body piercing, tattooing, acupuncture etc.;
- Acting as a Statutory Consultee for applications made under the Licensing Act 2003; and
- Enforcing smoke-free legislation in public places.

To achieve strategic aims and objectives it is necessary to work in partnership with other local authorities, the Health and Safety Executive and businesses. The Council aims to ensure that these joint working arrangements are in place and that officers of the service contribute and are committed to the ongoing development of these arrangements.

2.4 Demands on the Health and Safety Service

The Health and Safety Executive and Local Authorities are the principal enforcing authorities for Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSAWA) in Great Britain.

The primary purpose of the HSAWA is to control risks from work activities. The role of the HSE and LAs is to ensure that duty holders manage and control these risks and thus prevent harm to employees and to the public.

The type of premises/nature of work activity falling to local authorities for enforcement is dictated by Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1989 with further guidance provided by Health and Safety / Local Authority Liaison Committee (HELAL), which is the formal enforcement liaison committee between the HSE and LAs.

There are currently 1,354 premises in Hartlepool for which the Council is the Enforcing Authority for Health and Safety. Such premises include retailers, wholesalers, offices, catering premises (including hotels and guesthouses), leisure and consumer services and residential care homes. The businesses are predominantly micro/small (employing less than 10 employees).

Other premises within the borough, including premises within local authority control, are within the enforcing remit of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

The table below provides a profile of the premises within the borough.

Premises Type	No of Premises as at 01/04/25
Retail Shops	390
Wholesale	24
Offices	128
Catering Services	253
Hotel/residential	15
Residential Care Homes	40
Leisure and Cultural	254
Consumer Services	244
Other (Miscellaneous)	6
Total	1354

The delivery point for the health and safety enforcement service is at:
Civic Centre
Victoria Road
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY
Telephone: (01429) 266522

Members of the public and businesses may access the service at this point from 08.30 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 08.30 - 16.30 on Friday.

A 24-hour emergency call-out also operates to deal with Environmental Health emergencies, which occur out of hours. Contact can be made on (01429) 266522, then Option 1, then Option 2.

2.5 Enforcement Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council adopted its current Enforcement Policy in 2021. Supplementary to this, a Public Protection Enforcement Policy deals with those enforcement issues specific, or unique, to the service. This policy applies to health and safety enforcement.

The Health and Safety Executive Enforcement Management Model (EMM) will be used to inform the service's decision-making process. Officers also have reference to the HSE's Enforcement Guide and the Work Related Deaths Protocol.

3 SERVICE DELIVERY

The Council is committed to meeting its obligations under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

3.1 Regulatory Reform

There have been significant changes in regulatory approach in recent years. The key objective is to free up business growth by transforming regulatory enforcement.

In drawing up this service plan, we are setting out the approach we intend to take to comply with the National Local Authority Enforcement Code Health

and Safety at Work England, Scotland & Wales' (the Code). This is to ensure that we use a risk-based, targeted and proportionate approach to our interventions and enforcement in accordance with the principles of good regulation, which requires enforcement to be demonstrably targeted, proportionate, consistent, transparent and accountable.

The Code acknowledges that whilst the primary responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with the business who creates the risk, LA health and safety regulators have an important role in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks, supporting business, protecting their communities and contributing to a wider public health agenda.

The Code provides direction to local authorities on meeting these requirements, and reporting on compliance. To assist local authority's understand and implement the code, supplementary guidance is published annually.

The Service Plan sets out the risks, which we consider we need to address and the range of interventions that we will use to influence behavioural change in the way business manages or undertakes its work.

Officers carrying out regulatory interventions will ensure that every effort is made to reduce administrative burdens on business. At the same time, they will take efficient, effective and proportionate enforcement, concentrating on poor performers who present the highest risk to the health and safety of workers and the public.

Hartlepool Council is an active member of the Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group. Through this group, the five local authorities collectively target work areas based on:

- national priorities
- local priorities based on intelligence and evidence

As appropriate, a joint work plan is prepared and we aim to deliver this along with other interventions that are required at a local level.

This service plan sets out the activities that the service intends to carry out in 2025-26 to meet this requirement within the resources available. The programme will be delivered using the following interventions:

3.2 Interventions

As part of the Code HSE will monitor report and direct the approach of local authority regulatory intervention. This guidance supports HSE in this process by requiring local authorities to carefully consider how they target their inspections and investigations in a manner that is:

- Reactive – typically investigative actions, undertaken in response to a specific incident or complaint or visits in response to requests for assistance,

or

- Proactive – inspections that are not triggered in response to a single specific incident or concern but result from a wider consideration of local intelligence or national trends that identify poor performers.

There is a range of intervention types available for the regulation of Health and Safety at Work. LAs should use the full range of interventions to influence behaviours and the proportionate management of risk. These include:

a. Proactive interventions:

- This involves influencing and engaging with stakeholders and with the workforce and working with those at risk.
- Working with other regulators including HSE, other LA regulators, the Police and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) etc.
- Creating knowledge and awareness of health and safety risks and encouraging behaviour change through:
 - education and awareness
 - best practice
 - recognising good performance
 - proactive inspection (restricted to activities/sectors specified by HSE or where there is evidence that risks are not being effectively managed)

b. Reactive interventions:

- incident and ill-health investigation
- dealing with issues of concern that are raised and complaints

Health and safety interventions are carried out in accordance with the Council's policy and standard operating procedures and relevant national guidance i.e. the Code.

Information on premises liable to health and safety interventions is held on the APP computerised system. An intervention programme is produced from this system at the commencement of each reporting year.

During 2025-26, we will carry out a range of interventions based on risk, local intelligence, performance history, RIDDOR reports, complaints and national occupational health data.

3.2.1 Proactive interventions including inspections

HSE provides LAs with guidance and tools for priority planning and targeting their interventions, enabling them to meet the requirements of the National Local Authority Enforcement Code (the Code). Local Authority (LA) Circular (LAC 67/2- 2025/2026 Work-Year is guidance under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSAWA) and replaces LAC 67/2 (rev 13) and all earlier versions.

The Code states that proactive inspection must only be used to target the high-risk activities in those sectors specified by HSE or where intelligence suggests risks are not being effectively managed.

Proactive inspections should only be used for:

- a) Specific projects/programmes of inspections identified by HSE for LA attention;
- b) High risk premises / activities within the specific LA enforced sectors published by HSE (Annex B of LAC 67/2 provides a list of higher risk activities/sectors suitable for targeting for proactive inspection(the List”),
- c) Locally identified potential poor performers. This is where specific local intelligence indicates that a business is failing to effectively manage risk.

In all circumstances, local authorities have the discretion as to whether or not proactive inspection is the most appropriate intervention using their local knowledge/intelligence of the dutyholder.

3.2.2 Delivery of priorities

In delivering their priorities, local authorities should ensure their planned regulatory activity is focussed on outcomes. The Code provides flexibility for local authorities to address local priorities alongside the national priorities set by HSE. Having identified their evidence-based priorities local authorities are directed to address them using the whole range of regulatory interventions but preserve proactive inspection only for activities/sectors specified by HSE or where there is evidence that risks are not being effectively managed.

Priorities are presented in the Code in 2 distinct sections, one focussing on health and the other safety. These national priorities have been collated from intelligence.

a) National priorities

LAC 67/2 – 2025/206 Work-Year identifies the following national priorities:

Section 1 – Health Topics

Occupational Lung Disease

1. Asbestos – Duty to Manage

In premises likely to contain asbestos (i.e. built before 2000) regulators should draw duty holders’ attention to their duty to manage and the relevant guidance/webpages – www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/

LA EHOs should focus their attention on determining how every relevant duty holders’ premises they enter is managing asbestos.

2. Respirable silica dust.

Dust, containing harmful respirable crystalline silica (RCS), can be generated during common operations such as block cutting, chasing brickwork and cutting concrete floors.

During visits, LAs may come across minor construction work that is generating significant quantities of silica dust that may give rise to a matter of evident concern. Poor standards should be addressed with duty holders and appropriate enforcement action taken.

3. Legionella

a. Spa pools and hot tubs in the holiday sector

LAs should raise awareness of the risks of display spa pools and hot tubs and promote careful management to ensure that water quality does not encourage microbial growth and pose risks to service users or people in the vicinity of the spa pools or hot tubs.

b) Cooling towers located in built-up areas

Cooling towers can have the potential to spread aerosol several hundred metres from the source, which in a built up area, can potentially expose very large numbers of person's offsite. LAs should satisfy themselves that Legionella risks from cooling towers located in built-up areas are being appropriately managed.

3. Work Related Stress (WRS)

This year the national priority covers 2 aspects of linked work, continuing to raise awareness of work-related stress and mental health and the impact it can have on workers and the 'Working Minds' campaign..

EHOs should continue raising awareness with employers and their workers about the necessary tools to prevent work related stress and help support good mental health at work.

4. Violence and Aggression

Health and Safety Regulators, including EHOs are asked to highlight, with dutyholders in sales and health and social care sectors, the importance of suitable and sufficient risk assessments to identify hazards and control the risk from workplace violence and aggression and implement effective control measures to reduce the risks so far as reasonably practicable.

5. Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs)

Health and Safety Regulators, including EHOs are required to raise duty holder awareness of the regulatory requirement to ensure suitable and sufficient risk assessments for manual handling activities have been undertaken where appropriate. Focus should be given to retail premises and residential care homes (excluding people/person handling risks for manual handling).

6. Noise in the Workplace

Where Local Authority EHOs see hearing protection in use, and they are confident that it is a mandatory requirement within that workplace, they are asked to:

- Check the condition and use of the hearing protection
- Check the duty-holder is providing hearing health surveillance for the affected employees.

7. Visitor attractions to prevent or control ill health arising from animal contact

8. Planned Preventive Maintenance

Planned preventative maintenance (PPM) of work equipment is essential to the reduction of serious injuries and fatalities in the workplace. LA health and safety regulators are asked to raise awareness with local duty holders of their statutory duties and signpost to relevant guidance material.

9. Inflatable amusement devices

There has been a number of serious incidents where inflatable amusement devices have collapsed or blown away in windy conditions. Inflatables can be found at many premises that fall to LAs for enforcement, and LAs should raise awareness of the general risks associated with the operation of such devices.

10. Trampoline Parks – improved information provision and supervision of users.

Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of accidents occurring at the parks, involving both children and adults, which resulted in a specified major injury (fracture) as well as a small number which resulted in life-changing injuries. LA health and safety regulators are asked to highlight, with their duty holders, the importance of ensuring that there are suitable and sufficient standard operating procedures in place to ensure the safety of users, spectators, employees, and others.

11. Safety in Motorsport and Motor Leisure Industries

LAs are asked to focus upon health risks. E.g. noise, ventilation, gas safety. Where RIDDOR or concern are received by the LA an inspection visit is recommended.

12. Provision of licensable adventure activities without an AALA licence

The Adventure Activities Licensing Regulation 2008 (as amended) 1989 requires anyone who provides facilities for adventure activities to under 18s in return for payment to hold a licence.

Local authority enforcement officers are asked to be alert to providers in their local area who may be operating without a licence, and to take appropriate action.

Not all national priorities have a proactive inspection component. Many of the above will be discussed during routine contact with duty holders e.g. during routine food interventions, following complaints or accident investigations or when providing advice in respect of events notified to Hartlepool's Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

b) Regional Priorities

We will work in partnership with the other Tees Valley Authorities and HSE where appropriate to deliver local awareness based initiatives and enforcement.

All members of the Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group have agreed to seek opportunities to engage with the public health agenda with particular emphasis on improving health in the workplace. Best practice and opportunities for partnership work concerning public health will be shared. The group will also carry out consistency exercises and training activities identified as necessary during the year.

c) Local Priorities

We recognise that we have a vital role to play in ensuring that the regulatory system is focused on better health and safety outcomes and not purely technical breaches of the law. During interventions, officers will focus on specific risks, which are the key causes of serious workplace accidents, injuries and ill health in our community.

Using local based intelligence we have identified the following priorities, which can be addressed during our contact with businesses, including through other areas of, work e.g. food inspections and licensing visits.

Priority Topics

- Asbestos Management
- Electrical & Gas Safety in Commercial Premises
- Cellar Safety
- Deliveries / Workplace Transport
- Occupational Disease e.g. Dermatitis, Asthma
- Managing Risks from Legionella
- Hygiene in Tattoo Studios and Salons offering Beauty Treatments e.g. Micro blading, application of semi-permanent make-up etc.

It is anticipated that consistent, high quality interventions by the service will, over time, result in a general improvement in standards, reducing the frequency for recourse to formal action.

An estimated 10% of interventions are within premises where it is more appropriate to conduct interventions outside the standard working time hours. Arrangements are in place to inspect these premises out of hours by making use of the Council's flexible working arrangements, lieu time facilities and, if

necessary, paid overtime. In addition, these arrangements will permit the occasional intervention at premises that open outside of, as well as during standard work time hours.

Revisits will be carried out to check compliance with all statutory notices also where contraventions have been identified that may lead to risks to health and safety. Revisits other than for statutory notices will be made at officer's discretion.

The intervention programme for 2025/26 is expected to generate 5 revisits. As safety standards may have fallen during the COVID-19 Pandemic and/or cost of living crisis, this figure could however be significantly higher. A number of these premises revisits will be undertaken outside standard working hours and arrangements are in place to facilitate this.

The performance against targets for all health and safety interventions is reported annually to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in the Health and Safety Service Plan.

3.2.3 Unrated Premises

We endeavour to maintain an accurate database of health and safety premises in the Borough (so far as is possible given that there is no longer a requirement for premises to notify their presence to LAs) and record information to enable the completion of statutory returns to the HSE's Local Authority Unit. Currently there is no national guidance on how to address unrated premises, with the exception that premises must not receive an inspection without a reason.

We aim to identify businesses that fit in with national, regional and local priorities (e.g. by business directories, information from business rates and other intelligence) so that we can focus our interventions on those that present the greatest risk.

3.2.4 Combined Food & Health and Safety Interventions

We currently provide a combined food safety and health and safety service and have done so for many years to maximize resource use. Our planned approach does not result in an increase of proactive health and safety inspections, which is in accordance with government mandate.

3.3 Reactive Interventions

3.3.1 Health and Safety Complaints and Service Requests

In order to target those businesses that are poor performers and not meeting the requirements under health and safety legislation we will place significant emphasis on reactive work such as dealing with complaints, accidents and incidents.

It is intended that every complaint / request for service be responded to within 2 working days. The initial response is determined after assessment of the

information received and is based on the risk arising from the conditions that are the subject of the complaint.

Complaints are investigated in accordance with established procedures. The potential actions that are available vary from the provision of advice, often after liaison with the business, to full prosecution procedures in line with the Council's Public Protection Enforcement Policy. Officers also have regard to the Enforcement Management Model (EMM) when making enforcement decisions.

This reactive work is variable and unpredictable in nature and volume and includes complaints about poor working conditions, safety concerns and smoke free complaints. Based on the previous two years data it is estimated that 30 complaints / service requests will result in a visit being carried out.

3.3.2 Dealing with Matters of Evident Concern

The Code acknowledges that there will be other reasons that local authorities undertake site visits to businesses, for example food hygiene or licensing, and there will be circumstances when officers may become aware of a significant health and safety issue. Local authorities are directed to deal with such matters at the time of the initial visit wherever possible and factor it into their assessment of how the company is managing its risks, rating the premises accordingly.

Information relating to action taken in dealing with matters of evident concern has not previously been recorded as it forms part of the officer's role, but it is estimated as likely to require reactive health and safety interventions during approximately 30% of food safety inspections.

3.3.3 Accident/Disease/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations

Some accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences must be reported under the provisions of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). To co-ordinate the reporting of these incidents nationally there is an online RIDDOR reporting system. Fatal and specified injuries can also be reported by telephone.

Once a notification is received, it is accessed from a secure website. This work involves administrative resource to filter, download, direct and redirect incidents. Once accepted a decision by a senior officer is made as to whether the matter requires further investigation using selection criteria. The investigation selection criteria are based on national guidance.

In some cases, incidents can have a considerable impact on planned work as there is a need to react immediately. For example, accidents involving a fatality, major and/or multiple injury and those likely to affect the public will require immediate response, including out of hours if necessary.

The following data from the last ten years gives some indication of the likely workload:

Year	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
No. of reported accidents	47	72	50	58	46	29	14	27	32	31	26
No. requiring investigation	9	15	6	2	1	4	0	4	0	5	2

NB. Investigations may take several months to complete and can span financial years.

3.3.4 Supporting Businesses & Others

In support of local economic development and growth, the Council considers that providing advice and support to business, especially new business start-ups, to help them to comply with the requirements of legislation, is one of our core activities.

For health and safety issues the Council has a policy of offering comprehensive and usefully tailored advice to any business for which we are, or are likely to become, the enforcing authority. Feedback from businesses indicates that they value this type of contact.

Advice will be available during the course of routine visits and interventions, through information publications such as leaflets and booklets and in response to queries.

Advisory visits, which are undertaken, are distinct from regulatory visits and are, made at the convenience of the business without recourse to the section 20 regulatory powers of entry provided by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Our focus may be broader than specific health and safety outcomes as advice and support given can influence wider public health outcomes/health inequalities. In 2023/24, we worked with 41 new businesses.

3.3.5 Safety Advisory Group (SAG)

We provide advice on event management through the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). This is a multi-agency non-statutory body, coordinated by the local authority, that provides advice and guidance to event organisers on public safety at events, particularly those that are large, complex or carry a significant risk. The SAG ensures that events are planned and managed safely and legally. Event plans and risk assessments are reviewed and advice is provided to the event organiser(s) where concerns exist, including signposting to the Council and/or HSE website accordingly.

3.3.6 Public Health Promotional/Campaign Work

During 2024-25, we did not carry out any public health promotional campaign work. We did however continue to do joint visits with the Council's licensing

team/advisory visits to persons registering to undertake Acupuncture, Ear Piercing, Electrolysis & Tattooing.

3.3.7 Sampling

Water Sampling

During 2024/25 water sampling was undertaken from swimming pools and spa pools to monitor water quality. Sampling was also undertaken at the port and marina, including from 1 vessel visiting Hartlepool. These samples were taken upon request and were in relation to microbiological examination for the presence of *Legionella* and to assess water quality.

In addition, 11 Ship Sanitation Exemption Certificates were issued. In 2025-26, samples may again be taken from premises or vessels in response to health and safety concerns or as part of the Port Health function.

During 2024/25 we participated in a national study looking at the following:

Hygiene in premises that carry out tattooing or piercing.

Nine premises were visited to carry out a survey that looked at hygiene in premises that carry out tattooing or piercing. A total of 22 swabs were taken, Along with eight samples of green soap. Green soap is used to clean client's skin before treatments. All but one of the 22 swabs were deemed to be satisfactory. Two out of the eight samples of the green soap were deemed to be unsatisfactory, due to high levels of Pseudomonas bacteria. As part of the survey advice was provided to businesses.

During 2025/26 we will participate in relevant sampling surveys.

3.4 Complaints against our Staff

The Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel was set up to enable a business to challenge specific health and safety regulatory advice provided by HSE or Local Authority Inspectors, that they believe to be unreasonable or disproportionate. Before raising an issue with the panel, businesses are expected to have first tried to resolve the matter with the relevant inspector and their manager.

Anyone who is aggrieved by the actions of a member of staff is encouraged, in the first instance, to contact the employee's line manager. Details of how and who to make contact with are contained in the inspection report left at the time of an inspection.

Formal complaints are investigated in accordance with the Council's corporate complaint procedure.

3.5 Liaison Arrangements

The Council actively participates in local and regional activities and is represented on the following:

- Tees Valley Health and Safety Liaison Group;
- Tees Valley Public Protection Heads of Service Group;
- North East Public Protection Partnership;
- North of England Regulatory Liaison Group.

The Authority receives and takes cognisance of guidance from a number of bodies but principally the Health and Safety Executive, Local Authority Unit the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

The service acts as a Statutory Consultee for applications relating to Premises Licences made under the Licensing Act 2003 and are consultees for commercial planning applications.

3.6 Lead Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPS) / Primary Authority Scheme

It is the Council's policy to comply with HSE's mandatory guidance in respect of the Lead Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPS) and Primary Authority Scheme. In particular, the Council will contact the Lead/Primary Authority and liaise over:

- local intelligence (adverse defect or insurance reports etc.);
- issues arising in connection with inspection plans;
- any proposed formal enforcement action;
- service of Prohibition Notices;

- shortcomings in the companies policies that have wide implications; and
- death, major injury, work related ill health or dangerous occurrences reportable under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

This will help determine a proportionate and consistent response and ensure that any national implications can be considered.

In Hartlepool, there are currently no formal Primary Authority arrangements in place; however, we continue to work closely with local businesses on an informal basis. The level of resourcing will have to be reviewed if an opportunity to enter into a formal Primary Authority arrangement arises.

4. RESOURCES

4.1 Financial Resources

The annual budget for the Consumer Services section in the year 2025-26 is:

	£ 000
Employees	740
Other Expenditure	55
Public Health Grant	(306)
Other Grant Funding	(35)
Income	<u>(11)</u>
Net Budget	443

This budget is for other services provided by this section including Food, Animal Health, Trading Standards and Licensing resources are allocated in accordance with service demands. The figures do not include the budget for administrative / support services which are now incorporated into the overall budget.

4.2 Staffing Allocation

Under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 the Authority is required to set out their commitment, priorities and planned interventions; and put in place the capacity, management infrastructure, performance and information systems to deliver an effective service and comply with their statutory duties; operate systems to train, appoint, authorise, monitor and maintain a competent inspectorate.

The Executive Director of Development, Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services has overall responsibility for the delivery of the health and safety service.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services), with the requisite qualifications and experience, has responsibility for ensuring the strategic delivery of the Council's Public Protection service, including delivery of the health and safety service, in accordance with the service plan.

The resources determined necessary to deliver the service in 2025/26 are as follows:

1 x 0.20 FTE Environmental Health Manager (Commercial) (with responsibility also for Food, Port Health, Feed Hygiene and Animal Health)

4 x 0.20 FTE EHO (with requisite qualifications and experience)*

1 x 0.10 FTE Part-time EHO

**One of these posts is currently vacant*

These are considered to be the minimum resources required to deliver the commitments set out in this Plan and to comply with the S18 Standard.

The Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) has responsibility for strategic service delivery and management of the Health and Safety Service, in addition to other services and general management responsibilities as a member of the Development, Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services Management Team.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) has responsibility for the operational service delivery and management of the Health and Safety Service, Food, Public Health, Water Quality and Animal Health and Welfare.

The EHOs are responsible for carrying out the health and safety premises intervention programme as well as the delivery of all other aspects of the health and safety service and will undertake complex investigations. In addition, these officers undertake food and other enforcement work.

The Public Protection Support Services team provides administrative support.

All staff engaged in health and safety law enforcement activity are suitably trained, qualified, and appropriately authorised in accordance with guidance and internal policy.

4.3 Staff Development

The Council is committed to the training and personal development of its employees. During the annual appraisal process the formal identification of the training needs of staff members is linked with the development needs of the service. Competence standards in respect of regulatory skills, knowledge and development needs are assessed.

It is a mandatory requirement for officers of the health and safety service to maintain their professional competency. This is achieved in a variety of ways including through attendance at accredited short courses, seminars or conferences, by vocational visits, directed reading and E learning.

Detailed records are maintained relating to all training received by officers.

4.4 Equipment and Facilities

A range of equipment and facilities are required for the effective operation of the health and safety service.

The service has a computerised performance management system, Authority Public Protection (APP). This is capable of maintaining up to date accurate data relating to the activities of the health and safety service.

A documented database management procedure has been produced to ensure that the system is properly maintained, up to date and secure. The system is used for the generation of the intervention programmes, the recording and tracking of all health and safety activities, the production of statutory returns and the effective management of performance.

5. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The Council is committed to quality service provision. To support this commitment the health and safety service seeks to ensure consistent, effective, efficient and ethical service delivery that constitutes value for money.

A range of performance monitoring information will be used to assess the extent to which the health and safety service achieves this objective and will include on-going monitoring against pre-set targets, both internal and external audits and stakeholder feedback.

The Environmental Health Manager (Commercial Services) will carry out accompanied visits with officers undertaking inspections, investigations and other duties for the purpose of monitoring consistency and quality of the inspection and other visits carried out as well as maintaining and giving feedback with regard to associated documentation and reports.

It is possible that the Health and Safety Executive will at any time notify the Council of their intention to carry out an audit of the service.

6 REVIEW OF 2024-25 HEALTH & SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

6.1 Review against the Service Plan

It is recognised that a key element of the service planning process is the rational review of past performance. In the formulation of this service plan, a review has been conducted of performance against those targets established for the year 2024-25.

This service plan will be reviewed at the conclusion of 2025-26 and at any point during the year where significant legislative changes or other relevant factors occur during the year.

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Director (Regulatory Services) to carry out that review with the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods and Regulatory Services.

The service plan review will identify any shortfalls in service delivery and will inform decisions about future staffing and resource allocation, service standards, targets and priorities.

Any relevant amendments to the Council's Corporate Plan will be incorporated into the service plan.

Following any review leading to proposed revision of the service plan Member approval will be sought.

6.2 Performance Review 2024-2025

This section describes performance of the service in key areas.

6.2.1 Health & Safety Interventions

In total interventions were carried out at 104 premises. These were risk based and multiple priority topics were covered during some visits.

Below is a summary of the type of topics covered during the intervention visits:

- Asbestos Management
- Gas Safety in Commercial Kitchens
- Deliveries / Workplace Transport
- Cellar Safety
- Occupational Disease e.g. Dermatitis
- Managing Risks from Legionella
- Falls from Heights
- Violence at Work

In addition, officers made 1 revisit to monitor compliance with contraventions identified during planned interventions.

It appears that the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis is having an impact on standards. Periods of closure and financial pressures has resulted in some businesses failing to carry out essential maintenance / repairs, consequently there has been an increase in the number of contraventions found. We anticipate that this trend of reduction in standards is likely to continue until the economic climate improves.

During 2024/25, the Authority undertook 220 enforcement visits to assess compliance with smoke free legislation that came into force on 1st July 2007, a proportion of which were carried out in conjunction with health and safety inspections.

6.2.2 Promotional/Campaign Work

Routine promotional/campaign work did not take place in 2024-25.

6.2.3 Special Project – Funeral Directors

In April 2024 all local authorities received a request from the Minister for Courts and Legal Services at the Ministry of Justice and the Minister for Local Government and Levelling Up, that we carry out visits to all local funeral homes. This unexpected and unusual request followed the criminal investigation into Legacy Funeral Directors in Hull, and other similar cases.

This project was to “reassure the public that local funeral directors are safe, professional and care for loved ones as we would want”. We were asked to do a basic check that funeral directors comply with health and safety legislation regarding buildings, vehicles and equipment.

The greater part of the project was about ensuring the dignity and condition of persons in the funeral directors care, traceability through the funeral procedure and transparency for families.

We were also asked to gather information on funeral plans and to report our findings to the Financial Conduct Authority.

Where appropriate, advice was to be provided to funeral directors and if we suspected or uncovered criminal activity, we would liaise with Cleveland Police.

Although health and safety law applies to funeral directors, there is no sector specific legislation. In 2020 the Competition and Markets Authority recommended that independent regulation was needed, which HM Government has agreed to.

Hartlepool Borough Council officers completed visits to all 7 Funeral Directors within the Borough. Whilst no serious issues were identified our findings were reported to the two government departments for their consideration.

6.2.3 Health and Safety Complaints & Requests for Service

During the year, the service carried out 35 visits in response to 38 complaints / service requests relating to health and safety conditions and working practice. The initial response to these requests have been undertaken all within our target of 2 working days.

Officers responded to all statutory consultations relating to applications made under the Licensing Act 2003.

Comments were also made to the SAG in relation to event management. Where necessary advice was provided to event organisers.

6.2.4 Complaints against our Staff

No complaints were made against our staff during 2024-25.

6.2.6 Accidents/Diseases/Dangerous Occurrences Investigations

The service received 26 accident notifications during the year. After applying selection criteria based on national guidance, 2 of these notifications were selected for further investigation.

6.2.7 Formal Enforcement Action

With regards enforcement action under Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation no legal proceedings were undertaken during 2024/25. Two prohibition notices for lifting equipment at a garage.

7. KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT & CHALLENGES FOR 2025-26

In addition to committing the service to specific operational activities such as performance of the intervention programme, the service planning process assists in highlighting areas where improvement is desirable.

Detailed below are specifically identified key areas for improvement that are to be progressed during 2025-26.

1. The Public Protection section continues to face significant financial pressures due to ongoing Council savings and, as such, the need to prioritise service delivery and maximise effectiveness remains paramount. During 2025-26, we will target our resources effectively using a range of interventions, including providing advice to businesses with the aim of influencing behaviour and improving the management of health and safety risks. We will continue to explore how we can contribute to the Public Health Outcomes.
2. We will keep abreast of, and respond to, any changes to legislation, guidance and policy decision and monitor the impacts of any changes to the regulatory framework. We will review and update our Quality Management System/Standard Operating Procedures for Health & Safety as appropriate.