



Meeting	Performance & Resources Board	Agenda Item No.	13
	Service Leadership Team		6a
Meeting Date	28 July 2021		
	8 June 2021		
Report Author	Director of Corporate Services		
Presented By	Director of Corporate Services		
Subject	Bureau Veritas - COVID Assurance		
Type of Report	Information		

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the board are asked to note the contents of this paper and the following appendices,

- Bureau Veritas Restart your Business summary report (Appendix A)
- System Assessment and Certificate of compliance (Appendix B)
- Site assessment non/partial compliances and certificate of compliance (Appendix C)

OVERVIEW

The Service commissioned an external independent assurance COVID-19 Review to ensure the Service is compliant under the Health & Safety in the workplace Act 1974 [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/75) to ensure that our workplaces are operating to an acceptable standard, in line with COVID Government advice [Offices and contact centres - Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/offices-and-contact-centres-working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19).

BACKGROUND

The Service commissioned Bureau Veritas (BV) in January 2021 to undertake an independent Covid-19 assurance review.

The primary purpose of Restart Your Business With BV service was to provide an assessment of the processes and procedures, systems and controls the Service has implemented to maintain COVID safe workplaces. This also included facilities arrangements that had been enabled to keep our people safe.

The system assessment commenced and concluded early March, whereby a wide range of information and data was provided to BV. This was an in depth assessment of policies, procedures, risk assessments and workplaces measures in place.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

An initial meeting took place on 19 January 2021 with BV and all key stakeholders to define the scope of the assessment and map the Service's portfolio of sites and priority areas.

System Assessment

The BV system assessment focused on the measures, procedures, policies and risk assessments that have been defined or revised since the Service placed on hold or reduced activity across the organisation, this covered four themes as follows,

- **Process** - policies and procedures developed to protect employees and maintain business continuity.
- **Hygiene** - actions specific to maintaining good hygiene in premises.
- **People** - subjects specific to people's behaviour such as social distancing, PPE and employee protection
- **Facilities** - controls in place related to the facility itself including equipment inspection and maintenance

BV provided the Service with a list of documentation to be provided. On receipt of all documentation BV completed the assessment, compliance and evidence is detailed within Appendix B.

Site Assessment Phase

BV recommended a sample of sites and these were pre-agreed through the COVID Risk Group with all key stakeholders. The following sites were identified.

- Service Headquarters
- Fleet workshops
- Chelmsford Fire Station & Training Centre
- Witham Fire Station & Training Centre
- Rayleigh Fire Station
- Brentwood Fire Station
- Braintree Fire Station
- Halstead Fire Station
- Ongar Fire Station
- Corringham Fire Station

The Site Assessments were conducted through documentation review and on site visual inspection and an interview with local site personnel facilitated by Station Managers and/or a member of the Health and Safety Team. The site assessment findings are shown within the Non/Partial compliance spreadsheet (Appendix C). All non and partial compliances were addressed and evidence provided back to BV inspectors, in order to achieve full compliance.

BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

Prior to the independent review ECFRS had taken a robust approach to ensuring that each site across our estate had a site specific COVID risk assessment. Each risk assessment identified relevant control measures, for example signage for one way travel, hygiene practices, room capacity number etc. Once these had been addressed

the site was then jointly signed off through the local Station Manager and Health and Safety Representative.

Whilst the risk assessments had been formulated against the Government COVID Workplace guidance, ECFRS felt that it was important to seek an independent assessment of the measures that we had put in place. This was to gain further assurances that we had adopted all of the government guidance and that we could clearly evidence this, through an independent audit and inspection. BV upon completion of their inspection and satisfactory assurance would then issue the service with a certificate of assurance.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Following a three quote tender process, Bureau Veritas were commissioned to undertake the COVID Workplace Assurance Review. The total sum, including the desktop review of documentation and the ten independent site inspections undertaken by a BV COVID inspector totalled, £14,220.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Is this decision anticipated to have an impact on any of the following protected groups as defined within the Equality Act 2010:

<i>Race</i>	X	<i>Religion or belief</i>	X
<i>Sex</i>	X	<i>Gender reassignment</i>	X
<i>Age</i>	X	<i>Pregnancy & maternity</i>	X
<i>Disability</i>	X	<i>Marriage and Civil Partnership</i>	X
<i>Sexual orientation</i>	x		

(If an impact on one group or more is anticipated, a full People Impact Assessment must be completed).

WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

All key stakeholders (department heads, Station Managers and Group Managers) were involved from the initial meeting with BV on 19 January 2021 and were well communicated and involved throughout system and site assessments.

Having now received the BV report and certificate of assurance it will form an important part of our communication to staff in providing reassurance that our workplaces are COVID safe. We recognise that this is continually changing environment that we need to be adaptable to and as we progress closet towards the relaxation of COVID measures as determined by the government advice we will be able to use our learning from this report to further identify how we can improve our workplaces for the future.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None specific to this report at this time.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

The BV assessment highlighted the health & safety implications in terms of the COVID assurance review, which can be found within Appendix A, for which Non or Partial compliances were addressed.