

WORKPLACE LEARNING AGREEMENT
Between
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
And
LOCAL JOINT FORUM
(Recognised Trades Unions within RBC)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This agreement covers the following parties:

'Trades Unions' refers to the recognised Trades Unions within Reading Borough Council and representatives on Local Joint Forum.

The 'Council' refers to Reading Borough Council.

1.2 Links to external organisations

The Council and trades unions will liaise jointly with external learning providers and other bodies as appropriate, to meet the needs of employees.

1.3 Statement of intent

This Workplace Learning Agreement has been drawn up to reinforce the importance of learning in the workplace to Reading Borough Council and Trades Unions. The Agreement is intended to link to existing learning related policies of the Council which help deliver effective learning for the organisation's employees. It sets out the rights and duties of Union learning representatives and the commitment to (and responsibilities of) the Trades Unions and Reading Borough Council to establish and support joint working arrangements around learning initiatives.

2. PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Principles

This agreement is based on the principle that learning should develop the confidence and the skills of the individual, which will benefit them primarily at work, but also outside of work.

The Council already has a number of learning-related activities and policies, which outline its support for employee development; and managers' and staff's responsibilities within these. These are outlined in brief below :

- **Induction** - a comprehensive Induction for all employees which includes a Corporate, Directorate and Workplace Induction.

- **Appraisal** - Procedure documents, guidance for managers and employees, Appraisal and induction are the main means for managers (the organisation) to identify development needs for employees.
- **Annual Corporate Training Programme** - core learning programmes for employees, evaluating learning effectiveness and publicising learning resources.
- **Management training for senior and middle managers.** Annual service planning - identifying directorate programmes and team development needs on an annual basis.
- **National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book)** - the Organisation abides by the national provisions relating to employee development, outlined in Part 2, Section 3 'Training and Development'.

2.2 Definitions

Learning - This document refers to learning which is accessible to all employees, for work and for life; including those who may have been traditionally excluded from learning. Learning should be flexible and responsive to the needs of learners. Learning is about working together to meet a collective need - be it in the workplace, or in society.

Partnership - A partnership is one in which both sides have a contribution to make, and acknowledge the strengths of each partner. The partnership has to be embedded throughout the structures of each partner organisation. An effective partnership is one which has at its centre the needs of learners and which is flexible and dynamic.

Union Learning Representatives - Key functions are set out in the Employment Act 2002 and include: identifying learning or training needs; providing information and advice about learning or training; promoting the value of learning and training; consulting the employer about carrying out such activities and preparation to carry out any of the above activities.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Responsibilities and Commitments

This statement recognises the commitment to employee learning that will help employees take advantage of learning and development opportunities with support from the Council and Trades Unions. In order to support staff in developing their skills and abilities, the range of support mechanisms identified in 2.1 will be applied by the Council, the Trades Unions and employees themselves. There are a number of commitments and responsibilities by the Council, Trades Unions and individual employees. These are outlined below.

3.1.1 Organisation

- The Council will provide the appropriate mechanisms for employees' development needs to be discussed, recorded and provided, i.e. through probationary interviews, appraisals and service planning.
- The Council will put in place a centrally organised programme of learning options designed to meet generic identified employee development needs. Directorates will make provision to meet the technical and professional development needs of their employees through their Directorate/Service training and development budgets.
- Following attendance at centrally organised events, employees' records will be updated to maintain a training history of their learning activities. The Council will aim to promote the principles of lifelong learning so that individuals whatever their age or starting point can realise their full potential in learning, work and within the community.

3.1.2 Managers and supervisors

- Managers have responsibility for the training and development of employees reporting to them, ensuring that their employees understand and have reasonable access to the learning opportunities available and have their development needs discussed, recorded and met where appropriate.
- Managers have responsibility for ensuring that staff are allowed reasonable and planned release from work duties to attend job-related learning opportunities.
- Managers are also responsible for ensuring that each employee is made aware of the Workplace Learning Agreement and the learning opportunities available.

3.1.3 Trades Unions

The Trades Unions are important to the success of encouraging non-traditional learners back into learning. They need to enthuse all employees about the opportunities learning creates and offer support and encouragement to Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) (also called Lifelong Learning Advisers (LLAs)). Trades Unions are committed to working with their members and activists to support learning initiatives, to developing learning representatives to encourage and support learners and to enthuse about the benefits of learning. The Trades Unions bring to the partnership their experience of championing learning with non-traditional learners, their national Learning at Work Programmes and their branch organisations.

3.1.4 Union Learning Representatives/ Lifelong Learning Advisers

- The Trades Unions and the Council recognise the key role of Union workplace representatives in the successful realisation of lifelong

learning and in working with existing mechanisms to promote learning and help employees receive the development they need.

- The Trades Unions will appoint ULRs/ LLAs in accordance with its rules. These will be notified to the Council by individual Trades Unions.
- The Council will normally allow time off for the training of a ULR/LLA within six months of notification of appointment by the Trades Unions. Learning representatives will be given time off to perform their duties in accordance with the relevant ACAS Code of Practice.
- The Trades Unions will develop a network of ULRs and LLAs whose role is set out below.
 - ◆ Learning reps and advisers are an integral part of the union branch structure and as such will be supported by the branch committee and will work closely with the branch education officer as part of the branch education team.
 - ◆ They will work with employees in accordance with the duties and responsibilities outlined in the relevant ACAS Code of Practice.
 - ◆ The Trades Union's network of stewards and workplace contacts are also points of contact for potential learners who can then be channelled to the learning reps for appropriate support and signposting.
 - ◆ The Trades Unions provide two stages of training for learning reps, all of which is accredited by the Open College Network.

3.1.5 Employees

- Employees have a responsibility for their own development, which will include: discussing their development needs during induction and appraisal; thinking creatively about their own development needs and being prepared to make suggestions to their manager, committing to the learning opportunities provided and using their learning to improve their performance.
- For qualifications, employees have a responsibility to complete assignments and projects, which are set as part of the course.
- Some employees will be involved in a process of continuing professional development (CPD) either voluntarily or as a requirement of their membership of a professional organisation

3.1.6 LJF (Local Joint Forum)

The arrangements for and monitoring of the success of the learning agreement will take place within the existing joint industrial relations machinery of the Council (ie DJF's, JTUC, LJF).

3.2 Combating inequality

The Council is committed to working to ensure that all policy and practice relating to learning and development reflects an equal entitlement to access learning and also tackles traditional barriers to learning, also that employees can have reasonable and planned access to learning which meets their identified development needs and thereby the needs of the organisation. The Council's learning and development programme will be scheduled, where possible, take account of general employee working patterns.

The Council will work with Trades Unions and learning providers to identify and address any barriers to equality in access to learning including access, and flexibility in learning materials and delivery.

3.3 Time for learning

Reading Borough Council will allow all employees reasonable and planned paid time off work to attend those job-related learning events identified as either individual or team development needs.

4. RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

Disagreements about the application of this agreement shall be discussed informally in the first instance between the relevant trade union and the operational manager. If disputes cannot be resolved in this way, the matter may be refereed to the Council's Learning and Development Manager or Head of HR. If disputes cannot be resolved through these discussions, then the matter may be referred to the Joint Trades Union Committee (JTUC) and from there to the Council's Local Joint Forum (LJF). If agreement cannot be reached at the LJF then the Council's normal dispute resolution procedure will be applied.

5. REVIEW AND MONITORING

This agreement may be amended through the normal joint consultative arrangements that exist between the organisation and trades unions. A minimum of three month's notice will be given for proposed changes to this agreement, unless both parties jointly agree to a lesser notice period.

Signed

Chief Executive - Reading Borough Council
Trades Union x 3 Secretaries
Head of HR - Reading Borough Council