

Registers of Scotland

RoS Board

08 June 2021

Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21

Purpose

1. This is the annual Health and Safety report for Registers of Scotland (RoS). The report covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. Where possible, comparisons have been made to previous health and safety data gathered.
2. The overall purpose of the annual health and safety report is to give colleagues and stakeholders an understanding of health and safety arrangements at RoS and provide assurances on the adequacy of health and safety measures in place.

Recommendation

3. The Executive Management Team is invited to review the annual report and proposed changes to the Health and Safety policy at annex 1 and seek advice from the RoS Board prior to final approval.

Executive Summary

4. RoS employs more than 1,200 colleagues and contingent workers across its 2 buildings, Meadowbank House (MBH), and St Vincent's Plaza (SVP), and we place great importance on pursuing standards that effectively promote health and safety and support colleagues and visitors whilst minimising risks.
5. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a major shift in RoS working practices. The shift to exclusively remote working for the vast majority of RoS colleagues has had a dramatic impact on aspects of this annual report with new challenges emerging.
6. The provision of health and safety training has continued, with a sharp focus on remote working. A new Home Working e-learning training module was developed and deployed to all colleagues, providing guidance on obtaining the best possible working environment whilst working remotely.
7. To fully support colleagues, efforts to replicate the office environment within colleagues' homes was undertaken wherever possible. This consisted of the provision of desks, office chairs, monitors, laptop risers, support cushions amongst other items, supported by a safe and secure logistical exercise to manage the shipping of items. Emerging risks to colleagues through remote working have been addressed and a support network of Mental Health First Aiders has been implemented.
8. MBH partially reopened on 3rd June 2020, with approximately 30 RoS colleagues in the building on any given day to deliver essential services that cannot be delivered remotely.

Health and Safety Management System

9. The Health and Safety Management System (HSMS) continues to be 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 all colleagues, contactors, and visitors to RoS when undertaking aspects of work that are contained within the HSMS. Further detail is provided in annex 2.

Health and Safety Analysis

10. In March 2020, the decision to close MBH and SVP due to the Covid-19 lockdown dramatically altered the objectives of Health and Safety. Accidents within MBH and SVP during the period of this report were zero. There were no reported cases of Covid-19 being contracted by colleagues whilst in MBH or SVP and no positive cases have been recorded as RoS being the transmission point since the partial reopen on 3rd June 2020.

Remote Working

11. Prior to lockdown on 24 March 2020 the total number of laptops distributed throughout RoS was around 250 (20%) The current number of remotely enabled laptop users is 1248 (96%) and an illustration of laptop distribution is provided in annex 3 (pic1).

12. Deploying a significant number of laptops and peripheral equipment created a situation where the ergonomics and Display Screen Equipment (DSE) obligations of colleagues became the priority. As such, through the RoSnow portal a form was created to allow colleagues to order accessories to help with the ergonomics of their new remote working environment. (annex 3, pic2)

13. These items included:

- Laptop Risers
- Monitors
- Keyboards
- Mouse and Lumber support Cushions

14. Along with these peripherals, a range of desks and office chairs which complied with DSE regulations were made available to all colleagues (annex 3, pic3).

15. A range of laptop specific bags were made available for the safe transportation of laptops. These bags were either top loading or rucksack style. A full breakdown of items shipped is attached in annex 3 (pic4)

Remote Working support

16. To support colleagues as they adjust to their new remote working environment, the Health and Safety Adviser carried out a DSE assessors training course. This course which is accredited by Chartered Institute for Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF), entailed a full one-day (20%) course teaching the best way to support colleagues in a virtual environment.

Remote Working Training

17. As part of RoS commitment to continuous learning, it was recognised that an e-learning module would be required to assist with colleagues adapting to their new remote working environment. A Homeworkers e-learning course was developed in collaboration with our training partners Workrite / Ideagen and utilised our existing e-learning training platform based within RoSnet. This e-learning was a mandatory requirement for all colleagues. (annex 3, pic5)

Mental Health Support

18. Remote working poses a mental health risk due to the control measures that were implemented by the Scottish and UK Governments. These measures included the restriction of human contact between friends and family in many aspects and the confinement to our own homes for months at a time. To help address this, a MBH specific Mental Health network was set up on the RoSnow platform and hints and tips were given on how to best steer through the current climate.

19. A network of fully accredited Mental Health First Aiders was implemented to enable colleagues to seek support, guidance, and information on how to access professional help if so required.

Making RoS safe and secure

20. Although the vast majority of RoS colleagues are now enabled to work remotely, one team within RoS, Chancery and Judicial Registers (CAJR) needed to return to RoS as this process is not yet digital and still largely paper based.

21. With CAJR returning to MBH, other key departments were also required to return in order to support the CAJR team, namely being the IT service desk team and Estates. Further support would be required from the contracted Cleaning support team.

Scottish Government protocols

22. 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 the onsite track and trace system,
- workspaces and breakout areas with new layouts to allow for 2 metre social distancing between colleagues,
- the availability of sanitiser stations throughout operation areas of the building,
- and COVID age assessments.
- There was also a restriction on colleagues returning to the building if they were deemed a higher risk.
- The 'work from home' message was continuous throughout the COVID pandemic by the Executive Management Team (EMT).

Organisational Risk Assessment

23. Before the MBH building was reopened, a full operational risk assessment was undertaken, with all known risks identified and f emerging risks considered. This process followed the usual 5 steps of risk assessment:

1. Identify the risk

2. See who might be at risk
3. Evaluate the risk
4. Record the risk
5. Review the risk

24. This undertaking was a crucial part of allowing RoS to reopen the building and continue to serve the wider economy with a core part of the services that RoS provides.

Essential workers

25. To allow colleagues to return to work within primarily MBH, a process was created to ensure that colleagues returning were themselves not at risk from COVID and thus mitigate the risks to other returning colleagues.

26. Colleagues were identified who were crucial to the work process that they were being brought in to undertake. In most cases this was for CAJR, due to the physical nature of this work although other colleagues were brought in for short periods to identify and sort live case bags in various locations throughout MBH and SVP.

27. A process was developed where all prospective colleagues would submit a personal assessment, a COVID age assessment and also an application to receive an essential workers letter from the Keeper after they had met all the criteria and eligibility for returning to MBH.

28. No one was allowed on site without a letter from the Keeper. This also applied to all contractors who wished to visit both MBH and SVP and a full Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) was and is required before approval is granted.

29. A full Track and Trace protocol was put in place for all colleagues and contractors arriving on site. This allowed for a rapid identification of any positive COVID cases from colleagues or contractors on site so that all possible infections could be traced.

Re-exit plan for MBH

30. Along with establishing a process for colleagues to return to MBH, a plan was also created for the event of a re exit. 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, MBH can remain open and operate at the most acceptable level possible with the assistance of essential workers until such time as restrictions are lifted.

Reorganisation of the interior of RoS buildings

31. In order to comply with the social distancing measures and also to recreate a work environment that was compliant with ongoing restrictions, RoS took radical steps to completely change the interior of MBH. 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 of MBH. Lockers, where applicable were also cleared in both MBH and SVP.

32. Desk layouts were also reorganised with all desks now at 2m distance between each other and all spare desks have been removed from operational wings. This reorganisation also allowed for a deep clean to commence of utilised wings and for

occupied work areas to be cleaned more efficiently. Before and after pictures are provided in annex 3 (pics 6&7)

33. The support team have increased cleaning in all occupied areas during the current COVID pandemic and identified high area touch points. A card system was also introduced to enable the support team to identify which desks have been used. A one in, one out system was also implemented in the core area toilets by the introduction of a hook on the outside on which colleagues place their ID pass on when entering the toilet.

34. Hand sanitiser units have been placed outside each wing entry point in all core areas and beside the main lifts. Within the toilets extra sanitiser has been placed for use, all machines which have frequent touch points have sanitiser and wipes to use after every use.

Healthy Working Lives

35. RoS is a gold award holder of Healthy Working Lives. This was retained for 2020/21, which is the 4th consecutive year. This award recognises the commitment of RoS to improve health, safety, and wellbeing for all colleagues.

Consultation

36. 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 is active in driving forward health and safety policy and for addressing the concerns of either party. During the enforced period of absence from MBH and SVP, the committee has continued to meet to discuss any concerns or issues that may arise for colleagues working remotely or at MBH.

Regulator Inspections and Visits

37. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has increased inspections on buildings that have been open during the lockdown periods, however neither of our offices has been visited by an enforcement agency during 2020-21. This is a continuing trend from previous years.

Accidents/Incidents

38. During this reporting period there have been no reported incidents or accidents. This is more than likely due to our buildings having minimal staff members with the vast majority of colleagues working remotely. However, colleagues are still 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.

Fire/Emergency Alarm System

39. During 2020-21 there were 3 unplanned fire alarm activations. This was within the data centre on floor 3E at MBH. The cause was a faulty sensor head on the gas suppression system. The layout of the system created a situation where the sensor at

fault could not be identified and this has now been rectified. A full evacuation took place on each alarm activation.

First Aid

40. MBH continues to be adequately covered with fully trained first aiders. There was 1 reported incident during 2020-21 where a contractor required the assistance of a first aider.

Conclusion

41. The COVID pandemic has witnessed a shift in the way that people work and created a conversation on how we want to work going forward. The connectivity of the vast majority 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.

42. 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.

43. The commitment of senior management to providing the best possible working environment whether remotely or with MBH, can be witnessed by the efforts made to ensure that all colleagues have the equipment, training and support they need. Their commitment can also be witnessed with the willingness to lead and remain visible throughout and with continued monthly visits, along with PCS to MBH.

44. New technologies and working practises continue to be adopted by RoS and this has seen an increase in more ergonomic focused workstations, with the introduction of height adjustable desks and a focus on raising awareness of the importance of posture. Working practises continue to evolve and consultation is underway on how RoS can best support colleagues as the traditional Mon-Fri 9-5 work mentality changes and colleagues refocus their work/life balance.

45. RoS continues to champion equalities and diversity, maintaining a focus on such matters will enhance the working environment for all colleagues whether remotely or within MBH or SVP.

Head of Procurement & Estates
May 2021