

**MORAY COUNCIL  
HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT  
(January 2021 to December 2021)**

## **1 Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the performance of the Council in ensuring the health and safety of the workforce and service users. This is done through the utilisation of monitoring data and includes recommendations for improvements required to procedures and/or systems.

1.2 The national context for similar organisations on incidents and enforcement action is also considered for the purposes of shared learning.

## **2 Summary of Key Themes**

2.1 Covid 19 continued to have a significant impact on how the Council operated during 2021 and this is reflected both in the statistics that have been collected and the way that the Health and Safety Team has had to function.

Restrictions imposed by the pandemic resulted in reduced service activity and provision in some areas and this has resulted, as in 2020, in a lower incident rate than might have ordinarily been expected. There has also been an impact on the way the Health & Safety Team operated as the focus of work, at times, was on mitigating the risk of Covid which meant that less time could be spent on other planned work. Revised working arrangements and ensuring continual review and revision of risk assessments, particularly in light of changing guidance were key features.

2.2 Nevertheless, progress has been made, with a particular focus on safety audit activity and fire risk assessment, with a risk based, planned programme of work providing an important framework, particularly in ensuring that the backlog of overdue fire risk assessments were carried out.

2.3 Systems, process and format improvement has been a key focus of work in 2021 with incident reporting, risk assessment, accident investigation and safety training being reviewed and updated. This is a key area of focus to support the organisation in improving health and safety performance.

2.4 Health and Safety Culture is a continuing key theme where detailed actions and interventions have been planned and are beginning to be implemented. It is important that there continues to be a focus on this area of work which will be an ongoing project given the long term nature of implementing and sustaining culture change.

2.5 Incidents based on human error continue to occur, particularly in some safety critical services and work is ongoing to understand the underlying causes. This will enable the targeting of resources to service areas with the highest rates of incidents. With organisational development support, improvements in embedding health and safety awareness into the workforce should be realised.

2.6 Violence and Aggression in schools has been a major theme for a number of years but improvements in terms of staff and service user health and safety are anticipated from the ongoing implementation of the Challenging Behaviour Action Plan.

### 3 Review and Monitoring of Council Performance

#### 3.1 Statistical Review

3.1.1 **Appendix A** sets out the analysis of health and safety incidents that were reported during the year January – December 2021, with comparison to previous years' performance.

3.1.2 The main points to note are:

a) The number of incidents reported in 2021 was 174, down by 13% compared to 2020, and down 42% as compared with 2019. Again, this was most likely due to the impact of Covid-19, which resulted in lockdowns in some services and the disruption to working patterns in others. However, the figures show that there was also a drop in reported incidents of almost 50% in the last four months of 2021, compared to the same period in 2020, largely due to a significant reduction in numbers from within Education. Both were periods that saw a relaxation of restrictions. Further investigation as to the possible reasons for this trend is underway.

b) Environmental Services have the most reported incidents, followed by Education, then Health & Social Care and Corporate Services. Within Environmental Services, Waste recorded the highest number of incidents at 34%, up from 28% the previous year, while Open Spaces had 25%, a decline of approximately 9% on 2020 and Roads Maintenance saw their numbers rise from 11% to 17%.

c) The overwhelming majority of incidents resulted in minor injuries, with these accounting for 91% of the incidents in Education and 72% in Health & Social Care. They also accounted for 64% of incidents in Environmental Services, up from 38% in 2020. The reason for the figure being lower in Environmental Services is that the proportion of Dangerous Occurrences has traditionally been much higher in this service than others (where this figure is usually negligible), though it was significantly lower in 2021 compared to 2020. Dangerous Occurrences accounted for 31% of incidents in Environmental Services, which is a significant drop on the 44% recorded the previous year.

d) Slips, Trips and Falls continue to be the top cause of accidents, accounting for 35% of minor injuries. It was by far the largest cause of incidents in Education and Health & Social Care, but it was exceeded in Environmental Services by Hitting a Fixed or Stationary Object and Being Hit by a Flying or Moving Object. Hitting a Fixed or Stationary Object also accounts for approximately 43% of Dangerous Occurrences in Environmental Services, most of which involve vehicle operations of various sorts.

e) Violence and aggression involving staff continues to be an area of concern. There were 1300 incidents in 2021, which is an increase of 10% on the 2020 figure, though it is still below the 5 year record of 1428 set in 2019. The large majority of these incidents were recorded in Education. The number of incidents in 2020/21 (academic year) was 838, a reduction of 17% on 2019/20 and 27% down on 2018/19. 93% of Education incidents occurred in primary schools, which is the highest proportion across the last five academic years analysed. The most common incident type was Physical Assault with No Weapon at 68%, while Physical Assault With a Weapon accounted for 13%.

f) During 2021, a Care Facility reported 181 V&A incidents, down from 255 in 2020, making this year's figure the lowest since 2017. Over 20% of these incidents resulted in staff injury

with scratching, biting and kicking accounting for over 90% of injuries. Elsewhere in the Council, very low figures (only 12) were reported, too low for any meaningful analysis. This could possibly be attributable to service disruption caused by the pandemic but it is probable that there is some under reporting of incidents. There were five incidents reported in Community Care but none from Social Work, even though the latter has been operational throughout the pandemic. Similarly, two incidents were reported by the Supported Accommodation team but none were received from other frontline services which were operational during Covid and continued to deal with service users who display challenging behaviours.

g) The incident reporting processes for both workplace incidents and incidents involving violence and aggression are being reviewed and will be revised to improve the reporting of data and it's analysis in future years.

### 3.2 Review of Incidents/Accidents/Interventions

3.2.1 The following incident summaries are presented as a sample to illustrate the nature and range of risks the council has faced and to inform decisions on improvements for the future with appropriate remedial actions.

- a) Transport and vehicle safety continues to be a priority for the H&S team. Incident data and anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of vehicle incidents was lower in 2021 than in previous years but this will require detailed analysis to confirm. Even if this is the case, a steady stream of vehicle related incidents has continued, some of which could have been potentially more serious, e.g. lorry colliding with a roller shutter door, dangerous occurrence involving a vehicle being transported on another vehicle.
- b) Manual handling appears to be an issue in some areas of the Council after many years when it seemed to have been successfully addressed. Recent incident reports highlight staff in Direct Services being injured while lifting heavy loads while the H&S team is also working with colleagues in Education and the Social Work Training Team to review safer people handling procedures in ASN.
- c) Wilful fire raising has been an issue in schools during 2021. At least 6 schools have been affected by incidents of varying severity requiring call outs from the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service. All but one were thought to be deliberate. All have involved fire starting in the grounds but bins and a fence were badly damaged at Hythehill PS, while the grounds of Keith GS have recently been subjected to a number of incidents.
- d) Covid-19 has had a significant effect on the way that many staff have had to work and this is likely to continue as hybrid working becomes a permanent feature. The Health & Safety team continues to get calls for assistance with workstation and display screen equipment (DSE) issues but most of these tend to be related to ongoing health matters rather than problems transitioning to homeworking. This could suggest that things have settled down but it would be premature to draw too many conclusions as postural and other health issues can occur with a time lag.

### 3.3 Review of Progress

3.3.1 Health and Safety activity is set out in the annual action plan and then monitored through the council's performance management framework via the service plan and a more detailed workforce plan. Work has been carried out in accordance with the interim service

plan which was outlined for 2020-22 to take account of the impact of Covid 19 on planned work.

3.3.2 The following outlines the progress that has been made in addressing action areas established in the 2020 report.

3.3.3 Accident/Incident – monitor high risk areas; review the trial of the reversing incidents initiative and implement measures as appropriate. A separate form for reporting reversing incidents was trialled, however, the initial results were inconclusive and further work is underway with the services involved. Vehicle damage incident statistics compiled by Fleet Services over the last two years (2020 and 2021) recorded 162 incidents, which is down from 202 incidents reported during 2019 and 2020. However, serious incidents continue to occur so data monitoring will continue, as will investigation of specific incident trends and events with appropriate interventions based on the findings. In addition, the section of the Safety Management System covering Driving Safely has been reviewed and will progress through to implementation of the changes over the next few months.

3.3.4 Accident/Incident - review incident reporting process and implement changes as necessary: progress has been made with a review of the incident reporting process, including the development of an electronic form. Work is also progressing with the review of the Violence and Aggression Incident reporting process. It is anticipated that the work will be finalised and the revised processes launched, with appropriate communications, by the end of March 2022. In addition, the ongoing work to train staff to carry out inspections in care facilities will be completed by the end of March 2022.

3.3.5 Violence and Aggression: work is continuing to implement the revised action plan, led by the Head of Education Resources and supported as appropriate by the Health and Safety Team and Social Work Training Team (SWTT), particularly around improved staff training. As referred to above, work is also progressing to improve the incident reporting process, which will assist in data collection and improve the identification of incident trends.

3.3.6 Fire Risk Assessments: a rolling programme has been implemented to carry out fire risk assessments using a risk based priority approach. Whilst progress is marginally behind the plan outlined at the beginning of 2021, priority has been given to premises at highest risk and those that have been the focus of SFRS activity.

3.3.7 Covid-19 Risk Assessment: work has been undertaken throughout the year to ensure that services were supported to continually review and revise as necessary and appropriate, the risk assessments for buildings, activities and individuals. Communications on the implications of the constantly changing guidance continued over 2021 with advice, guidance and support provided to services as required in order to mitigate the risk.

3.3.8 Inspection: improve accountability by carrying out more inspections within services. Discussions have taken place with Trades Union representatives, regarding the development of a joint inspection programme, in line with the recently refreshed Partnership Agreement and work will continue to have an agreed programme of work in place, from April 2022.

3.3.8 Risk Management: work with OD colleagues to implement measures in targeted areas with high or increasing incident reports. Close links have been established with OD colleagues, with the work on health and safety culture focussing primarily on increased and improved communications and support with audit activity across the organisation, e.g.

information on the changes in legislation around driving safely, lone working audit. Further work on behavioural safety and links with other work outlined in the plan for 2022, such as better incident reporting, incident investigation, risk assessment, lone working, vehicle safety, are being developed.

3.3.9 Revised Working Arrangements post Covid-19: The Lone Working Policy has been reviewed and updated with an action plan agreed with service representatives to take forward service specific protocols and operating procedures aligned with the refreshed Policy. The DSE Policy and supporting guidance and arrangements have been reviewed and are in the final stages of the work required to take forward for formal approval. There has also been continual input to the revised working arrangements for the longer term implementation of hybrid working.

## **4 Benchmarking and National Developments**

4.1 The incident rate for 2021 is down in comparison with previous years, again, most likely due to reductions in activity and service provision, i.e. less people were in some workplaces so less accidents occurred. Figures available from the HSE for 2021 show a similar trend, though comparing the Council with HSE data is difficult as the HSE figures are generally sector based, whereas the Council is a multi-sector organisation.

4.2 Annual Incident Rate (AIR) figures based on RIDDOR incidents is not available for comparison between all the councils in the north of Scotland due to difficulties with the data. The AIR is generally based on RIDDOR incidents but the very low number of these during 2021 does not enable a fair comparison. Difficulties with the accuracy of data collection is being addressed through the revision of the Council's incident reporting arrangements, as referred to above.

4.3 A list of the top 10 prosecutions for health and safety breaches in 2021 has been provided by HSP Magazine. These show a resumption of the trend for very high fines for poor health and safety, ranging from £700k for a serious fire caused by lack of building maintenance to £6.5M for the death of a child who had got access to a rail depot and was electrocuted. Four of the ten were electrical related, which is an unusually high proportion, but two were for fatalities involving workplace transport arrangements. This continues to be an area of concern within the Council and both the outcomes of the incidents, as well as the punishments applied, highlight the importance of getting things right.

## **5 Conclusions and Proposed Developments**

5.1 Covid-19 has continued to have an impact on Council services and activities during 2021 and this is reflected in the incident statistics reported. Numbers are significantly down for most measures as was the case in 2020 but comparison with pre-Covid years are difficult.

5.2 Nevertheless, progress has been made on the issues reported on last year, including, violence and aggression, lone working, vehicle incidents, health and safety culture. Work will continue on these areas in accordance with the plans in place which will be the subject of continual review, taking account of any competing priorities and demands.

5.3 Important progress has also been made in terms of the way the H&S team operates. Systems and processes have been reviewed and changes are being implemented as required. This is likely to accelerate in 2022 but the changes are vital to help the team

become more effective in helping services in the Council manage their health and safety issues.

5.4 Work will also continue with the OD team in terms of using different tools and techniques and communications to support managers in targeted areas to monitor and raise awareness amongst their teams.

5.5. Support for the more permanent move to revised ways of working e.g. hybrid working, homeworking, video conferencing, in work rota arrangements will continue to be required and the planned work in relation to refreshing and updating policies on, for example, DSE and Lone Working will continue along with other potential health and safety issues arising from changed ways of working going forward.

## 6 Action Plan.

Actions	Target for Completion
Accident/Incident: Audit high risk services or issues	Continue with programme of audits in accordance with the timescales for completion according to prioritisation in order of importance. Quarterly review.
Implement changes to the Incident Reporting System including launch and communications across the organisation.	June 2022
Accident/Incident: Implement measures required to ensure improvements in vehicle incidents/driver behaviour, including actions arising from the conclusions of the reversing incidents trial.	October 2022
Implement changes to SMS: Driving Safely Policy and supporting information and guidance.	March 2023
Fire Risk Assessments: Continue to implement the fire risk assessment rolling programme.	Adhere to identified timescales for completion according to prioritisation in order of importance. Quarterly review.
Violence and Aggression – continue to support the implementation of the Challenging Behaviour Action Plan and roll out of identified training as appropriate.	In accordance with timescales outlined in Challenging Behaviour Action Plan. March 23
Risk Assessment: Develop audit of risk assessment; training and guidance for managers on RA.	December 2022.
Inspection: Develop joint inspection programme with Trades Unions in	Programme in place for 2022.

accordance with the agreed Partnership Agreement. Improve accountability by carrying out more inspections within services.	Adhere to identified timescales for completion according to prioritisation in order of importance
Risk Management: work with OD colleagues to implement measures in targeted areas with high or increasing incident reports.	Planned work to be implemented in order of priority over the course of 2022.
Revised Working Arrangements post Covid-19.	Ensure effective implementation of agreed changes to DSE Policy and Lone Working Policies including supporting guidance, protocols and arrangements.  October 2022
High level review of SMS and identification of priorities for the revision of policies, ensuring availability of up to date resources for managers.	March 2023

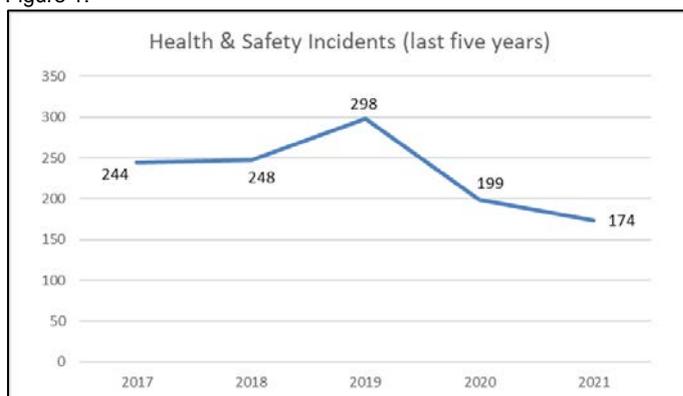
## Moray Council Health & Safety Annual Report - 2021

The summarised information below relates to Accidents and Violence & Aggression data extracted from the Health & Safety database for the period January to December 2021.

### Health & Safety Incidents

During 2021, recorded Health & Safety incidents at Moray Council fell for the second consecutive year to 174; 13% less than 2020 and 42% less than the pre-COVID data of 2019. (Figure 1)

Figure 1:



Monthly data shows recorded incidents were low in January and February which could be attributed to the second national COVID lockdown. However, during the last four months of the year when no restrictions were in place, incidents declined by nearly 50% compared to the same period in 2020. (Figure 2) With incidents broken down by department, it is clear the largest fall in incidents during the last four months of 2021 has been within Education. (Figure 2a)

Figure 2:

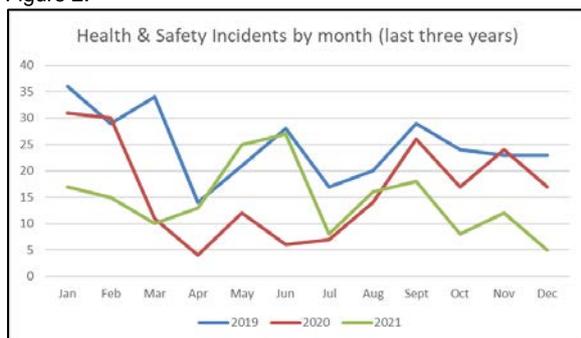
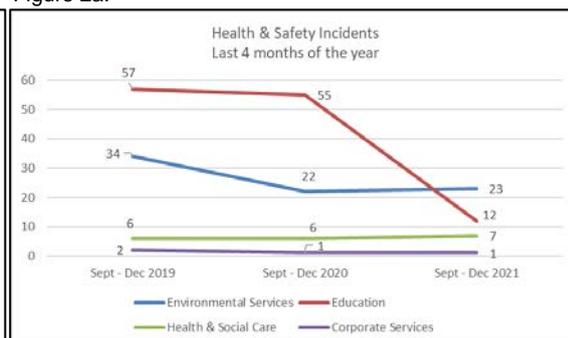
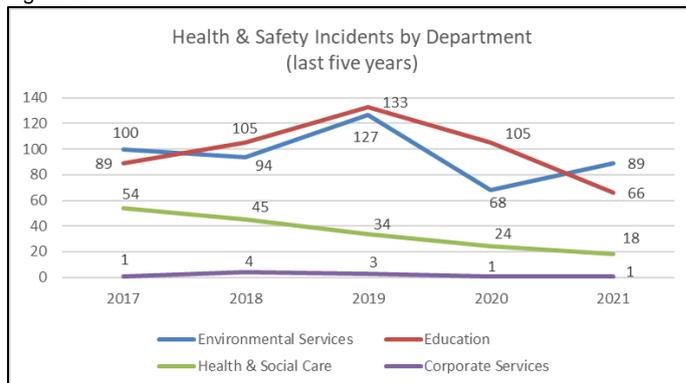


Figure 2a:



Comparing annual data confirms the decline within Education with incidents down 37% from 105 in 2020 to 66. For the first time since 2017, Environmental Services recorded the highest number with an increase of 31% compared to 2020. (Figure 3)

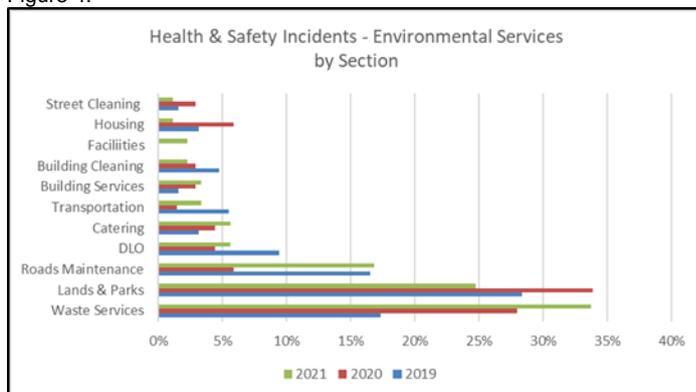
Figure 3:



NB: The incident reporting form and database are yet to be amended to reflect the structure of Moray Council introduced in 2019. This will be updated in due course but at the moment allows for continued comparisons to be made with previous years.

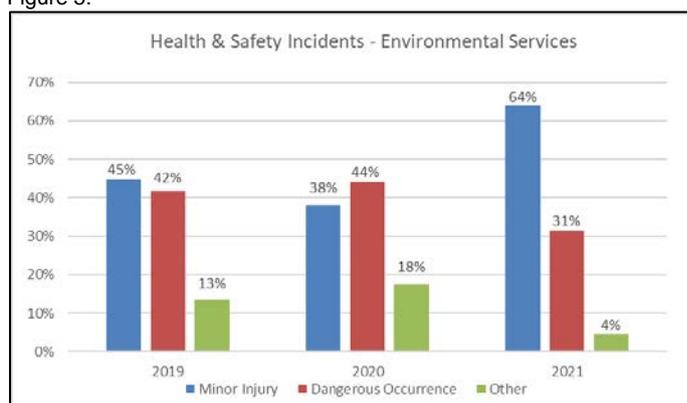
Environmental Services covers a wide range of services provided by Moray Council. Breaking incidents down by section provides a clearer view of where incidents are occurring. In 2021, Waste Services recorded the highest proportion of incidents at 34%; up from 17% in 2019 and 28% in 2020. In contrast, incidents reported by Lands & Parks have declined to the lowest level in three years at 25%. With Roads Maintenance, after a decline in 2020 likely caused by the reprioritising of work due to Covid, incidents have increased back to a similar level seen in 2019. (Figure 4).

Figure 4:



Looking at the total 89 incidents recorded by Environmental Services, the notable increase was Minor Injuries up from 38% in 2020 to 64%. Dangerous Occurrences accounted for 31%. Within the 4% of 'Other' are incidents including Major Injury, Injury to Non-employee, Over 7 Day Injury and Specified Injury. (Figure 5)

Figure 5:



The majority of Minor Injuries recorded by Environmental Services in 2021 were within Waste Services at 35%; a fall from the 42% reported in 2020. Minor injuries also occurred within Building Services and Facilities for the first time in recent years. Lands & Parks have again recorded the highest proportion of Dangerous Occurrences however there has been a significant increase in these incidents within Waste Services compared to 2020; up from 7% to 32%. (Figures 6 & 7)

Figure 6:

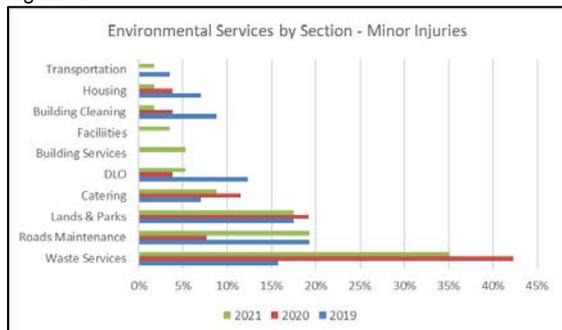
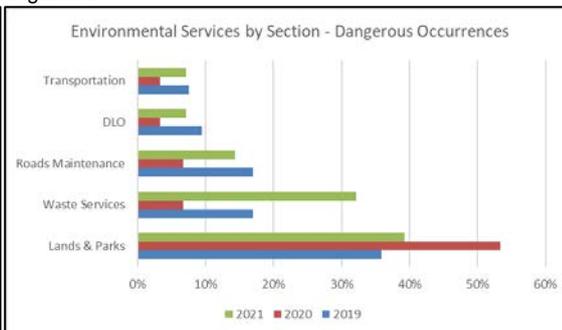


Figure 7:



In 2021, across all sections of Environmental Services, 23% of all Minor Injuries occurred due to 'Hitting a fixed or stationary object', considerably less than the 54% recorded in 2020. In contrast there were increases with those caused by 'Hit by moving/falling/flying object' and Manual Handling. 2021 also saw some Minor Injuries with causes not seen in 2020 including 'Attack by an animal', 'Hit by a vehicle' and 'Fall from height'. With Dangerous Occurrences, 'Hitting a fixed or stationary object' increased to 43%, up from 37% in 2020 while there was also a notable spike with those caused by 'Contact with moving machinery or material being machined'. (Figure 8 & 9).

Figure 8:

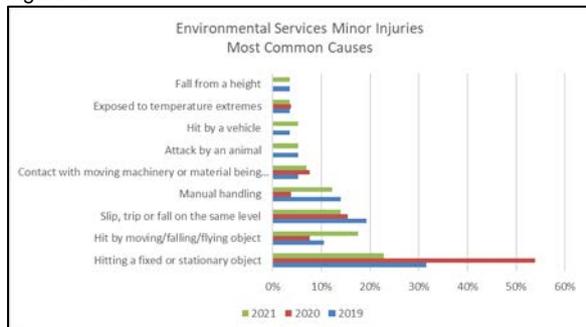
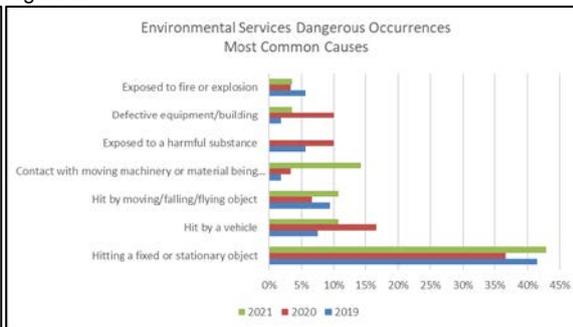
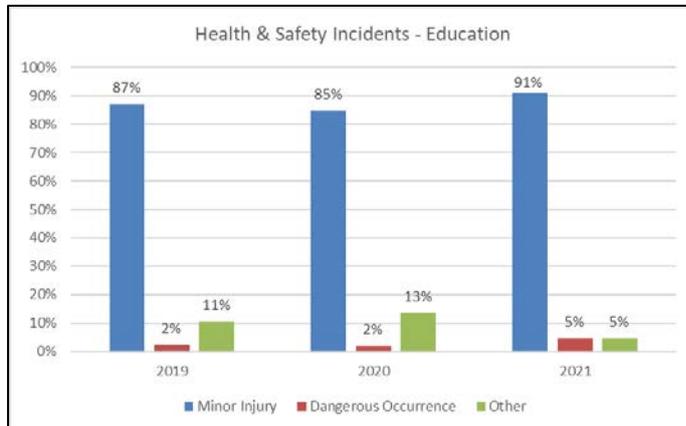


Figure 9:



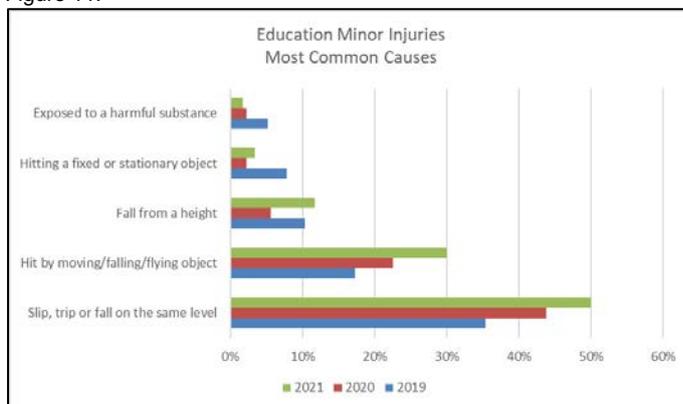
Within Education, 91% of the 66 Health & Safety Incidents were Minor Injuries. As with Environmental Services, 'Other' Incidents include Major Injury, Injury to Non-employee, Over 7 Day Injury and Specified Injury. In 2021, Dangerous Occurrences increased slightly to 5% and included incidents caused by 'Contact with Electricity', 'Contact with moving machinery or material being machined' and 'Exposed to fire or explosion'. (Figure 10)

Figure 10:



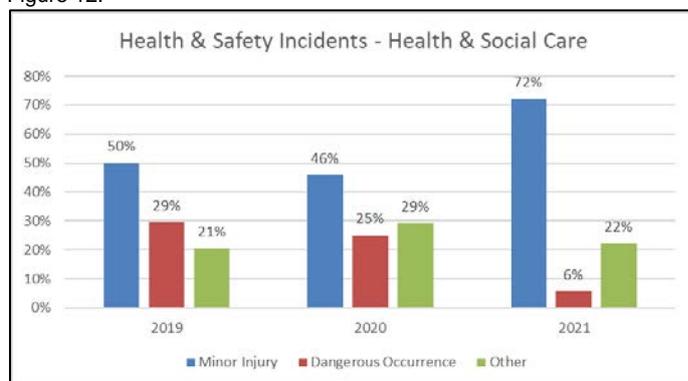
Over the past three years in Education, there has been a steady increase in incidents caused by 'Slip, trip or fall on the same level' and 'Hit by moving/falling/flying object' with both now accounting for 80% of all Minor Injuries. (Figure 11).

Figure 11:



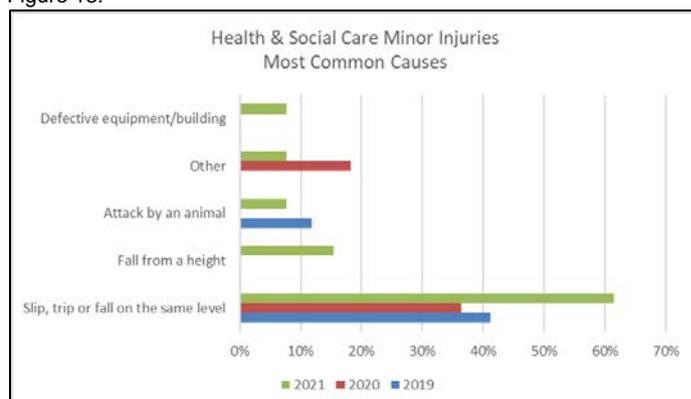
Of the 18 Health & Safety Incidents within Health & Social Care, 72% were recorded as Minor Injury; the highest proportion seen in recent years. In contrast, Dangerous Occurrences fell to just 6%. 'Other' incidents included 'Specified Injuries' and 'Injury to non-employee'. (Figure 12)

Figure 12:



Looking at the cause of Minor Injuries, 'Slips trip or fall on the same level' have jumped to 62% from 36% in 2020. There were also incidents involving a 'Fall from height' and 'Defective equipment/building' not seen in 2019 or 2020. (Figure 13)

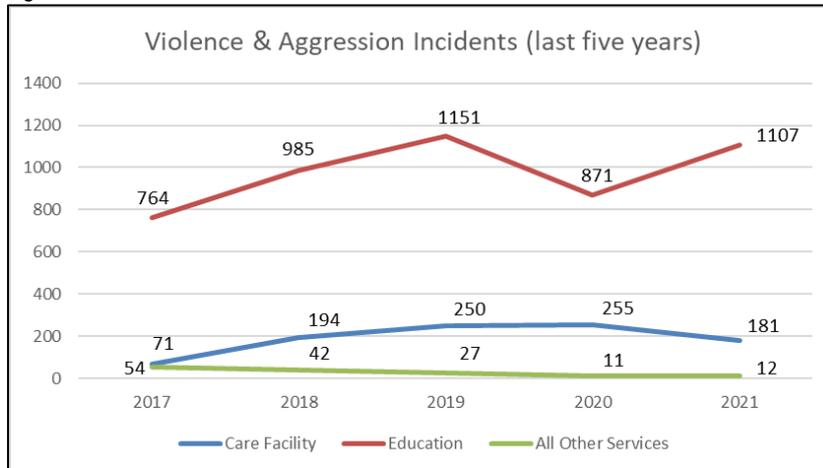
Figure 13:



## Violence & Aggression Incidents

During 2021, total of 1300 Violence and Aggression incidents were recorded by Moray Council. Those taking place in an Education setting increased by 27% compared to 2020 data. (Figure 14)

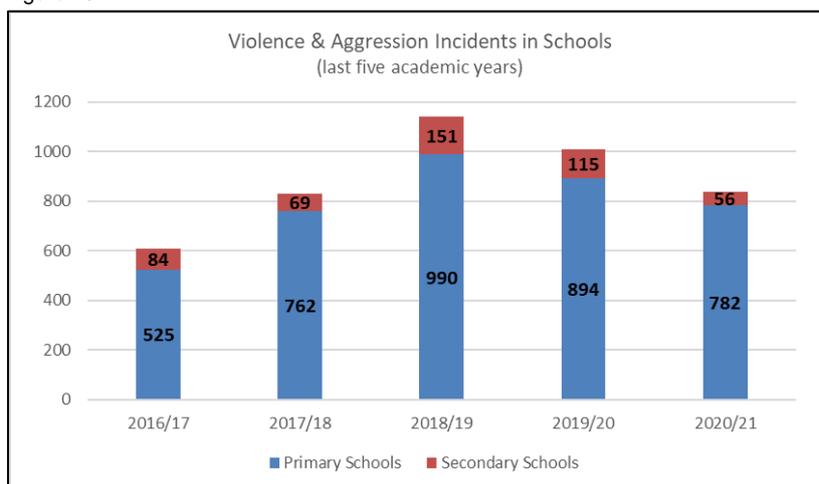
Figure 14:



Violence and Aggression involving school staff is reported by Education each academic year. Looking at data this way, 838 incidents were recorded during in 2020/21; a decline of 17% from 2019/20 and 27% less than 2018/19. Of the 838 incidents, 93% took place within a primary school setting. (Figure 15)

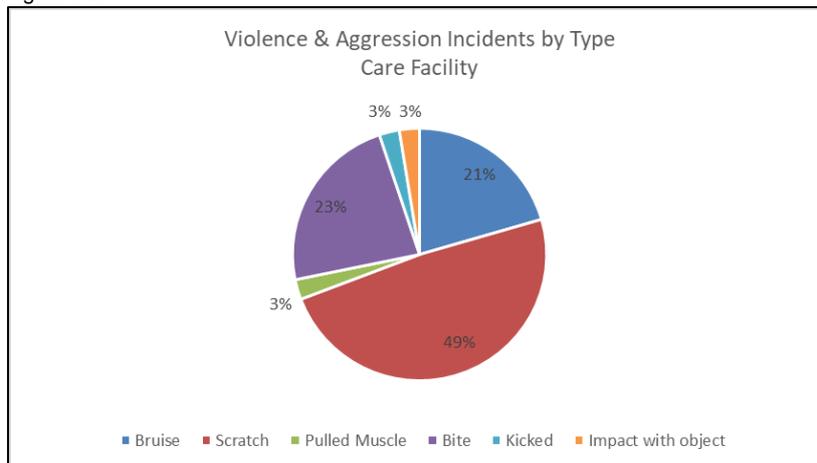
574 incidents (68%) were recorded as 'Physical assault with no weapon', with 'Physical assault with a weapon' accounting for 110 incidents (13%).

Figure 15:



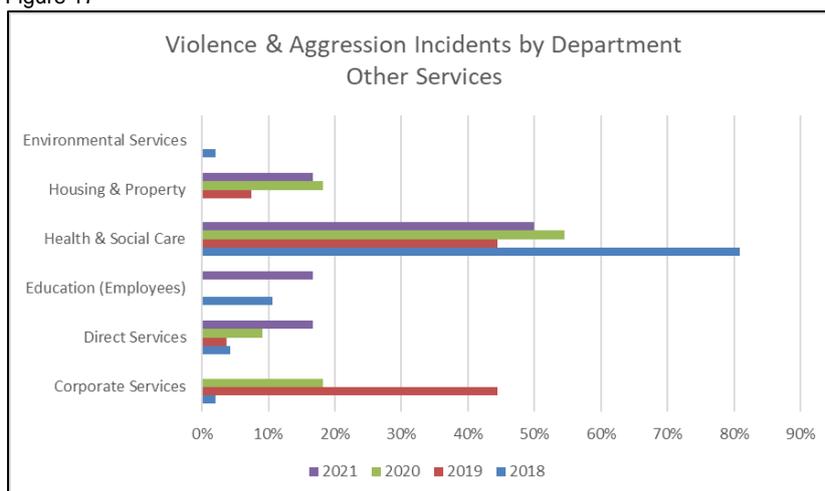
Of the 181 Violence & Aggression incidents at the Care Facility, 39 resulted in an injury to staff with nearly half reporting being scratched. (Figure 16)

Figure 16:



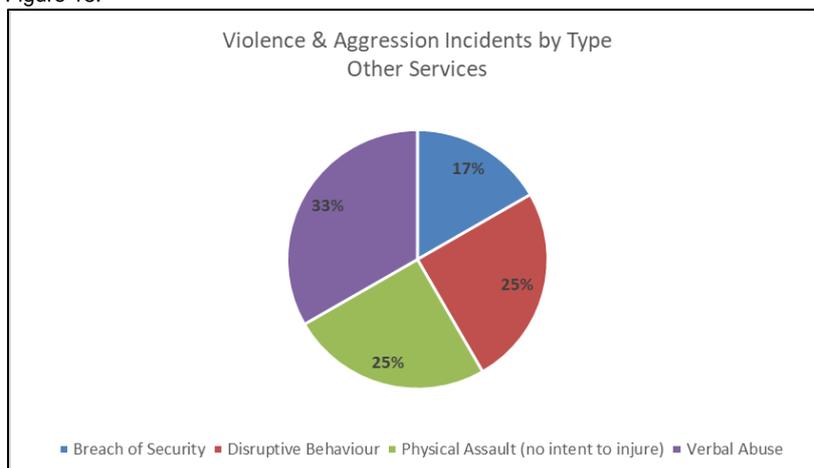
During 2021, 50% of all Violence and Aggression incidents recorded under 'Other Services' involved staff from Health & Social care. (Figure 17)

Figure 17



Most incidents recorded in 2021 for 'Other Services' were categorised as Verbal Abuse. (Figure 18)

Figure 18:



### Working days lost to industrial injury/accidents

The number of working days lost due to industrial injury or accident can fluctuate considerably from quarter-to-quarter however with the exception of just two quarters, days lost have remained well below target since Q4 2017/18. (Figure 19)

Those quarters recording a spike in days lost (Q2 2020/21 and Q3 2021/22) were each affected by a case of long term absence where the individual had not yet returned to work.

Figure 19:

