Health, Safety and Welfare Committee
Summary Communications

1st November 2023 – Rev 2

Animals on Campus Policy

This policy has been out for consultation through safety forums and various groups, the results were included in a redrafted version of the policy which was presented to the committee.

The following options were presented:
- accepting the policy with amendments
- considering alternatives on a School/Department or building basis
- deciding as a group to pursue a different approach.

Concerns raised:
- Workload generated by the second option
- Students might not want to disclose their mental health issues to justify their need for an assistance animal
- The potential workload impact of an influx of people with medical conditions requiring assistance animals

It was agreed to have a mini registration process to collect data on animals brought on campus, with the aim of revisiting the issue and, perhaps, implementing the policy in two academic years' time. Risk assessments and clear guidance for approvals were emphasized. Students were restricted to bringing assistance animals only.

Accident Reporting

The BeOnline system, which is already used for mandatory health and safety training, has an accident and near miss reporting function. There are plans to transition to this system to:

- Reduce admin burden on H&S department
- Better GDPR compliance
- Easier reporting for users

The system is currently being trialled by some schools & directorates and will be gradually rolled out across the university in 2024.

COSHH Policy

The COSHH policy has been out for consultation since August, comments from this process have been included in the most recent draft of the policy which was presented to the committee.

There was discussion about whether COSHH assessments should be included in risk assessments or kept separately.

It was decided a task and finish group would be established to agree an approach to the assessments and how best to implement the policy.

Committee Composition

It has been identified that the committee has potential areas of over-representation and other areas are under-represented.

It was proposed to the committee that the composition was revised to ensure fair representation. The committee agreed with the approach presented.

Other News

- The health and safety policy writing and reiew programme is broadly on target
- 25 members of staff have been trained on gas safety and a report from the gas consultant following their inspection is due shortly
- Some schools have very low mandatory training completion rates
- Due to establishment of new Staff Experience Committee, the wellbeing section of this committee will be transferred to the new committee

Student Learning Area - Polwarth

In the Student Learning Area in Polwarth it has been discovered that there is no suitable emergency exit route for those with serious mobility impairments or wheelchair users. It was recommended that these individuals were restricted from using that space until this could be rectified and their safe egress in an emergency could be ensured.

It was noted that there was not a process for endorsing such a decision considering the safety, equality and diversity issues that such a decision may have.

A clear process for temporarily restricting access to buildings is being established in consultation with the Estates Committee and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC), following recommendations to the Committee.

Wellbeing

The wellbeing team have put together a campaign which is targeted at helping lift mood and energy levels from lack of sunshine and the cold - Coping with the Change of Season | StaffNet | The University of Aberdeen (abdn.ac.uk).

It suggests helpful options such as ways to increase dopamine, optimise oxytocin, supercharge serotonin and enhance endorphins. Also, by joining the staff BeWell network via this form you would have access to a range of activities to achieve this.

Additional Safety Messages

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer. You cannot see, smell, or taste the gas. This means you could be exposed to it without even realising it.

What should you do if you suspect carbon monoxide is present?
1. Turn off the gas
2. Turn off appliances
3. Open windows
4. Get everyone to exit the house
5. Call the emergency services or the Gas Emergency number 0800 111 999

If you are feeling unwell seek medical attention

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning:

Smoking on Campus

There have been several reports recently of staff and students smoking in inappropriate areas.

Smoking is prohibited in all University buildings including communal working areas, offices, University residences, stairwells, lifts, workplace entrances and doorways. Smoking is also prohibited within vehicles owned or operated by the University or vehicles hired or leased for university business

Please be mindful when you are smoking or vaping outside and stay away from doorways, open windows or near vents which pull air into the building.

At Foresterhill staff and students are required to comply with the NHS Smoke Free policy and must not smoke or vape on any NHS premises.

Fault Reporting

With darker mornings and evenings, it has been highlighted that a number of university owned lights are broken, leaving areas poorly lit.

If you come across any broken lights, please report them as soon as possible to estates so they can be fixed.

You can report faults on the Estates and Facilities page of StaffNet here: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/fault-reporting-789.php

Redundant IT Kit

Do you have an old desktop, laptop or tablet that is sitting gathering dust? If so, this could be a risk in a number of ways.

If there is data on it, this may be at risk if it falls into the wrong hands and if it does not receive regular updates it may be vulnerable when it is next connected to the network. Additionally there could be a fire risk, even if it not plugged in. This came as an expensive shock to the University of Vienna when the battery in a laptop, not used for over 3 years, burst into flames and destroyed a chemistry lab. Although the risk of this kind of event is very low, and no one was hurt, the disruption and cost was very significant.

So, if you have any redundant IT kit please check out the Waste and recycling page and get it removed, the data cleared and the equipment disposed of in the correct way.

Note: Electrical equipment can be a fire risk too and it is important that all types of waste are either recycled or disposed of appropriately. Why not have a clear out before the winter break, or make it your new year's resolution?

Although preventative measures are put in place accidents do happen. Updating the 'loss of buildings' section of your Business Continuity Plan as well as maintaining an asset list will greatly improve our response and recovery. Staff training in incident and emergency response is provided by the Resilience Team, buscont@abdn.ac.uk