

# Accident/Incident

# Investigation

# Guidance

Issue: December 2016  
Review: December 2018



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## Introduction

The aim of this guidance is to describe the actions needed to successfully investigate accidents and incidents in the workplace.

All Directorates must have a robust system in place to ensure all such incidents are reported using the Council's on-line reporting system, SHE®Assure.

Incidents should be reported to the line manager as soon as possible after the incident and no later than 24 hours following the incident taking place.

In the case of significant incidents resulting in a major injury or fatality, Health and Safety Services must be notified immediately that the incident has occurred.

Accident / Incident Reporting and Investigation Flowchart provides a quick overview of the this procedure (*Appendix A*).

## 2. Principles of investigation

Although 'safety' is all about preventing accidents in the first place, a better understanding can be gained from those that do happen. Consequently, it is important that accidents are reported quickly so that an investigation may follow as soon as possible and then remedial action put in place to prevent a recurrence.

The purpose of the investigation is;

- To establish the causes of the accident/incident
- To identify any weaknesses in standards or arrangements for managing health and safety
- To identify any corrective action(s)
- To reduce the likelihood of a recurrence
- Not to blame any individual or group of individuals

## What should be investigated?

All accidents/incidents and near misses must be reported and investigated these include;

- Accidents, violence and aggression incidents and near misses involving any employee of Coventry City Council (CCC), a contractor, service users, young persons and members of the public on CCC premises or where the council has partial responsibility (e.g. rights of way)
- Accidents, violence and aggression incidents and near misses involving any contractor, service users, young persons and members of the public during activities undertaken by, or on the behalf of CCC
- Those on any site, location managed or owned by CCC (e.g. Community Parks)

The level and extent of the investigation should reflect the seriousness or potential seriousness of the accident or incident.

The term 'accident/incident' includes events such as slips/trips/falls, verbal assaults, physical assaults, near misses etc.

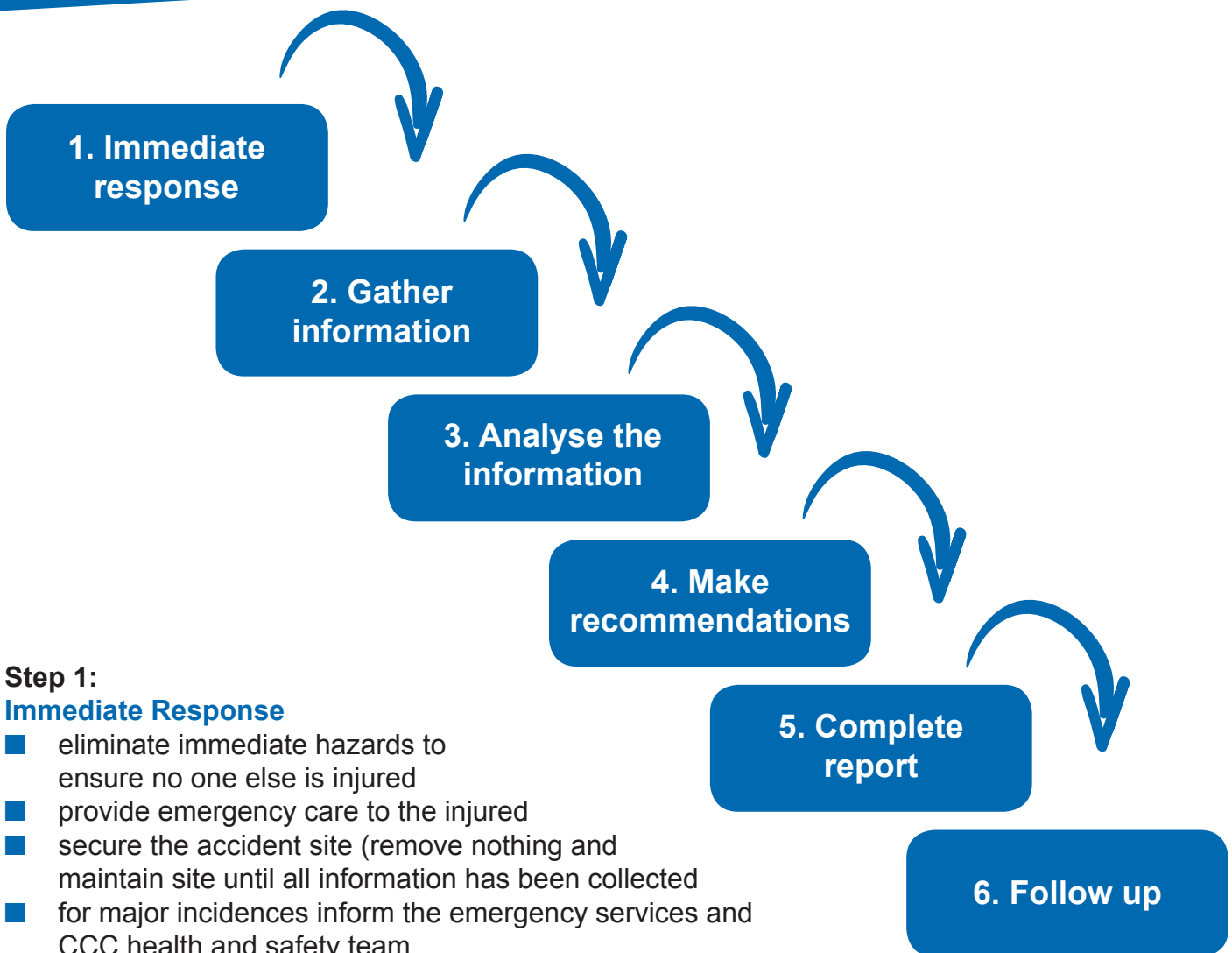
- **Why investigate?** To gain an understanding of how and why things went wrong, take steps to put it right and prevent a recurrence. Investigations should be conducted with accident prevention in mind, look at underlying cause and not to place blame
- **When should an investigation be undertaken?** As soon as possible – memories fade over time
- **What does an investigation involve?** Gathering information, analysis of the information and if necessary implementing actions to prevent recurrence

## 3.1 What does a good investigation involve?

The objective is to find out not only how the adverse event happened, but also what allowed it to occur in the first place. It is important that you;

- Start your investigation as soon as possible after the event, while the incident is fresh in peoples' minds and the scene of the accident has not been disturbed. (In the case of some incidents, certain steps such as administering first aid and making the scene safe have to be taken immediately)
- Adopt a systematic approach – avoid jumping to conclusions
- Conduct the investigation with accident prevention in mind, not finding someone to blame
- Analyse all the information available, including (where appropriate) physical evidence about the scene of the accident, witness statements and written documents such as risk assessments, procedures, permits to work etc. to find out what went wrong
- Identify the immediate causes of the incident (e.g. trailing cable tripping hazard), the underlying causes (i.e. previous actions which have allowed unsafe practices or conditions to exist, e.g. people ignoring the tripping hazard) and the root causes (poor supervision, training etc.)
- Find out what you need to do to prevent it happening again

## 3.2 Steps in carrying out an investigation



## Step 2:

### Gathering Information:

- Undertake interviews promptly and separately. Talk to; the injured person, the first aider, any witnesses to the incident, the immediate supervisor and anyone else who can provide any information
- **Where, when and who:** Detail the time of the accident; who was injured / involved and; give as much information as possible about the exact location of the incident

**How and what:** Identify what happened leading up to the accident, how the accident happened, and the resulting injury (description of the injury and location e.g. ring finger left hand)

## Step 3:

### Analyse the information:

There are many factors that can contribute to accidents / incidents; however these can usually be broken down into four major categories: people, equipment, materials and the environment.

**Under the four categories Consideration should be given to the following:**

Category	Things to Consider
People	Knowledge, experience, skill, understanding, training
	Physical capability
	Workload
	Safe work practices and procedures
	Documentation of hazards (Risk assessments etc.)
Equipment	Design
	Use
	Preventative maintenance
	Hazard recognition, evaluation and control
Materials	Manufacturers' specifications
	Use
	Hazard recognized, evaluated and controlled
	Safe work practices and procedures
Environment	Lighting
	Site / premise layout
	House keeping
	Weather conditions

## Step 4:

### Make Recommendations:

Once the main cause/s of the incident is / are identified, a set of well thought-out recommendations should be developed as a means of preventing a similar event in the future.

### Recommendations should:

- Be clearly written
- Be as specific as possible – what, when and where
- Identify target dates for implementation and follow up
- List resources required for implementation (replacement of equipment, arrangement for repairs, implementation of a checking regime or new procedures, arrangements for training, increase in supervision, communication of health and safety procedures)

## Step 5:

### Complete Report:

The purpose of the accident / incident investigation report is to communicate the investigation and document recommendations for corrective action. Accident / incident investigation reports may be used as evidence during legal proceedings; therefore, it is important that the report is fully complete. All personal information should be removed before distribution of the investigation report and before communicating the investigation findings.

## Step 6:

### Follow Up:

Accident / incident investigation should identify those responsible for;

- Implementing corrective actions within the assigned time frame
- Meeting time-lines for implementing the corrective actions
- Evaluating corrective actions to ensure they are effective
- Sharing the investigation findings with workforce

## 3.3 Incident investigation form and who should investigate?

**All incidents must be investigated.** The level and extent of the investigation should reflect the seriousness or potential seriousness of the accident or incidents. Managers are required to enter brief details of investigations undertaken for incidents resulting in no lost time or minor injuries on SHE ASSURE.

When Investigating lost time, major injury and near miss incidents, managers must use the **Lost Time, Major Injury and Near Miss Investigation checklist for Managers** and cause tables (*Appendix B*).

Further guidance and recommendations for who should investigate' is tabulated in Incident Impact and Investigators (*Appendix C*).

## 3.4 Additional investigators

- **Safety Representatives:** The functions of a Safety Representative (whether trade union appointed or non-trade union appointed) include the right to be part of an accident / incident investigation at the workplace when the accident/incident involves an employee who they are there to represent, or occurs in the area/location they are appointed to cover.
- **Enforcement agencies:** After the most serious incidents, dangerous occurrences or cases of work related disease; enforcement agencies such as the Health and Safety Executive or the police may also want to carry out an investigation.

In the event of an investigation by an external agency, such as the HSE, should a direct approach be made, line managers must inform health and safety immediately and seek assistance (024 7683 3285). Occupational Health Safety, and Wellbeing Service will provide the necessary professional support to the process.

In the event of such an investigation, all CCC staff must provide the fullest co-operation.

## 4. Maintaining records

It is essential that all reports and records are maintained safely and securely for reference on SHE® Assure. These would include accident report forms, photographs, diagrams etc. and the decisions taken regarding the recommendations they contain.

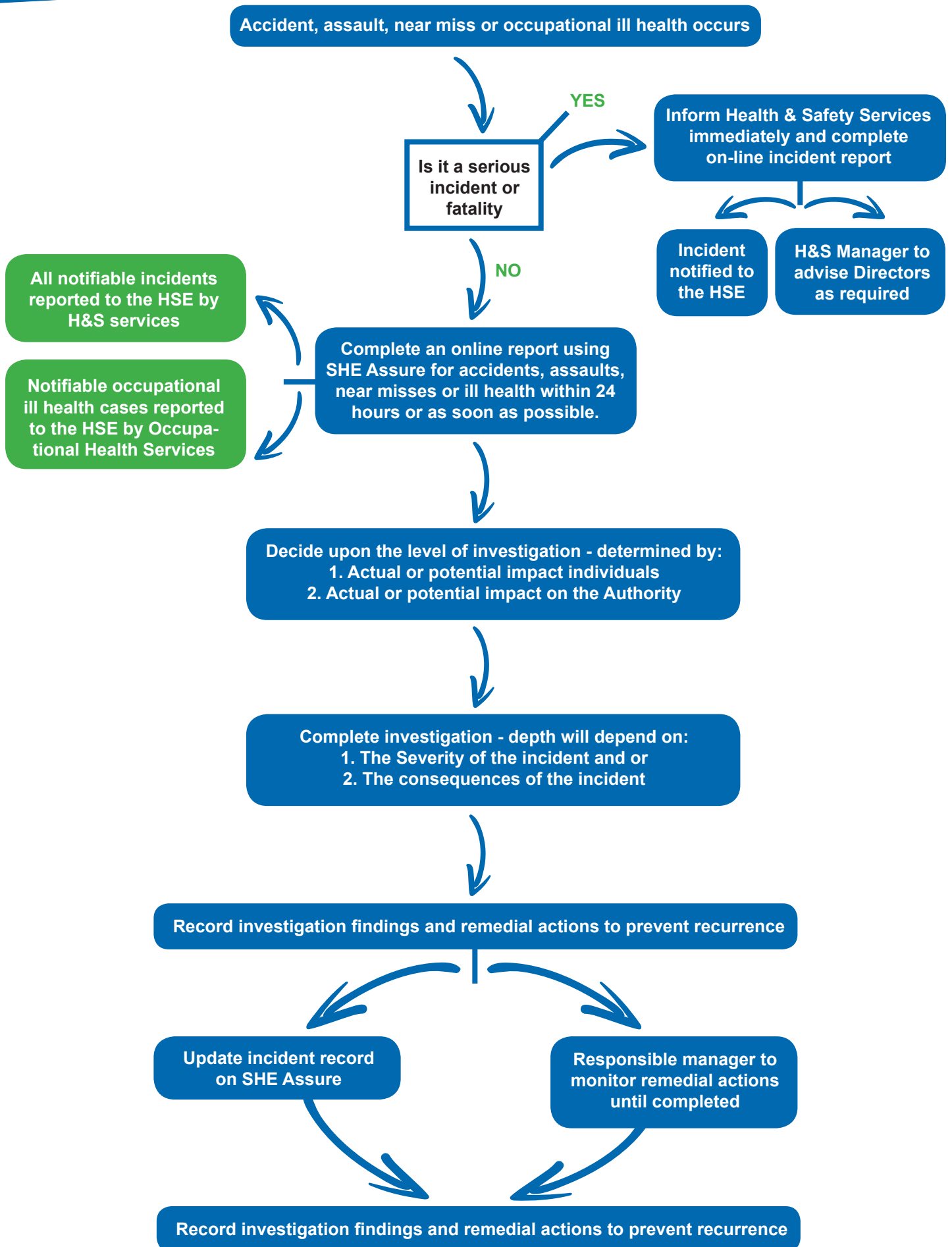
Timescales for the document retention are provided within the Council's Retention and Disposal Schedules. Typical timescales are given below:

Examples of Records	Retention Action	Guidance
Incident reports and Investigations – Employees	Retain for 4 years	Where the documents relate to identifiable individuals, the period of retention is absolute. Therefore they should not be disposed of prior to this period and should only be exceeded where there is a justifiable reason. Where documents relate to non-identifiable individuals, the periods stated here are the minimum recommended, but sections are at liberty to retain these longer if they wish.
Incident reports and Investigations - Members of the public (adults -18 and over)	Retain for 4 years	
Incident reports and Investigations - Members of the public (children)	Retain until the child's 22nd birthday.	
Occupational ill health - Employees	Retain for 40 years	

## 5. Further information and assistance

1. For more information or guidance on incident investigation please contact Health and Safety Services on (024)76 833285 or [healthandsafetyservicesadmin@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:healthandsafetyservicesadmin@coventry.gov.uk)
2. HSG245: "Investigating accidents and incidents: A workbook for employers, unions, safety representatives and safety professionals" HSE Publications.  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg245.htm>

# Appendix A: Accident Reporting and Investigation flowchart





# Appendix B: Lost Time, Major Injury and Near Miss Investigation checklist for Managers

Managers Investigation Checklist – Use in conjunction with Table 1: Incident Causation and Table 2: Immediate / Underlying causes

NB. When investigating 'CABLE STRIKE – near misses' line managers in addition to completing this form must also complete the cable/strike investigation Checklist (*Appendix D*).

Injured Party Details (if applicable)	Surname	
	First Name	
Incident date and time		
Location of incident		
SHE Assure reference		
Investigation Officer/s		

Brief description of the incident - Exactly what was being done at the time and how did the incident occur? (give as much detail as possible)

Was there anything unusual or different about the working conditions on this occasion?

Have there been any similar incidents previously that you are aware of?

Yes  No

If Yes – give details

Areas Investigated	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Findings
<b>Working Environment:</b> (condition of site)	Were any of the following factors present or exist. <b>Floors:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uneven surfaces</li> <li>• Wet</li> <li>• Slippery</li> </ul>				
	<b>Lighting:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor</li> <li>• Too Bright</li> </ul>				
	<b>Temperature</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too Cold</li> <li>• Too Hot</li> </ul>				
	<b>Noise Levels</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive</li> </ul>				
	<b>Work Space</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restricted</li> </ul>				
	<b>Weather Conditions</b>				
	<b>Other conditions</b>				
	<b>Plant and Equipment</b>	Was plant or equipment being used / involved?			

Areas Investigated	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Findings
	Have the employee/s received any training or instruction in relation to use of the chemical/s?				
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Was a risk assessment carried out for the task / activity or workplace? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Assessment</li> <li>• Manual Handling</li> <li>• COSHH</li> <li>• Noise</li> <li>• PPE</li> <li>• Fire Precautions</li> <li>• Other (specify)</li> </ul>				
	Were the control measures implemented and suitable?				If No: Give Details
<b>Personal Protective Equipment</b>	Was any PPE being used?				If Yes: Give Details
	Was PPE adequate for the task / activity?				
	Did the employee/s receive any training or instruction in the use of the PPE?				If Yes: Give Details
	Was the PPE in good condition and regularly maintained?				If Yes: Give Details

Areas Investigated	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Findings
<b>Training, Instruction and Supervision</b>	Have employees received adequate information, instruction and training to undertake the task / activity safely?				Details:
	Were there adequate levels of supervision?				
	Was a safe system of work prepared / documented for the task / activity?				Details
	Was the employee/s following the procedure / instructions?				If No: Give Details
<b>Site Monitoring / Inspections</b>	Has the workplace / site / equipment been subject to any safety inspections?				If Yes: Details: Date of inspection
	Were there any unresolved deficiencies which could have contributed to this incident?				If Yes: Details:
<b>Existing Conditions (Employee)</b>	Does the employee/s have an existing health condition/s that could have contributed to the incident?				
	Has the employee been referred to Occupational Health?				
	Have any recommendations for occupational health been implemented / actioned to prevent an injury to the employee?				If Yes: Give Details

Areas Investigated	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Findings
Evidence	<p>1. Have photographs been taken of the incident site or other hard evidence been kept?</p> <p>Yes (<i>please attach</i>) <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please state when the photographs were taken including date/time and attach them</p> <p>2. Have witnesses to the incident been identified and statements obtained?</p> <p>Yes (<i>please attach</i>) <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/></p>				
Additional relevant information	<p>Please include any other information which you feel may be relevant to the investigation?</p>				

Areas Investigated	Questions	Yes	No	N/A	Findings
<b>Investigation findings</b>	<p>What was the immediate, underlying and root cause? (Refer to Table 2 for guidance)  <i>(For example consider whether training/supervision was sufficient, whether equipment was suitable, adequately maintained and fit for purpose, whether the safe system of work (ssow) was adequate and implemented. If the SSOW was inadequate then please say why?)</i></p>				

<b>Areas Investigated</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>Action to prevent recurrence</b>					
<b>Signed</b>				<b>Date</b>	

**Table 1:** Cause(s) of accident. Tick all those that apply and add any others of relevance

Unsafe Acts	Unsafe Conditions
<p>Improper use of equipment</p> <p>Using faulty/defective equipment</p> <p>Removing safety devices or making them inoperative</p> <p>Under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs</p> <p>Failure to wear personal protective equipment (PPE)</p> <p>Horseplay</p> <p>Incorrect lifting techniques</p> <p>Incorrect loading/stacking</p> <p>Operation of equipment without authority</p> <p>Failure to warn or to secure</p> <p>Non-compliance with standards</p> <p>Other -</p>	<p>Poor housekeeping</p> <p>Sharps (glass, needles etc)</p> <p>Insufficient guards/barriers</p> <p>Defective tools, equipment or materials</p> <p>Insufficient or improper protective equipment</p> <p>Insufficient lighting</p> <p>Insufficient ventilation</p> <p>Exposure to excessive noise</p> <p>Insufficient warning signs</p> <p>Non-compliance with standards</p> <p>Animal (bite etc.)</p> <p>Other -</p>
<p>Physical incapacity</p> <p>Mental incapacity</p> <p>Lack of knowledge</p> <p>Lack of skill</p> <p>Stress</p> <p>Improper motivation</p> <p>Distraction</p> <p>Attitude</p> <p>Motivation</p> <p>Non-compliance with standards (e.g. training)</p> <p>Other -</p>	<p>Inadequate leadership/supervision</p> <p>Inadequate engineering</p> <p>Inadequate purchasing</p> <p>Inadequate maintenance</p> <p>Inadequate tools/equipment</p> <p>Inadequate materials</p> <p>Inadequate work standards/procedures</p> <p>Inadequate training</p> <p>Inadequate standards</p> <p>Other -</p>



**Table 2:** Summary of immediate and underlying causes

Area	Immediate Causes	Underlying Causes
Premises	Access/egress; housekeeping; layout; floor conditions; obstructions; lighting; environmental conditions	Design; selection of workplace; repair/maintenance; cleaning
Plant & Substances	Machine guarding; condition of tools; hazardous substances; ventilation	Design; selection; commissioning; maintenance; personal protective equipment; storage and use of substances; risk assessment of hazardous substances
Procedures	Safe system of work; instructions issued - clarity and adequacy; supervision; safe movement of material or substances; personal protective equipment – selection and use	Safe system of work; emergency procedures; information and instructions - preparation and communication; supervision; transport/movement; contractors - competence and selection; monitoring arrangements
People	Suitability; competence/training; supervision; fitness	Selection/placement; induction or refresher training; cover for absence; safety culture/peer pressure; inadequate/absent supervision
Environment	Spills, escapes, other types of pollution or contamination	Safe system of work, maintenance of plant, and equipment, premises etc. Many causes in common with those above

The above process of collection and comparison will lead to an understanding of the immediate and underlying causes that provoked the accident. The analysis of causes outlined in the tables is not exhaustive, but is indicative of the factors that frequently feature in accidents within the authority.

Based on the investigation findings, recommendations can be proposed which identify:-

- Where standards and controls for risks and organisational elements are absent;
- Where standards are inadequate, and;
- Where standards are adequate but not properly implemented.

The final step is to ensure that recommendations are prioritised and turned into actions for managers to implement, with the aim of preventing recurrence. An agreed timescale should be recommended, based on the seriousness of the event.

\*Monitoring arrangements for progress / implementation of recommended actions need to be established.

## Appendix C: Incident impact and investigators

The level of investigation will vary depending on the severity of the accident/incident (or the likely consequences in the event of a near miss).

Table below illustrates the impact of an incident on an individual and recommendations for who should carry out the corresponding investigation.

Actual or potential impact on individuals		
Employee	MOP / Pupils	Recommendations for preliminary investigation to be undertaken by
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No injury</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No injury</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor injury (cuts, bruises etc.) / damage</li> <li>Less than 7 days absence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor injury / damage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major injury (fractures, dislocation, loss of sight etc.)</li> <li>Ill health</li> <li>More than 7 days absence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major injury (fractures, dislocation, loss of sight etc.)</li> <li>Taken to hospital (from scene of incident)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line Manager</li> <li>H&amp;S Advisor</li> <li>&gt; 7 days absence or Major injury</li> <li>Occupational Health – ill health</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fatal incident</li> <li>Unexpected death in service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fatal incident</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Manager / Head Teacher</li> <li>H&amp;S Manager / Team Leader</li> </ul>
In addition to the above the following incidents		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Near miss incidents (incidents where no injuries have been sustained, but with the potential to cause harm e.g. major equipment failure)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line Manager</li> <li>H&amp;S Advisor</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dangerous Occurrences (as classified under RIDDOR)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line Manager / Head Teacher</li> <li>H&amp;S Advisor</li> </ul>

# Appendix D: Cable/service strike investigation checklist

In the event of a cable/service strike, in addition to completing the **Lost Time, Major Injury and Near Miss Investigation checklist for Managers**. Please ensure that the requested information is also completed:

What was the exact location of incident (including nearest house number, shop name, junction, landmark etc. depending on specific location)?	
What were the weather conditions at the time of the incident? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Sunny <input type="checkbox"/> Windy <input type="checkbox"/> Raining <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy rain <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
What were the lighting conditions at the time of the incident? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Daylight <input type="checkbox"/> Overcast (dull) <input type="checkbox"/> Dark <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
What was the service type encountered? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Water (Plastic) <input type="checkbox"/> Water (Metal excluding lead) <input type="checkbox"/> Water (Lead) <input type="checkbox"/> Water (Clay) <input type="checkbox"/> Gas <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity (High Voltage) <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity (Low Voltage) <input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications (Fiber-optic) <input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications (other) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):
What was the depth of the service below the surface?	_____ mm
Any other factors relating to the service that may have contributed to incident? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Looped/Coiled <input type="checkbox"/> Variable depth (up and down) <input type="checkbox"/> Not uniformly routed (wavy) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify):
What was the service struck by? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Plant <input type="checkbox"/> Powered hand-tool <input type="checkbox"/> Hand-tool <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify):
If incident involved vehicle, machinery or plant was the operator/ driver qualified/ certified to be using it?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Was the service identified and/or marked as part of the permit to dig? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Was a CAT and Genny being used on site? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> CAT	<input type="checkbox"/> Genny
Was a banksman/ observer in place? (Tick as appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

The completed incident investigation form must be scanned and attached to the SHE Assure incident report. If handwritten, please ensure it is legible.

## Contacts

Health and Safety Services on 024 7683 3172  
 Business Services (Health and Safety Support) 024 7683 3103

If you need this information in another language or format please contact Occupational Health on 024 7683 3255