

[Plymouth City County Council fined £200,000 after failing to protect workers](#)

Plymouth City Council has been fined £200,000 after its failures led to employees developing hand arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) and carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS).

During 2017 – 2019, two council employees developed HAVS and a further four were diagnosed with CTS as a result of prolonged and uncontrolled exposure to hand arm vibration while working in the grass cutting team or when carrying out arboriculture activities.

HAVS can affect the nerves causing pins and needles and numbness and can result in reduced strength in the hands. It can also vascular components in the hands causing asymmetrical blanching of the fingers and numbness which occur when exposed to cold and wet.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that between 2005 – 2019, Plymouth City Council failed in its legal duty to comply with legislation even though [guidance has been available for employers since 2005](#).

Plymouth City Council pleaded guilty of breaching Section 2(1) of the health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The local authority was fined £200,000 and ordered to pay £25,877 in costs at Plymouth Magistrates Court on 29 June 2023.

HSE inspector Janet Hensey said: “The fine imposed on Plymouth City Council should underline to everyone carrying out similar activities that the courts, and HSE, take a failure to follow legislation seriously.

“We will not hesitate to take action against companies which do not do all that they can to keep people safe. Exposure to vibration is a recognised health risk with potentially disabling consequences.

“There has been relevant legislation regarding assessing and controlling [exposure to vibration since 2005](#), this was a case of the organisation completely failing to identify the risk to employees when carrying out grass cutting and arboriculture activities.”

Blake Morgan Solicitor Agent supported HSE with this prosecution.

Notes to editors

1. [The Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing

behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.

2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE guidance on [Hand Arm Vibration](#) is available.