

SAFETY POLICIES AND WRITTEN PROCEDURES

Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires every employer who has five or more employees to produce a written statement that makes a clear commitment to high standards of health and safety. No two statements will be alike since they are specific to that particular business. The safety policy should contain the general aims of the company for protecting the health and safety of their employees, as well as providing details of the organisation and arrangements for putting that policy into practice. Due to the size of the Isle of Wight Council and the diverse range of services provided, a three tier system has been adopted which consists of:

- (1) A Corporate Policy
- (2) Directorate Health and Safety Statements
- (3) Workplace Operational Policies.

1. The Corporate Policy is included in Section 1.5. This document makes clear the commitment by top management to ensure that health and safety is properly managed and puts it on an equal footing with other business functions. Whilst overall responsibility rests at this highest level, other persons have to accept responsibility for implementing the policy. All newly appointed staff who receive a contract of employment will also receive a copy of the current safety policy. However, managers must be aware that there may be other persons who have not seen the document, for example trainees, temporary workers, volunteers etc and it is for them to rectify this situation.

Legislation also requires that the policy is revised as appropriate and that the changes are brought to every employees' attention. Since the general statement is a corporate policy this will be reviewed annually by the Chief Executive Officer together with his management team and will subsequently be endorsed by the Joint Consultative Board.

2. Strategic Directors have a clearly defined accountability for health and safety matters and are subject to legal duties under Section 37 of the Health and Safety at Work Act. (In practical terms, directors and managers can be prosecuted if it is alleged that their organisation has disregarded the law through their wilful consent or neglect). Directorate Health and Safety Statements are designed to set the arrangements for the particular Directorate, detailing ground rules and making clear who is accountable and which matters are delegated. Service managers should be left in no doubt as to their responsibilities and how health and safety aims are to be achieved. The policy statement should comprise three sections:

- (a) Statement of general policy which should be signed by the Strategic Director and dated.
- (b) The organisation with key individuals identified and their responsibilities defined. The arrangements for implementing the policy should also be included.
- (c) The workplace arrangements which might need to be considered for this section could include risk assessment and management, emergency procedures, accident reporting, inducting new staff, health and safety training, inspection of workplaces, testing/examination of work equipment, record keeping, co-ordination of contractors and consultation with trade union representatives. In particular any central arrangements should be made clear.

3. The operational policies are normally written by section/workplace managers. These must contain the specific arrangements for that particular establishment or service and include names or job titles of persons allocated tasks such as fire marshals, first aiders and trade union safety representatives. Duties set out in the policy must have been discussed with the person concerned and accepted by them. Since there are several 'self-contained' corporate policies which set standards for compliance, workplace arrangements need to be compatible with the objectives of these documents. In addition workplace managers will need to develop safety rules, safe systems of work and where necessary permit to work systems. The need for these should be identified through risk assessments.

Whatever the level of health and safety competence achieved by managers and other staff, professional health and safety advice will often be required. The Health and Safety Section has been appointed as competent person(s) in accordance with the requirement of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and will be pleased to assist managers in meeting their health and safety obligations.

There are several leaflets and booklets published by the Health and Safety Executive, which provide checklists and guidance on topics that might need to be considered for inclusion in policy documents. Contact the Health and Safety Section if you would like to read any of these publications or require assistance in drafting policies or procedures.