

# RISK News

Issue 26

July 2004

## Reputation matters

**Everything that each of us does can affect the reputation of Norfolk County Council. This can be positive or negative, depending on what we've done and how we've done it.**

**The way we communicate to those outside the authority, the way we carry out our jobs and the impact we have on others, all affect other people's opinions of NCC. If what you do is also newsworthy, the impact on our reputation can be much greater.**

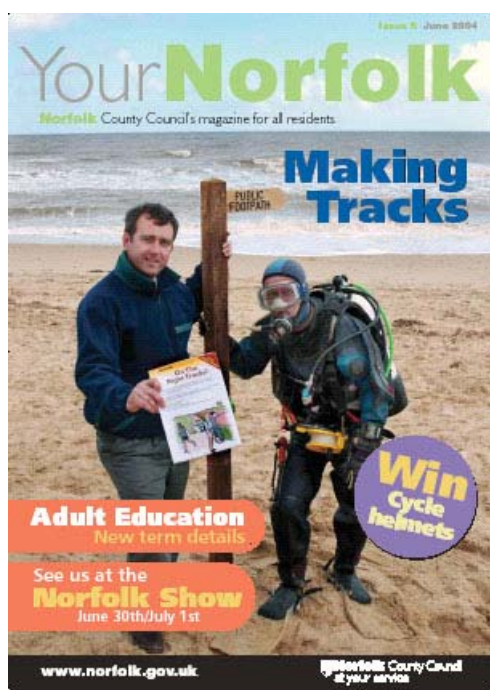
The County Council is proud of its reputation and works hard to maintain and improve it. At a corporate level this is steered by the Communications Unit.

Members of the team are based in each of the major departments and sit on departmental management teams so that advice and guidance can be fed into key decisions. Joanna Hannam, Head of Communications, also sits on the Chief Officer Group to advise on corporate issues. This allows forthcoming items to be identified so that proactive media plans can be drawn up if needed.

The way that Norfolk manages its reputation has improved significantly over the past few years with a much more proactive approach to issues and more resources directed to this work. Now relations with the media are much improved, and the coverage reflects this.

The public also see a difference – 52% feel the Council keeps them well informed (through outlets such as Your Norfolk), compared with only 27% in 2002.

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### Special features

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Produced by the Risk Management section of the Department of Finance

## Comment

Welcome to the latest issue of Risk News.

Our lead article looks at the issue of managing the reputation of the County Council and the risks that can affect it. This is not just to do with negative risks and trying to protect ourselves. Positive actions can enhance the image of the authority and improve our reputation with others. It is an area that everyone contributes to, perhaps without even realising it, but it is a very important element of providing quality services to Norfolk's citizens.

The other major feature relates to managing projects. This is a type of work that the authority undertakes on numerous occasions, but with varying degrees of success. Project management is a skill that has to be learnt and it should not be assumed that anyone can manage a project without suitable experience and knowledge.

If you would like to contribute to a future issue of Risk News, or have any other comments, please contact any of the people listed below.

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## NCC listed for national awards

**Norfolk County Council has been shortlisted for two prestigious awards in this year's national ALARM awards.**

Each year the Association of Local Authority Risk Managers (ALARM) invites local authorities to submit examples of good risk management in their own organisations. An external panel then judges these and the winners are announced at the annual conference at the end of June. We are included in the top three in two categories.

The first, A Human Resource Initiative, is for the Education Well-Being scheme that has been running in most schools and the LEA. This has shown significant benefits to those taking part. Morale has improved, stress levels have been reduced and recruitment/retention of staff has been made easier.

The other is for the work we have done in raising awareness of risk and how to manage risks. This includes Risk News, Risk Awareness Weeks, the intranet site, training provided to departments, feedback from clients, and departmental initiatives.

The two entries can be found on our intranet and Esinet sites. We're keeping our fingers crossed and will let you know if we are successful.

## Oops!!

Flames ravaged a fire station in Florida recently after the firefighters left a pot on the stove when they went to answer an emergency.

An embarrassed fire chief explained that they were used to telling the public what they needed to do and comforting them, but that they were now having to comfort themselves!



## Risk Management & Insurance Services

Check out the new.....

## Risk Management & Insurance Services website

Have a look at our updated Risk and Insurance website for a range of information, advice and guidance.

### Home Page

The '**Home Page**' holds information such as latest news, advice, contacts and a new selection of FAQs. Separate sections on risk management and insurance are included. Risk News can also be found here, with back issues for the last four years and an article search facility.



### Risk Management Services



The '**Risk Management Services**' section holds information and guidance on all the risk types that the authority faces. There is advice on how to manage specific risks as well as how to evaluate your risks and generic guidance for assessing risks.

Within the '**Insurance Services**' section you will find 'Policies and Cover' that gives brief details of all insurance policies. This has been split between schools and departments, as the policies are different. This part of the site also explains what to do when 'making a claim' and contains the relevant claim forms or advises on alternative arrangements.

**To visit Risk & Insurance on the Intranet you can use any of the following:**

- 1) Type the following link into your browser <http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/riskandinsurance>
- 2) Go to the NCC Intranet Home Page and click Risk & Insurance within the Finance Department.

**And for Esinet users:**

- 1) Type the link below into your browser.....  
<http://www.esinet.norfolk.gov.uk/efict/riskandinsurance>
- 2) Go to the Esinet homepage, click on the left hand column entitled "School Management & Governance". Then click on "Managers and Administrators". Risk and Insurance can now be found within the left hand column.

# Driver development training – it works!

The driver development training programme was introduced in 2000 as part of the corporate motor policy. The aims are to improve the safety of those who drive on county business, to improve their driving skills, and to reduce motor accidents. So far the programme, managed by our Road Safety Unit, has covered lease car drivers and those school employees who drive minibuses on school business.

## Success!

Results so far show that the number of accidents have fallen by about 25% since the scheme was introduced. Even more impressively, the costs of the accidents have come down by over 50%, an annual saving of over £150,000. So not only are our drivers having fewer accidents, but when they do happen they are less dramatic and fewer people are being injured.



## Taking NCC vehicles abroad

**Quick reminder** – if you will be taking a lease car abroad this summer, you must contact Car Leasing before you go. They will then contact the Insurance section. Be aware that the breakdown and recovery service that applies to the lease cars in the UK does **not** apply abroad and drivers need to make their own arrangements.

## Motoring myth

Apparently 1 in 5 drivers think they can go fast enough to beat a speed camera.

Top Gear recently tried this – you need to go at over 171 mph to outrun a standard camera!

## Arson alert

- The cost of arson in UK schools in 2003 was £97m
- 34% of school arsons happen during normal school hours
- The most common location for a day time fire is in cloakrooms
- 25% of all malicious fires at schools are thought to have been started by children **aged 7 or under!**
- 35% of schools that have a malicious fire **will** have another one



# New post lifts Social Services

Social Services provide a variety of services to a wide range of clients. As part of their work some staff, for example carers, need to move people or objects. This can present a risk of injury or an accident.

At the moment manual handling is responsible for 30% of all accidents that occur within Social Services and the resulting injuries, vacancies and financial losses have a serious effect on clients and staff alike.

To help manage this risk, Social Services have created a dedicated Manual Handling Advisory Service. The service is based at Carrow House and is tasked with leading policy development on manual handling, as well as providing manual handling advice to staff at all levels within Social Services.

Particular areas that the service can advise on include:

- Safer Handling
- Manual Handling Training
- Ergonomics
- Manual Handling Risk Assessment
- Complex Handling Issues



Two members of staff demonstrate how to operate a hoist correctly

The service has only been up and running since the beginning of March but it is already beginning to have an impact.

- Information about the service has been sent out to Social Services staff and requests for support and advice are beginning to come in;
- Details of any accident are now being copied directly to the Manual Handling Advisor for further investigation and;
- Training courses have been revised and updated.

Response to the service has been very positive and it is hoped it will continue to bring benefits to both staff and clients. For further information contact the Manual Handling Advisor (tel 01603 224097) or e-mail [richard.goodhew@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:richard.goodhew@norfolk.gov.uk)

If you would like this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the Helpline, 01603 223488.

# Healthy eating

## Did you know?

1. Avocados are cholesterol free and provide heart healthy vitamin E, folic acid and potassium. While high in fat for a fruit, most is the healthier unsaturated type.
2. Pasta, oats and pulses, such as peas, beans and lentils, are good sources of 'slow release' carbohydrates that help to keep your blood sugar level on an even keel.
3. Skimmed and semi-skimmed milk contain as much calcium as full cream milk.
4. People who eat a high fibre breakfast, such as branflakes or All Bran report feeling less tired and stressed than those who eat a low fibre cereal such as cornflakes.
5. Food eaten late at night is not more fattening. Studies have found that it is your total calorie count over the whole day that matters, not when it is consumed.
6. The deeper the colour of a fruit or vegetable the more nutritious it is.
7. A pound of fat contains 3,500 calories. Therefore to lose a pound a week you only need to eat 500 calories less each day.



# Managing projects successfully

**Your manager says “We have just been given a load of money to do a big project”. “Great” you say. “I want you to manage the project,” says your manager. “But I have no project management experience” you say. “Don’t worry about that, you’ll be all right. Besides, I’ll support you.”**

Sound familiar? You’re not alone! But will it be a success?

The recent Risk Profiling identified that poor project management featured consistently across many departments. A number of high profile projects have failed to be delivered on time, or within budget, and too frequently targets or outcomes are missed. There is little corporate guidance or help available to those who are in the above position.

Many formal project management systems exist, such as Prince 2 which is fairly widely used across the authority. However to be effective and workable, any project methodology must be appropriate to the scale of the task.

For simple projects, a thought out plan, agreed milestones, and someone to monitor and steer the project may be enough. For large complex projects a more structured approach is needed to set up and approve the project, monitor and guide its progress, solve its problems, deliver the end product and close it down.

## Project health check

On the opposite page is a checklist that you can use to test the health of your project at the start and throughout the project. Score each question using the grading shown, add it up then check against the second table. It doesn’t guarantee success, but it may help you to identify the areas that need attention.

Strongly Disagree = - 4 Disagree = - 2 Neutral = 0 Agree = 2 Strongly Agree = 4		
No	Question:	Score:
1	A strong business case has been developed and approved	
2	The project is in line with Council's corporate priorities	
3	I have the full support of senior management for the project	
4	The benefits of the project are well understood and documented	
5	A clear set of deliverables have been identified	
6	The customer understands its requirements and agrees the scope of the project	
7	Critical success factors have been identified and agreed with the customer	
8	Management will support a request for additional resources, if required	
9	A detailed project plan exists	
10	Frequent milestones have been built into the project plan	
11	There are sufficient resources available until the end of the project	
12	Each team member understands their role, can fulfil it and is committed to it	
13	All materials required for the project are available	
14	A risk log has been completed and a plan formulated to deal with identified risks	
15	A communications plan has been developed and is being delivered	
16	The project time-scale is appropriate and achievable	
17	Appropriate contingency plans are in place	
18	Appropriate change control and quality control processes are in place	
19	I am confident that the project has every chance of success	
20	I have scored the above questions honestly and to the best of my knowledge	
	<b>Score:</b>	

Score	Probability of Success	Description
-80 to -40	Impossible	Do not attempt this project until you have addressed the -4 and -2 issues
-39 to 0	Low	You have too many uncertain areas in this project. Focus on the -4 and -2 issues to improve the overall chances of success
1 to 39	Moderate	You need to pay attention to any -4 and -2 issues to move this project's chance of success higher.
40 to 80	High	This project has every chance of success but don't get over confident.

## Overall advice

Don't take on any projects unless you feel you have the necessary skills to achieve success. A good project manager needs sound individual, team and technical skills. These are not just givens, they are acquired by training and experience. If you are the one allocating project responsibilities consider whether your team has the necessary skills or whether external help is required.

Always remember the words of the Yoruba tribe (apparently) "*a thing that cannot be accomplished should never be undertaken*".

# Current scams

## Nothing for something

The age-old scam of payments for advertising and publishing directories has seen a resurgence recently. This is where establishments or individuals (mostly Education or Social Services) are sent business directories that they have not ordered. The sender then contacts them and demands payment. Cases have been reported where senders have stated that they have tape recordings of verbal orders being placed.

Fear not. Under Section 3 of the Unsolicited Goods and Services Act 1971, it is a criminal offence to demand payment or assert a right to payment where there is no signed order/note of agreement requesting inclusion in a directory, (max fine £5,000).

## I wandered lonely as a clod

Fall for this, and you will be a clod, too. Once again budding writers (or rather, their parents and schools) are being targeted to enter poetry competitions that offer prizes for both the writers and their respective schools. Beware. This may be no more than a cynical attempt to part you from your cash under the guise that your “little Johnny or Jemima” is the next John Betjeman.

The normal scenario is that the written work is so good that it has either:

- been included within a book along with other “exceptional” youngsters which, surprise, surprise, you can purchase at an above average price, or
- can be laminated and mounted in a frame for you to buy as a permanent record, so that all who see it can appreciate it, again at a higher than normal cost.

Who among us could refuse to see our “gifted” offspring’s “exceptional” talent in print! Not to mention the fact that we must buy a copy for Mum, Dad, Granny, Grandpa, Great Aunt Petunia etc.

If you do succumb, beware if the address lists a box number. When checking an address for one organiser, the road and the postcode did not match. Remember, all mail is delivered to the box number, irrespective of the address or postcode stated on envelopes.

If addresses can’t be confirmed, there is a risk that not only will you not receive your order but you may not see your money again, either.

## A little something for your trouble

Instances are being reported of a promotional offer being made by a company that both publishes an educational magazine and runs an associated web site.

The offer is that for each colleague that you introduce to take out a subscription, you will earn a store voucher for a given amount as a reward. If you persuade your section or establishment etc to subscribe, the amount of the voucher will be greater, (the larger the group, the greater the amount).

This offer can be seen as an inducement to gain the company an unfair advantage for its product over that of competitors. As such, although no contract is entered into, this type of inducement is contrary to the council’s Code of Conduct.

*If you think you may be the target for a scam please contact Norfolk Audit Services on **01603 222746**.*



# Reputation matters

(continued from page 1)

In 2003/04 the Communications Unit dealt with nearly 3,700 media enquiries and issued 842 releases to the media, of which 96% were used by at least one outlet. There was an average of 70 positive stories a month about the authority compared with just 38 a month in 2000/01.

The Communications Unit can offer training in dealing with the media, plain English, writing for publications, report writing skills, etc. Any information issued to the public or the media will reflect on NCC and so the better presented it is, the more positive the image of us will be.

The Unit can also advise on campaigns, publicity for events or activities and strategies for dealing with major news items.

## Sometimes reputations can be hit by a failure to think ahead.

No doubt Gerald Ratner regrets his casual comments about the quality of his then jewellery business products.

And a pencil manufacturer recently had an embarrassing product recall. They thought it would be a good idea to make pencils for schools with the slogan “**Too cool to do drugs**”. What they forgot was that the message changes as the pencil is used.

From “**cool to do drugs**” to a final instruction “**do drugs**” they were forced to scrap the product at a significant cost to themselves and their reputation.

## Top media tips

### When a reporter calls:

- give yourself time
- ask questions before you answer
- take details and promise to phone back

Should you be dealing with this?

Should it be a Chief Officer or politician?

### Making a response:

- be sure of your facts
- be brief and keep to the point
- NEVER speculate or comment

If in doubt, ask for help. Talk to your departmental communications officer or the corporate media team on 01603 222972/3.

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## Work experience - warning

We have found a few instances recently where young people have been placed on work experience, but the firm they were placed with did not have suitable insurance.

Schools and others must

- firstly check that the potential placement providers have public liability insurance of at least £2 million.

- also check that the insurance cover does extend to under 16s and work experience students. This is not always automatic as some businesses cannot get cover for under 16s.

Not to do this check is potentially putting the young person at risk and leaving the County Council open to a claim for negligence.

# Premises manager training

The last issue of Risk News mentioned we were considering putting on a series of training events for people with responsibilities for managing premises. This is now going to happen. Starting in the autumn there will be a series of one-day courses, each covering:

- Managing the risks associated with asbestos
- Managing the risks associated with legionella
- Managing the risks associated with hot work
- Fire risk assessments and fire safety management
- Managing works contractors
- Managing statutory plant inspections

At the end of the day delegates will understand the risks involved, how NCC's policies will help to manage the risks, and who takes responsibility for what.

The sessions will be free to attend until March 2007 and it is expected that every premises manager will attend. Further details are available from your Departmental Safety Advisers or the Central Safety Team – promotional material should be available shortly through the normal H&S routes.

## Stay safe on the beach

Stay Safe On The Beach is a unique beach safety campaign that focuses specifically on the use of inflatables at the coast. The aim is to avoid and reduce the number of fatalities and incidents that arise each year by using these toys.

Norfolk's Trading Standards department is the first trading standards agency in the country to look specifically at the dangers that these toys can pose. They have teamed up with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency for this pioneering project.

Last year lifeboats were launched about 650 times to deal with someone in trouble while using an inflatable. Each rescue involves up to 15 people



each time and as these incidents are avoidable, this takes the rescue service away from dealing with other emergency situations.



The campaign started after officers carrying out test purchases found that the majority of inflatables failed to state clearly they were not suitable for use in the sea. To support the campaign there is a DVD that highlights the dangers of inflatables, and two booklets aimed at educating children (one for those aged 5-11 and one for high school pupils).

These resources are available to schools and libraries across the county and can be obtained by calling the Customer Service Centre on 0844 800 8013. For more information check out the Trading Standards internet site.

# Frequently asked questions

The Risk and Insurance section receives many enquiries about our insurance cover and risk related issues. Here is a small selection of some of the more common ones.

## Business use for vehicles

- Q.** *Are employees of Norfolk County Council covered for business use when using their own vehicles on County Business e.g. attending meetings at different County premises or teachers transporting children?*
- A.** Business cover is not provided for employees of Norfolk County Council. Should you need to use your own vehicle for business purposes you will need to obtain your own business cover from your own motor insurer. This can normally be added to your existing private motor vehicle policy at little or no extra cost.

## Key holding

- Q.** *A Norfolk County Council establishment is having building work carried out by external contractors, the contractors would like to start work early and finish late. Would it be OK if they had keys to the building?*
- A.** Keys to properties must only be in the custody of an employee of NCC. They must not be given to external contractors. Should keys be given to contractors and an incident occurs resulting in a claim that can be attributed to the contractors not locking up properly, this would not be insured under the Property Insurance Policy.

## Contractors insurance

- Q.** *What level of insurance do works contractors require?*
- A.** We recommend that they have a minimum of £5million worth of public liability cover.

## Work experience

- Q.** *A school has received a questionnaire to complete for a work placement student to be on their premises. It asks if NCC has public liability insurance, the name of the insurer, the policy number and the expiry date.*
- A.** NCC has £50m of public liability cover. The policy is with St Pauls International, the number is UC POP 3481069, and it expires on 31 March 2005.

## Volunteers

- Q.** *Norfolk County Council is staging a number of events. Some of the people helping in these events are volunteers, are they covered under the Authority's Insurance Policy?*
- A.** Yes the Public Liability Insurance covers volunteers while carrying out duties for the Authority.

# Risky business

## Mobile phones and driving

Following recent changes in the law the corporate motor policy has been revised to reflect the latest County Council guidelines on using mobile phones.

An amended version of the motor policy can be found on our website (see page 3).

The main changes are that departments need to decide which of their staff need to have mobile phones when driving, and whether they then need to have a hands-free kit supplied. This will depend on how urgent it is that the employee can make or receive calls while on the road.



Remember, it is illegal to use a hand-held phone while driving. Also that anyone causing an accident when using a phone, whether hands free or not, is liable to prosecution and can receive a custodial sentence if convicted.

## Don't be too flexible with your "flexible friend"

Beware of phone calls where the caller pretends to be from either VISA or MASTERCARD. This could be a scam to obtain your card security number.

Basically, a call is made stating that they have noticed a purchase on your account from a company that they have been watching. You are then asked whether you have purchased anything from this company. When you reply no, they say that they will issue a credit to your account for the transaction, (usually below the £500 limit flagged by most cards).

At this point they need to verify that you are in possession of your card (i.e. that it has not been lost or stolen), and you are asked to quote the last three digits of the number on the reverse of it.

This is the card security number. Not surprisingly, when you get your next statement, instead of finding a credit to your account, you will probably find a number of transactions charged that have not been made by you.



A number of instances have been reported of this scam, all following the basic template. NEVER give out any security details. Both VISA and MASTERCARD state that they do not require any information on the card as they already know it.

## And finally . . .

### *A cunning plan?*

Those people who are concerned that the UK does not spend enough on raising awareness of major incidents might like to consider the initial German response to a chemical attack.

Instead of mobile phones or pagers, the authorities decided to have mobile tannoy announcements telling people to stay indoors, close the windows and turn the radio on until the chemical agent had dispersed.

The first public trials of this warning system saw people opening windows and coming outside to hear what was going on!