

Committee	Human Resources	
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Subject	H&S Periodic Report (Oct) 2025-26	
Author	Jim Hutton – H&S Officer	
Action requested	For noting	
Purpose of the paper	To report on developments and key issues related to Health and Safety.	
Summary of the paper	<p>The report, authored by Jim Hutton (H&S Officer), provides a periodic update on Health & Safety and Fire Safety performance across UHI NWH for the start of the 2025–26 academic year. It covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Safety: Progress on fire evacuation drills, training, and fire risk assessments. A new tracker for fire actions is being developed. • Health & Safety: Updates on policy, training, incident statistics, asbestos management, and work-related stress. 	
Consultation	Senior Management Team (SMT), Managers and relevant team members	
Resource implications	Implications are outlined within the report.	
Risk implications	Discussed within paper	
Link with strategy	This report has a direct link to the College’s Health and Safety strategy alongside relevant legislation.	
<u>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion</u>	This document covers high level health and safety information and is not directly impactful for individual groups.	
Island Community Impact	Not required in this instance.	
Paper status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open – The paper may be circulated to non-members of the committee and published online without restriction. <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted – The paper must not be circulated to non-members or published online until after the committee meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential - The paper must not be circulated beyond the committee members and should not be published online. Some information is considered commercially sensitive.	
<u>Freedom of information</u>	Open	

Health and Safety End of Year Report 2024_2025

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Introduction

This Health & Safety Periodic Report outlines key developments and strategic actions taken by UHI NWH in the areas of Fire Safety and Health & Safety for the 2025–26 academic year.

Fire Safety

Achievements: Completion of Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) across all campuses; establishment of fire warden roles.

Challenges: Incomplete fire warden training; inconsistent evacuation resources; lack of zone/building plans at some sites.

Actions: Development of a central FRA tracker; scheduled evacuation drills; contextualised training rollout in Semester 1.

Health & Safety

UHI NWH has strengthened its safety foundations through leadership training, policy updates, and joining the University Health and Safety Association (USHA).

Key developments include improved asbestos management, a new dignity at work policy, and early planning for Martyn's Law compliance.

A recent staff survey revealed high levels of stress and harassment, prompting the formation of a working group to address wellbeing concerns.

Fire Safety

Overview

In 2024-25 the college made significant steps with regards to improving fire safety performance, most notably the compliant contracting of fire safety consultant to support the college; the completion of the Fire Risk Assessments for all campuses; and the establishment of a large group of staff within our college structure (principally in facilities and engagement teams) who hold fire warden duties within their job descriptions.

Priority matters for 2025-26 were identified as provision of suitable staff training, management of fire actions and normalisation of regular fire drills across all campuses.

In the following sections, this report will provide updates on each of those priority items.

Fire Warden and Fire Awareness Training

An online Fire Awareness and Fire Warden course is offered by our appointed Fire Safety Consultants who are working with the UHI NWH safety officer to contextualise this course to UHI NWH's processes and procedures. This training package is still in development but is expected to be ready for online delivery during Semester 1 of 2025-26. Once available, as a priority, all staff with fire warden duties will be provided with refresher training.

Management of Fire Actions

Following completion of Fire Risk Assessments for all our campuses, there have been generated a large number of tasks requiring remedial action in order to improve the fire safety status of all of our campuses.

In 2024-25, the estates team handled these FRA actions as FRAs were published, seeking to tackle highest priority issues in a timely manner. However, this strategy has meant that an overall view of FRA action status has not been available and there is a risk that some high risk or substantial items are not adequately managed.

In 2025-26, a priority for the team is to create a single source tracker that contains all FRA actions broken down priority, location and completion status. This tool will give management a quick visualisation tool and allow planners to easily identify those areas requiring further attention.

It's also intended that, due to the high volume of actions, particularly in some remote and rural areas that the responsibility for resolving some actions may be passed to centre staff with adequate oversight from the estates manager.

Fire Risk Assessment Strategy

Now that FRAs have been conducted across all our estate, the following strategy for review and renewing shall be implemented:

- Any FRA that is older than 4 years shall be renewed within that academic year.
- Any FRA that is older than 2 years shall be reviewed for completeness as a desktop exercise and if deemed necessary shall be renewed.
- Where there is any significant change of use or occupancy (or for any other concern) the estates manager may deem it necessary to renew an FRA outwith this general schedule.

Fire Evacuation Drills

In September the college undertook college-wide evacuation drills for all centres where the college is the responsible party for managing the evacuation of our buildings. The college is planning to undertake 4 drills in 2025-26 and collate findings from each campus during these drills to identify areas of improvement. Drills will be carried out at different times of the day and days of the week and are intended to both generate useful insights into areas for improvement and to familiarise staff and students with our buildings processes.

After each drill a survey is sent out to each centre to capture useful learning. The findings of these surveys are reviewed by the Safety Officer, Campus Services Manager and Head of Infrastructure.

Findings

In the Sept drill, the following main themes were identified:

- All buildings were evacuated swiftly.
- 12 of the 16 premises operated using the correct post-merger hybrid evacuation plan.
- 10 of the 16 Fire Wardens felt competent and comfortable in leading the evacuation.
- 9 of the 16 Fire Wardens felt competent and comfortable using the Fire Evacuation Grab Bag provided at each campus.
- It was noted that some fire grab bags did not contain all of the necessary content.
 - 6 campuses had no zone plan
 - 2 campuses had no building plan
- 8 of the 16 survey respondents noted that their Fire Wardens required training.
- 9 of the 16 survey respondents noted that their Fire Warden was not given assistance from other staff members
- 11 of the 16 respondents noted that they were not aware of the UFAS processes and responsibilities.
- At one location a person inside the building did not evacuate as they did not hear the alarm.
- At two locations, no staff member was willing to take on the Fire Warden role or to assist the Fire Warden when one observing member of staff assumed the responsibility.

Remedial Actions

Several remedial actions have been agreed in response to these findings, including:

1. Fire awareness training and fire warden training are a high priority action for rolling out in Sem 1 of 25-26. – **Safety Officer – Nov 25**
2. Curriculum/Research Staff in ETEC & ERI to be assigned to hold Fire Warden duties. In these locations, no members of staff acted as Fire Wardens during the drill. – **Curriculum Leads – Nov 25**
3. A PEEP to be completed for the person in Thurso who did not hear the fire alarm to ensure the safe evacuation of this person. – **Safety Officer – Sept 25**
4. All fire grab bags to be audited for completeness. – **Campus Services Manager – Nov 25**
5. All staff to be reminded during training that they are to make themselves available to support the fire warden during an evacuation. – **Safety Officer – Nov 25**
6. It was noted that some centres conducted their drills during periods of low occupancy. Future drills are to be scheduled at different times of the day/week. – **Safety Officer – Dec 25**

Health and Safety

Overview

The College has continued to focus on establishing the strong foundations for good safety management, making improvements in emergency measures, first aid provision, improving our understanding of work-related stress, undertaking risk assessments and reporting & investigating of incidents.

IOSH Training has been completed at both the executive tier and the directors/heads of tier of the college aiming to improve understanding, competencies and commitment to sound H&S practices from the top down.

At a strategic level, the College has become a member of the University Health and Safety Association (USHA), which provides access to various H&S management and auditing facilities.

In work-related stress a dignity at work policy is in draft and a work-related stress working group has been formed and is now operational.

The college has taken significant steps to improve its management practices around asbestos with a new policy being published (the Asbestos Management Plan), and Asbestos Register being established and populated and an annual review undertaken by the Safety Officer, Estates Manager and Head of Infrastructure.

Management & Policy Update

In 2024-25 UHI NWH implemented a process of identifying Senior Responsible Officers (SRO) for each site and making this information available at front desks / reception areas for use in case of emergencies. This process requires to be reviewed ensuring that all persons know who to contact in cases of emergency and all SRO contacts have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The SRO will be an essential function of the College as it develops incident response plans (see Martyn's Law), and so it is essential to ensure that this function is fit for purpose.

UHI NWH has recently joined University Health and Safety Association (USHA), an industry recognised management standard used by institutions including various leading universities in the UK. This scheme provides us with a management standard on Leadership and Management of Health and Safety in Higher Education Institutions and also allows us access to the Health and Safety Management Profile (HASMMap) safety audit tool. Implementation of this management standard will improve how UHI NWH manages risk by bringing risk management in line with best practices, placing the responsibility for ownership of risk onto the those who create the risk. Implementing this standard will mean that risk ownership and management is embedded into the working duties of all members of College staff. It should be noted that implementation of these potential

benefits will be determined by the level of resource that can be assigned to working on the enabling strategy and actions.

Changes to Legislation & Guidance

A new legislation, Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 commonly referred to as Martyn’s Law is a new act that will place additional statutory requirements on colleges to develop plans for how they will respond to various major incidents, specifically terrorist threats. Martyn’s Law is intended to improve protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK, as it introduces a tiered framework, categorising premises and events based on the number of individuals to be present at any one time. The larger UHI NWH premises will be in scope and will be captured in the Standard Tier of Martyn’s law. Those premises hosting less than 200 people will formally be out-of-scope, however, it is likely that these campuses will be included in implementing new incident management practices.

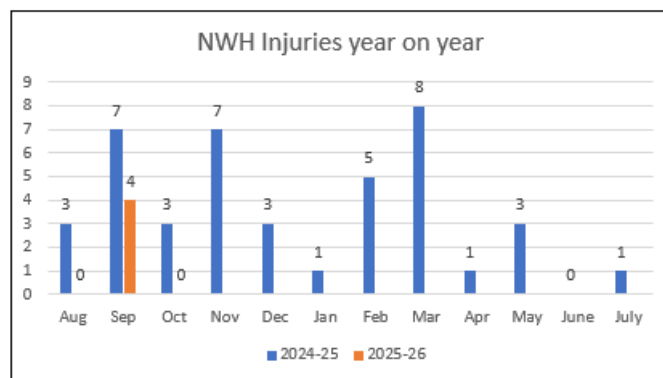
Various staff members within the Compliance, H&S and Infrastructure teams have started engaging with Police Scotland and Protect UK to better understand the implications of this new legislation. Planning for the introduction of Martyn’s Law is in its infancy, but key staff members have attended various Q&A and information sessions and have started to draft new internal plans which will later form the basis of our incident response plans.

Further work will be required in this area as the legislation comes into force, which is currently anticipated for not earlier than April 2027.

Incident and Injury Occurrence Statistics

The following sections provide an overview and discussion on the reportable incidents and injury occurrences across our sites in Sept 2025.

In terms of reportable injuries, the following graph illustrates the monthly injury rate and compares occurrences to the previous reporting period. Whilst it is welcoming to see a reduction in reported injuries in Sept 2025 compared to the previous period, it is too early to draw any conclusions on whether this signals a pattern of improvement.



RID	INJ	NM	INC	UA	UC	MED	PD
0	4	3	2	1	3	4	1

Moderate Injury

- 1 trapping injury
- Back injury-Canoe capsized where student got legs stuck under the seat and had to push hard to release themselves

Minor Injuries

- 3 strike injuries
- Minor cut to head - hit head on digital readout panel on a milling machine
- Minor cut to head - Bending down under a shelf and scraped her head against the corner, causing a scrape on her scalp causing it to bleed profusely. cleaners cupboard
- Twisted their knee when exiting kayak during a capsized

INCidents

- 2 Fire Evacuations outwith scheduled drills both triggered by dirt/dust in sensors.

Work Related Stress

The College undertook the HSE Workplace Stress and Wellbeing survey in May/June 2025. The survey was available to all staff, and the College received 238 responses, representing 45% of employees.

The full survey results are provided in the '*HSE Workplace Stress and Wellbeing Report*' file available in the reading room.

The survey measures staff perceptions of demand, control, support (both Manager Support and Peer Support), relationships, role and change.

The survey results indicated that in six out of the seven areas the College was performing below the HSE lower 25th percentile benchmark established for this survey.

In terms of mental health, the survey indicates there is a likelihood of harm being caused currently, with 35.6% of staff respondents reporting severe or moderate levels of anxiety or depression and 19.9% reporting moderate levels.

40.4% of staff respondents reported harassment and 23.4% reported bullying in the workplace.

Following on from this survey, the College has committed to various further actions including:

- Sharing the full survey results with staff and trade unions.
- Updating the 'Dignity at Work' policy and arrange mandatory training for all managers. This item remains in draft at time of writing.
- To form a working group in coalition with staff and trade union representatives to co-design an updated action plan and monitoring arrangements. This working group has now been formed and is supported by Investors in People who are conducting staff interviews and focus groups to further contextualise feedback.
- Undertake a follow up survey at approximately the same time of year in 2026 in order to benchmark progress.

Training Update

Leadership and provision of training and instruction on Health and Safety are key to our provision of safe people, safe buildings and safe equipment.

IOSH (Institution of Occupational Safety and Health) offers a multi-tiered training system with different levels of H&S qualification to suit various roles within an organisation. UHI NWH have prioritised implementing training of the executive team and senior management with IOSH Safety of Executives and Directors and IOSH Leading Safely respectively. These training sessions have now been completed.

Further expansion of IOSH Managing Safely and targeted roll out of IOSH Working Safely courses in the future will further enhance our safety culture.

Asbestos Management

Prior to this year, neither UHI NWH nor any of the legacy colleges had an Asbestos Management Plan or Asbestos Register. These are statutorily required and are essential documents to support the safe management of works across our estate. The legacy colleges did have a variety of surveys completed, of varying completeness and quality.

In 2025-26, significant progress has been made to improve asbestos management across our estate:

- All asbestos surveys have been relocated to a central shared storage location.
- An Asbestos Management Plan (the governing policy document) has been drafted and published.
- An Asbestos Register, containing and risk grading all items of asbestos across our estate has been created.

- The first annual review of the asbestos register has been completed, reviewing and agreeing risk rating for all items of asbestos and agreeing priority actions for 2025-26.

During the review some gaps or inaccuracies in our data were found. Also found were locations where the fidelity of data was in doubt, perhaps due to the age or quality of the original survey. It was also noted that many of the College's staff who work in areas containing asbestos, e.g., facilities staff members require asbestos awareness training. In 2025-26 addressing these concerns will further improve the college's performance in how it manages asbestos, but nevertheless the completed activity outlined above represents a significant improvement in asbestos management practices in 2025-26 than previously.