

Terms of Reference – Safety Panels

In order to meet the legislative requirements of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee's Regulations 1977 and the Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996, New Forest District Council will put in place formal arrangements for consultation on health, safety and welfare matters. These groups will be our **Safety Panels**, which will deliver effective consultation through positive communication and taking a co-ordinated approach to safety, health and workplace issues.

The scope of the Safety Panel is to have real and meaningful consultation on safety, health and welfare issues in the workplace. Each group shall meet at least every 3 months, unless the group unanimously agree to delay or bring forward the meeting. Core duties include the following functions:-

- Setting a culture of co-operation and trust through listening, gaining a better understanding of workforce concerns, and problem solving;
- Consider and review the introduction of any measures, initiatives, equipment or process which may substantially affect the health, safety or welfare of employees;
- Review health and safety policies and procedures;
- Review employee health and safety training;
- Review and monitor the accident and incident statistics of employees and others;
- Ensure a consistent approach to investigating incidents (near misses) and accidents across Services;
- Assist in developing measures, procedures and information to eliminate, or reduce occupational risks and inform those who may be affected in the workplace;
- Allow feedback on accident investigation reports and findings, with a view to stopping any reoccurrence;
- Consider all safety issues raised by both employee and employer side and take action as appropriate;
- Ensure that the workforce receive suitable communication on the actions to be taken following the meeting.

Membership and Roles:

Chairperson: In order to maximize the actions of the Safety Panel the Chair of the meeting needs to have the authority to approve those actions agreed by the group, or be prepared to take safety, health or welfare matters which have a significant cost to EMT for approval. It is appropriate then for a Service Manager to take the role of Chair, which should last for a minimum of 12 months. An additional function of the Chair is to ensure the agenda is circulated at least one week before the date of the meeting and aim for minutes to be distributed ideally within one week after - while the issues discussed are fresh in the mind of those present. The agenda and minutes must be sent to all members of the group, and the date of meetings should be set out in advance at the start of the year. The Chair should attend all of the Safety Panels, however, it is accepted that there may be an occasion when a deputy needs to step in. It is the expectation that this deputy will be another Service Manager, who is regularly in attendance at the meetings, or the Corporate Health and Safety Manager

Corporate Health and Safety Team: To attend every meeting to support the Safety Panel and to provide feedback on accident, incident (near misses) and ill health data for the previous quarter. Where there is an Action Plan progress needs to be feedback to the group. Relevant legislative changes and national or industry guidance should be brought to the attention of the group. Feedback should also be given from other Safety Panels and from other relevant groups, e.g. Fire Safety Steering Group. The Corporate Health and Safety Team will hold a copy of agenda's,

minutes, action plans, and other relevant Safety Panel documents centrally on the ForestNet Safety Panel page.

Management: relevant Service Managers which come under the scope of the group should be in attendance, or send a suitable deputy, or provide a written update to the Chair when not available in person.

Workforce representatives: Unionised Safety Representatives who have members within the Services which the Safety Panel covers should be in attendance, and elected Safety Representative are to attend the meeting. It is important that relevant issues which have been raised by the workforce are voiced at the meeting so that the employer has a chance to review these concerns.

Where possible there should be equal numbers of workforce representatives (unionised and elected safety representatives), and management representatives. However, depending on the size of the services covered by Safety Panel it is not expected that this will always be possible. It is important that the group does not become too large as to create difficulty for the Chair to cover all items on the agenda.

It is not considered necessary to have a formal strict number which must be met for the Safety Panel(s) to be considered quorum, however, there must be both employer (management) and employee representatives in attendance to make the consultation process worthwhile. Where several representatives are not able to make the date/ time of the meeting then the Chair should consider postponing to a date/time where the majority of the group can attend.

All members of each panel are expected to read group documents (agenda, minutes, etc) ahead of the Safety Panel meeting so that nominated lead officers may report only on key findings at the meeting itself.