



South Tyneside Council

Annual Occupational Health and Safety Report

This document has been classified as: **Not
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**Joanne Woods, Occupational Health & Safety
Manager**

Committee – 27 May 2026

Report to People and Organisational Development Committee

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Cllr Susan Sybenga

Report of Joanne Woods, Occupational Health & Safety Manager

Subject: Annual Occupational Health and Safety Report

Date: Wednesday 27 May 2026

Wards affected: All

Council ambitions: Healthy and Well, Part of Strong Communities

Does the report and any appendices contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?

- No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

For Executive Decisions only:

Is the decision a Key Decision? **No**

Is it included in the Forward Plan? **No**

If not in the Forward Plan is the report: General Exception Rule / Special Urgency Rule

Relevant Scrutiny Chair:

Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? No

(If the decision is anything other than any executive decision made by the Cabinet or a Key Decision made by an officer under delegated powers, call-in is not applicable. This should be explained in the report).

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update of South Tyneside Council's (STC) health and safety performance for April 2025 to March 2026.
2. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing of our customers, staff and elected members is of paramount importance, and links to the achievement of the Council's vision, ambitions and strategy in line with our PROUD values.
3. South Tyneside Council has a legal duty of care under health and safety legislation to safeguard its staff, but also those affected by its activities. Responsibility for compliance is set out in the [Corporate Health and Safety Policy](#).
4. This report is intended to inform People and Organisational Development Committee on current and progressive issues and performance.

Background Information

5. The Occupational Health & Safety Team provide an advisory, support and enforcement service to help all staff fulfil their health and safety responsibilities.
6. It is a small team consisting of an Occupational Health & Safety Manager, four full-time Health & Safety Advisors, and one full-time Health & Safety Technician. The Business Administration Apprentice role was removed as part of the cost saving measures within POC Services for 2026/27.
7. We support all areas of the Council and currently have Service Level Agreements (SLA's) with Schools and Academy Schools. We currently support 40, which is broken down into 37 Local Authority schools and 3 academies.

Executive Summary

8. This report updates the Committee on performance and the legal duties of South Tyneside Council in relation to the management of health and safety. Overall, there are a significant number of activities undertaken across South Tyneside Council that may pose risks to Health & Safety.
9. The performance of KPI's during the last year 2025/26 has seen mixed results including:
 - Accidents to staff have increased by 7% in comparison to the previous year (from 223 accidents in 2024/25 to 239 accidents in 2025/26).

- The overall accident rate per employee remained relatively stable, showing a slight decrease compared to the 2024/25 - average 1.29 accidents per 100 employees this year, compared to 1.31.
- The number of incidents of violence towards staff have decreased by 6% (400) in comparison to 2024/25 (424).
- Near miss reporting has decreased by 1% (1 incident) during this period compared to the previous year, when 110 incidents were logged.
- We have seen a decrease in the number of fires within our tenants properties.
- The number of false fire alarm activations with our High Rise Buildings have slightly increased.
- Three employee civil claims have been reported and six claims closed in the last year.
- There has been 12 RIDDOR reports during this year.
- During this period, STC did not receive any HSE prosecutions, prohibition notices, or improvement notices. We did however have two unannounced visits by the HSE which resulted in no further action.

Introduction

10. This report summarises STC's health and safety performance for April 2025 to March 2026, highlighting the key risks, controls, issues, and achievements experienced over this period.
11. STC's approach to health and safety adheres to the principles of sensible risk management.
12. Health and Safety audits are undertaken by the Occupational Health and Safety Team. In addition, a number of safety inspections have been undertaken across a range of projects throughout this period.

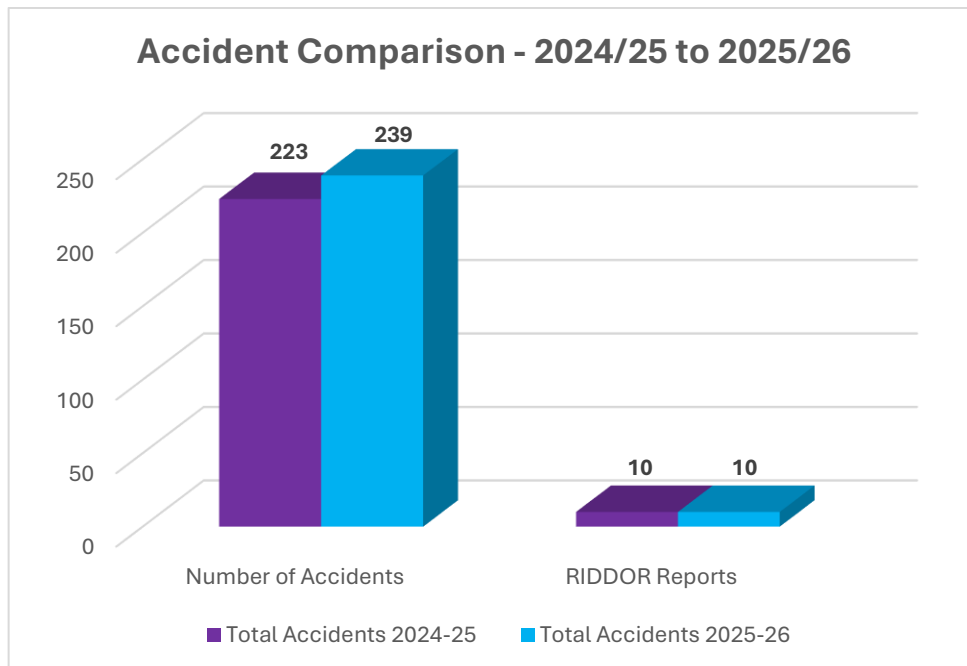
Key Performance Indicators

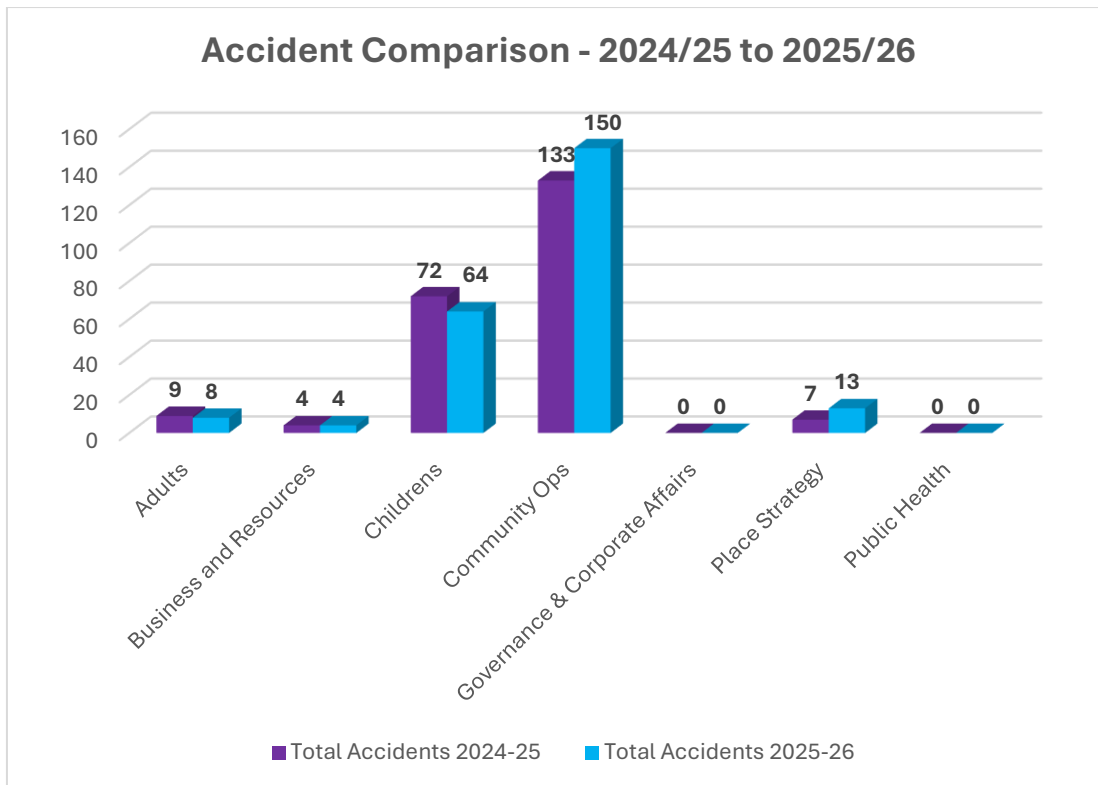
13. For a breakdown of key performance indicators please see **Appendix 1: Performance data – Key Performance Indicator Chart, statistics and KPI information April 2025 to March 2026**. Performance data is discussed at the individual Directorate Quarterly Health, Safety & Wellbeing Meetings.

Accidents Involving Staff

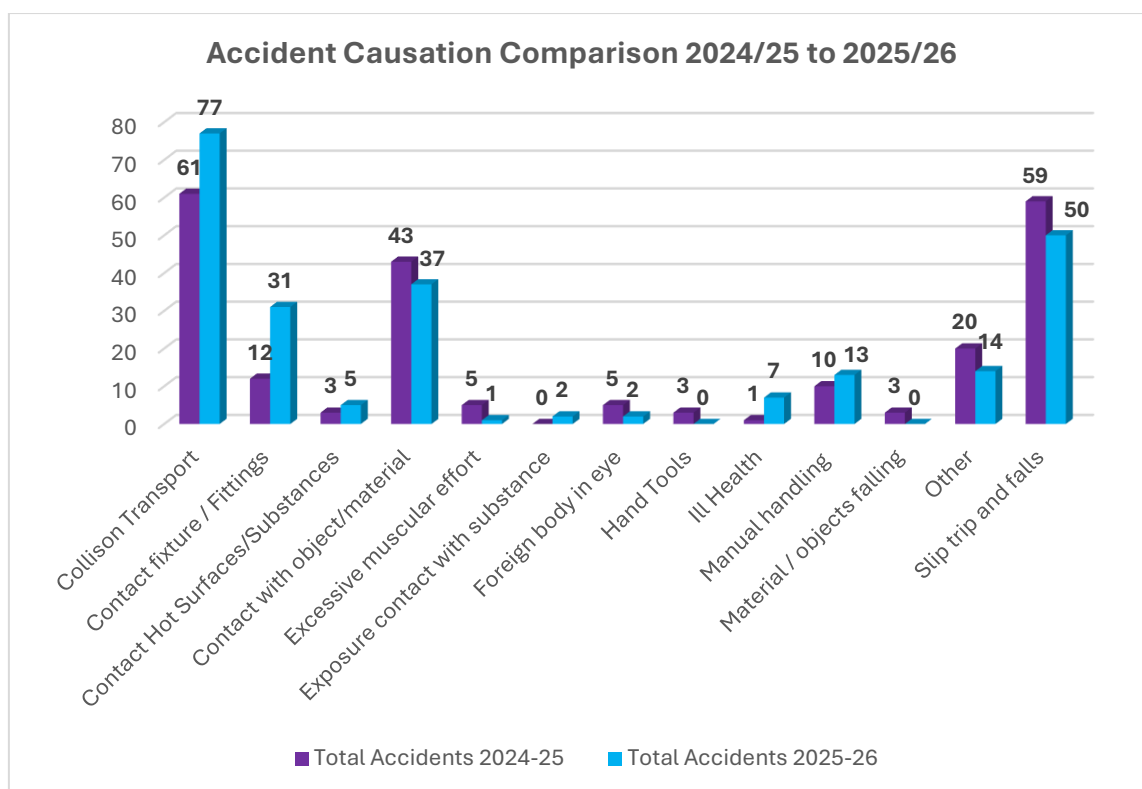
Number of Accidents reported

14. There were 239 accidents reported between 1st April 2025 and 30th March 2026, an increase of 7% compared to the 223 accidents recorded during 2024/25. A breakdown of these accidents is provided later in the report.
15. The overall accident rate per employee remained relatively stable, showing a slight decrease compared to the 2024/25 average: 1.29 accident per 100 employees this year, compared to 1.31 last year.
16. RIDDOR reporting showed 0.054 incidents per 100 employees in 2025/26 which remains relatively unchanged from last year's rate of 0.058.
17. Community Operations again recorded the most accidents this year. However, this is expected due to the nature of the work that they perform.





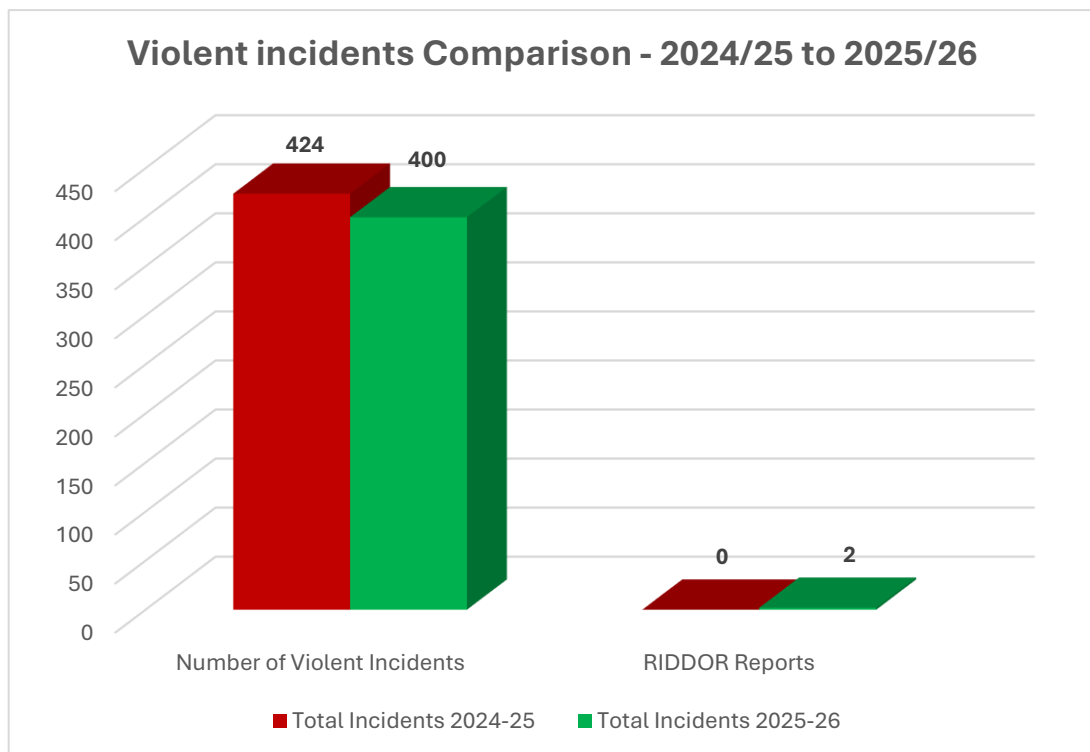
18. Collision/Transport incidents were again the leading cause of accidents this year (77), with most reported by Waste Services and no injuries sustained. To reduce future incidents, new HGV drivers shadow experienced staff after their assessment, and the Waste Services Driver Trainer reviews accident sites with drivers and fillers to reinforce preventative actions. A strengthened induction process and targeted driver accident review training, introduced in November 2025, appear to have helped reduce incident numbers over the last few months. All drivers have also been issued with the Driver Handbook and received a supporting briefing session.
19. There were 50 reported slip, trip, and fall incidents, with no specific trends identified. Reminders have been issued to all STC staff and schools on ways to help prevent these incidents.
20. A trend was also identified involving school staff being struck by sports balls in playgrounds. General guidance was issued to schools to help prevent recurrence.
21. The year on year breakdown of minor accidents is as follows:

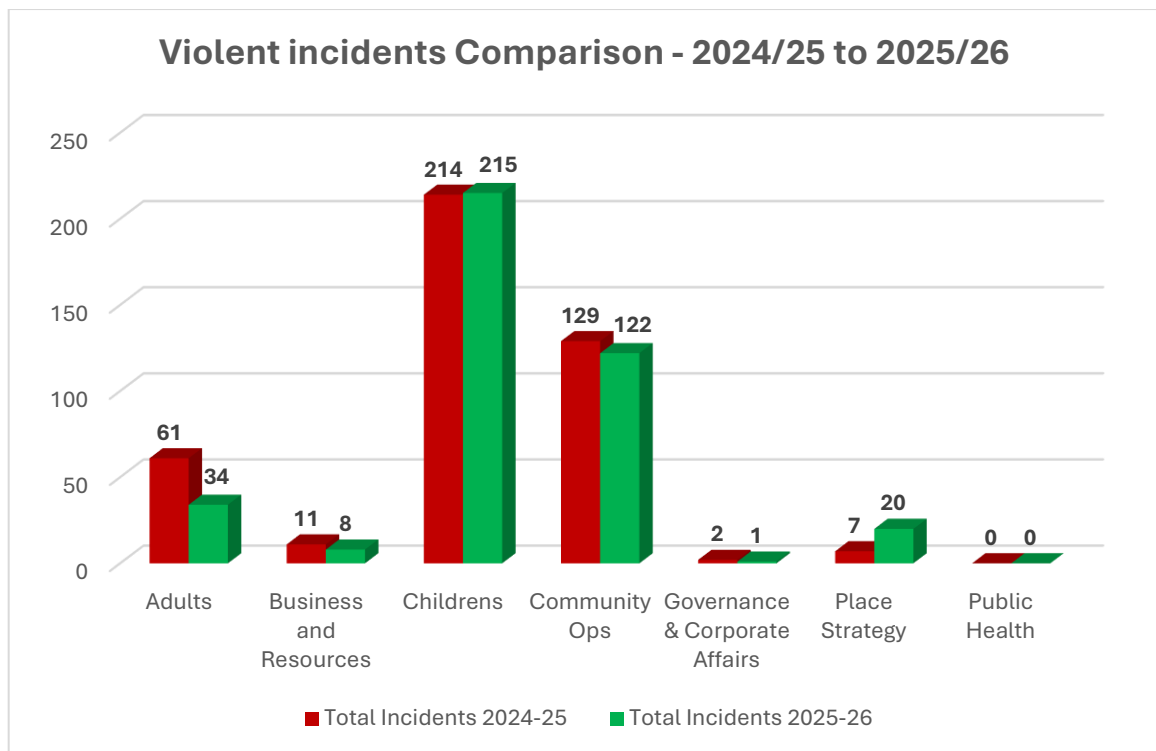


22. Ten accidents were reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) to the Health & Safety Executive. Workplace incidents that require reporting include specified injuries such as fractures (excluding fingers, thumbs, and toes), serious burns, and cases of over-seven-day incapacitation, where an employee is unable to work for more than seven consecutive days. No specific trends were identified, and the Health & Safety Executive did not intervene or conduct further investigations.
23. All accidents are discussed in detail at the various Directorate Quarterly Health, Safety and Wellbeing meetings looking at trends and ways to reduce incidents.
24. In addition to reviewing staff accidents, the OH&ST also investigate accidents / incidents involving members of the public in STC buildings, as well as serious pupil incidents. In 2025/26, the team investigated 474 cases, up from 425 in 2024/25. This increase is likely linked to the simplified reporting process introduced in schools, which has resulted in a 12% rise in reported incidents.

Number of Violence and Abuse incidents reported

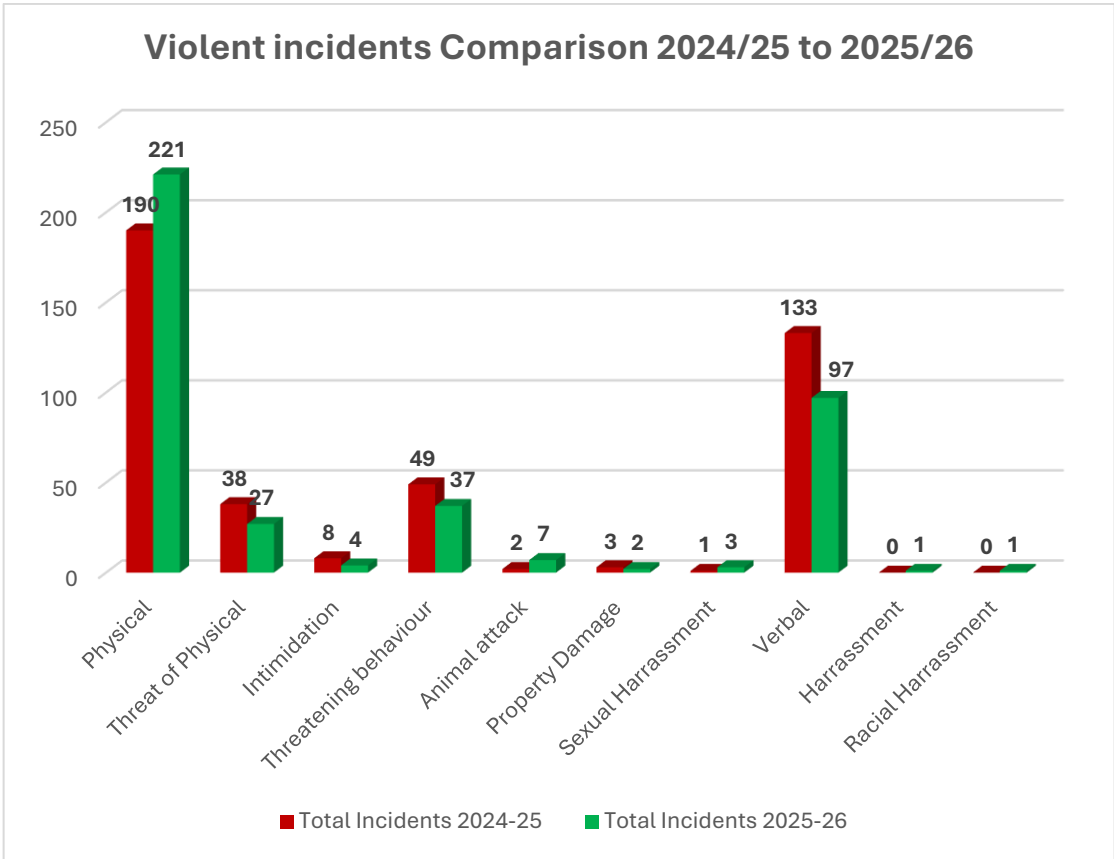
25. Between 1st April and 30th March 2026, there were 400 incidents of violence and abuse reported, compared to 424 incidents during 2024/25. This represents a 6% decrease in reported incidents. By comparison, 294 incidents were reported in 2023/24.





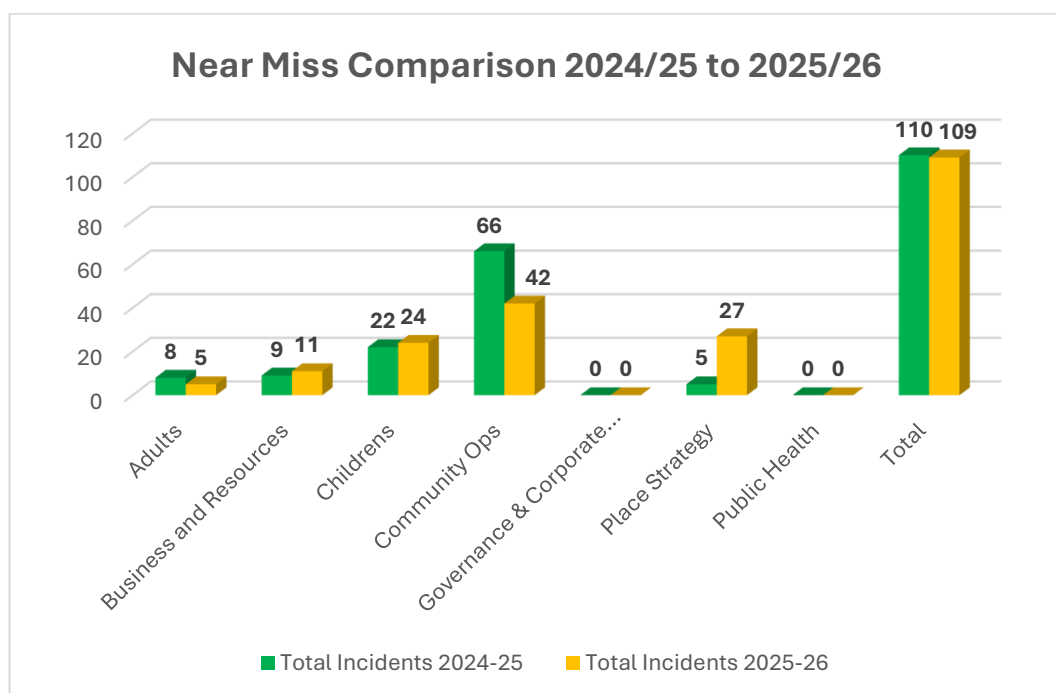
26. The highest number of reported incidents originated from Children's Services, with 162 incidents reported from schools. Notably, 67 of these were attributed to the same twenty pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
27. We have seen an increase in the number of incidents being reported by schools in the last quarter of the year which may be due to improved promotion of incident reporting in schools and a simpler reporting process.
28. 41 incidents reported from Children and Families Social Care involved the same six young people.
29. Two incidents were reportable under RIDDOR. One involved a staff member who was seriously injured after being attacked by two dogs while entering a property's garden. The second occurred in one of our SEN schools, where a pupil became dysregulated and lashed out, resulting in a member of staff being absent from work for more than seven days.
30. Over the last two years, we have received six reports, each involving multiple incidents where staff were targeted via social media.
31. Managers continue to provide tailored support to staff based on individual needs and the specific incident. This support continues to include immediate check-ins to assess physical and mental well-being, staff debriefs, additional training, discussions on de-escalation strategies, recovery time, lone worker devices and staff rotation or a change of personnel. The OHS&T continue to support with the completion of individual risk assessments.
32. Template risk assessments are available for managers to use, including those covering sexual harassment and online abuse.

33. The Occupational Health & Safety Team’s ongoing programme of risk assessments and Violence at Work audits in schools continues to reinforce the importance of robust accident and incident reporting procedures. Schools we support have also been reminded of their obligation to report all incidents of violence.
34. All directorates now have nominated gatekeepers who are responsible for staying up to date and sharing any new risk of harm or hazard warning markers with their teams. Training was delivered in February 2026, and a central list where new risks can be added and viewed is available on a dedicated ‘Gatekeepers’ Channel on MS Teams, helping staff update their risk assessments when supporting specific customers or attending flagged properties.
35. A policy is being developed to clearly define the sanctions that may be applied to persistent offenders, including restricting access to specific council facilities to protect staff. Further measures are also being introduced to tackle online abuse, accompanied by clear and consistent communications to staff affirming that abusive behaviour will not be tolerated.
36. A breakdown of incidents are as follows:



Number of Near Misses reported

37. A near miss is an unplanned event that could have resulted in injury, illness, or damage but didn't. Essentially, it's a narrowly avoided incident where no harm occurred, but the situation had the potential to be dangerous.
38. There were 109 Near Misses reported during the period, this figure is a reduction of 1 from the last year (110 reports). All near misses are investigated and remedial actions are implemented and discussed across service areas to prevent reoccurrence.
39. Several hot-load incidents occurred in bin wagons during the last year, prompting preventative actions and increased community communication about hazardous waste. There was also a trend of incidents involving Middlefields project contractors, which has since decreased.
40. The breakdown below shows which areas reported the most:



Audits and Inspections

41. The OH&ST conducted various audits and inspections throughout this period. These included Risk Assessment and Violence at Work Audits, Fire Management Compliance Audits, Building Compliance Audits, Security Audits and an Asbestos Audit. Actions and recommendations were discussed with the appropriate managers, and the team provides support to ensure compliance. No major concerns were found.

42. A total of 79 audits and 542 site inspections were completed during the period. This represents an increase of 27 audits (approximately 52%) and 139 inspections (approximately 35%) compared with 2024/25.

Construction and Demolition Projects

43. The OH&ST support on a number of high-risk construction and demolition projects across the borough. The support given ranges from reviewing appropriate Health & Safety documentation e.g., Construction Phase Plans, Risk Assessments and Method Statements. Attending prestart and site meetings, completing site set up audits and regular site inspections, where required.
44. Between 1st April 2025 and 30th March 2026, OH&ST provided support on a range of construction and demolition projects, including numerous roofing works across STC buildings and schools, the Hebburn Central data room construction, the Venj Highways depot development, the Mortimer School extension, solar panel installations, and a number of rewires and fire alarm installations.
45. Monthly meeting continue to be held between OH&ST and Asset Management Building and Compliance Team and Asset Management within Housing Services to discuss ongoing and upcoming projects.
46. STC must ensure that the contractors they have chosen to use have the right combination of skills, experience and knowledge and are able to do the job safely, without risks. As part of the assurance process the OH&ST complete regular assessments on contractor competency via a CHAS, SSIP or Common Assessment Standard (CAS) route. The assessment focuses on evaluating a contractor's ability to manage workplace risks and comply with safety regulations. It includes ensuring the contractor has documented policies in place, demonstrated how hazards are identified and mitigated, and ensure their adherence to UK health & safety laws.
47. During 2025/26, the team assessed the Health & Safety competency of 486 contractors, all of whom were successfully added to the approved Health & Safety Contractor list. This represents a 39% increase from 2024/25, when 350 were assessed.

Fire Safety Performance

48. Fire Safety Performance in this period is as follows:

	Total 2025/26	Total 2024/25
Fire False Alarms in Housing Plus	74	35
Fire Incidents in Housing Plus	4	7
Fire False Alarms in Extra Care	2	1
Fire Incidents in Tenants Properties	10	24
Fire Alarm Activations within High Rise Buildings	10	6

Fire Incidents in Tenants Properties

49. There were 10 fires in general needs properties during this period, Fire incidents within tenant's properties are largely beyond the control of the organisation but remain one of our primary concerns.
50. Housing Service continues to support our residents and share important fire safety information with them through social media channels.
51. There has been an increase this year in the number of activations within Housing Plus. The team continues to make significant efforts to educate and support residents in fire safety, including holding regular tenant meetings and providing information and guidance. The primary cause of activations remains cooking related incidents, often due to items being left unattended on the hob or in the oven, or food becoming accidentally burnt.

Managing safety risks in high-rise residential buildings

52. OH&ST continues to work with the Housing Services Compliance Team to support delivery of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and the Building Safety Act 2022.
53. The building safety case reports and other associated documents have been submitted for all 4 high rise buildings (Durham, Ellen, Monastery, and Wilkinson Court) and the Building Safety Regulator has confirmed they have all the necessary documentation to start their assessment for the Building Assessment Certificate process.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

54. The HSE are the enforcing authority for health and safety local activities and there were no prosecutions, prohibition notices, or improvement notices served on STC during this period. The HSE carried out two unannounced visits to construction projects one to the new housing development on Lizard Lane, and another to the extension project at Mortimer Community College. No concerns were raised during either visit.
55. Twelve reportable injuries and incidents occurred during this period under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013, representing an increase of two compared to 2024/25. No further action was taken by the HSE.

Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

56. During 2025/26 the Health & Safety policy has been reviewed, updated and published.
57. New template Health & Safety Policy issued to schools, enabling them to tailor it to their specific context.
58. A new Drug, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy was introduced and agreed by People and Organisational Development Committee.

Civil Claims Received

59. Three employee civil claims have been reported. Six cases have also been closed.

Claim Type	Nature injury	Input Date	Acc Date	Incident Type	Occupation
Industrial Disease	Head	June 2025	1986 to 1987	Industrial Deafness	Parks – Grounds Maintenance
Industrial Disease	Head	June 2025	2004 to 2006	Industrial Deafness	Highways Labourer
Industrial Disease	Head	Aug 2025	1974 to 1976	Industrial Deafness	Joiner

Claim No	Finalised	STATUS	Claim Type	Description	Paid to Date	Recov to Date	Tot.Cost (-Rec)
TE000112	13/05/2025	Closed - Repudiated, Fees only	Industrial Disease	Claim for deafness bricklayer	£2,850.87	£0.00	2850.87
TE000151	27/06/2025	Closed - Paid	Accident	Carrying out a full site clearance and was required to remove side waste and while doing felt a sharp prick on his right hand, which	£12,964.00	£0.00	12964.00

				happened to be a syringe, resulting in injury			
TE000159	14/07/2025	Closed -Repudiated (inc. full recovery)	Industrial Disease	VWF between 2004 - May 2024 Plasterer	£0.00	£0.00	0.00
TE000131	16/07/2025	Closed - Paid	Accident	Industrial dryer fell onto claimant head	£62,345.02	£0.00	62345.02
TE000149	13/08/2025	Closed - Paid	Accident	Working for agency (Ramstad) cut finger when lifting stainless steel sink – reports no PPE provided	£11,561.00	£0.00	11561.00
TE000160	13/08/2025	Closed -Repudiated (inc. full recovery)	Accident	A SEN Pupil was sitting on her knee and flung his head back hitting her in the mouth causing injury.	£0.00	£0.00	0.00

Overview of some of the support provided by OH&ST

60. The accident / incident reporting forms were updated to ensure it was easier for all to complete, including the new online reporting process for schools.
61. Rolling programme introduced to review procedures to make them more accessible and easier to follow.
62. A newsletter launched and distributed to all schools supported by the team.
63. Template risk assessments updated and reissued to all schools supported by the team.
64. During the completion of workstation assessments, where additional equipment is identified as necessary, the team has been repurposing returned equipment through Facilities Management to help reduce costs.
65. Updated the common assessment standard questionnaire to make it easier for contractors to complete and return for assessment.

Health & Safety Training Undertaken

66. Staff across the organisation have participated in various Health & Safety training programs throughout the year, including: First Aid and Refresher training, Food Safety training, Fire Safety and Fire Warden training, ladder safety training, CPC and Driver training, Medication Awareness and Infection Control training and Building Safety Regulations training.
67. Savings have been achieved where possible by delivering essential Health & Safety training and sourcing alternative providers, while ensuring that safety standards were not compromised.

68. Training continues to be a standard agenda item in all Operational and Quarterly Health, Safety and Wellbeing meetings to ensure all training needs are captured and met.
69. The OH&ST continue to invest in their own professional development. The H&S Technician is currently undertaking the NEBOSH General Certificate, while the advisors have completed scaffold inspector training, DSE assessor training and Building Safety Regulations training. The team is also working towards being able to deliver IOSH accredited training.

Governance Structure

70. The governance structure for managing health and safety in STC remains in place and was reviewed in 2025/26. Quarterly Strategic Health, Safety, and Wellbeing meetings are held to assess performance across the organisation. These meetings include trade union representatives, ensuring collaborative discussions and consideration of employee interests in decision-making. Attendance and engagement remain strong.

Focus for 2026/2027

71. Undertake the scheduled review of Health & Safety procedures to ensure they are more accessible and user friendly, alongside developing toolbox talks to support the updated procedures.
72. Continue to undertake focused audits (Building Compliance) across public buildings.
73. Develop a corporate stress risk assessment and provide a centralised set of support tools to ensure managers and staff can easily access guidance when needed.
74. Deliver in house IOSH accredited training.

Conclusions

75. Overall, there are a significant number of activities undertaken across STC that pose risks to health and safety. We continue to ensure that these risks are effectively managed.
76. Performance indicators continue to be monitored and health and safety performance monitored at both an operational and strategic level.
77. Audits and inspections of the management of health and safety across STC will continue to be undertaken and reviewed to ensure that risks are being managed effectively and to identify any improvements needed.

Implications

78. The implementation of South Tyneside Council not managing Health & Safety has several key implications which are detailed below.

Financial and Resources

79. The OH&ST are still assessing an electronic audit and inspection system that utilises handheld tablets. This will reduce administration time and provide a more efficient service to both internal and external stakeholders. This is currently on hold due to ICT and budget constraints.

Legal and Governance

80. The Council has a legal responsibility under legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure the health, safety, and welfare at work of their employees. This is understood to include minimising the risk of work-related mental health issues as well as physical health and injury.

Risk

81. There are significant legal, financial, and moral implications for the Council regarding potential non-compliance with health and safety legislation.

Equality and Diversity and Community

82. Under equality legislation the Council has a legal duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in relation to race, disability gender (including gender reassignment), age, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief.

83. The Council also has a duty to foster good relations and to consider the impact of its decisions on human rights. The law requires that this duty to pay due regard is demonstrated in the decision-making process and the report should contain a statement as to whether the recommendation has a particular impact on any of the above groups.

Environmental and Sustainability

84. There are no significant environmental and sustainability implications arising from the information supplied in this report.

Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans

85. The report supports the Council ambitions, policies, strategies and plans.

Consultation and Engagement

86. OH&ST consult and engage on a regular basis across all directorates and provide quarterly reports and updates to corporate Health & Safety meetings and the Workforce Consultative Forums, and six-monthly updates to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Recommendations

87. To ensure the People and Organisational Development Committee are kept informed on work undertaken in relation to occupational health and safety and the service provided to the organisation.

88. The People and Organisational Development Committee is requested to note this report.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Performance Data – Quarterly Key Performance Indicator Chart

Performance Data – Quarterly Key Performance Indicator Chart

Appendix 1

15 measured indicators for health and safety are identified in the table below.

Health & Safety Performance Data 2025/26		2025/26 Total	2024/25 Total	Difference
1	Accidents involving Staff (Non-RIDDOR)	229	213	+16
2	Accidents involving Staff (RIDDOR)	10	10	0
3	Accident rate per 100 FTE (average)	1.29	1.31	-0.02
4	General Public / Pupils Personal Injury	474	425	+49
5	Violence to Staff Incidents (Verbal / threatening behaviours)	170	229	-59
6	Violence to Staff Incidents (Physical)	230	195	+35
7	Violence to Staff Incidents (RIDDOR)	2	0	+2
8	Fire incidents in Tenants Properties	14	24	-10
9	Fire False Alarms in High Rise	10	6	+4
10	Fire False Alarms in Housing Plus	74	35	+39
11	Fire False Alarms in Extra Care	2	1	+1
12	Site Inspection / Audits completed	621	455	+166
13	HSE Visits	2	0	+2
14	Civil claims received	3	7	-4
15	Near miss / safety concerns	109	110	-1
Total Minus KPI 3		1950	1710	
Total Incidents Minus Interventions (KPI's 12 & 15)		1220	1145	

Annual Occupational Health & Safety Report

The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:

Background Paper	File Ref:	File Location
Nil		