



Case Study: Renfrewshire Council achieves OHSAS 18001 Health and Safety Management

Background

Renfrewshire Council has gained certification to OHSAS 18001 with BSI. The Council based in the west central region of Scotland, employs 9,500 staff and is responsible for the provision of all Local Authority services for 178,000 people throughout Renfrewshire. The Council aims to provide safe and high quality services that meet local needs.

Health and safety is a centralised function within Renfrewshire Council with an objective to assist and support the Council's eight departments, to achieve a healthy and safe working environment for Council employees along with others who may be affected by the Council's undertakings.

Challenge

Renfrewshire Council was faced with a number of health and safety challenges. In the first instance they wanted to increase ownership of health and safety issues at both organisational and individual level. There was also a desire to move away from the previous "prescriptive" approach contained in BS 8800 and HSG 65, along with the need to support a positive health and safety culture, as well as supporting their delivery of "Best Value." Margaret Quinn, Director of Corporate Services commented:

"We have always worked to the current best practice including BS 8800 and HSG 65. However, to us, these systems were prescriptive in their approach and did not fully encourage the employee buy-in and continuous improvement cycle we want to achieve. "

Solution

In October 2000 a decision was taken by the Director of Corporate Services to evaluate the department's health and safety management system against a globally recognised management standard. The department then sought certification to OHSAS 18001 by appointing BSI to audit its systems and processes. Brian Mitchell, Personnel Manager (Health & Safety) said:

"We chose BSI as our business partner because of their international reputation for excellence. As one of the largest and respected management systems registrars in the world they provide a service of the highest quality and integrity."

Following registration of the Corporate Services Department in September 2001 a report on OHSAS 18001 was submitted to the Corporate Management Team and agreement was given to have all departments registered on an incremental basis. Tom Scholes, Chief Executive explained:

"On reviewing the proposal for the introduction of OHSAS 18001, there was no question in my mind that OHSAS 18001 would allow Renfrewshire Council to continue to take a leading role in the protection of its employees and those that we provide services to in our community. I see OHSAS 18001 underpinning the principles of Best Value throughout Renfrewshire Council's service."

On the subject of implementing OHSAS 18001, Councillor Jim Harkins, Leader of the Council commented:

"We have taken a phased approach to delivering OHSAS 18001 across the Council starting with the Corporate Services department, then the Chief Executive's department and the Finance and Information Technology department, and going forward, will roll out to all other relevant departments."

The rationale behind phasing the implementation of OHSAS 18001 was to allow us to test the water, gain experience and to best use our available resources. I believe that this is a very positive step forward for the Council."

Since implementing OHSAS 18001 Renfrewshire Council has seen a number of benefits. Certification has supported the principals of "Best Value," through transparency of service delivery and continual improvement, and has led to a change in the culture of the organisation through encouraging the ownership of health and safety, particularly in involving employees. It has also built upon the current best practice of BS 8800 and HSG 65.

OHSAS 18001 has enabled the Council to identify and address the gaps in their system. Implementation also demonstrates to the Council's employees and stakeholders that they have a health and safety system that is OHSAS 18001 compliant. Independent assessment also allows the Council to benchmark their efforts against other Local Authorities and the Private Sector and set a standard for their suppliers to aspire to. Brian Mitchell, Personnel Manager (Health & Safety) added:

"We undertake an annual satisfaction survey and this year our service improvements pushed satisfaction up by 2%. We cannot say that this was directly attributable to OHSAS 18001 but it would have been a contributing factor. We have received for the second consecutive year a RoSPA gold award, by demonstrating a best practice management system."

Future

Through working in partnership with BSI, Renfrewshire Council have been able to maintain a consistent approach with its other management systems across the organisation. Renfrewshire Council are currently registered to ISO 9001 and BSI Benchmark.

The expertise and professionalism of BSI's Client Manager has provided the Council with a consistent and compliant service, as well as raising awareness and education throughout. Tom Scholes, Chief Executive commented:

"In partnership with BSI we have been able to phase our implementation plan and provide internal awareness briefings in a manner that is beneficial to Renfrewshire."

Renfrewshire Council look forward to receiving even more benefits in the future as a result of implementing OHSAS 18001.