

Registers of Scotland

RoS Board

13 June 2023

Health and Safety Annual Report 2022/23

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of the Annual Health and Safety Report for 2022/23 to the RoS Board.
2. The RoS Board are invited to comment on the annual report 2022/23

Recommendation

3. The RoS Board are invited to review this annual report and approve publication.

Background

4. The Health and Safety Annual report 2022/23 contains an overview on the current H+S situation within RoS. The report itself was still heavily impacted and to a certain degree, controlled by events out with of RoS's control with the ongoing Covid pandemic during 2022.
5. The report is produced annually for the RoS Board and wider audience. Developments in working practises have radically changed the way RoS operates and works with many colleagues choosing a hybrid approach to work.

Health and Safety

6. The main body of this report is an overview of all aspects of H+S within RoS. The report states the challenges that have been throughout 2022/23 and the work to address these challenges so that RoS continues to provide a safe working environment for all colleagues working either within their home or within the office space.

Conclusion

7. The report concludes that RoS strives to maintain a positive and inclusive H+S environment.
8. The health and safety Committee continues to be at the forefront of H+S with its joint working group of senior management, estates, wellbeing, HR, and the Trade Union.

Job Title: Head of Procurement and Estates

Directorate: Corporate

Date: May 2023

Annual Health and Safety Report for 2022/23

Purpose:

1. This annual Health and Safety report for Registers of Scotland (RoS) covers the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. Where possible, comparisons have been made to previous health and safety data provided. The purpose of this report is to provide colleagues / stakeholders with an understanding of health and safety arrangements at RoS and provide assurance on the adequacy of measures in place.

Recommendation

2. The RoS Executive Management Team are invited to review this annual report and approve further RoS Board submission and authorisation ahead of publication.

Executive Summary

3. RoS employs more than 1,200 colleagues who deliver their role within a hybrid working environment. This means working some of their time from home, as well as one of the designated RoS offices: Meadowbank House (MBH) and St Vincent's Plaza (SVP). We place a great importance on pursuing standards in all our work environments that effectively promote health and safety, support colleagues, visitors and other building users whilst also minimising risks.

4. The Covid-19 pandemic caused a major shift in RoS working practices. The introduction of hybrid working for the vast majority of RoS colleagues, had a dramatic impact on aspects of the annual report last year. However, colleagues started to return to MBH and SVP this year embracing the hybrid approach and RoS remain committed to maintain the flexible work life balance benefit that this provides.

5. Health and safety training provision has continued, with a focus on hybrid working. The Home Working e-learning module has been utilised and, with the return of colleagues to a RoS office, this has been used in conjunction with our Display Screen Equipment (DSE) office-based e-learning module to ensure that we provide the best possible working environment for our colleagues.

6. A key focus this year has been the requirement for colleagues to demonstrate that their home working environment is ergonomically viable and meets the minimum equipment standards as defined by RoS. For example, the provision and use of a fully adjustable, 5-star castor base ergonomic chair. A support network of Mental Health First Aiders remains in place, which is supported by a range of 3rd party resources.

7. MBH and SVP have been fully reopened, as a flexible and accessible workspace for all colleagues. It is viewed that colleagues will create their own work patterns that support their role and their team deliverables. Physical space within both buildings has been redesigned to better enable hybrid working. To improve utilisation, RoS has also begun to share space with other SG organisations, which also generates an economic benefit to the public sector in Scotland.

Health and Safety Management System

8. The Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) remains the cornerstone of all processes relating to health and safety within RoS. The HSMS details the correct

processes and procedures and what is expected from colleagues, contactors, and visitors to RoS when undertaking any aspect of work contained within the HSMS.

Health and Safety Analysis

9. During 2022, following Scottish and UK Government health advice, the decision to fully reopen MBH and SVP was made. Accidents during this reporting period remained very low, with only one reported incident in total. To confirm, colleagues were also advised to report any accidents or incidents within their homes, if they happen during working hours and are directly attributed to a task that is connected to RoS work.

10. There have been no reported cases of Covid-19 being contracted by colleagues whilst working at MBH or SVP and no positive cases have been recorded as RoS being the transmission point since the buildings began to reopen.

11. There was one unplanned fire alarm activation and one planned evacuation arranged at MBH. During the same period there was one planned evacuation arranged at SVP. This alarm system continues to be tested on a weekly basis for both buildings.

12. Both RoS buildings continue to be adequately covered with fully trained first aid volunteers. There was one reported first aid incident during 2022-23 and plans are underway to retrain lapsed first aid volunteers, whose certificates have expired during the pandemic.

Hybrid Working Support and Training

13. RoS continues to support hybrid working for colleagues, ensuring that they are provided with a range of choices to ensure their home environment is of an appropriate standard as required by RoS. The RoS Health and Safety Adviser and wider Estates team were made available to assist colleagues with these assessments as they adjusted to these new work environments. This included the continued support of colleagues with reasonable adjustments from home or in the office. As part of RoS commitment to continuous learning, the Homeworkers e-learning module was made mandatory to ensure home set ups met best practise design.

Mental Health Support

14. RoS is aware that hybrid working can present a mental health risk. To address this, a RoS Mental Health network was set up on the RoSNow platform with a wide range of links to access help. A network of fully accredited Mental Health First Aiders was also implemented to enable colleagues to seek support, guidance, and information on how to access professional help if so required.

Re-Opening RoS to all colleagues

15. Before reopening both buildings, a full operational risk assessment was undertaken with all known risks identified and emerging risks considered. RoS followed Scottish Government guidance on the reopening of buildings by adhering to the strict protocols that were in place. This included the implementation of an onsite track and trace system. As RoS moved through 2022/23, these restrictions were eased, culminating in no restrictions on building attendance other than self-isolation if a colleague self-tested positive for Covid-19.

16. Colleagues looking to attend the office were encouraged to book onto an induction, to refamiliarise themselves with all relevant building safety protocols and procedures. This induction also showcased the new office layouts and the approach to how RoS would operate in a hybrid environment. Once this induction was complete, colleagues were able to choose the best way to work and pre-book attendance onsite as required via the Cloudbooking software platform. Colleagues regularly attending a site were also asked to complete the annual Assessrite e-learning module, which covers the DSE mandatory training for all building attendees.

17. A Concierge Service was also introduced to enable hybrid working, with colleagues able to access support for arranging team or collaborative working days in the office or for any specific building-based events.

Building Dependent Teams at MBH

18. Chancery and Judicial Registers (CAJR) remain mainly office dependent due to their processes being largely paper based. Although developments to digitise this process are ongoing, dedicated working spaces were created to support this team to minimise any risks of a Covid-19 outbreak affecting the delivery of operational services. In 2022-23, work was also undertaken to bring a dedicated team back into MBH to address a backlog of physical case bags still in RoS possession. This involved the relocation of c. 48,000 case bags and a dedicated storage facility in 4 West. All fixed working areas went through careful planning to ensure it was safe and met individual and team requirements as well as SG guidance.

19. Along with establishing a process for colleagues to return to MBH / SVP on an ad hoc or permanent basis, a plan was also created that considered a re-exit event. This re-exit plan details the actions, resources and procedures required to ensure that, in the event of further local or national Covid-19 related restrictions instructed by UK or Scottish Government, RoS building could remain open and operate at the most acceptable level possible. This plan is live and continually reviewed and updated.

Reorganisation of the interior of RoS buildings

20. In compliance with social distancing measures, RoS took radical steps to redesign building layout. This included the removal of all personal cabinets (PEDs) from the wing floors and creating a logistics solution to transporting colleagues' personal items to their homes or storing them in another unused area.

21. Workstation layouts were reorganised to introduce 2m social distancing and enhanced cleaning procedures was introduced. The continued monitoring of building utilisation, and the subsequent relaxation of guidance, resulted in additional workstations being introduced and a more optimal use of building space. By year end, workstations in some areas were set up with no social distancing in place.

22. Onsite support teams have continued to maintain the increased cleaning procedures in occupied building areas, as first introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes the sanitisation of high area touch points, which will ensure that RoS buildings will continue to operate at the highest levels of a cleanliness to help reduce the spread of any germs or other pathogens.

Sharing our Buildings with other Organisations

23. Through the careful monitoring of building utilisation, RoS identified an opportunity to share our space with other SG organisations. By utilising a Memorandum of Terms of Understanding framework, two agreements were put in place by year end to share dedicated space at MBH. Within these agreements, roles and responsibilities for health and safety management are made clear and regular Management Group meetings are held between RoS and the building tenants to discuss these and any specific issues that may have arisen.

Regulator Building Inspections and Visits

24. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) increased inspections on buildings that were open during the lockdown period. Since the changes in guidelines in March 2022 and up until March 2023, RoS did not receive a visit from any Regulatory Inspection body.

Wellbeing

25. Wellbeing presented to the board in a separate paper

Union Consultation

26. Consultation between Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) and RoS management continues to provide an effective relationship on health and safety matters. The Health and Safety Committee (HSC) is active in driving forward health and safety policy and for addressing the concerns of either party. The HSC meets on a regular 3 monthly cycle and a new emphasis has been placed on the HSC with a new structure including representation from Wellbeing and HR, to ensure that emerging risks from hybrid are identified and mitigated.

Conclusion

27. The Covid-19 pandemic has witnessed a shift in the way that colleagues work and created an ongoing conversation on how RoS wants to work going forward. The virtual connectivity of RoS colleagues and the digitisation of many of the RoS registers, has allowed colleagues to continue to provide a high standard of work whilst not physically being in an office environment.

28. The overall safety culture within RoS is a positive one. This is driven by a senior management team who are focused on maintaining and developing health and safety within RoS and see health and safety as a central core of good management rather than a stand-alone system.

29. The commitment of the EMT and senior management to provide the best possible working environment, hybrid or building dedicated, can be witnessed by the efforts made to ensure that all colleagues have the equipment, training and support they need. Commitment can also be seen in their willingness to lead and drive forward with the continued participation of the Health and Safety Committee and placing this at the heart of Health and Safety within RoS.

30. New technologies and working practises continue to be adopted by RoS, this has seen an increase in more ergonomic focused workstations with the introduction of more height adjustable desks and a focus on raising awareness of the importance of posture. Working practises continue to evolve and consultation with PCS and colleagues on how RoS can best support colleagues as the traditional scope of work and where we do it, changes at pace. RoS places the same demands on hybrid working with colleagues working at home and ensuring that colleagues non office environments are as ergonomic as possible.

31. RoS continues to champion equalities and diversity, maintaining a focus here will continue to enhance the working environment for all colleagues. Mental health support continues to be a primary focus, to ensure colleagues are able to access to internal and external networks for support.

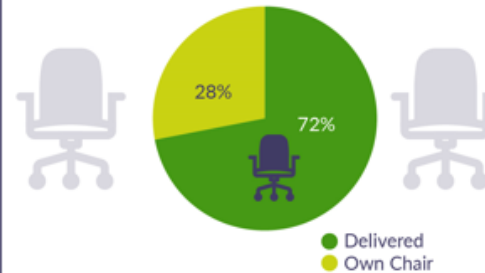
Head of Procurement & Estates
May 2023

Registers of Scotland Health and Safety 22/23

Non fatal Injuries



Chairs to Homeworkers



Inspections



Wellbeing



17 people contacted EAP regarding mental health issues (stress)
 10 of these people attributed their mental health issue to personal reasons
 7 of these people attributed their mental health issues to both work and personal reasons



Colleague Hybrid Training



Sharing our space with other SG Orgs



7
First aid volunteers in MBH

2
First aid volunteers in SVP

security staff
in MBH first aid trained and available to assist if required

Training program for volunteers to begin
2023

MBH/SVP reopening building Inductions

100%