

To: Councillor Terry (Chair)
Councillors Brock, Ennis, Mitchell and
Mpofu-Coles

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8 November 2023

Your contact is: **Richard Woodford - Committee Services**

NOTICE OF MEETING - PERSONNEL COMMITTEE 16 NOVEMBER 2023

A meeting of the Personnel Committee will be held on Thursday, 16 November 2023 at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

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At this point, the following motion will be moved by the Chair:

“That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item on the agenda, as it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of that Act”

10. REDUNDANCY AND SPECIAL SEVERANCE PAYMENT COSTS - 1 OCTOBER 2022 TO 31 OCTOBER 2023

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PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MINUTES – 13 JULY 2023

Present: Councillor Terry (Chair);
Councillors Brock, Ennis, Mpofu-Coles and R Singh (Substitute for Councillor Mitchell).

Also Present: Kathryn Cook and Teresa Kaine.
Kieran Magee.

Apologies: Councillor Mitchell.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM

The Chief Executive submitted the proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 15 June 2023.

3. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

The Committee considered a report presenting two Employment Policies which had been reviewed jointly and agreed with the Joint Trade Unions. The following documents were attached to the report:

Appendix A	Domestic Violence Policy
Appendix B	Employment Break Policy
Appendix C	Smoking at Work Policy
Appendix D	Flexible Workstyles Framework
Appendix E	Equality Impact Assessment

The report explained that the Domestic Violence Policy was a new policy that had been developed as part of the Council's commitment to support its workforce's health and wellbeing at work. The Employment Break Policy was also new, and had been developed to provide the basis for a clear understanding of the Employment Break Scheme for the benefit of both the organisation and the employee who wished to have a planned and agreed break from the workplace. The new Smoking at Work Policy conformed to the requirements of smoke-free legislation. The Flexible Workstyles Policy had originally been drafted in 2021, but the agile working principles had now been updated to reflect the aim of the Council's approach to Flexible Working.

The report explained that all employment policies had now been reviewed by the HR and Organisational Development team, following consultation and negotiation with the Joint Trade Unions. A communications plan was in place to communicate the revised policies to managers and employees.

Resolved: That the following revised HR policies, as set out in in Appendices A,B, C and D to the report, be approved:

- **Domestic Violence Policy;**
- **Employment Break Policy;**

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MINUTES – 13 JULY 2023

- **Smoking at Work Policy;**
- **Flexible Workstyles Framework.**

4. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY AND THE WHOLE COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

The Committee considered a report which explained how the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and plan would be developed. The Council would be using a whole council engagement exercise to inform both the strategy and the plan. The strategy and plan would be drafted by September 2023 for submission to Personnel Committee for agreement on 16 November 2023.

The report explained that, further to a motion agreed at Council on 20 October 2020, (Minute 7 refers) attached to the report at Appendix 1, the Council had been working to develop a formal EDI Strategy setting out the Council's aims and ambitions for becoming a more diverse and inclusive organisation, the priorities for achieving this and how progress and success would be measured. The scope of the strategy would encompass all protected characteristics as well as inclusion more generally

The report noted that achievements to date included a steady increase in the ethnic diversity of staff and a more representative senior leadership team (RSM Group). The report also set out a timetable for the development of the Strategy. In order to fully develop the Council's ambition in a meaningful way to improve EDI, it would be necessary to involve as many people as possible across the organisation in the development of the EDI, including teams, active staff groups, ambassadors, trades unions etc in a Whole Council engagement exercise. Plans were being put in place to engage with staff in teams that were historically less likely to respond to initiatives such as this one. The engagement exercise the Big Conversation, would be structured to include multiple channels with multiple stakeholders focussing on the following core questions:

- What do you think our equality, diversity and inclusion priorities should be?
- How do you want the Council to *feel* in the future?
- What would help your voice to be better heard?

Whilst this exercise would initially be limited to RBC staff, officers were also talking to Brighter Futures for Children about engaging their staff, including those working in schools.

The responses would then be analysed to identify areas of focus and external consultancy support would be used to enable development of the EDI Strategy. The EDI Strategy would have implications for a range of HR policies and processes requiring both a thorough review of these areas and a conscious decision about how the EDI Strategy would be supported going forward.

Resolved

- (1) That the process for the development of RBCs EDI strategy and plan including a whole council engagement exercise be noted;**
- (2) That the EDI strategy and plan be submitted to Personnel Committee in November 2023.**

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.24pm).

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENTS) MINUTES – 17 NOVEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair)

Councillors Hoskin, Mitchell and Terry

Also in Attendance: Jackie Yates (Chief Executive), Andrew Tromans (Penna), Di Smith (BBFC Chair), Paul Snell (NED BBFC)

1. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended), the press and public be excluded for consideration of the following item as there was likely to be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

2. APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN

The Committee carried out an interview process for the post of Executive Director of Children's Services.

Resolved-

That, subject to the acceptance of a formal offer, Lara Patel be appointed Executive Director of Children's Services, Brighter Futures for Children.

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PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENTS) MINUTES – 26 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair)

Councillors Page, Robinson and Terry

Also in Attendance: Jackie Yates (Chief Executive)

1. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended), the press and public be excluded for consideration of the following item as there was likely to be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

2. APPOINTMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RESOURCES

The Committee carried out an interview process for the post of Executive Director Resources.

Resolved-

That, subject to the acceptance of a formal offer, Charlie Stewart be appointed as the Executive Director of Resources on a three year contract.

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PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENTS) MINUTES – 23 JULY 2023

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair)

Councillors Gittings, Mitchell and Terry

Also in Attendance: Jackie Yates (Chief Executive), Kathryn Cook (AD HR&OD) and Andrew Tromans (Penna)

1. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended), the press and public be excluded for consideration of the following item as there was likely to be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

2. APPOINTMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

The Committee carried out an interview process for the post of Executive Director Communities and Adult Social Care Services.

Resolved-

That, subject to the acceptance of a formal offer, Melissa Wise be appointed as the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care Services

(The meeting commenced at 9.30am and finished at 3.00pm)

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PERSONNEL COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENTS) MINUTES – 25 JULY 2023

Present: Councillor Brock (Chair)
Councillors Ennis, Robinson and Terry

Also in Attendance: Jackie Yates (Chief Executive); Kathryn Cook (AD HR&OD) and Andrew Tromans (Penna)

3. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved -

That pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, (as amended), the press and public be excluded for consideration of the following item as there was likely to be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to that Act.

4. APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

The Committee carried out an interview process for the post of Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services.

Resolved –

That, subject to the acceptance of a formal offer, Keith Townsend be appointed as the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

(The meeting commenced at 11.30am and finished at 4.00pm)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM – 10 OCTOBER 2023

Present:

Councillors Terry (Chair), Ennis and Mitchell.

K Magee	Unite
A McNamara	National Education Union (NEU)
K Gumbrell	National Education Union (NEU)
M Palfrey	Unison
Kathryn Cook	Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development
Teresa Kaine	HR Services Manager
Julie Quarmby	Committee Services

Apologies: Councillor Brock

1. PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2023

The proceedings of the Local Joint Forum meeting held on 15 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes/Actions of the following meetings were received:

- Corporate Health and Safety Committee – 21 September 2023
- Joint Trades Union Committee – Actions

3. FINANCE - UPDATE

Darren Carter, Director of Finance, attended the meeting and gave a verbal update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the current in-year budget position. He explained that there was currently a forecast overspend of around £4m, including a Brighter Futures for Children overspend of £5.8m, rather than the surplus of £2.781m that had been forecast when the budget had been set in February 2023.

Darren Carter explained that the budget situation had become more challenging due to larger than expected increases in pay, inflation, and unavoidable demand pressures, including increased homelessness and children's social care costs. He noted that it had become very challenging to mitigate overspending in the current year and for the next financial year and advised that CMT were going through a budget challenge process to explore the measures that could be taken to bring the current in-year overspend down.

Darren Carter noted that the budgetary pressures being faced by RBC were not unique and RBC was not close to needing to issue a Section 114 notice but it was important that action be taken now to manage overspending in order to allow the Council to set a balanced budget without needing to utilise its reserves.

Darren Carter expressed the opinion that, given the wider national context, it was likely that Central Government would need to take action to address the budgetary pressures felt across Local Government. Such actions could potentially take the form of targeted

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LOCAL JOINT FORUM – 10 OCTOBER 2023

grant funding eg for Adult Social Care but, far more likely, would take the form of allowing Councils to raise Council Tax beyond the current permitted amount allowed.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

4. ELECTRIC FLEET

Darren Carter, Director of Finance, gave an update on the Council's electric vehicle fleet. He explained that the most recent purchase of vehicles had been made using a budget underspend, meaning that there were no capital or borrowing costs associated with the purchase. The Council had considered the business case for the purchase of electric vehicles and had balanced these against the Council's response to the climate emergency and commitment to achieving net zero status. The electric vehicles were more expensive to buy but had a longer asset life and they had been purchased to replace existing vehicles that were at the end of their life.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

5. HR POLICY UPDATE

Teresa Kaine, HR Services Manager, attended the meeting and reported that the current policies under review were Breastfeeding, Workload and Wellbeing & Mental Health. The Trades Unions were being consulted, and the revised policies would be submitted to the Personnel Committee for agreement in November.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION - UPDATE

Kathryn Cook, Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, gave a verbal update on the work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Kathryn explained that the Big Conversation had now ended and the staff input had been used to draft the EDI Strategy. An easy read version of the Strategy would be produced and Trades Unions would have the opportunity to see the strategy and the delivery plan at JTUC on 18th October before it was finalised and submitted to Personnel Committee on 16 November 2023.

Kathryn Cook noted that it was harder to engage with some teams than others and that work was underway to build a communications and engagement plan so that all employees would be aware of the strategy and what it means for them.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

(The meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.52 pm).

Personnel Committee

16 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reports for 2023 and Workforce Profile Report for 2022-23
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Kathryn Cook – Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development
Lead Councillor	Councillor Liz Terry
Corporate priority	Our Foundations
Recommendations	<p>1. It is recommended that Personal Committee note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Gender Pay Gap Report 2023 in appendix 1. - The Ethnicity Pay Gap Report in appendix 2. - The Workforce Profile 2022-23 in appendix 3.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report presents the Council’s Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap reports for 2023. The mean gender pay gap is 0.82% and the median is 0.00%. This compares to last year’s figures of 0.13% (mean) and 3.06% (median).
- 1.2. The mean ethnicity pay gap for 2023 is 2.46% mean and minus 0.40% median, compared to last year when they were 2.68% mean and minus 1.76% median.
- 1.3. The report also presents the Workforce Profile for 2022/23 which provides a summary of equalities monitoring data and trends over time. It covers data on the protected characteristics of the current workforce and job applicants in 2022/23 and compares it to the previous three financial years where relevant.
- 1.4. Taking positive action on workplace equality can have significant benefits for an organisation’s reputation, culture and people. The Ethnicity and Gender Pay Gap reports are a fundamental step on the Council’s journey to improving workplace equality. It helps to create a baseline to track current progress and drive continual improvement.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. An employer must comply with the regulations for any year where they have a ‘headcount’ of 250 or more employees on the ‘snapshot date’. For local authorities the snapshot date is 31 March each year.
- 2.2. Organisations must publish the following information:
 - Their mean gender pay gap
 - Their median gender pay gap

- Their mean bonus gender pay gap
 - Their median bonus gender pay gap
 - Their proportion of males and females receiving a bonus payment
 - Their proportion of males and females in each quartile pay band
- 2.3. The information must be published on both the employer's website and on the Government Equalities Office website. An employer should then use that information to help understand any underlying causes for their gender pay gap and take suitable steps to minimise it. Benefits will differ between employers but can include developing a reputation for being a fair and progressive employer, attracting a wider pool of potential recruits for vacancies and the enhanced productivity that can come from a workforce that feels valued and engaged in a culture committed to tackling inequality.
- 2.4. Unlike the gender pay gap, large organisations are still not yet legally required to publish their ethnicity pay gap. The Council has chosen voluntarily to publish its data for the fourth year.
- 2.5. Public authorities have specific duties under the Equality Act 2010 to help them comply with the public sector equality duty. They must:
- publish equality information at least once a year to show how they have complied with the equality duty.
 - prepare and publish equality objectives at least once every 4 years.
- 2.6. The Workforce Profile in Appendix 3 is a key component of meeting the duty, and the Council's own Equal Opportunity in Employment Policy. It covers data on the protected characteristics of the current workforce and job applicants in 2022/23 and compares it to the previous three financial years where relevant. The data is also intended to provide an equalities context and focus for ongoing discussions with internal and external stakeholders. The Workforce Profile will be published on the Council's website on the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policies](#) page.

3. The Gender Pay Gap report

- 3.1. The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men and women as a proportion of average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of men's earnings. For example, a 4% gender pay gap shows that women earn 4% less per hour, on average, than men. Conversely, a negative 4% gender pay gap shows that women earn 4% more, on average, than men.
- 3.2. Appendix 1 shows the Council's gender pay gap information for 2023. The mean gender pay gap is 0.82% and the median is 0.00%. This is based on data at the snapshot date of 31 March 2023. A mean average is calculated by totalling all the values in a dataset; this total is then divided by the number of values that make up the dataset. The median of a group of numbers is the number in the middle, when the numbers are in order of magnitude.
- 3.3. The Council is in a good position. Most organisations have a much larger gender pay gap, with a median for the whole economy of 14.9% for 2022. This reflects the Council's aspiration to be a fair and inclusive employer, making best use of its talent regardless of gender. It is important not to lose focus on this however and through on going monitoring, we will take care to identify remedial actions as issues emerge.

4. The Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2023

- 4.1. The ethnicity pay gap is the percentage difference in the average hourly rate of pay of white employees and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees. We publish the same six calculations as for the gender pay gap (see 2.3), plus the proportion of the workforce in each ethnic group and the proportion who have disclosed their ethnicity (94.0%). This

is in line with guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development who recommend that employers publish a uniform set of eight statistics comparing pay for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees with white employees. In addition, we have broken this down further using the ONS Census' five ethnicity categories so that we can identify any differences in more detail.

- 4.2. The Council's Ethnicity Pay Gap report is attached at Appendix 2. It is based on data at the snapshot date of 31 March 2023. The mean pay gap for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees is 2.46%. There is a negative median pay gap of 0.40%, meaning that the median pay of white employees is 0.40% less than for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees.
- 4.3. The detailed breakdown by ethnic groups shows some differences which the overall figures mask. Employees from Asian backgrounds and those in Other Ethnic groups have higher average pay than white colleagues. The mean pay gap is largest for employees who identify as Black or Black British, whose pay is 9.06% lower on average than their white colleagues, this has reduced from 13% in 2022.
- 4.4. Nationally, in 2019 (the latest data available), the median hourly pay for those in white ethnic groups was £12.40 per hour compared with those in ethnic minority groups at £12.11 per hour – a pay gap of 2.3%, its narrowest level since 2012. The median pay gap was at its largest in 2014, at 8.4%
- 4.5. Long service awards are the only payments made at the Council which qualify as bonus pay. Thirty five employees received long services awards within the relevant period, 31 of whom were white employees. In most cases, this was a one-off award of £1,000. It should be born in mind that all employees are eligible for this payment once they have reached the necessary service related requirements.
- 4.6. The majority of full-pay relevant employees at the Council, 77.6%, are white. This has reduced since 2022 when it was 83.4%. There are more white employees in every quartile and the proportion increases as pay increases up to 84.0% in the upper quartile, which is still broadly in line with the overall proportion of white employees.
- 4.7. The report also provides a more detailed breakdown of employees by ethnic group by pay grade. At the highest paid end of the pay structure, there are employees from every ethnic group paid on Reading Senior Manager grades or above, except for Other Ethnic Groups, the highest paid employees are still predominantly white.
- 4.8. An action plan to further improve the Council's position is underway, which will be aligned to our Inclusion and Diversity Strategy.

5. Workforce Profile Report for 2022/23

- 5.1. The Workforce Profile in Appendix 3 is a key component of meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010, and the Council's own Equal Opportunity in Employment Policy. It covers data on the protected characteristics of the current workforce and job applicants in 2022/23 and compares it to the previous three financial years where relevant. The data is also intended to provide an equalities context and focus for ongoing discussions with internal and external stakeholders. The Workforce Profile will be published on the Council's website on the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policies](#) page.
- 5.2. The Workforce Profile includes data on
 - Vacancies, applicants, starters, leavers and maternity leave.
 - Demographic characteristics of the workforce by gender, ethnicity, age, disability, full and part time working, length of service and pay grade.
 - Staff engagement and employment procedures.

The audit does not include data for sexual orientation or religion or belief. This data is available but approximately 50% of job applicants and current employees chose not to

disclose these protected characteristics so there is concern about the validity and reliability of the data.

Key Findings

- 5.3. The Workforce Profile in Appendix 3 includes data for all Council employees. It excludes schools' staff, agency and casual workers. The overall number of employees included in the report is greater than for the gender and ethnicity pay reports where only full-pay relevant employees (FPREs) are included. FPREs exclude employees who are not in receipt of full pay, like those on maternity pay, unpaid leave etc. See the [Gov.uk website](#) for a definition and examples of full-pay relevant employees (FPREs).

Ethnicity

- 5.4. The proportion of job applicants from minority ethnic backgrounds increased again in 2022/23 to 43.6%, up from 37.1% in 2021/22 and 32.6% in 2020/21. The proportion of White British applicants has again reduced slightly in 2022/23 compared to the last two years, to 41.3%. 28.1% of new starters were from non-white ethnicities, compared to the percentage of non-white ethnicities in the general workforce (17.0%). The number of job applicants who 'prefer not to say' or who have not declared their ethnic origin has decreased to 4.9% compared to 5.1% in 2021/22.
- 5.5. The percentage of the workforce in minority ethnic groups has gradually increased over the last few years and is now 17.0%, up from 15.9% in 2021/22. There has been an increase in every ethnic group except White British which has reduced and Other Ethnic Groups which has decreased by 0.1%. The proportion of staff who 'prefer not to say' or who have not declared their ethnicity has increased to 5.7% in 2022/23, from 5.3% in 2021/22.

Gender

- 5.6. The Council employs more women overall – 60.8% of employees are women and 39.2% are men. The proportion for job applicants is similar at 58.0% women and 40.4% men, with the remainder preferring not to say.
- 5.7. A much greater percentage of females work part-time than males (89.5% compared to 10.5%). There is a higher proportion of female workers in all categories.

Disability

- 5.8. In 2022/23, 4.1% of the workforce declared a disability, unchanged from 2021/22. Due to the small number of staff that identify as having a disability it is not possible to carry out any meaningful analysis of disability related to pay grades.
- 5.9. A lower percentage of applicants state that they have a disability (0.5%) than the existing workforce (4.1%). Applications from employees with a disability are positively encouraged through the disability confident scheme. The percentage of applicants who prefer not to say or who have not declared a disability has increased to 89.1% in 2022/23.
- 5.10. The actual proportion of staff and job applicants who meet the legal definition of disabled within the Equality Act 2010 (i.e. a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities) is likely to be far higher than the number who have declared a disability.
- 5.11. One of the actions for the year ahead is to address the increasing numbers of staff and job applicants who 'prefer not to say' or who decline to respond in relation to the equalities monitoring data that we collect. Low equalities monitoring disclosure rates are a problem for many employers, but the information is vital to help address issues accurately and for producing effective action plans. We will therefore seek to encourage greater disclosure by explaining how we use and intend to use this data.

6. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 6.1. Advancing equality, diversity and inclusion within the Council's workforce enables moving to a position where our workforce represents the community it serves and ensuring a Council that is fit for the future.

7. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 7.1. None.

8. Community Engagement

- 8.1. We will continue to use the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion page on the Council's website to set out our approach and enable access to key information about our workforce, the Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reports for 2023, and the People Strategy.
- 8.2. The following steps will be taken to publish the Council's Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reports
- Published on the Council's website
 - Published on the Government Equalities Office website (Gender Pay only)
 - An item will be included in the staff newsletter to highlight the gender and ethnicity pay gap information in a proactive way to staff
 - A press statement will be issued to bring the report to the attention of local media, residents and businesses.

9. Equality Implications

- 9.1. An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for the issues covered by this report.

10. Other Relevant Considerations

- 10.1. None.

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Council has a duty to publish workforce and employment information to demonstrate compliance with this duty. This report supports the Council to fulfil this duty.

12. Financial Implications

- 12.1. None.

13. Timetable for Implementation

- 13.1. Not applicable

14. Background Papers

- 14.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. Gender Pay Gap Report 2023
2. Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2023
3. Workforce Profile 2022-23

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
GENDER PAY GAP REPORT FOR 2023

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 From April 2017, under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, employers with 250 or more employees are required to publish statutory gender pay gap calculations every year.
- 1.2 To make the calculations, data must be gathered from the Council’s payroll from a specific date each year. This specific date is called the ‘snapshot date’, which is 31 March for public sector organisations.
- 1.3 The calculations must be published on the Council’s website and the Government Equalities Office website by 30 March. This report sets out the figures that will need to be published and an analysis of the information.

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The information that is required for publication is:

Mean gender pay gap	The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees (FPREs) and that of female full-pay relevant employees.
Median gender pay gap	The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of male full-pay relevant employees and that of female full-pay relevant employees.
Mean bonus gap	The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.
Median gender pay gap	The difference between the median bonus pay paid to male relevant employees and that paid to female relevant employees.
Bonus proportions	The proportions of male and female relevant employees who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period.
Quartile pay bands	The proportions of male and female full-pay relevant employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands.

- 2.2 For the purpose of this report, the workforce profile as at the ‘snapshot date’ date of 31 March 2023 was 1720 full-pay relevant employees (FPREs), which is made up by 1049 (61.0%) women and 671 (39.0%) men.
- 2.3 The Council’s data excludes the children’s services workforce which transferred to Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) on 1 December 2018 (i.e. before the snapshot date of 31 March 2020). BFfC are now required to report their gender pay gap separately.
- 2.4 In accordance with [Government’s guidance](#), data for school staff is not included in this report.
- 2.4 The figures in this report have been calculated in accordance with the Government’s guidance by the Data Team in HR and Organisational Development. The highlighted figures in each table are those that will require publication.

Table 1 - Mean and median gender pay gap

	Men	Women	Women’s earnings are:
Mean Hourly Rate	£18.37	£18.22	0.82% lower
Median Hourly Rate	£16.60	£16.60	0.00% lower

Table 2 – Mean and median gender pay gap in bonus payments*

**in this context, this means our 20 year long service awards*

	Men	Women	Women’s bonuses are:
Mean amount of bonus	£936.36	£958.33	-2.35% lower
Median amount of bonus	£1000.00	£1,000.00	0.0% lower

Table 3 - Proportion of men and women who received a bonus

	Men		Women	
FPREs Total	671		1049	
Proportion of all those receiving a bonus	11	1.64%	24	2.29%

3 ANALYSIS

- 3.1 **Table 1** shows that the Council's mean (0.82%) and median (0.00%) gender pay gap compares favourably with the 2022 national average gender pay gap figure of 14.9% (published as a median value).
- 3.2 **Tables 2 and 3** reflect a small group of employees who received their "bonuses" in the relevant period. The Council does not have provision for the payment of bonuses within its terms and conditions. However, long service awards in the form of money meet the government's definition of "bonus" for this report.
- 3.3 Long service awards at the Council are in recognition of achieving 20 years' continuous service. The Council is currently running two long service award schemes with varying cash values:
- 3.3.1 A one-off money award of £1,000 for those achieving long service with either the Council or a combination of the Council and Berkshire County Council, with the provision for employees to "trade in" all or part of the award for additional days' leave, currently at the rate of £100 per day; or;
- 3.3.2 £573 plus double leave for achieving 20 years' service for employees appointed by the Council before 1 April 1999.
- 3.4 Nine of the 11 men received the same cash value as 22 of the 24 women. This has, as a result, translated into a -2.35% pay gap, as shown in Table 2.
- 3.5 Based on how the gender pay gap is calculated, although the gap is small, it still exists within the Council as its workforce is predominantly women (61.0%). There are more women than men at every pay quartile, yet half of women are in the lower middle and upper pay quartiles (see **Figures 1 and 2** below).
- 3.6 **Figure 3** illustrates the breakdown of men and women in each pay band. Pay band RG2 has the greatest proportion of women (69.81%), which is higher than the overall proportion of women employed at the Council (60.0%). Job roles that fall into this pay band are primarily Cleaning Operatives and Nursery Officers. 81% of the women in this pay band are part-time.
- 3.7 The Chattered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)¹ finds that there are a number of barriers that could hinder women achieving senior positions, e.g. caring responsibilities, full time working being the existing norm for senior roles, career break etc.

¹ CIPD, *Why are there so few women at the top, 2016*, https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/why-are-there-so-many-women-at-the-top_2016-april_tcm18-14006.pdf

3.8 Despite the CIPD’s findings, the Council has a good balance of men and women at senior management level. Of the employees paid on Reading Senior Managers grades, i.e. earnings above £57,502 per annum, 50.9% are women.

Figure 1 - Proportion of men and women in each pay quartile

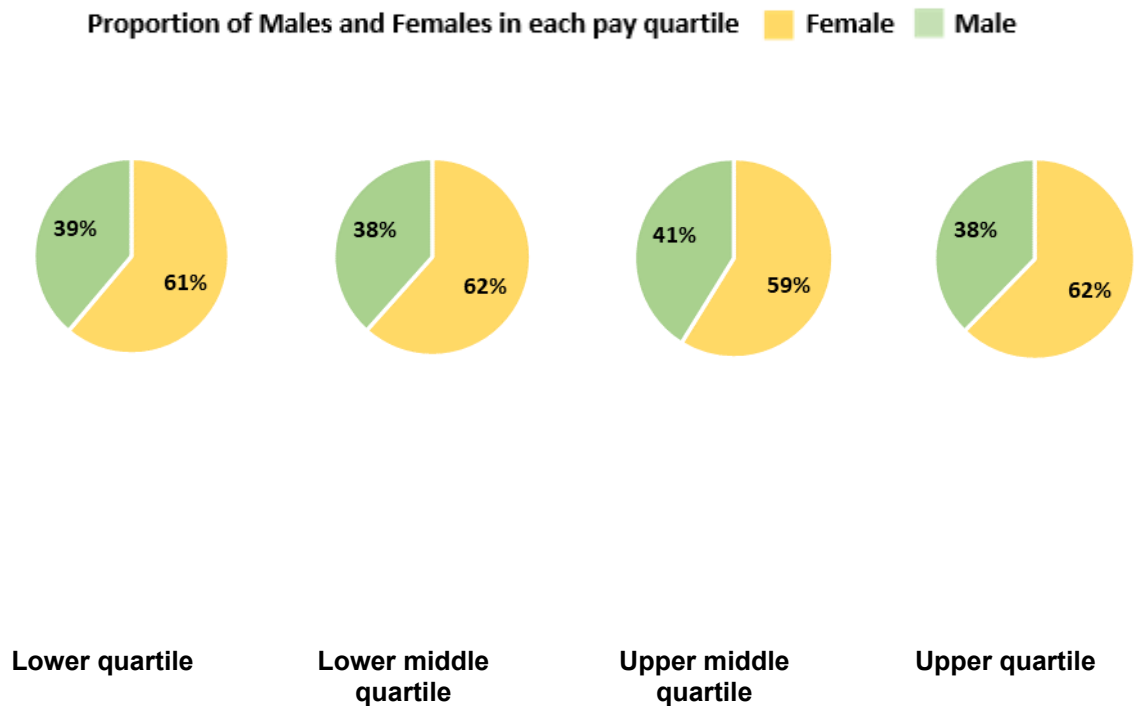


Figure 2 - Number of men and women in each pay quartile

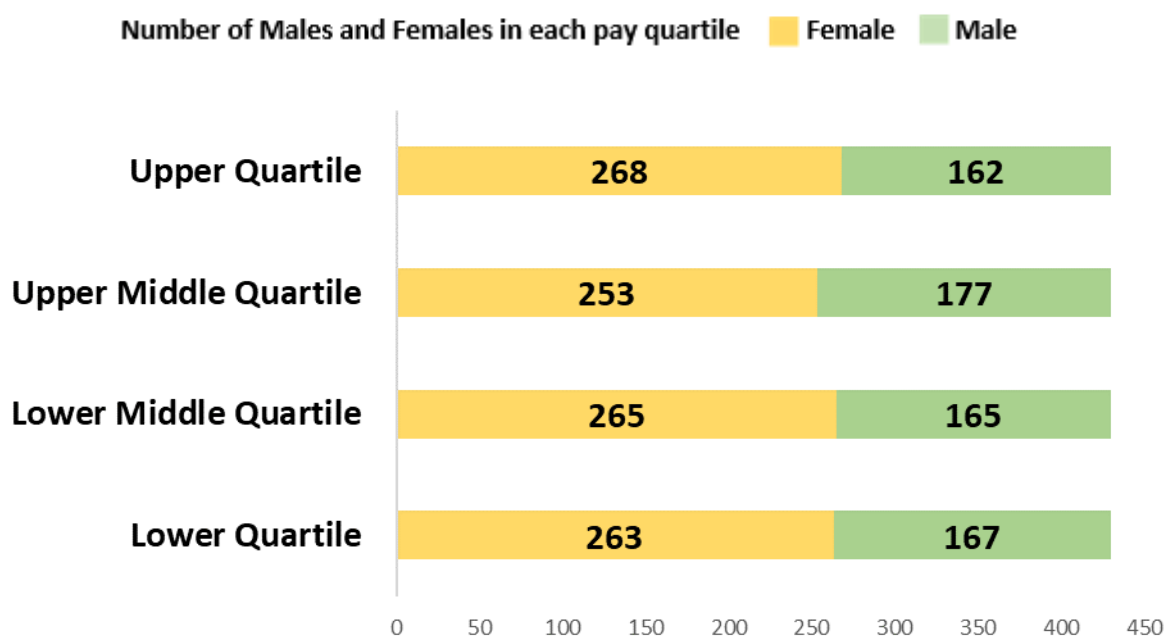
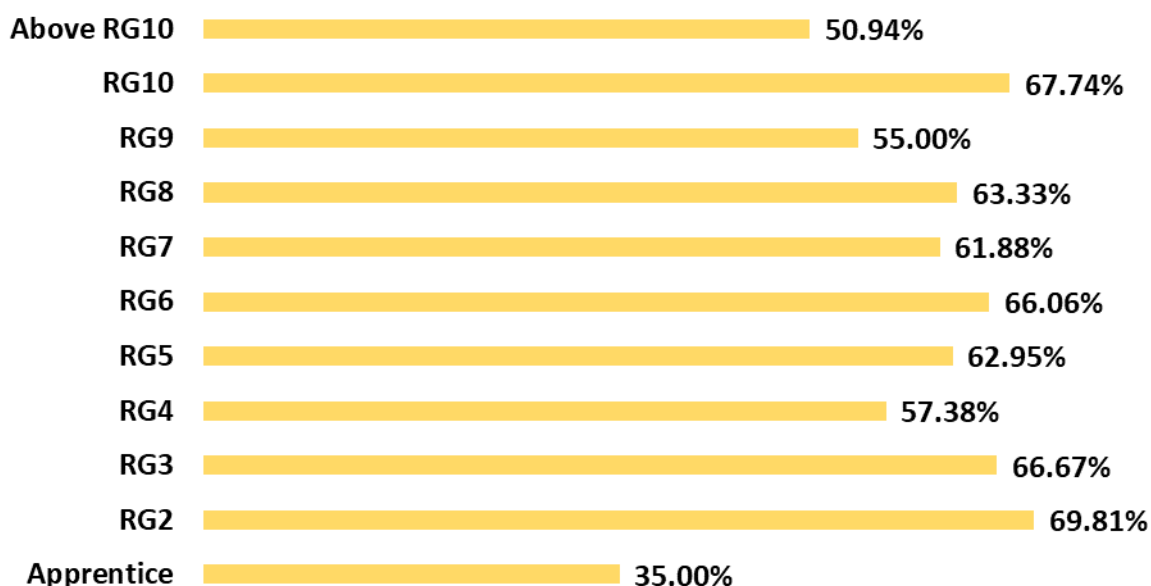


Figure 3 - Proportion of women in each pay band as at 31 March 2022



4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The **small gender pay gap** at the Council, which is lower than the national average, is the result of the long-term effort that the Council has invested to ensure fair pay for all staff, including:

- Promoting and supporting a number of flexible working policies for all employees within the Council, irrespective of gender, including job share, part time working and term time working. In some areas there is also flexibility to work from different locations.
- Promoting the Council as a great place to work in local schools through the Resourcing team offering to support schools with CV writing workshops, interviews skills etc, whilst also improving employability skills for young people in the borough
- Implemented a new, consistent pay structure in May 2011 as a result of a pay review exercise starting in 2009.
- Having a clear policy of paying employees equally for the same or equivalent work, regardless of gender.
- Having an objective job evaluation scheme (GAUGE) to ensure pay fairness.

- Formal authorisation process for any changes in pay, including accelerated increments, market supplements and pay at starting appointments.
- Extended the right to request flexible working to all staff in 2010, 4 years before the Government changed the law.
- Enhanced Shared Parental Pay to mirror contractual Maternity Pay.
- Became an accredited “Living Wage Employer” in 2014 paying the Living Wage set by the Living Wage Foundation as a minimum to all employees at the lower level of the pay structure;

5 ACTION PLAN/RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is recommended that we:
- 5.2 Continue to promote the benefits of flexible working practices to employees and managers. In addition, the Council will monitor the take-up of flexible working arrangements by gender and level within the organisation.
- 5.3 Promote the benefits of working for the Council both internally and externally, such as apprenticeship opportunities, flexible working arrangements, diversity commitments etc.
- 5.4 Continue to require recruiting managers to attend the Council’s recruitment and selection training which highlights the issue of unconscious bias during recruitment and interview processes.
- 5.5 Continue to ensure that recruiting managers use structured interviews as this is more effective at guarding against unconscious bias by ensuring that all candidates are asked the same questions and are assessed using pre-specified, standardised criteria.
- 5.6 Increase awareness about apprenticeship schemes to encourage more employees to improve their skills and experience giving them the opportunity to progress their career.

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ETHNICITY PAY GAP REPORT FOR 2023

Purpose of the report

1.1 Large organisations are not yet legally required to publish their ethnicity pay gap. However, we have decided to continue to voluntarily publish our ethnicity pay gap as we believe it is a fundamental step on the Council's journey to improving workplace equality. We will use this information to help us reflect on what we are doing both internally and externally to achieve a truly diverse and inclusive organisation and where we need to take action to tackle inequality.

1.2 The ethnicity pay gap is the percentage difference in the average hourly pay rate for employees from minority ethnic groups compared to the average hourly pay rate for white employees. We calculate our ethnicity pay gap using largely the same methodology as set out in the Government regulations for calculating the gender pay gap. We also follow guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)[\[1\]](#) who recommend that employers publish a uniform set of eight statistics comparing pay for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees with white employees. In addition, we have broken this down further using the ONS Census' five ethnicity categories so that we can identify any differences in more detail.

2. Introduction and background

2.1 Our ethnicity disclosure rate is not at 100% (currently it is 94.0%). We will work towards improving this rate over the next 12 months as part of the work we are doing on Inclusion and Diversity to improve declaration rates for all protected characteristics.

Terminology:

Mean ethnicity pay gap	The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of white full-pay relevant employees (FPREs) [2] and that of FPREs from minority ethnic groups.
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	[2] See the Gov.uk website for a definition and examples of full-pay relevant employees (FPREs)evant employees (FPREs)
Median ethnicity pay gap	The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of white FPREs and that of FPREs from minority ethnic groups.
Mean bonus gap	The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to white FPREs and that paid to FPREs from minority ethnic groups.
Median ethnicity pay gap	The difference between the median bonus pay paid to white FPREs and that paid to FPREs from minority ethnic groups.
Bonus proportions (this includes long service awards)	The proportions of white FPREs and FPREs from minority ethnic groups who were paid bonus pay during the relevant period.
Quartile pay bands	The proportions of white FPREs and FPREs from minority ethnic groups in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands.

2.2 For the purpose of this report, the workforce profile at the ‘snapshot date’ date of 31 March 2023 was 1,624 full-pay relevant employees (FPREs). Data for schools’ staff is not included, nor is the children’s services workforce (BFfC). Table 1 shows the make-up of the workforce by ethnic group.

Table 1 – Number of employees by ethnic grouping

	Number	Percentage
Asian or Asian British	114	7.0%
Black or Black British	122	7.5%
Mixed	55	3.4%
Other Ethnic Groups	3	0.2%
White	1335	82.0%
Total	1629	100%

Table 2 – Overall mean and median ethnicity pay gap and bonus pay gap for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Employees

	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Employees	White Employees	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Employees' earnings are
Mean hourly rate	£17.90	£18.35	2.46%
Median hourly rate	£16.66	£16.60	-0.40%
Mean amount of bonus	£500	£945.16	47.10%
Median amount of bonus	£500	£1000	50.00%

Table 2a – Mean and median ethnicity pay gap and bonus pay* gap for Asian or Asian British Employees

*Please note that our long service award at 20 years counts as a 'bonus' for the purpose of pay gap reporting

	Asian or Asian British Employees	White Employees	Asian or Asian British Employees' earnings are
Mean hourly rate	£18.75	£18.35	-2.19%
Median hourly rate	£15.98	£16.60	3.69%
Mean amount of bonus	£0.00	£945.16	100.00%
Median amount of bonus	£0.00	£1000	100.00%

Table 2b – Mean and median ethnicity pay gap and bonus pay gap for Black or Black British Employees

	Black or Black British Employees	White Employees	Black or Black British Employees' earnings are
--	---	------------------------	---

Mean hourly rate	£16.68	£18.35	9.06%
Median hourly rate	£15.26	£16.60	8.06%
Mean amount of bonus	£1000	£945.16	-5.80%
Median amount of bonus	£1000	£1000	0.00%

Table 2c – Mean and median ethnicity pay gap and bonus pay gap for employees from Mixed Ethnic Backgrounds

	Employees from Mixed Ethnic Backgrounds	White Employees	Employees from Mixed Ethnic Backgrounds' earnings are
Mean hourly rate	£16.91	£18.35	7.86%
Median hourly rate	£14.43	£16.60	13.05%
Mean amount of bonus	£1000	£945.16	-5.80%
Median amount of bonus	£1000	£1000	0.00%

Table 2d – Mean and median ethnicity pay gap and bonus pay gap for employees from Other Ethnic Groups

	Employees from Other Ethnic Groups	White Employees	Employees from Other Ethnic Groups' earnings are
Mean hourly rate	£19.24	£18.35	-4.88%
Median hourly rate	£20.98	£16.60	-26.41%
Mean amount of bonus	£0.00	£945.16	100.00%
Median amount of bonus	£0.00	£1000	100.00%

Table 3 – Overall proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Employees and White Employees who received a bonus

	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Employees	White Employees
FPREs Total	294	1335
Proportion of all those receiving a bonus	4 (2.32%)	31 (1.07%)

Table 3a –Proportion of employees in each ethnic group who received a bonus

Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Mixed Ethnic Backgrounds	Other Ethnic Backgrounds	White
114	122	55	3	1335
0 (0.00%)	3 (2.46%)	1 (1.82%)	0 (0.00%)	31 (2.32%)

3. Analysis

3.1 Table 2 shows that the Council’s mean pay gap for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees for 2023 is 2.46% (i.e. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees are paid 2.46% lower than their white colleagues on average). Mean refers to the statistical average pay for the group, whereas median refers to the middle point of the pay for the group. There is a negative median pay gap of 0.40%, meaning that the median pay of white employees is 0.40% less than for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees. Both figures have improved since 31 March 2021, when the mean pay gap was 4.26% and the median was 5.69%. In 2020, the mean pay gap was 6.88% and the median was 0.28%.

3.2 Nationally, in 2019 (the latest data available^[3]), the median hourly pay for white ethnic employees was £12.40 per hour compared to those in minority ethnic groups at £12.11 per hour – a pay gap of 2.3%, its narrowest level since 2012. The pay gap was at its largest in 2014, at 8.4%.

[3] Source: Office for National Statistics – Annual Population Survey 2019

3.2 **Tables 2a to 2d** show this data broken down further for employees from different minority ethnic groups compared to their white colleagues. The mean pay gap is largest for employees who identify as Black or Black British, whose pay is 9.06% lower on average than their white colleagues, followed by employees from Mixed Ethnic backgrounds who are paid 7.86% less than white employees on average. There is a negative pay gap for employees who identify as Asian or Asian British, who are paid 2.9% more than their white colleagues on average. The mean and median pay gaps for staff who identify as from Other Ethnic Groups also have higher pay on average than white employees, although this group comprises only three people.

3.3 Tables 2 and 2a to 2d and Tables 3 and 3a show employees who received “bonuses” in the relevant period. The Council does not pay bonuses within its terms and conditions. However, long service awards in the form of money meet the Government’s definition of “bonus”.

3.4 Long service awards are in recognition of achieving 20 years’ continuous service. The Council is currently running two long service schemes with varying cash values:

- A one-off money award of £1,000 for those achieving long service with either the Council or a combination of the Council and Berkshire County Council, with the provision for employees to “trade in” all or part of the award for additional days’ leave, currently at the rate of £100 per day; or;
- £573 plus double leave for achieving 20 years’ service for employees appointed by the Council before 1 April 1999.

3.5 Thirty-five employees received long services awards in 2023. Thirty-one of the thirty-five received a one-off award of £1,000. There is a bonus pay gap of negative 5.80% for Black or Black British and Asian or Asian British staff. However it should be born in mind that all employees are eligible for this payment once they have reached the necessary service related requirements.

3.6 Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the breakdown of employees by ethnic group in each pay quartile. There are more white employees in every quartile and the proportion increases as pay increases, from 77.8% in the lower quartile to 84% in the upper quartile. All quartiles are broadly in line with the overall proportion of white employees in the workforce (82.0%)

3.7 Figures 3a to Figure 3d illustrate the breakdown of employees from each minority ethnic group compared to white employees by pay grade. At the highest paid end of the pay structure, there are employees from every ethnic group except those that do not disclose their ethnicity (an improvement since 2021, when there were no Asian or Asian British employees or employees from Other Ethnic Groups paid on Reading Senior Manager grades). However, this group is still predominantly white employees.

Figure 1 – Proportion of employees in each pay quartile by ethnic group on 31 March 2023

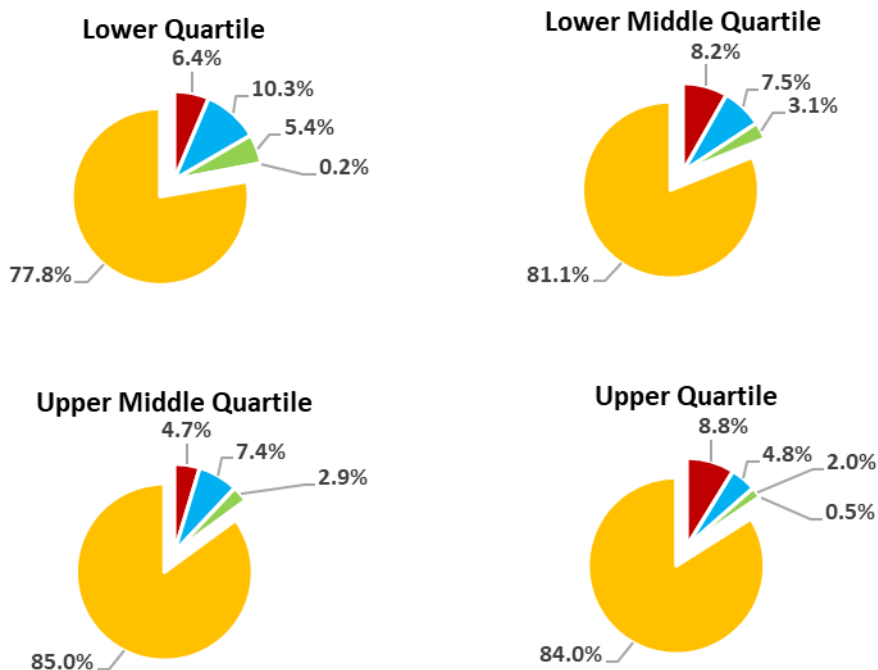


Figure 2 – Number of employees in each ethnic group on 31 March 2023

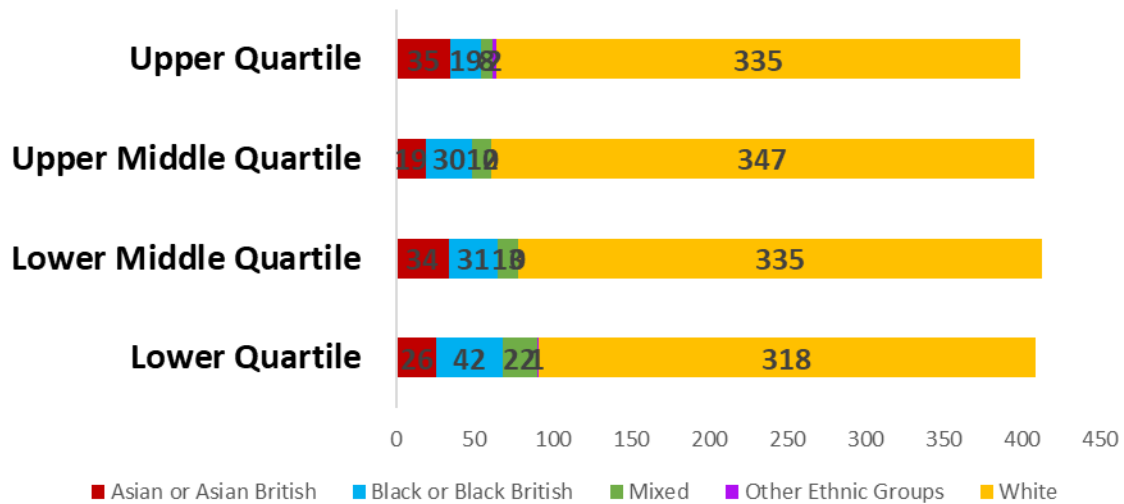


Figure 3a – Proportion of Asian or Asian British employees compared to White Employees in each pay band on 31 March 2023

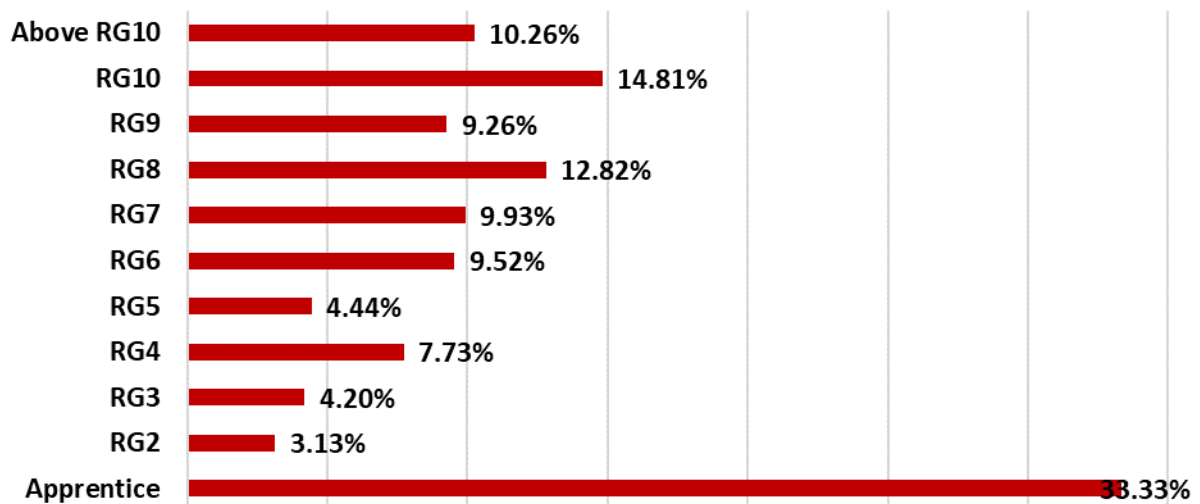


Figure 3b – Proportion of Black or Black British employees compared to White Employees in each pay band on 31 March 2023

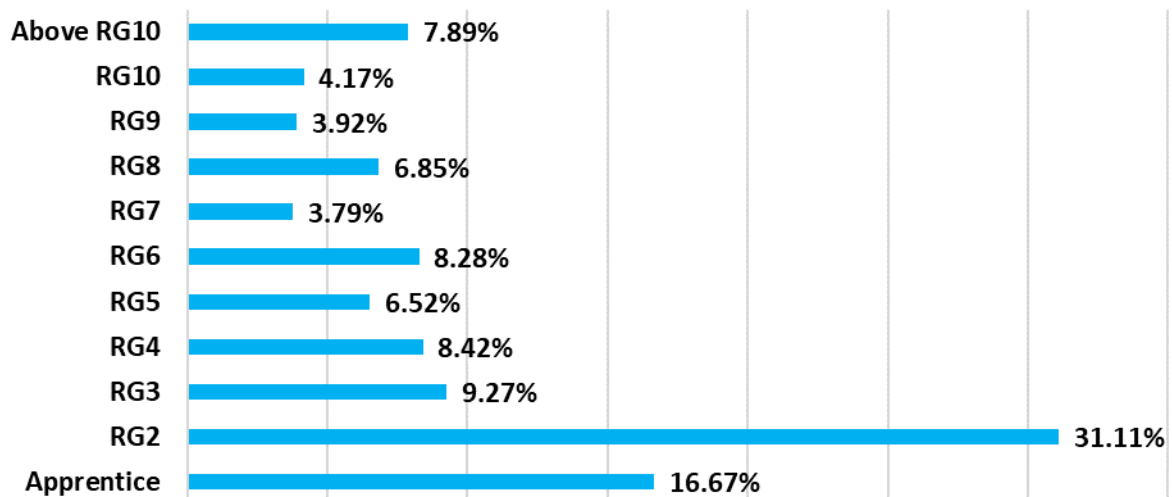


Figure 3c – Proportion of employees from Mixed Ethnic Backgrounds compared to White Employees in each pay band on 31 March 2023

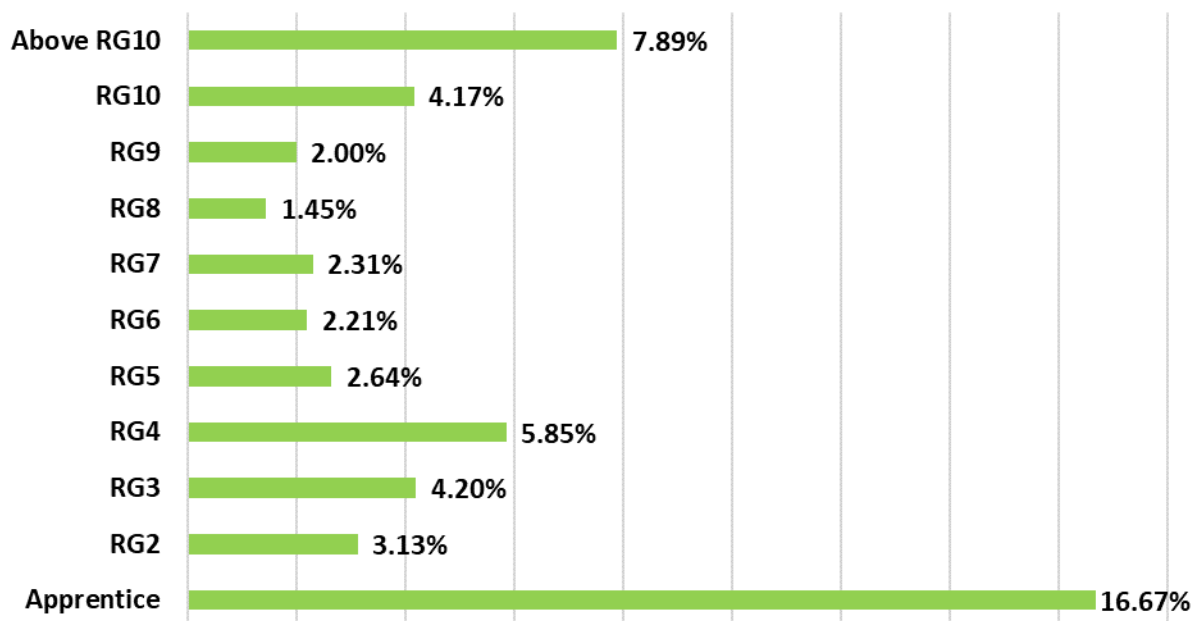
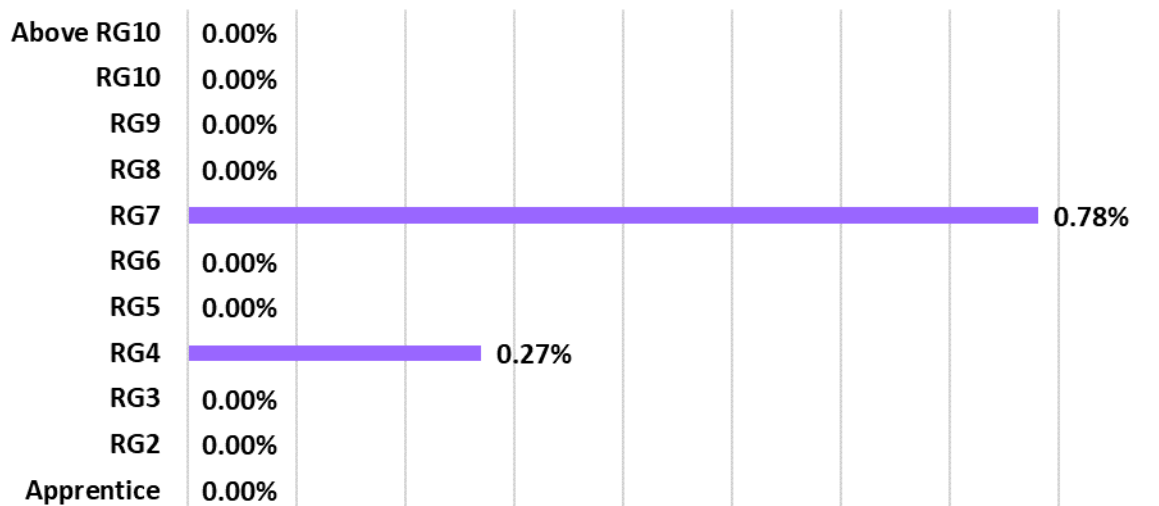


Figure 3d – Proportion of employees from Other Ethnic Groups compared to White Employees in each pay band on 31 March 2023



4. Action plan to reduce the ethnicity pay gap

4.1 Taking positive action on workplace equality can have significant benefits for an organisation’s reputation, culture and people. This Ethnicity Pay Gap report, along with our Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile reports as well as our new Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and plan are a fundamental step on the Council’s journey to improving workplace equality. It helps to create a baseline to track current progress and drive continual improvement.

4.2 There is a small proportion of employees (6.0%) who have either not been asked to provide their ethnicity or have chosen a ‘prefer not to say’ response. Low ethnicity disclosure rates are a problem for many employers, but the information is vital to help address any ethnicity pay gaps accurately and for producing effective action plans. We will therefore seek to encourage all employees to disclose their ethnicity, explaining how we use this data as part of our broader work on disclosure in the Inclusion and Diversity strategy.

4.3 We will continue to promote the benefits of working for the Council both internally and externally, such as flexible hours and hybrid working arrangements, and our commitment to inclusion and diversity. We will increase awareness about apprenticeship schemes to encourage more employees to enhance their skills and qualifications, giving them greater opportunities to progress their careers.

4.4 We will ensure that all promotion opportunities are advertised internally to our staff to embed a culture where we grow our own talent from within the Council.

4.6 We will continue to deliver recruitment and selection training which all recruiting managers are required to complete, which highlights the issue of unconscious bias during recruitment and interview processes and seeks to eliminate it.

4.7 We will continue to ensure that recruiting managers use structured interviews as this is more effective at guarding against unconscious bias by ensuring that all candidates are asked the same questions and are assessed using pre-specified, standardised criteria.

4.8 It is recommended that this report be highlighted to all staff and elected members, and published on our website, as part of our approach to improve inclusion and tackle inequality in the workplace.

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Reading Borough Council

Workforce Profile Information

2022 – 2023

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1 Overview

Reading Borough Council strives to be an inclusive and fair employer. The analysis of our workforce profile in relation to equalities is central to making sure that this happens. This report provides an overview of the range of people in the council and serves as an evidence base to inform the council's equalities objectives, which form part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010). The information contained in this document is also reported to the council's Personnel Committee.

The council actively encourages individuals from all protected characteristics' groups¹ to be part of its team and highly values people's individual skills and talents. The information included in this report is also used to understand whether the council's workforce reflects the demographic of the wider community and, if not, how progress can be made to achieve this over time. Understanding the profile of employees also means that appropriate support and solutions can be delivered.

This report is updated on an annual basis and the information provided is based on the last complete financial year (202/23), unless otherwise indicated.

2 Vacancies, applicants, leavers and maternity leave

2.1 Vacancies and applicants

We track the number of advertised vacancies by month:

Vacancies and applicants	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Average number of vacancies advertised per month	33	20	36	43
Number of applicants	4762	5890	4498	5586

In addition, we also track the ethnic diversity of applicants. The number of White British applicants has dropped compared to the last two years and the number of applicants from BME groups has increased to 43.6%

Ethnic origin	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
White: British	53.5%	50.9%	49.4%	41.3%
White Other	10.3%	10.1%	8.4%	10.2%
Mixed/multiple	4.5%	4.0%	4.7%	4.4%
Asian/Asian British	15.5%	18.4%	20.9%	25.6%
Black/Black British	9.6%	9.2%	9.9%	11.7%
Other ethnic group	1.3%	1.0%	1.6%	1.9%
No value (Prefer not to say)	5.2%	6.4%	5.1%	4.9%

There has been a slight increase in the number of younger applicants:

¹ Equality Act 2010 – The 'protected characteristics' include: race, age, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership.

Age range	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
16 to 29	35.0%	36.5%	33.3%	36.0%
30 to 44	37.5%	35.6%	36.3%	37.1%
45 to 59	19.6%	18.4%	21.5%	19.0%
60 to 64	2.6%	1.9%	3.2%	2.4%
65 to 74	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%
75 and over	0.0%	0.03%	0.0%	0.0%
No value (Prefer not to say)	4.7%	7.1%	5.2%	4.8%

The Council continues to attract more applications from women than men:

Gender	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Female	52.5%	55.2%	56.7%	58.0%
Male	46.1%	43.1%	41.1%	40.4%
No value (Prefer not to say)	1.4%	1.6%	2.2%	1.7%

A lower percentage of applicants' state that they have a disability (0.5%) than the existing workforce (4.1%). This could be due to new applicants being asked to say if they would like to be considered through the Disability Confident accessibility scheme, which guarantees an interview if they meet the minimum criteria for the job they are applying for. The percentage of applicants who declare that they have a disability has decreased in 2022/23 but this may be due to the large increase in the percentage who prefer not to say.

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Yes	3.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.5%
No	84.9%	18.4	13.5%	10.4%
No value (Prefer not to say)	11.2%	80.9%	85.7%	89.1%

2.2 Starters

There are some notable demographic characteristics of new starters compared to the existing workforce:

- 1.2% of the starters during 2022/23 reported themselves as being disabled, compared to 4.1% amongst the workforce.
- 28.1% of the starters were from non-White British ethnicities, compared to the percentage of non-White British ethnicities in the general workforce (17.0%).
- A much lower percentage of starters are aged 45 and over (32.9% compared to 55.2% amongst the workforce).

2.3 Leavers

Voluntary labour turnover increased in 2022/23 compared to the previous year.

Rate	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
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Labour turnover rate (all reasons)	16.7%	11.0%	16.0%	14.6%
Labour turnover rate (voluntary resignation)	10.7%	8.4%	11.8%	13.6%

Further information on the reasons for staff leaving employment at the council are shown below. Voluntary resignation is the main reason, followed by the expiration of temporary contracts and retirement.

Reason for leaving	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Death in Service	2	4	2	1
Dismissal	3	5	3	4
Dismissal – Ill Health	2	3	4	0
End of Fixed Term Contract	16	19	13	0
End of Temporary Contract	0	0	0	20
Mutual Agreement	6	9	12	9
Redundancy	13	6	5	5
Resignation	146	108	204	176
Retirement	20	26	18	22
Retirement – Ill Health	3	3	6	5
Retirement- Redundancy	4	0	0	3
Early Retirement	1	2	0	0
Settlement Agreement	1	1	1	0
TUPE Transfer	1	0	0	0
Unsuccessful Probation	8	3	2	4
Total	226	189	270	249

Some demographic characteristics of leavers:

- 4.0% of leavers during 202/23 reported themselves as being disabled, compared to 4.1% amongst the workforce as a whole
- A slightly lower percentage of leavers in 2022/23 are aged 55 and over (23.3%), compared to 29.4% amongst the workforce.
- A lower proportion (55.0%) of leavers in 2022/23 were female, compared to 60.8% of the workforce.

2.4 Maternity leave

The vast majority of staff members that go on maternity leave return to work at the council - 100% of those that went on maternity leave during 2022/23 returning.

3 Demographic characteristics of the workforce

3.1 Disability

To ensure that our employment opportunities are accessible to disabled people, we are committed to be a ‘Disability Confident Employer²’. We actively promote employment opportunities to disabled applicants, providing information in Plain English and offering accessible formats where necessary to facilitate the recruitment process.

4.1% of the workforce consider themselves to have a disability. This is in line with previous years:

Disability	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No	86.9%	80.8%	73.2%	68.2%
Yes	3.7%	3.8%	4.1%	4.1%

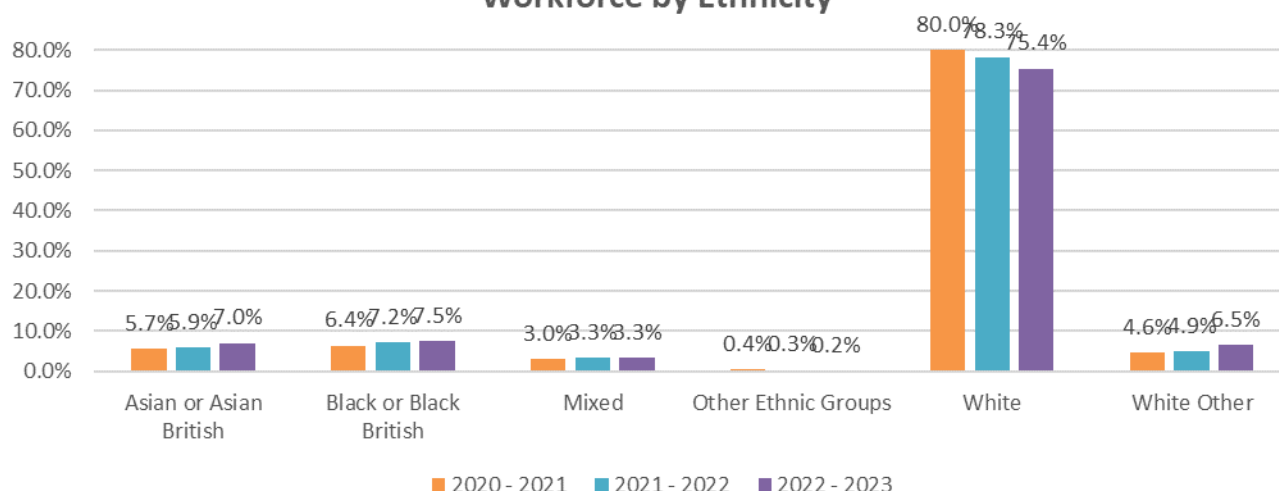
3.2 Ethnicity

71.1% of the council’s workforce describe their ethnicity as White English/Welsh/Scottish /Northern Irish/British. This percentage has decreased compared to other years. The percentage of the workforce in Non-White ethnicities has increased in the last two years and stands at 17.0% in 31st March 2023. The proportion of staff who identify as Black/Black British has shown an increase from 6.9% in 2020/21 to 7.1% in 2022/23.

Ethnicity	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
White: British	76.7%	75.4%	74.1%	71.1%
White Other	4.3%	4.4%	4.7%	6.1%
Black/Black British	6.3%	6.0%	6.9%	7.1%
Asian/Asian British	4.9%	5.3%	5.6%	6.6%
Mixed	2.7%	2.8%	3.1%	3.1%
Other ethnic group(s)	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Prefer not to say	4.9%	5.7%	5.3%	5.7%

² As a Disability Confident employer, we have made specific commitments regarding the employment of disabled people. As part of this, a disabled person is guaranteed an interview if they meet the essential criteria for the job vacancy. See www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign for more information

Workforce by Ethnicity



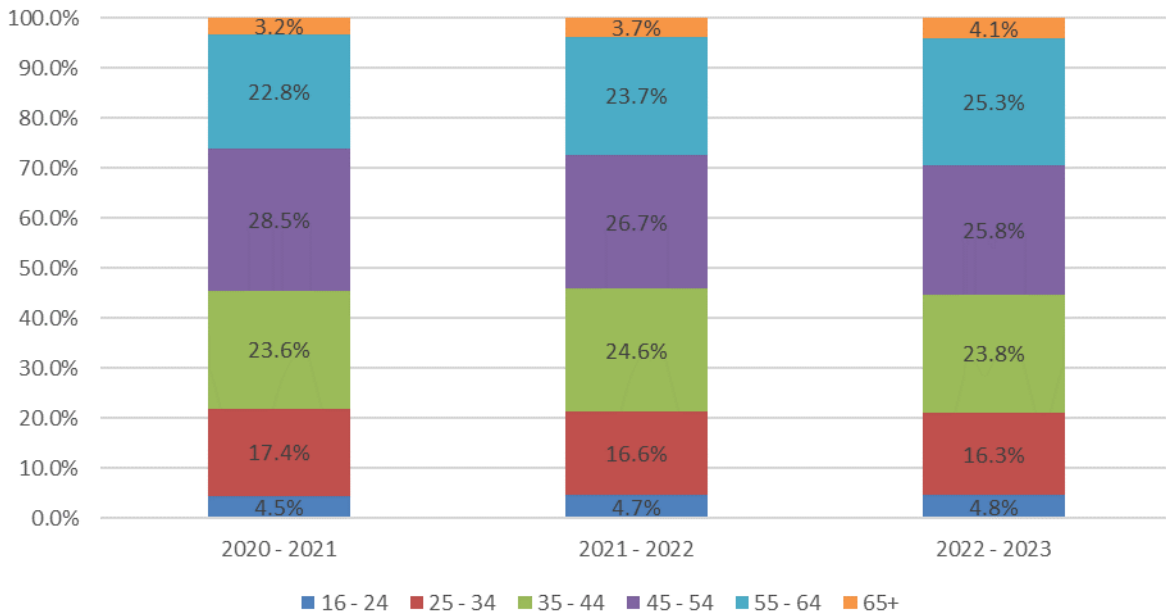
3.3 Age profile

The percentage of staff under the age of 24 continues to be low (4.8%) compared to the percentage of staff aged 55 to 64 (25.3%). The council is pro-actively working with local schools and colleges to promote employment opportunities – including apprenticeships.

The percentage of the council’s workforce aged 55 and over is 29.4% which is slightly higher than the number of staff aged 35 to 44 (23.8%). As more of the workforce moves into the 55 and over age range there is an increased importance on ensuring that in addition to retention initiatives to retain older workers, a robust succession planning mechanism is embedded to deliver business continuity, top talent, and leaders and managers of the future.

Age	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
16-24	4.7%	4.5%	4.7%	4.8%
25-34	17.1%	17.4%	16.6%	16.3%
35-44	23.3%	23.6%	24.6%	23.8%
45-54	28.6%	28.5%	26.7%	25.8%
55-64	23.0%	22.8%	23.7%	25.3%
65+	3.3%	3.2%	3.7%	4.1%

Workforce by Age



3.4 Gender

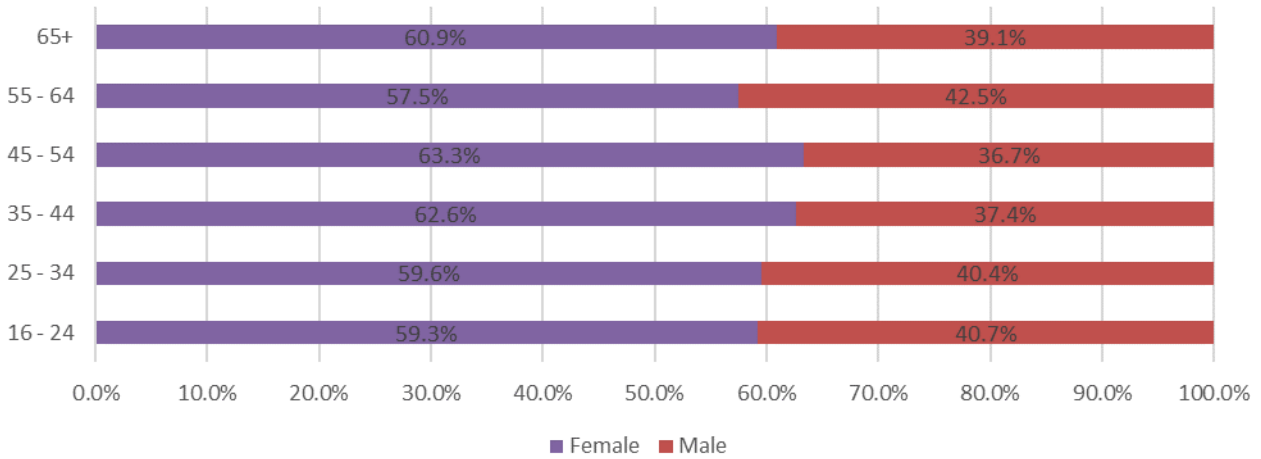
The Council employs more female staff, with 59.8% females and 40.2% males, although this distribution had dropped in the three years prior it is now increasing, as shown in the table below.

The gender split by age in 2022/23 shows a predominantly larger percentage of female employees in all age groups but is particularly high in the 45 to 54 range (63.3%) and the 35 to 44 range (62.6%).

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Female	59.1%	58.7%	59.8%	60.8%
Male	40.9%	41.3%	40.2%	39.2%

Age Group	Female	Male
16 to 24	59.3%	40.7%
25 to 34	59.6%	40.4%
35 to 44	63.6%	37.4%
45 to 54	63.3%	36.7%
55 to 64	57.5%	42.5%
65+	60.9%	39.1%

Workforce by Age and Gender

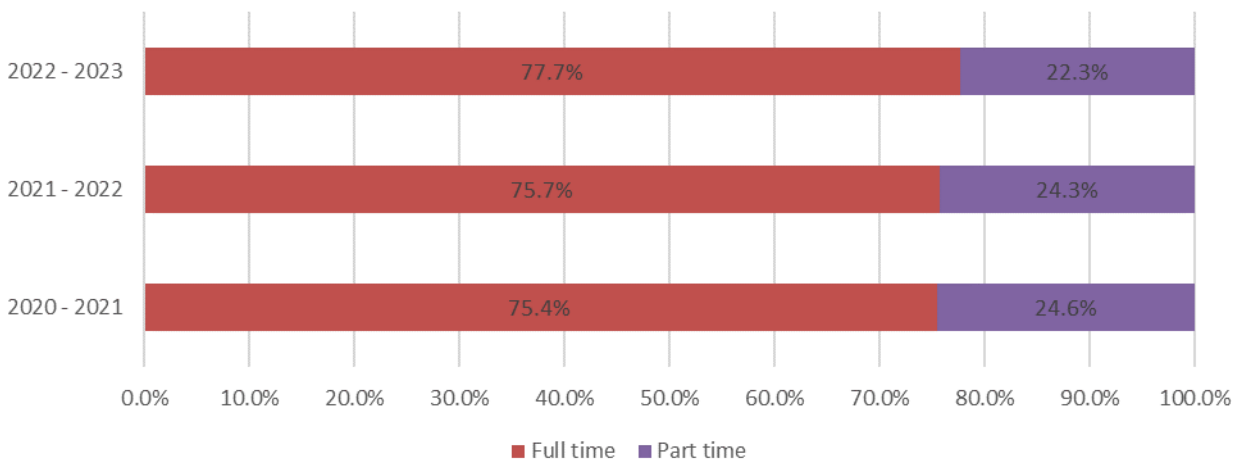


3.5 Full-time and part-time

About three quarters of employees within the council work full-time, whilst 22.3% work part-time. There has been a steady increase of staff in full-time work compared to part-time. Both full-time and part-time staff are afforded the benefit of a wide range of flexible working options, such as working compressed hours or working remotely, which benefit both the individual and the organisation.

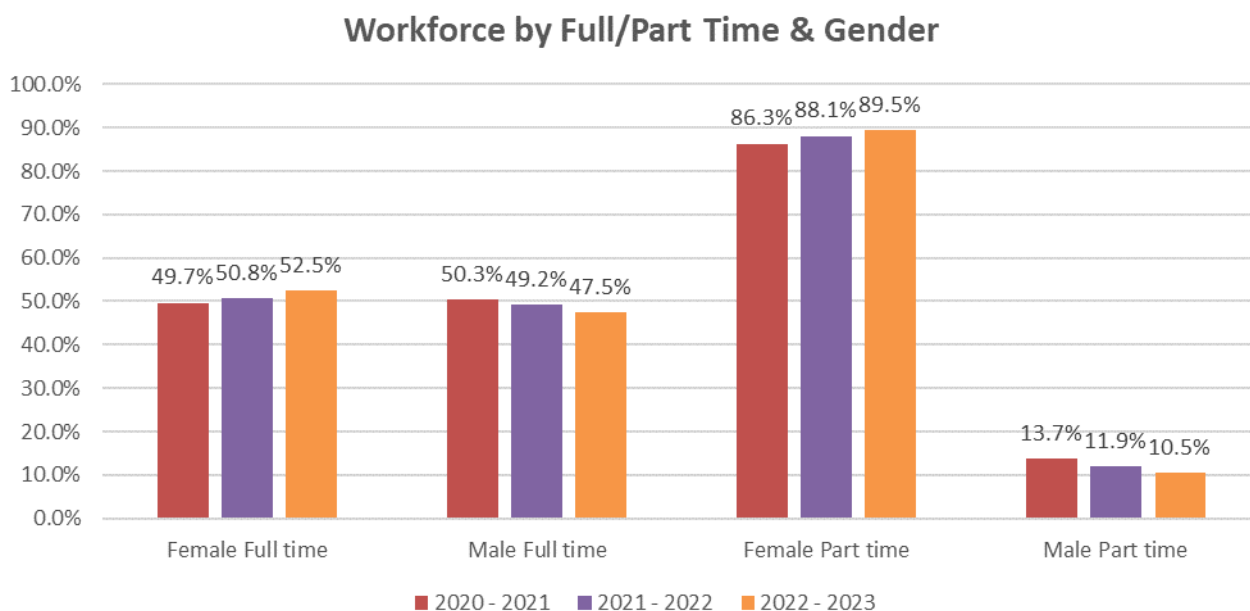
Contract type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Full time	73.6%	75.4%	75.7%	77.7%
Part time	26.4%	24.6%	24.3%	22.3%

Workforce by full and part time



3.6 Full-time and part-time by gender

A much greater percentage of females work part-time than males (89.5% compared to 10.5%). The percentage of males and females working full or part-time has remained relatively stable over time:



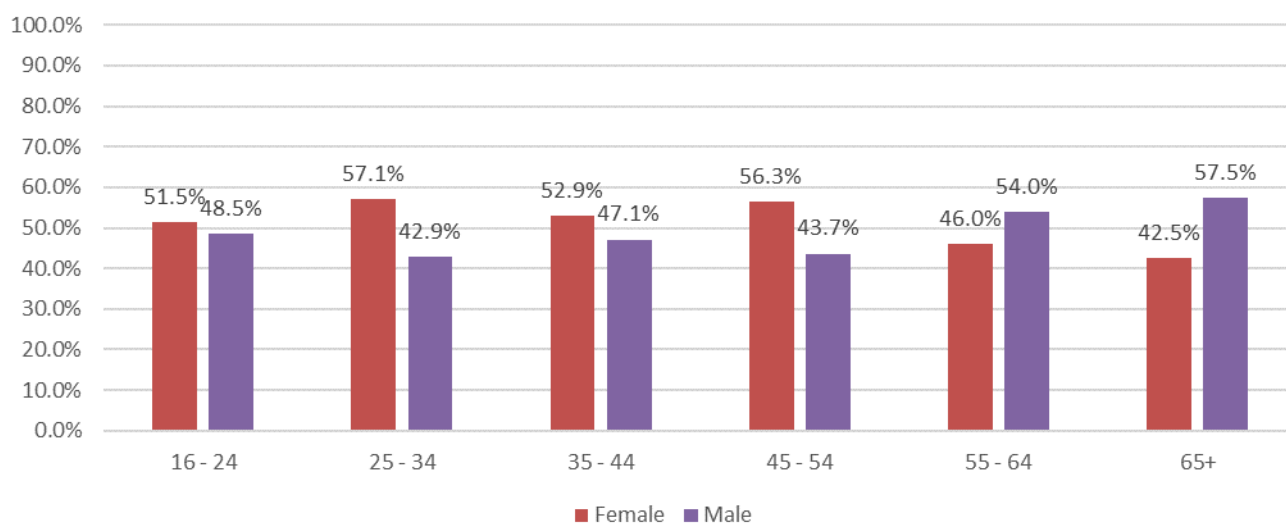
Gender	Contract type	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Female	Full time	49.3%	49.7%	50.8%	52.5%
Male	Full time	50.7%	50.3%	49.2%	47.5%
Female	Part time	86.6%	86.3%	88.1%	89.5%
Male	Part time	13.4%	13.7%	11.9%	10.5%

3.7 Full-time and part-time by gender and age

A higher percentage of females aged 45 to 54 (56.3%) and 25 to 34 (57.1%) work full-time. This then falls for those aged 16 to 24 (51.5%) and then rises again for females aged 35 to 44 (52.9%). Fewer than half of females aged 65 and over work full-time (42.5%), which is potentially due to flexible working and/or retirement and pension options.

More than 90% of Males between the ages of 25 to 64 work full-time, and in the 16 – 24 age group 48.5% work full time, while in the 65+ category 57.5% work full time. Again this is likely to be due to flexible retirement/working arrangements which enable employees to have a gradual route into retirement if they wish.

Full Time workforce by Gender and Age

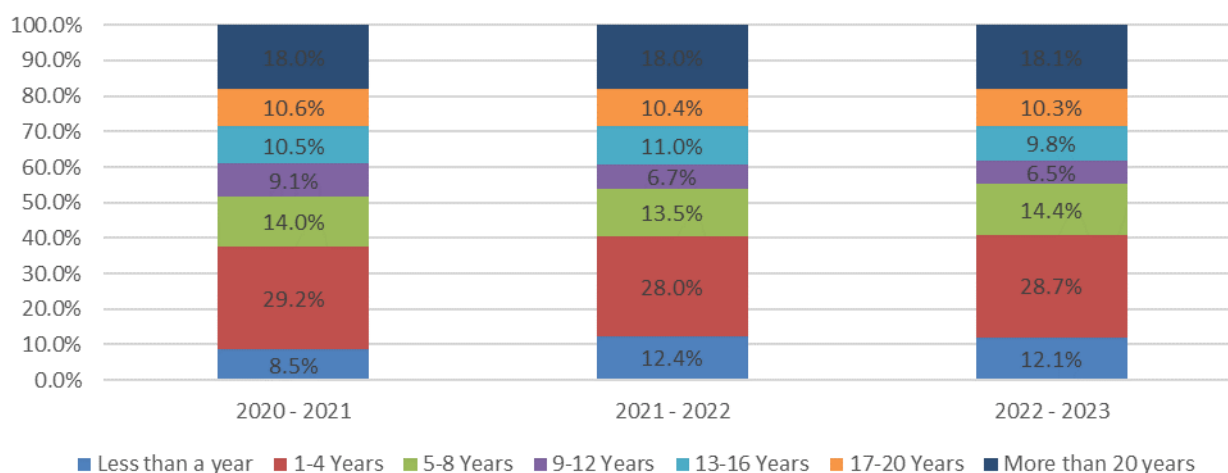


3.8 Length of service

2022/23 shows a slight decrease in the proportion of staff that have worked at the council for less than a year and has remained relatively stable for all other staff :

Length of service	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Less than a year	5.9%	8.5%	12.4%	12.1%
1 to 4 years	29.2%	29.2%	28.0%	28.7%
5 to 8 years	12.4%	14.0%	13.5%	14.4%
9 to 12 years	11.6%	9.1%	6.7%	6.5%
13 to 16 years	11.9%	10.5%	11.0%	9.8%
17 to 20 years	10.9%	10.6%	10.4%	10.3%
More than 20 years	18.1%	18.0%	18.0%	18.1%

Workforce by Length of Service



3.9 Length of service by disability

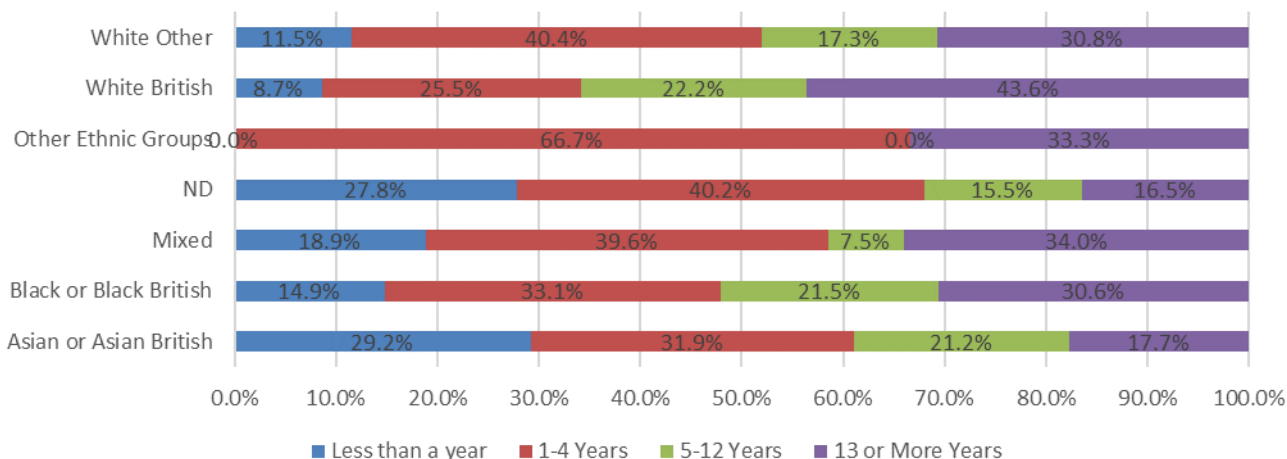
Due to the low numbers recorded for employees with a disability it is difficult to note any particular trends pertinent to their length of service.

3.10 Length of service by ethnicity

33.1% of White British members of staff have worked for Reading Borough Council for up to four years, compared to 26.7% of non-White British employees. 43.6% of White British members of staff have worked at the council for 13 or more years, compared to 26.2% of non-White British staff.

Ethnicity	Less than a year	1 to 4 years	5 to 12 years	13 +
Asian/Asian British	29.2%	31.9%	21.2%	17.7%
Black/Black British	14.9%	33.1%	21.5%	30.6%
Mixed	18.9%	39.6%	7.5%	34.0%
Prefer not to say	27.8%	40.2%	15.5%	16.5%
Other ethnic group(s)	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%
White British	8.7%	25.5%	22.2%	43.6%
White Other	11.5%	40.4%	17.3%	30.8%

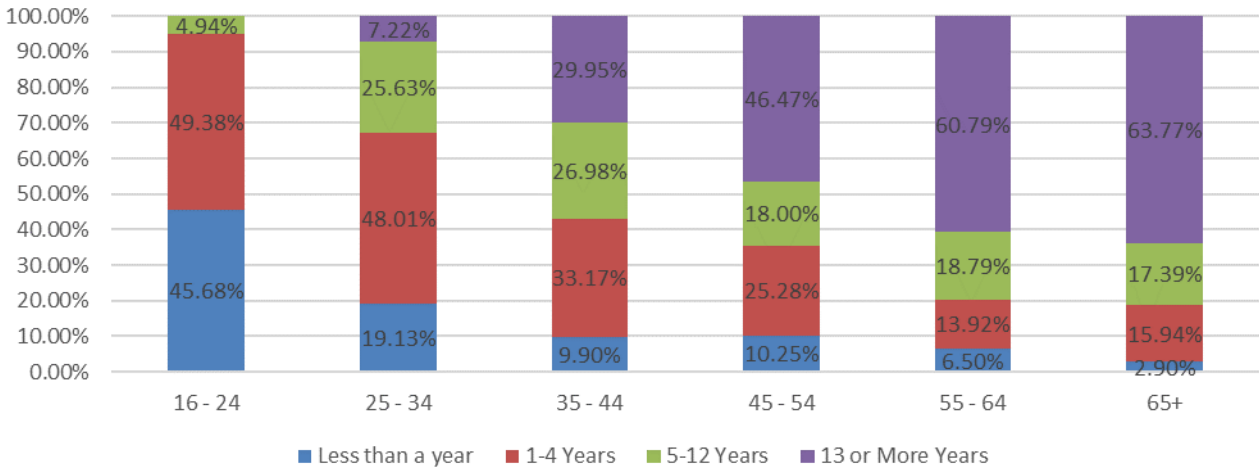
Workforce by Length of Service and Ethnicity



3.11 Length of service by age profile

There are more people in the 35 and over category who have served for longer periods and more people aged 34 and below that have served less than a year. The majority of those aged under 35 have worked at the authority 1 to 4 years. The percentage of staff that have worked at the organisation for fewer than four years declines with age. This is because the correlation between age and length of service tends to be positive, as older employees tend to have been in the organisation longer:

Workforce by Age and Length of Service

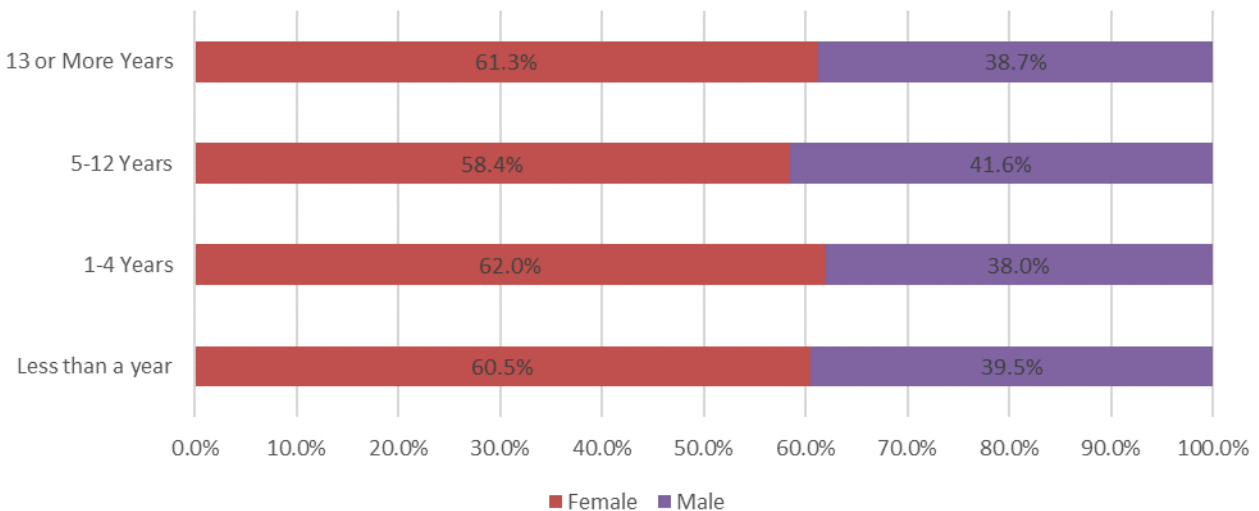


3.12 Length of service by gender

The percentage of staff by gender is similar across the different service lengths, although a lower percentage of those that have served for 13 or more years are male.

Ethnicity	Less than a year	1 to 4 years	5 to 12 years	13 +
Female	60.5%	62.0%	58.4%	61.3%
Male	39.5%	38.0%	41.6%	38.7%

Workforce by Length of Service and Gender



3.13 Pay grade

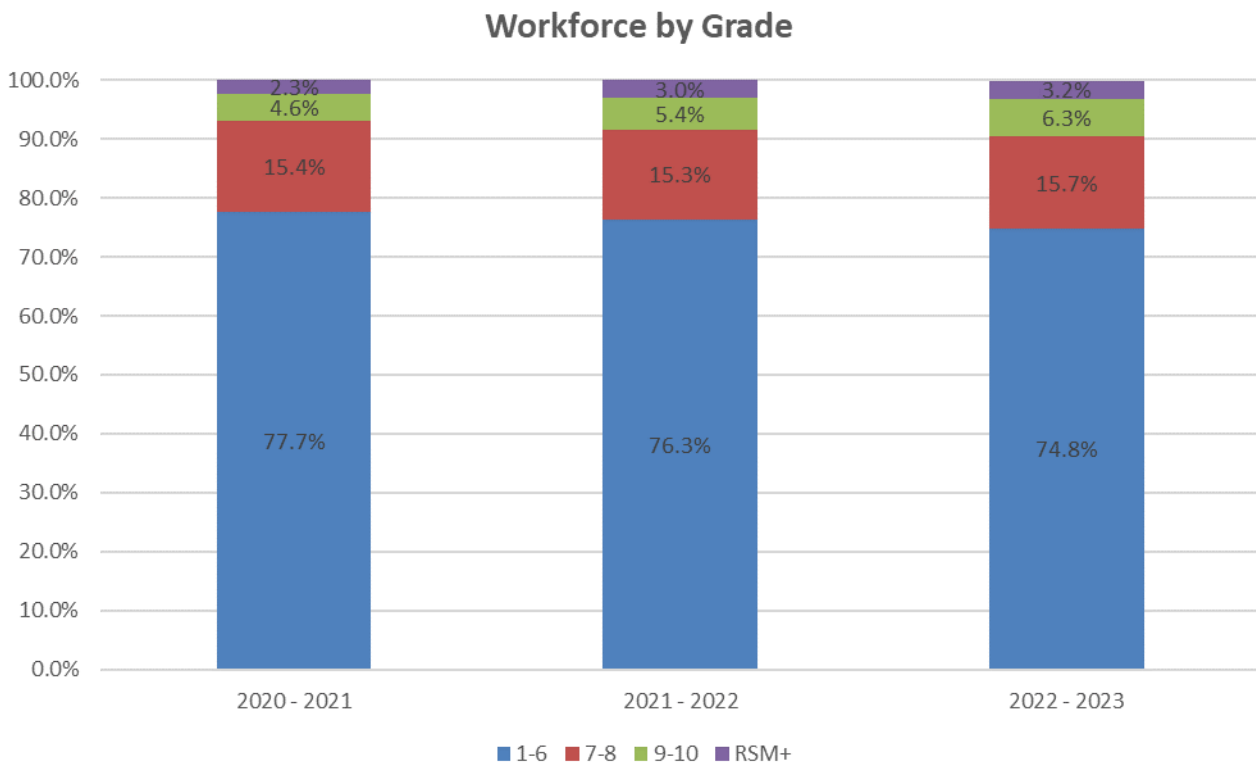
This section features information broken down by salary grades.

Grade explanation

- **RG1 to RG6** cover a wide range of administrative, technical, clerical and manual roles. For the purpose of this report these grades also include apprentices, for whom there are separate pay arrangements.
- **RG7 to RG8** cover a range of professional and first line manager / supervisory roles.
- **RG9 to RG10** cover a range of senior professional and middle manager roles.
- **RSMD and above** cover senior managers, Coroners, Assistant and Deputy Directors, Executive Directors and the Chief Executive,

The percentage of staff within each pay grade has remained relatively stable over time as shown below.

Grade	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Grades 1 to 6	78.3%	77.7%	76.3%	74.8%
Grades 7 to 8	15.1%	15.4%	15.3%	15.7%
Grades 9 to 10	4.3%	4.6%	5.4%	6.3%
Grades RSM and Above	2.3%	2.3%	3.0%	3.2%



3.14 Grade by disability

Due to the small number of staff that identify themselves as having a disability in each grade group, the data is potentially disclosive and so is not presented here. The council continues

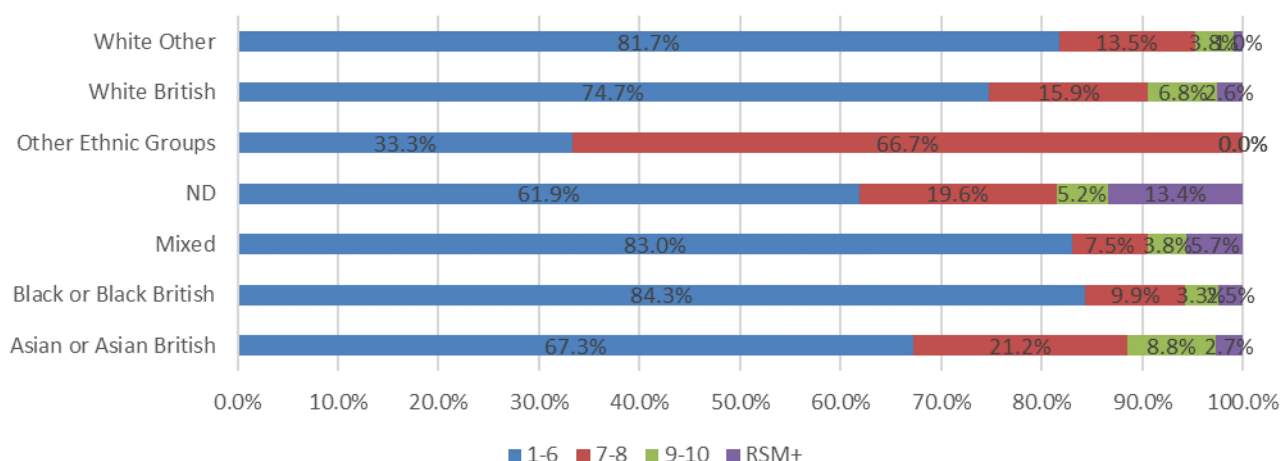
its commitment to be a Disability Confident Employer to encourage applications from disabled candidates and promote development for existing disabled members of staff.

3.15 Grade by ethnicity

There is a lower percentage of White British staff in RG1 to RG6 than the percentage of staff from non-White British ethnic groups.

Ethnicity	Grade 1- 6	Grade 7-8	Grade 9-10	RSM and Above
Asian/Asian British	67.3%	21.2%	8.8%	2.7%
Black/Black British	84.3%	9.9%	3.3%	2.5%
Mixed	83.0%	7.5%	3.8%	5.7%
Prefer not to say	61.9%	19.6%	5.2%	13.4%
Other ethnic group(s)	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%
White British	74.7%	15.9%	6.8%	2.6%
White Other	81.7%	13.5%	3.8%	1.0%

Workforce by Ethnicity and Pay Grade

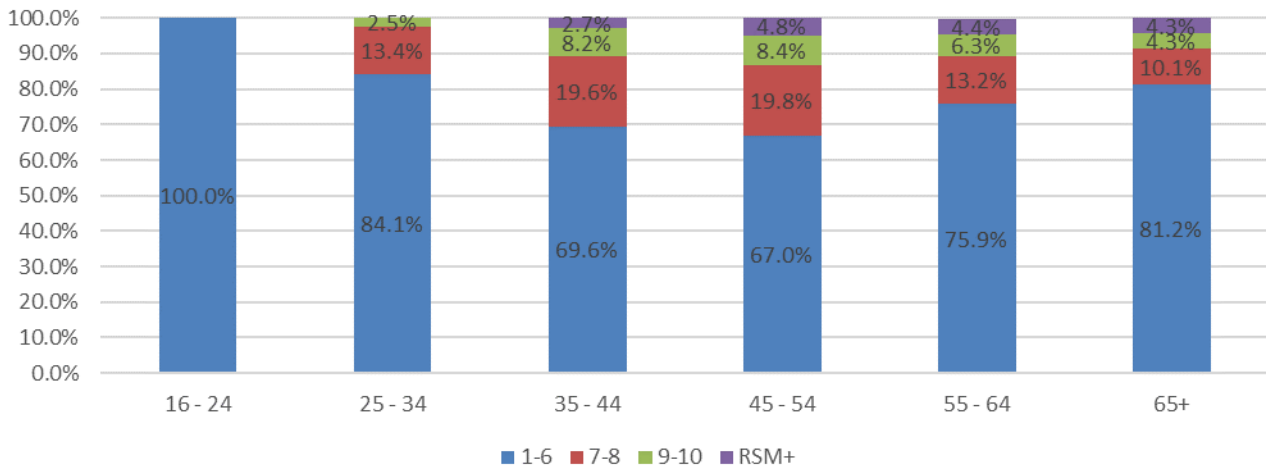


3.16 Grade by age profile

The pay grades of staff aged under 35 are lower than the older age groups. This is expected as in most cases staff are in the earlier stages of their careers. A larger percentage of those aged 45 to 54 are in the highest pay grades than any other age group.

Age	Grades 1-6	Grades 7-8	Grades 9-10	RSM and Above
16 to 24	100.0%			
25 to 34	84.1%	13.4%	2.5%	
35 to 44	69.6%	19.6%	8.2%	2.7%
45 to 54	67.0%	19.8%	8.4%	4.8%
55 to 64	75.9%	13.2%	6.3%	4.4%
65+	81.2%	10.1%	4.3%	4.3%

Workforce by Age and Grade

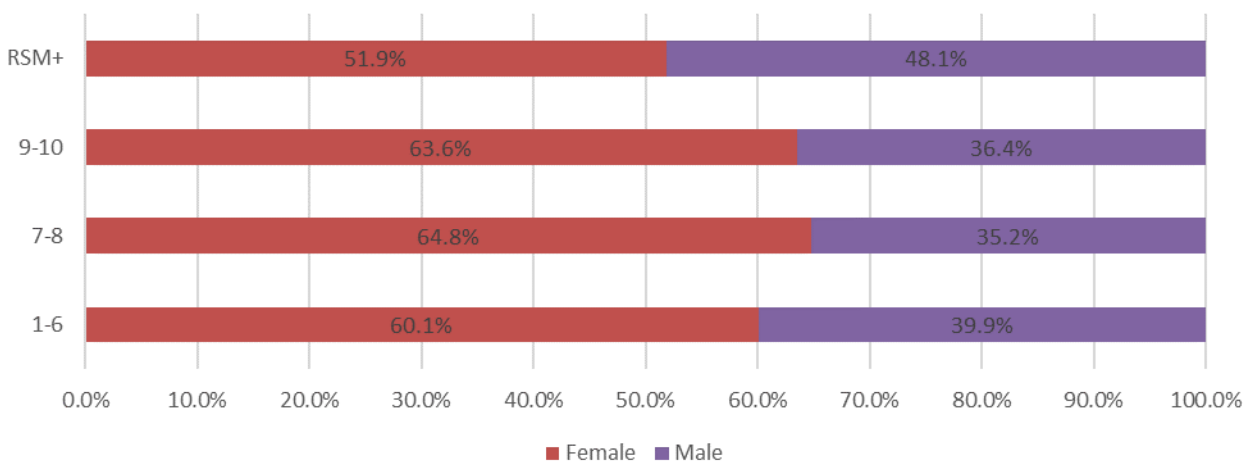


3.17 Grade by gender

There is a higher proportion of female workers in all categories.

Gender	Grade 1-6	Grade 7- 8	Grade 9-10	RSMD and Above
Female	60.1%	64.8%	63.6%	51.9%
Male	39.9%	35.2%	36.4%	48.1%

Workforce by Gender and Grade



4 Staff engagement and procedures

4.1 Quantitative and qualitative research with employees

A staff survey was carried out in July 2023 and the results were analysed at a corporate level, by ED area and by AD area. The results were also analysed by protected characteristic and

demographic group. The results will be shared – along with the staff survey action plan – at the meeting.

4.2 Due regard to the aims of the duty in decision-making

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out on all employment-related policies and procedures and general employment issues are discussed with Unison.

4.3 Staff complaints

There were no staff complaints recorded as instances of discrimination during the period which this report covers.

4.4 Engagement with trade unions and staff

The Council recognises the value of a strong and effective relationship with our Trades Unions and regular formal and informal discussions are held with them including a quarterly meeting with the Chief Executive. The Trade Unions are invited to be part of significant projects and programmes including Team Reading Board, Modern Workplace etc.

RBC has a range of engagement mechanisms with staff including the Chief Executive’s briefings, Team Talk and through staff groups. Recently RBC held its first Big Conversation with staff (on EDI).

Work is underway further to develop our engagement frameworks and a paper is due to be considered by CMT in December.

4.5 Policies and programmes to address equality concerns

RBC has recently developed its Inclusion and Diversity strategy and plan – this strategy had significant input from staff and stakeholders, including Trades Unions. The three year action plan to support delivery of the I&D strategy contains a number of specific actions to drive inclusion and diversity including development opportunities, policy reviews and enhanced reporting mechanisms.

HR Casework

Completed HR Casework – Use of Formal Procedures – April 2022 to March 2023 - Analysis by Employee Profile

Case Type	All Cases	Gender		BAME		Disability	
		Female	%	Number	%	Number	%
Capability - IH	118	37	31.4%	1	3.0%	2	1.7%
Capability – Performance	22	10	45.5%	3	33.3%	2	9.1%
Disciplinary	23	3	13.0%	3	33.3%	0	0.0%

Grievance	16	9	56.3%	2	25.0%	2	12.5%
Total	179	59	33.0%	9	15.3%	1	3.4%

Completed HR Casework – Use of Formal Procedures – April 2022 to March 2023 – Employee Profile Not Recorded

Case Type	All Cases	Gender		BAME		Disability	
		Not Recorded	%	Not Recorded	%	Not Recorded	%
Capability - IH	118	2	1.7%	7	21.2%	46	39.0%
Capability – Performance	22	0	0.0%	2	22.2%	13	59.1%
Disciplinary	23	2	8.7%	1	11.1%	12	52.2%
Grievance	16	0	0.00%	2	25.0%	4	25.0%
Total	179	1	2.2%	14	20.3%	26	39.39%

The council has a Flexible Working Policy that welcomes formal requests from employees who meet the necessary criteria. We recognise the importance of a work-life balance for all staff and will consider flexible working requests on an informal basis, accommodating these where they meet business needs.

4.6 Learning and development opportunities

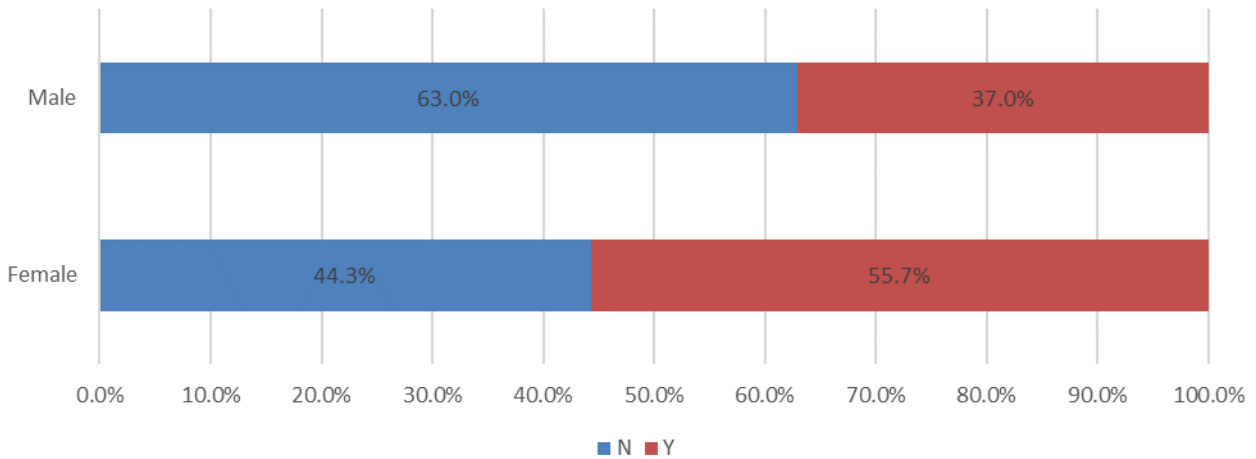
The council is committed to training and personal development. Every member of staff has a crucial role to play in enabling the council to make a difference: to make the borough an even better place to be and to help meet the challenges faced within local communities. To that effect, the council has a People Strategy in place with the aim “to have the right people, in the right job, with the right skills”.

To deliver on this, the council has a range of learning and development opportunities available including classroom courses, e-learning and a professional qualification support scheme as well as on-the-job training, and mentoring. The council also has an integrated programme of leadership and management development.

In 2022/23 48.4% of the total workforce accessed our corporate training, 55.7% of females accessed training and 53.7% of Black/ Black British staff accessed training compared to 47.4% of White British Staff.

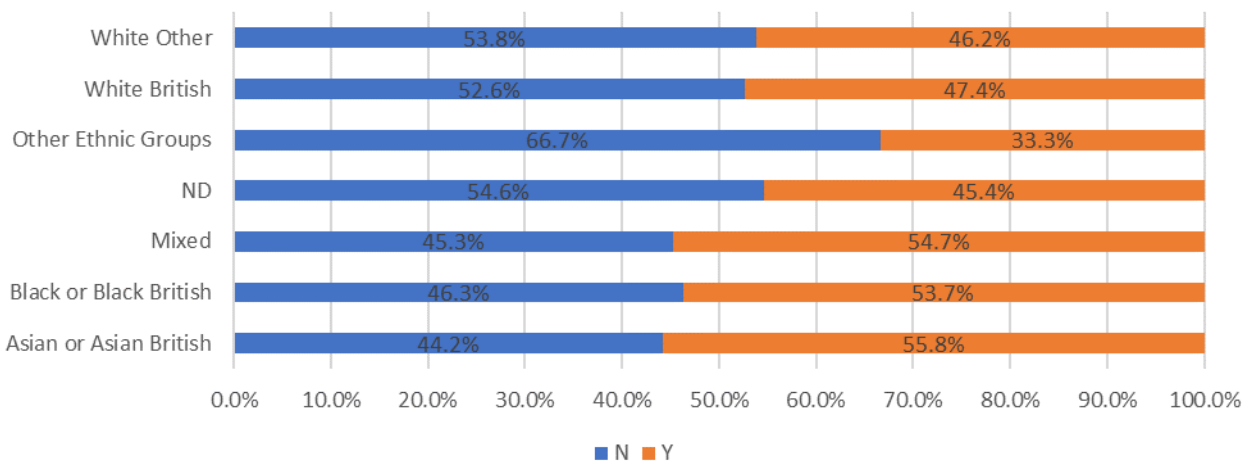
Gender	Number who accessed Training	Number who did not access Training
Female	55.7%	44.3%
Male	37.0%	63.0%

Workforce by Gender and Accessed Training



Ethnicity	Number who accessed Training	Number who did not access Training
Asian/Asian British	55.8%	44.2%
Black/Black British	53.7%	46.3%
Mixed	54.7%	45.3%
Prefer not to say	45.4%	54.6%
Other ethnic group(s)	33.3%	66.7%
White British	47.4%	52.6%
White Other	46.2%	53.8%

Workforce by Ethnicity and Accessed Training



Development opportunities can be identified in a variety of ways including by the individual through regular 1 to 1 meetings and the performance appraisal process. Training courses delivered on an ongoing basis include health and safety, first aid, stress resilience, equality

and diversity, recruitment and selection, project management, Microsoft Office applications, data protection, lone working and managing aggressive behaviour.

4.7 Gender pay gap information

The council has been required to publish and report specific figures about its gender pay gap since 2017. Using the required snapshot date of 31 March 2023 for public sector organisations, the council was pleased to report a median gender pay gap of 0.0%. This showed the council was performing positively against the national average of 14.9% (in favour of men).

The council will be publishing it's 2023 gender pay gap report on it's website, and on the government reporting website, by 30 March 2024.

4.8 Ethnicity pay gap information

Large organisations are not yet legally required to publish their ethnicity pay gap, but the Council has chosen to voluntarily publish its data for the fourth year.

Based on data at the snapshot date of 31 March 2023, the mean pay gap for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees is 2.46%. There is a negative median pay gap of 0.40%, meaning that the median pay of white employees is 0.40% less than for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees.

The council will be publishing it's 2023 ethnicity pay gap report on it's website by 30 march 2024.

Personnel Committee

16 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	RBC Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and Plan
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Kathryn Cook, Assistant Director HR&OD
Lead Councillor	Councillor Terry
Corporate priority	Our Foundations
Recommendations	1. That the proposed Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and Plan, attached at Appendix A, are agreed.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Reading Borough Council (RBC) is actively working to develop its approach to inclusion and diversity and become a more inclusive employer. The Council has been working on its inclusion agenda for several years seeking advice and insight from its own workforce and from external specialists, working to understand where we need to improve and what our priorities should be. It is accepted that to make further progress we need to be clear about our ambition and how we will deliver it. The draft Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Strategy at Appendix A sets that out.

1.2 Reading is a diverse and vibrant place with pockets of affluence and deprivation. We know that most of the people who work for us are local. More than half of our workforce (54%) live in the borough and a further 27% are from nearby RG postcodes (81% total).

1.3 We want Reading Borough Council to have a workforce that reflects and understands the communities it serves and to be seen as an employer of choice within our communities; one that values inclusion and diversity, and the different perspectives they bring. This paper sets out our proposals to achieve this within our workforce.

1.4 Language is important and never more so than in relation to inclusion and diversity where the use of divisive or sloppy language can have significant, sometimes unknown and unseen (except to the individual) ramifications.

1.5 A few key terms used in this paper are defined below:

- **Inclusion:** the extent we feel valued, included, and able to succeed. Inclusion is what we do as employers and colleagues.
- **Diversity:** a measure of the mix, differences, and variety in people or ideas. We aspire to reflect our community. Diversity is who we are.
- **Intersectionality:** It is important to understand the ‘intersectionality’ or interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class and gender in creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination,

and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.

1.6 Throughout this Strategy we refer to Inclusion and Diversity. This is deliberate and reflects the strong feedback received from staff, leaders and managers as well as reflecting best practice. Our external specialists, Inclusive Employers, advised that achieving full inclusion is the important first goal, as when inclusion is delivered, diversity and equality will naturally follow.

1.7 This Strategy focuses on the inclusion and diversity of both our current and future workforce. However, it is clear that some groups' experience of discrimination demands additional focus. We have framed our work on racism through the lens of the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD)s definition:

"Whilst workplace inclusion is essential, racism needs to be expressly addressed, given the long-standing lack of progress on race equality in our society and workplaces. It needs to be named and consciously addressed alongside, and separate to, an overarching commitment to inclusion."

Hence, the Action Plan ensures early work is undertaken on embedding our anti racism ambition as well as our approach to the recruitment, support and development of disabled staff. Further work will then focus on the other protected characteristics (see definition in Policy context section below).

Appendices

Appendix A:

Draft Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Plan

Appendix B:

Comparison of our current workforce against the most recent census (2021), including information about 'prefer not to say' / 'do not want to declare' statistics.

Appendix C:

Outcomes from the Big Conversation on EDI

2. Policy Context

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 is the foundational legal framework to protect individuals' rights and advance equality of opportunity for all. This Act provides the primary legislative basis under which our Strategy operates. The Equalities Act 2010 outlines key legal responsibilities for employers including ensuring they do not unfairly discriminate in any aspect of work, do all they reasonably can to protect people from discrimination, and to look after the wellbeing of employees. The Act introduced the term "protected characteristics" to refer to groups that are protected under the Act. Protected characteristics are legally defined as:

Age	Race	Sex
Sexual orientation	Marriage/civil partnership	Disability
Gender reassignment	Religion or belief	Maternity and paternity

2.2 In addition to the duties required by legislation, Council agreed on 17th October 2023 that RBC should include Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic in its strategies and plans.

2.3 The *Public Sector Equality Duty* (created under the Equality Act 2010) came into force on 5 April 2011 and requires public bodies and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunities and foster good relations between different communities.

2.4 All our HR policies and processes are regularly reviewed with the above obligations in mind. There are several proposals in the draft Strategy and Action Plan that if it is agreed will need to be reflected in our HR Policies going forward.

2.5 However, it is important to note that the draft Strategy goes beyond 'just' our legal obligations. It aims to ensure that we go beyond policies and into something enshrined in how we do business and how we work with each other.

3. The Proposal

3.1 Work on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agenda has been underway since late 2020 following the motion passed at October's Council on Tackling Employment Inequality. This work was enhanced following the report by the consultants Business in the Community who were commissioned to review the Council's approach to EDI.

Tangible progress has been made particularly in terms of the equality and diversity agenda:

- There has been a steady increase in the ethnic diversity of RBC staff and the development of a more representative senior leadership team.
- We have made changes to our recruitment process to increase our 'reach' into different ethnic groups and to simplify the applications process.
- Staff briefings and communications on EDI have been strengthened and relevant e-learning for new managers has been introduced. This will be extended to all managers during the life of the plan.
- We report annually on our gender and ethnicity pay gaps and have been successful in driving these down year on year. The 2022 Council's gender pay gap (mean) was 0.13% and the ethnicity pay gap (mean) was 2.68%. The gender and ethnicity pay gap reports for 2023 are currently in production and will be shared with Personnel Committee on 16th November. Early indications are that the gaps have continued to close, albeit there are some outliers that will need to be better understood.
- Increasing managers understanding of the importance of the EDI agenda in recruitment has also been strengthened and all managers are now required to complete the Recruitment and Selection e-Learning course; this includes a module on unconscious bias and an explanation of the relevant legislation on discrimination.
- It is also now a requirement that whenever possible recruitment panels should be diverse and during interviews an assessment of candidates against Team Reading values is required.
- To reach a wider, more diverse talent pool, we have diversified our recruitment advertising, moving away from traditional 'Local Authority' advertising routes and focussing on social media and Google search. Our job descriptions and adverts use inclusive language and focus on Team Reading values and all our adverts now feature a strong inclusivity statement. The application process has also been simplified, moving away from lengthy application forms and mandatory supporting statements, which can be difficult for many, and advice and guidance is available on the recruitment page of our website.
- RBC is a signatory to the Race at Work Charter and to its seven aims:
 1. Appoint an executive sponsor for race.
 2. Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress.
 3. Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying.

4. Make equality, diversity and inclusion the responsibility of all leaders and managers.
5. Take action that supports black, Asian, mixed race and other ethnically diverse employees' career progression.
6. Support race inclusion allies in the workplace.
7. Include black, Asian, mixed race and other ethnically led enterprise owners in supply chain.

Work has also been on-going on other aspects of EDI raised in Business in the Community's report, including on a zero tolerance to bullying and harassment, developing a positive workforce culture through the TEAM reading values and enhancing employee engagement.

Work to embed fully these activities needs, of course, to continue and to include all protected characteristics. The Council's ambition is to become an exemplar in inclusiveness.

3.2 Given progress has been made on some fronts, it is appropriate to now take stock and consider our longer-term aspirations for EDI. We need to move from focussing on the basics required by legislation to developing a compelling longer-term ambition for EDI within the Council.

3.3 The draft Strategy outlines our plans over the next three years to develop our inclusion and diversity work, enabling RBC to progress towards being a fully inclusive organisation. It is of key importance that everyone recognises that inclusion and diversity is everyone's responsibility – leaders, managers and staff. It is only through working together that this Strategy and Action Plan will be delivered. For this reason, although the Strategy acknowledges the importance of RBC investing in this agenda and providing leadership focus and drive to it, the fundamental requirement is for everyone who works for RBC to understand what the Strategy aims to achieve and their role in delivering it.

4. Current Diversity Position:

4.1 Whilst the focus of the draft Strategy goes beyond just focusing on protected characteristics, officers will continue to track data about our workforce in relation to protected characteristics as this provides not only a useful snapshot of how effective our approach is, but also allows comparisons to be made to the census for the Borough as a whole.

Currently:

- 61% of our workforce is female, compared to the borough's population of 50%
- 17.7% identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, compared to 32.9% of the borough's population - (Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic is used here as it reflects the data set, we will avoid terms such as minority ethnic that categorise people into large groupings that do not reflect their heritage),
- 4% of our workforce say they have a disability, compared to 14% of the borough's population
- 4.6% of the workforce identifies as non-heterosexual compared to 5% in the census

4.2 The Council has an enduring issue with under declaration of protected characteristics by staff. For some protected characteristics the 'prefer not to say' / 'do not want to declare' categories can be as high as 34%.

4.3 Appendix B sets out a comparison of our current workforce against the most recent census (2021), including information about 'prefer not to say' / 'do not want to declare' statistics.

5. The Big Conversation – Staff Engagement

5.1 During June and July 2023, management engaged in a "Big Conversation" on EDI with staff. This included engaging with all staff through focus groups, Team Talk, team conversations, staff forums and individual comments. A separate workshop was held with trade union colleagues. Involvement in the Big Conversation was strong.

5.2 Feedback from staff about the priorities they felt we should focus on in relation to EDI included:

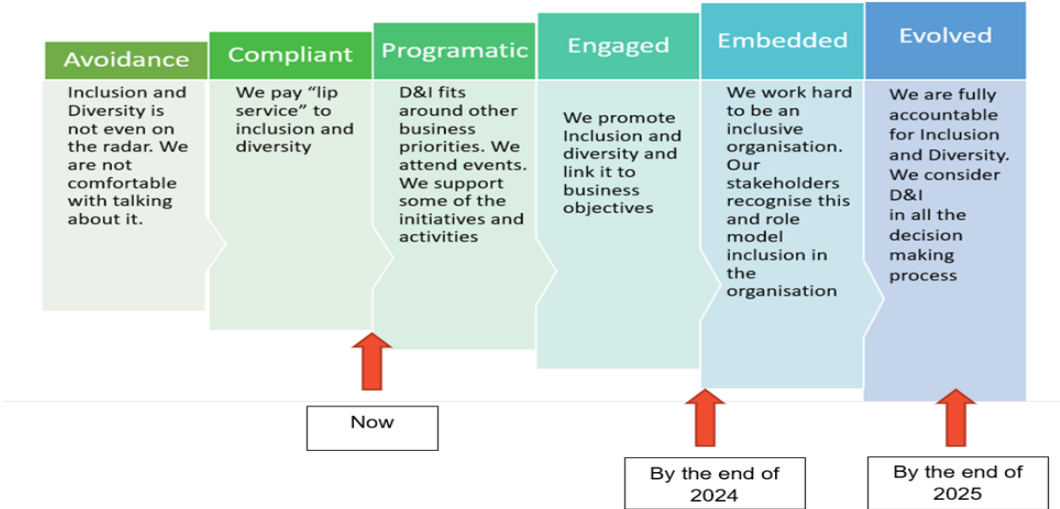
- Enhance the Training and development offer.
- Broaden our view of EDI to consider neurodiversity, mental health and other hidden disabilities.
- Ensure our supporting policies and procedures are consistently applied across the council.
- Ensuring a work environment that feels safe to challenge and able to speak out
- Getting the balance right, ensuring work in this area is not overstated to the detriment of a focus on service delivery.
- Recruit fairly through inclusive practices, keep good staff and develop them for progression, pay fairly and address nepotism.
- Demonstrate Leadership excellence. Leaders being visible, role modelling excellence, values and the required behaviours.

Appendix C summarises in more detail views collected from the Big Conversation.

5.3 In parallel to the Big Conversation, Inclusive Employers were commissioned to help us understand better where we are now and to help us scope our ambition and associated action plan. Their work was divided into three discrete but interconnected work packages:

- Stage 1: Desk based research including review of relevant policies, staff survey results 2022 & 2023 and previous EDI audit.
- Stage 2: Diversity data review including staff profiles by protected characteristics and employee lifecycle data. A list of data sources and activities in the development of the strategy is shown as appendix A.
- Stage 3: Interviews and co-creation sessions with Senior Leaders and employee groups to discuss key findings.

Inclusive Employers used the following maturity model to help us to understand our current situation.



5.4 Their analysis of our current position is that we are between "compliant" and "programmatic". Whilst we might find this a little disappointing given all of the work that has taken place to date, it does underscore our belief that RBC still has some way to go to really deliver on

this agenda. The maturity model and Inclusive Employers associated 'check list' has helped us to structure our Action Plan, enabling us to progress towards 'evolved' potentially as soon as by the end of 2026.

6. WHAT IS OUR AMBITION FOR I&D?

6.1 The work to understand the views and opinions of our workforce; the demographic analysis and the actions suggested by the Inclusion Maturity model have been crafted into both an Action Plan and Ambition Statement for I&D. The Plan has also been informed by the anti-racism definition in paragraph 1.7 (above) so that all groups are able to flourish and act as advocates for the Council. Thereby enabling our workforce to better reflect the community we serve.

6.2 In reflecting on the importance of everyone who works for RBC actively embracing I&D, the wording of our ambition (below) has been specifically crafted to show that shared ownership. Staff groups (staff ambassadors, Staff Disability Forum, LGBTQ+, Women's Health group), Trade Unions and many of those involved in the original Inclusive Employers discovery work have had the opportunity to comment on and contribute to this ambition statement:

Our ambition: An inclusive culture where we can all do our best work and can thrive.

To achieve this ambition we will:

- Implement the Action Plan outlined in the Strategy to move us from being judged 'programmatic' to 'embedded' in the Inclusive Employers Inclusion maturity model by the end of 2026 and report on progress regularly to staff.
- Identify relevant external memberships that will help us to keep track of best practice eg the Business Disability Forum /Inclusive Employers .
- Create a governance structure to oversee progress.
- Value inclusion and diversity to support staff wellbeing and create a positive and supportive culture where people feel able to be themselves.
- Develop the skills, knowledge and talent of our people so that they fulfil their full potential and uphold our inclusive culture.
- Prioritise the creation of both an anti racist statement for the Council and a disabled 'charter' in the first year of the Action Plan – reviewing the need for proactive measures to support people with other protected characteristics during the life of the Plan

The full draft Strategy document is attached at Appendix A.

7. Options

7.1 There is of course an option to do nothing but meet the minimum requirements of legislation. However, we are more ambitious than this and our staff have clearly told us that they wish RBC and themselves to be equally ambitious. Options exist to look at enhancing or de-scoping the proposals made or to look to extend the timeline for delivery.

8.0 Contribution to Strategic Aims

8.1 The inclusion and diversity agenda has evolved significantly over the last 30 years – it continues to evolve, and we need to be in a position to respond not only to changes in legislation but also to changing societal expectations and norms.

8.2 Our staff are responsible for delivering high quality services to residents and it is important that every member of staff feels able to deliver their best work – feeling included and valued is an important facet of this. This is our first Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan, it builds on previous successes and actions and aim to build strong and enduring foundations for the future and is therefore an important part of the ‘Our Foundations’ theme within the Corporate Plan. It also aims to ensure RBC better reflects the residents of the Borough and, although focussed internally, contributes to the Corporate Plan themes of ‘Thriving Communities’ and ‘Inclusive Economy’.

9.. Environmental and Climate Implications

There are no environmental or climate implications arising from this paper – it addresses internal issues to do with our workforce.

10.Community Engagement

This report focuses on inclusion and diversity in relation to our staff. There has been an extensive period of involvement with staff groups and the workforce more generally (through the Big Conversation on EDI). The feedback from these discussions is set out in the body of the paper and the Strategy and Action Plan directly respond to the comments made.

11.Equality Implications

The Strategy and Action Plan are directly related to our responsibilities as an employer. It proposes actions to improve our current position – with the aim of putting inclusion and diversity at the heart of not only our people management practices and policies but also more generally in how we work with each other e.g. through reflecting its themes and priorities in our Team Reading values. Through close monitoring of our performance in relation to all aspects of the Strategy we will track progress in relation to all ‘protected characteristics’ as well as wider measures of inclusion and diversity.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision given that the aim of the Strategy is to address issues relating to the equality and inclusion of everyone who works for RBC.

12.Other Relevant Considerations

This report proposes actions that will impact on existing HR&OD policies and processes. As the Strategy is delivered, policies and processes will be systematically worked through and agreed with the trades unions prior to being considered by Policy/Personnel Committee as relevant.

13..Legal Implications

None – this proposal is to meet and to overachieve the requirements in legislation.

14.Financial Implications

The proposals in this report will be met from a combination of existing budget and Transformation reserve funding.

16.Timetable for Implementation

The Strategy and Action Plan covers the period of January 2024 to December 2026. The Corporate Management Team will regularly track progress and updates will be provided to the Personnel Committee every 6 months.

17.Background Papers

17.1 There are none.

Comparison of our current workforce against the most recent census (2021), including information about 'prefer not to say' / 'do not want to declare' statistics.

Analysis of our current workforce

Workforce composition @Sept 23

Workforce size: 1730			
Declaration rates:	Not know n:	Do not want to declare:	
Consider disabled	28.3%	0%	
Marital status	5.3%	2.4%	
Ethnicity	6%	0%	
Sexual orientation	28.2%	5.9%	
Religion	26.6%	6.3%	
Religion			
Agnostic	3.9%	Jew ish	0.2%
Atheist	5.1%	Muslim	2.3%
Buddhist	0.3%	Sikh	0.9%
Christian	26.8%	None	23.6%
Hindu	1.2%	Not know n/DNWTS	32.9%
Ethnicity			
Asian or Asian British		6.9%	
Black or Black British		7.2%	
Mixed		3.4%	
Not known		6.0%	
Other Ethnic groups		0.2%	
White		76.4%	
Total		100%	

Gender	
Female	60.8%
Male	39.2%
Consider Disabled?	
YES	4%
NO	67.7%
Not know n	28.3%
Marital Status	
Civil Partnership	0.8%
Married	43.2%
Partner	12.5%
Single	35.8%
Not know n/DNWTS	7.7%
Age	
0-21	1.5%
22-30	11.6%
31-40	22.1%
41-50	25.5%
51-55	12.6%
55-65	24%
66+	2.6%
Sexual Orientation	
Bisexual	1.2%
Gay man	1.6%
Gay Woman/lesbian	0.9%
Heterosexual/ straight	61.3%
Other	0.9%
Not know n/DNWTS	34.1%



Staff input to the Draft Inclusion and Diversity Strategy

On the 13 June 2023 the Chief Executive launched a Big Conversation to generate a council wide discussion about equality, diversity and inclusion and engage staff in the development of the Council's EDI Strategy.

The Big Conversation on EDI focussed on three questions:

- What do you think our EDI priorities should be?
- How do you want the Council to feel going forwards?
- How do you want your voice to be heard?

The conversation involved structured discussions through a wide range of channels, including direct email, team discussions, vlogs and online survey forms.

The Big Conversation formally concluded on 28 July and the feedback from various channels has been collated with the headline results outlined in this report. A breakdown of the comments / suggestions by directorate has been shared as appropriate.

Involvement:

Involvement included individual forms and comments, team sessions, comments in posting boxes, workshops (including with the trades unions, staff groups, at Team Talk and an all-staff event in DACHS) as well as responses to the VLOGs and comments made directly to the HR&OD team. It is difficult to establish the total number of respondents as it's not clear how many people were involved in all of the various team events – however in total to date there have been just under 100 separate summaries logged – these range from individual comments to team responses for very large teams e.g. DACHS as a whole.

Key Outcomes:

A thematic analysis was carried out on all of the responses received – this analysis looked at all comments and suggestions received in respect of the three questions that were posed for this Big Conversation, grouping wherever possible. The key EDI themes are consistent across the Directorates, where there are specific issues raised, they mostly relate to frontline services (see paragraph below).

The priorities identified were:

Training and Development:

Raising awareness of EDI , developing high quality training and bringing in external speakers to enhance the training offer were widely discussed. There is a feeling that the current training could be improved by being broader in scope and using more external speakers to enhance the offer. Unconscious bias training was suggested by many, with class bias and the 'minority stress model' also suggested. The Senior Leadership Group has already undergone some training in EDI including the issue of 'Allyship'. Further training will be developed and roll out across the Council.

“ education for all in a supportive way to understand their responsibilities and what is acceptable and what is not”

“Increasing training on EDI issues for all staff - Mandatory once a year possibly or even having speakers in person or on teams would be better”

“Enhance the training that's open to staff in those roles informed by people with lived experience”

Neurodiversity and hidden disabilities:

Feedback indicates that staff want the council to take a broad view of EDI with more consideration of part time workers, consideration for neuro diversity, reasonable adjustments for mental health and a better understanding of hidden disabilities.

“focus on neurodiversity and staff welfare”

“Instead of just focussing on race, ethnicity or sexuality, more focus should be placed on other needs such as neurodiversity, menopause, hidden disabilities, part time workers etc”.

“Focus on hidden disabilities”

“Staff with disabilities, neurodivergence, mental health issues etc. This also includes those with undiagnosed or undisclosed neurodivergence because that process can take several years and many don’t want to disclose their condition”

“Consider how to become more enabling and inclusive to those staff/customers who may have disabilities that are not obvious (neurodiverse, visual, mental health etc.).”

Representation:

There is some concern that our staff and our managerial layers do not reflect the diversity of our community.

“Gathering data on EDI-Where are we now? Where do we want to be and then logical priorities justified based on this information”

“diversity at senior level”

“be more diverse. the senior management team is not diverse”

“More diverse workforce to represent the population of Reading & provide better services”

“Getting a more representative workforce with regard to ethnicity should be the priority, at every level. It feels like we have a long way to go at this when looking at members, senior management and frontline staff”.

“more inclusive and the management team reflective of the council”

Consistent policies and procedures supporting EDI:

Comments indicate a requirement to have policies and procedures consistent with our aims and values and also to ensure they are consistently applied across the council.

“Policies that support managers and teams to prioritise equality, diversity and inclusion whilst also keep the customer at the heart of our service delivery”.

“Ensuring our policies on bullying and harassment are up to date with current legislation and current social climate”

“Policies to support staff need to be consistent across all teams and directorates rather than at managers’ discretion (i.e. do all directorates have the same policy around flexible working?)”

“It would be useful if there was also consistency in culture / values - individual managers can have very different styles which can create different cultures between teams, with varying levels of support and inclusion”

Psychological safety:

Staff expressed a desire to work in a place that feels safe, safe to challenge, and speak out in a culture of safety.

“creating a safe culture, no reprisals”

“safe to challenge”

“be open to feedback and criticism”

Ability for people to use their voice without fear or repercussion”

*“openness to hear feedback and take action”
“Allow a variety of opinion”*

Getting the balance right:

The Big Conversation highlights strong support across the organisation to improve and enhance equality, diversity and inclusion but also to ensure that all viewpoints are taken into account. There is a sense that some staff are concerned that this agenda may be overstated to the detriment of a focus on service delivery. We need to get the balance right. There are a number of staff who feel that true equality and inclusion isn't gained by focussing on differences but on commonalities, that on occasion some agendas are promoted to the detriment of others and that sometimes actions are tokenistic and do not reflect the real issues.

“We are all born equal and die equal. Why do we need to make a song and dance about these issues. Highlighting them attracts the negativity that we see daily across the media.”

“Focus less on grand demonstrations and more on the attitudes of staff, managers and office/site chat. Not highlighting difference”

“In terms of diversity I feel the council is looking at it wrong and we should be more business orientated, diversity should not be about race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexuality, age etc it should be about having a mix of people that are ideas people, starters, finishers, doers etc as that is how a team becomes more productive and reaches higher goals”.

“too much focus on what makes people different could be destructive to a sense of unity. The priority should be ensuring that EDI is celebrated while keeping the focus on unity, not division.”

“By championing diversity we have to be careful that we don't highlight differences and in fact cause division and increased marginalisation”.

“ Treat people as people, don't over complicate it.”

Recruitment and career development:

Recruitment, retention and career development were highlighted as areas to be prioritised within the EDI strategy. Recruiting fairly through inclusive practices, keeping good staff, developing in house, paying fairly, addressing the perception of nepotism and addressing pay differentials were all considered to be key to enhancing inclusion and fairness. A high staff churn (especially of managers) is costly and adversely affects staff wellbeing.

Offer a better package to attract skills and professionals to the council / staff incentives for recruiting

“recruitment practices that mirror what is actually done in the job - ie don't make people do presentations if they are not required in the role”

“Recruitment process – the information provided to recruiting managers enables conscious and unconscious bias”

“Keeping good staff”.

“A major issue of inclusion was pay, collectively it's disheartening when you see jobs being advertised for more than being paid, when it's the same or even less”.

“To make sure you are giving correct support to those who work in HR where hiring is concerned”

“Those in more traditionally female oriented roles at RBC are in general not on a level par with male dominated jobs of a similar skill set”.

Senior leadership excellence:

Comments were made about the importance of leaders being visible, particularly to those in frontline positions. Some teams also discussed the importance of senior managers role modelling excellence, values and the required behaviours.

“Senior Leaders to truly believe in creating a diverse and inclusive organisation and model their behaviour accordingly to help change the culture and lead by example”

“Leaders should lead by good example and be visible and approachable”

“Senior Management should be seen to be present in the teams they manage more frequently - so that staff feel they have the ability for their voice to be heard at a more senior level”

“Senior managers to get out and about and talk to people face to face on the front line - rather than rely on managers providing feedback”

“senior managers to role model excellence”

“More contact between senior managers and teams”

Front Line staff:

People working in front line roles had a slightly more specific ‘take’ on what they would value:

- more senior leader visibility.
- more tailored recruitment solutions.
- less ‘Civic’ focussed thinking.
- more staff recognition and
- acknowledgement that staff can face discriminatory practices from the public.

How do people want the future Council to feel?

There was a lot of commonality around how staff want the future council to feel, the table below highlights the words most used to describe the future council staff want:

Colourful	customer-focussed	non-judgmental
diverse (culture, ideas, politics)	friendly	open-to-criticism
inclusive	happy	representative
transparent	healthier	respectful
accepting	joined-up	safe
confident	liberating	secure
honest and open	listening	smarter
approachable	modern	unified
colourful	non- pressured	wealthier
compassionate	non-hierarchical	welcoming
connected	can be ourselves	properly resourced
not woke	appreciative	forward -thinking

How people want to be heard?

There is a strong sentiment that some staff do not feel able to make their voice heard for fear of negative consequences. There is a feeling that surveys and polls need to be anonymous to enable people to feel safe participating. Comments have been made that as well as not completing filtering questions some do not complete them honestly to ensure anonymity. This could be problematic if filtering data is to be used in any way other than as a general pulse of the organisation.

There is support for staff groups and networks as opportunities for people to meet and share ideas but with caveats that this needs to be managed carefully to create unity not division and represent staff views not just marginal views. There is also support for staff representatives and people outside the line management chain who could be ‘listeners’, supporting staff.

Staff appreciate being asked their opinion but feel strongly that the council needs to listen to what they say, reflect back and keep people informed of what is happening as a result of the ‘staff voice’.

It was felt important that mechanisms for listening to staff that are already in place such as appraisals and 1-1s are managed to ensure they happen regularly and that follow up actions take place.

The Big Conversation as an engagement tool:

The process has been well received especially the opportunities to talk and discuss a subject rather than just completing forms and surveys.

"This is a good start".

"Initially the team thought the idea of including this in the team meeting was 'tick boxy' and maybe would take 5-10 mins. We spent 90 minutes (and could have taken longer) discussing our thoughts and feelings - it was a really helpful 'kick-off' conversation.

Thanks for the toolkit - it was helpful as a guide and to inform the structure of our discussion."

"I do not feel unheard. This helps".

"I just wanted to say thank you for creating this opportunity for staff to share their ideas on how RBC can be a better place for everyone".



Reading Borough Council

Draft Inclusion and Diversity Strategy January 2024- December 2026

Our ambition: An inclusive culture where we can all do our best work and can thrive.

To achieve this ambition we will:

- Create a structured I & D Action Plan that moves us from being judged 'programmatic' to 'embedded' in the Inclusive Employers Inclusion maturity model by the end of 2026 and report on progress regularly to staff.
- Identify relevant external memberships that will help us to keep track of best practice e.g., the Business Disability Forum /Inclusive Employers
- Create a governance structure to oversee progress.
- Value inclusion and diversity to support staff wellbeing and create a positive and supportive culture where people feel able to be themselves.
- Develop the skills, knowledge and talent of our people so that they fulfil their full potential and uphold our inclusive culture.
- Prioritise the creation of both an anti-racist statement for the Council and a disabled 'charter' in the first year of the plan – reviewing the need for proactive measures to support people with other protected characteristics during the life of the plan.

We will focus on the following areas over the next three years:

To support our ambitions, we will...

Review and develop our ambition statement through consideration of the unique lived experiences of different sectors of society:

- As a first step we will think carefully about what it means for RBC to be an antiracist organisation. Taking input from staff, stakeholders and members and from external best practice we will develop a clear and ambitious plan to deliver it.
- We will develop a similar approach to disability in its widest sense (including neuro-diversity and mental health), developing strategies to better support this significantly under-represented group in our workforce.
- During the life of the Action Plan we will regularly review progress in relation to all protected characteristics, developing enabling ambition statements as required.

Develop our approach to Inclusive Recruitment:

- Promote diversifying shortlisting and interviewing.

- Create standardised I&D questions to weave into the recruitment process across all jobs (in interview and/or application)
- Promote flexible working options at advert and appointment.
- Ensure external agencies understand our I&D ambitions e.g., when sourcing candidates
- Review our approach to interviews and assessment centres e.g., to enable neuro diverse applicants to perform at their best.
- Use work experience and apprenticeships to support our ambition.

We will improve on our Disability Confident offering:

- Upskill internal HR/Recruitment Team to promote and encourage Inclusive recruitment practices.
- With members of the Staff Disability Forum ensure we focus on the internal experiences of disabled colleagues making sure they have resources and support to succeed in their role
- Provide support to candidates who say they are disabled.
- We will diversify where we promote our available jobs to reach all communities locally.

We will develop a programme of support for all staff seeking career progression.

- Review feedback from the big Conversation and other sources, and engage with focus groups to understand better what current support is of value and what needs to be developed.
- Review our current Leadership Development programme pilot with this feedback in mind.
- Develop further variety in the ways the Council supports career progression including developing success plans.

To understand if the above actions are working, we will:

- Continue to monitor representation across the whole workforce across numerous identities to identify any inconsistencies/ areas for focus.
- Continue to monitor feedback from candidates about the application and interview processes – identifying ways in which we can improve.
- Monitor turnover across the whole workforce and particular identities (including disabled) to identify any specific areas of concern.
- Staff survey scores from disabled colleagues to ‘match’ those of non-disabled colleagues

We want Inclusion and diversity to be at the forefront of all our colleagues minds from the work they deliver, management, and team interactions

To support our ambitions, we will...

Launch this Strategy and Action Plan across the workforce so everyone understands the importance and the part they play.

- We'll run a staff sessions to explain the Strategy, Action Plan, and language/terminology used.
- To bring all Inclusion & Diversity work together, we'll make an I&D brand to bring unity to the work delivered over the next 2 years and beyond
- We'll update colleagues quarterly on progress.

Develop a robust structure and support for current and upcoming staff networks to build community, trust and diversify feedback

- Set our networks up for success by giving them terms of reference, network running guidance (including on membership and meeting structures) and develop a clear communications pathway from networks to the CEO so that concerns and comments can be raised.
- Consider introducing 'protected time' for involvement in staff networks and groups.

People Managers will undergo a series of continuous learning

- Senior leadership to take part in a series of training e.g., Inclusive Leadership to understand a variety of identities to role model inclusive decision making
- Roll out allyship training.
- A reverse mentoring programme will be launched to support understanding and unity across all colleagues (starting with protected characteristics)

To understand if our actions above are working, we will:

- Expect a 5% increase (minimum), currently 77%, in colleagues agreeing "The Council is an inclusive organisation where everyone is respected and valued" on the next engagement survey about the importance of I&D by the end of 2025.
- Deliver a 50% increase in number of colleagues who are part of a staff network by year 2
- By the 2025 staff survey we will expect a 5% (minimum) , currently 57% , increase in colleagues trusting senior leadership (question: "Leadership by the Senior Leaders is positive and supportive)

We want all colleagues to have an inclusive and fair experience whilst at work which helps them thrive.

To support our ambitions, we will...

Review all the Council's HR policies to support and include a broad spectrum of identities and experiences to build a healthy workplace

- We will revise all policies with the wider lens of Inclusion and intersectionality beyond protected characteristics (including socio and economic status)
- We'll introduce gender neutral language throughout all policies
- We will work with our networks to make sure a wide range of voices review policies.
- We'll communicate all edited and existing policies so all council employees can access them and identify 'easy read' options

Review the Team Reading values to identify where we need to reflect I&D

- Our current values and supporting descriptions will be reviewed and adapted to ensure a clear statement on inclusion and diversity is included to reflect the importance of everyone's role in achieving our ambition "we want an inclusive culture where we can do our best work and can thrive".

Run an organisational-wide data review across the employee lifecycle to gather data to help us make inclusive and informed decisions.

- We will update all data questions to encompass all identities and backgrounds to help us make better decisions for our people. We will do this by collecting consistent data from job application, on boarding, engagement surveys and exit interviews)
- We will launch a data collection exercise across the Council to improve our understanding of our people.

Set line managers up for success to best support their colleagues.

- Upskill line managers to have meaningful conversations on areas of inclusion and diversity to help them understand the needs of their colleagues. This will enable them to discuss and support team members with reasonable adjustments and/or creating the conditions for them to thrive and do their best work in line with our Inclusion and Diversity ambitions.

To understand if the above actions are working, we will:

- Deliver a 10% decrease in 'prefer not to say' /not stated across all identities for new joiners and existing staff by the end of 2025
- Ensure all core HR policies – including the I&D strategy - are produced in 'easy read' format
- Team Reading values are updated and integrated into the start of the 24/25 performance annual appraisal year.

We want to celebrate diversity in our workforce and empower our colleagues to speak up when they see or experience exclusion.

To support our ambitions, we will...

Design an annual plan of Diversity dates and identities to celebrate through communications, events and training:

- Working with our staff groups we will focus on key diversity dates throughout the year to celebrate and raise awareness, making sure they diversify across a variety of identities (sexuality, disability, faith and more)

We will run a cohesive Allyship Training Programme to encourage unity, connection, and solidarity across all identities – so we can all make a positive culture.

- This training programme will encourage and empower colleagues to be active allies.
- It will explore topics of inclusion, diversity and being an active ally.

To understand if our actions are working, we will:

- Expect that 20% (345 as at 30/9/23 headcount) of colleagues engage with I&D training/ comms and engagement events and comms by end of year 1
- All line managers undergo the allyship training programme by the end of years 1, 2, 3

Delivering the Strategy

To implement this Strategy and to ensure its delivery, strong governance will be essential. The following governance and support arrangements will be established:

- A short-term steering group -will be set up to have oversight of the strategy and delivery plan– led by the Chief Executive
- Each Directorate will be supported to consider their own action-planning based on the strategy – including via the next service planning round-
- Progress-will be monitored and reported through Team Reading Delivery Team & Board and Corporate Management Team and to Personnel Committee
- A communications and engagement plan will be developed to accompany the strategy and for this to be updated at review points.

CONCLUSION

I&D is not only a 'good thing' in which to invest, but also an organisational imperative. This Strategy and Action Plan provide RBC with a blueprint for how to become more inclusive and diverse and over a concentrated timespan of two years. We will review the Strategy in late 2025. There will always be more that we can do.

Appendices: Action Plan

Year 1

Launch the Strategy and Action Plan

- Run all-staff sessions (virtual and in-person) to explain the Strategy and Action Plan and the language/terminology used.
- Develop a brand (image/logo/slogan) as part of the strategy and Action Plan that can be utilised for all future inclusion work.
- Develop targets/measures alongside the Strategy (examples, recruitment, retainment, satisfaction, leadership (identities), data collection, pay gaps)
- Upskill HR&OD to feel articulate and confident with language, identities, Public Sector Equality Duty Act, and terminology. Include Networks quarterly or where relevant (i.e., policy review)

Review and develop our ambition statement through consideration of the unique lived experiences of different sectors of society:

- As a first step we will think carefully about what it means for RBC to be an antiracist organisation. Taking input from staff, stakeholders and members and from external best practice we will develop a clear, and ambitions and plan to deliver it.
- We will develop a similar approach to disability in its widest sense (including neuro-diversity and mental health), developing strategies to better support this significantly under-represented group in our workforce.
- During the life of the Action Plan we will regularly review progress in relation to all protected characteristics, developing enabling ambition statements as required

E-Learning

- Launch the new I&D e-learning on neurodiversity and inclusion, disability and inclusion, unconscious bias and anti racism (align to existing EDI e-learning packages)

Review Team Reading values.

- Ensure I&D is reflected appropriately in our Team Reading values, aligning this to our performance appraisal processes

Staff Networks

Develop and launch networks to create a community of support. Establish:

- Terms of reference
- Guidance about how staff networks should operate, governance and reporting mechanisms including how to raise concerns and comments.
- Training for all Network Chairs
- Guidance for managers in terms of how network Chairs contributions should be recognised within appraisals and staff attendance supported.
- Introduce active listening sessions for senior managers to inform development of both the Action Plan and HR policies and procedures.

Inclusive Leadership training

- Develop and deliver Inclusive leadership training for Senior Leadership Team (CMT and CEO, Directors, and Assistant Directors). Content to cover I&D 'basics' so everyone has the same foundations; specific topics where leaders feel they have weaknesses in their knowledge.
- Review feedback from the big Conversation and other sources, and engage with focus groups to understand better what current support is of value and what needs to be developed.
- Review our current Leadership Development programme with this feedback in mind.

Support progression:

- Develop tailored progression workshops and support to enable mobility including to senior leadership roles

Allyship Training

- Build I&D into management training so that line managers are able to have meaningful conversations on areas of inclusion and diversity
- Run a programme of training that introduces allyship, discusses intersectionality and highlights identities/ communities that need ally support. Content to encourage and empower colleagues to be active allies and to explore topics of inclusion, diversity and being an active ally

Recruitment

- Target improved representation across whole workforce including leadership and management
- Identify any further positive action to reduce ethnicity and gender pay gaps.
- Upskill colleagues who recruit on topics covering bias in recruitment, relevant laws, reasonable adjustments, and positive action.
- Design an Inclusive Recruitment Guide to promote diversifying shortlisting and interviewing panels; create standardised I&D questions to weave into the recruitment process; promote flexible working options at advert and appointment

Disability Confident

- Upskill hiring managers to ensure they foster a recruitment process to welcome disabled candidates from the job advert to the interview.
- Upskill managers on Reasonable Adjustments and Access to work to encourage and support disabled colleagues including Neurodiversity (external and internal)

Policy review

- Revise policies with the broad lens of Inclusion and intersectionality and consider opportunities to move beyond protected characteristics (eg socio and economic status)
- Where appropriate introduce gender neutral language throughout all (especially menopause, parental/adoption)
- Utilise staff networks as a critical friend.

- Develop 'easy to read' versions of key policies covering key information and contacts for further inquiry

Year 2

Celebrate and embrace difference:

- Roll-out a programme that celebrates difference – linking to the diversity calendar The Diversity and Inclusion Calendar 2023 | Inclusive Employers - diversity events/days to bring people together and help increase cultural understanding and create social inclusion
- Introduce a series of 'lunch & learns' to help demystify myths and common misconceptions and increase understanding on lived experiences.
- Utilise existing networks to support this.

Data review

- Ensure all sources of identity data (and all questions/answers) are inclusive and consistent including:
- Applying for roles, onboarding, exit interview, engagement survey, retention, sickness etc (or make your data system can be used across all stages)
- Regularly review this data and build in additional actions to this plan as required.
- Share data and insights with staff groups.
- We will launch a data collection exercise across the Council to improve our understanding of our people

Support progression:

Continue to deliver tailored progression workshops and support to enable mobility including to senior leadership roles

Allyship Training

- Continue programme of training that introduces allyship, discusses intersectionality and highlights identities/ communities that need ally support. Content to encourage and empower colleagues to be active allies and to explore topics of inclusion, diversity and being an active ally.

Policy review

- Continue review of policies with the broad lens of Inclusion and intersectionality and consider opportunities to move beyond protected characteristics (e.g. socio and economic status)
- Where appropriate introduce gender neutral language throughout all (especially menopause, parental/adoption)
- Utilise staff networks as a critical friend.
- Develop 'easy to read' versions of key policies covering key information and contacts for further inquiry

Year 3

Develop and Roll out a series of I&D workshops e.g.

- Understanding Neurodiversity and hidden disabilities
- How to have an Active Bystander
- Using inclusive language
-

Support progression:

Continue to deliver tailored progression workshops and support to enable mobility including to senior leadership roles

Launch a reverse mentoring programme

- Pilot a reverse mentoring scheme with SLG volunteers with a view to extending once successful.

Allyship Training

- Continue programme of training that introduces allyship, discusses intersectionality and highlights identities/ communities that need ally support. Content to encourage and empower colleagues to be active allies and to explore topics of inclusion, diversity and being an active ally

Policy review

- Continue review of policies with the broad lens of Inclusion and intersectionality and consider opportunities to move beyond protected characteristics (eg socio and economic status)
- Where appropriate introduce gender neutral language throughout all (especially menopause, parental/adoption)
- Utilise staff networks as a critical friend
- Develop 'easy to read' versions of key policies covering key information and contacts for further inquiry

Review:

- progress made on IE maturity model and identify next steps based on Year 1 & 2 actions
- Progress made towards delivering our ambition – both for inclusivity and in relation to different protected characteristics

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Personnel Committee

16 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	RBC Staff Survey and Action Plan
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Kathryn Cook, Assistant Director HR&OD
Lead Councillor	Councillor Liz Terry
Corporate priority	Our Foundations
Recommendations	1. Personnel Committee notes the staff survey outcomes and the action plan.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. RBC regularly runs a staff survey to understand the views of staff about working for the Council. The latest staff survey was run in June and July 2023. Following analysis of the results, a corporate action plan has been created. Personnel Committee is asked to note the outcomes of the survey and the actions proposed.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. It is important to have an engaged workforce and one of the ways in which we identify issues is through the regular use of staff surveys. These surveys are generally carried out once a year. The results are analysed corporately and each DMT also considers the results for their area, identifying any additional actions they feel need to be taken.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1 The staff survey was open for 4 weeks from 19 June to 14 July 2023. It consisted of 58 questions, plus optional questions about the respondent (e.g. directorate, ethnicity, age range etc). The questions asked included new ones relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- 3.2 There were 744 responses which represents 44% of the Council's workforce. This is a decrease from previous surveys in 2022, 2021 and 2019 where the response rates were 49%, 58% and 51% respectively. The results are nevertheless statistically valid.
- 3.3 Headline results for the staff survey were presented to Corporate Management Team (CMT) in August and published to all staff shortly afterwards. Appendix 1 details the trend in responses by question compared to last year.

KEY FINDINGS

3.4 Positives to maintain/build on:

- Nearly all respondents (96%) agree or strongly agree that they make a valuable contribution to the success of the Council by doing their job and know how their role supports the overall objectives of the Council (95%).

- There is evidence that the Team Reading values are embedded in the Council with nearly all respondents (94%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they know what the four Team Reading values are.,
- Nearly all respondents (94%) agree the Council values a diverse workforce.
- Feedback for line managers is once again very positive e.g. My line manager supports me to work flexibly– 92%, My line is approachable and supportive - 91%; My line manager demonstrates the Team Reading values – 88%, I have confidence in my line managers leadership skills- 84%

Positives with an increase of 5% or more include:

- I understand how my role supports the overall Council objectives
- There are opportunities for me to contribute my ideas
- I would still like to be working at the Council in a year's time
- I feel confident using the ICT systems and equipment needed for my job
- The Council is an inclusive organisation where everyone is respected and valued
- I would recommend the Council to my family and friends as a great place to work
- I am confident that my ideas are taken seriously and heard at the right level.
- Leadership by the senior leaders is positive and supportive
- Reading Borough Council works as one, where teams collaborate for the benefit of our customers
- I have experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months (this means unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated, or offended). The positive increase here reflects a reduction in the number of respondents who have experienced bullying and harassment
- For people who raised bullying and harassment at work in the last 12 months: I felt listened to and my concerns were taken seriously

The highest increase in scores were given to “I am confident my ideas are taken seriously and heard at the right level” and “The Council is an inclusive organisation where everyone is respected and valued.” These increased by 13% and 9% respectively.

In addition to the quantitative results, staff could add ‘free text’ comments about anything they wished to comment on. Three hundred and nineteen comments were provided. Many positive comments were received, however most comments from respondents were related to negative experiences of working at the Council.

Positive comments were provided in the following areas:

- Line manager support and care
- Flexible workstyles, locations
- Team and colleagues being helpful
- Great new employee experience
- Recognition of great manager/senior leader
- Sense of belonging, Positive experience of supervision
- Inclusive place to work

3.5 Areas for improvement from comments made:

As last year, the results are generally very positive whilst the comments are generally more negative. We should continue to acknowledge that both things are true at the same time, with many staff feeling positive and supported, whilst others do not feel this way and have a negative view of working at the Council.

The top five negative comment themes reflect again the four corporate priorities from last year (workload and pressure, pay and benefits, behaviours, and Leadership impact), and also ICT issues. They also align with the scores for specific questions:

Workload and pressure

The percentage of staff who agree or strongly agree that the pressure of work is manageable is the same as in 2021 and 2022 (67%). 47% of the people who raised workload pressures with their managers did not feel the discussion was useful. This is a frequently occurring negative theme in the comments. The main concern for those who scored this negatively is that there are too few people expected to do too much, too many priorities and people working excessive hours.

Pay and benefits

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that their pay is fair has slightly increased to 54% from 53% last year). This is also a frequently occurring negative theme in the comments, which focus on pay not keeping pace with the increasing cost of living and poor benefits.

Behaviours/values

15% of staff (1 in 7 approx.) agreed or strongly agreed that they have experienced bullying at work in the last 12 months (the question last year covered a two year period). Whilst this is a 5% reduction on last year this is still an area for improvement in line with the Council's zero tolerance to bullying and harassment.

22% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they have witnessed bullying and harassment at work in the last 12 months.

The proportion of people who believe the council works as one, where teams collaborate for the benefit of our customers has increased by 7% to 54% (up from 47%).

Leadership:

There was a 5% reduction in responses to Line Managers giving clear feedback on work.

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that they have confidence in the leadership skills of senior leaders has slightly increased to 56% (up from 55%).

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that leadership is positive and supportive has increased to 57% (up from 53%). Concerns about senior leadership are however an occurring negative theme in the comments in terms of visibility, communication to all levels, understanding of employee experiences, being open to constructive challenge in relation to behaviours and poor behaviours.

Other:

The proportion of people who agree or strongly agree that they have the ICT equipment and resources to do their job well has continued to increase now 81% up from 75%. However, ICT is a common negative theme in the comments, which focus on poor quality equipment and poor training for systems.

40% of people who completed the survey do not feel action will be taken as a response of the survey. The lower response rate this year could indicate a range of issues e.g. lack of confidence in action from the survey, survey fatigue noting a number of surveys were live during the period eg the Big Conversation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) or indeed to indicate that generally staff are happy with how things are right now, so didn't feel the need to respond.

3.6 Cohort analysis:

3.6.1 Further analysis has been carried out this year into how different groups responded – this analysis included looking at protected characteristics, location and ‘group’ (eg senior managers). (Please note that approx.. 20% of respondents used the “prefer not to say” option for the ‘About You’ questions related to protected characteristics. For the purpose of this breakdown characteristics have been analysed individually, without consideration of “intersectionality” the experience of employees from multiple identities).

Enjoyment of roles:

- BAME employees and Senior Managers appear to be the most positive staff groups overall.
- staff at Bennett Road score lowest for enjoyment of their roles 80% vs the overall survey score of 88%, with DACHS team members scoring highest as an overall Directorate in this question. 100% of Senior Leaders enjoy their jobs vs 84% of Team Leaders/Supervisors. BAME employees score above the survey average at 91% whilst employees with a disability score lower at 83% in this question.

Pay:

- Bennett Road and wider community-based roles score lowest for agreement to pay being fair, along with Team Leaders/Supervisors, carers, and male employees.

Workload:

- Team Leaders/Supervisors/ and Team/Service Managers score lowest in terms of workload being manageable.

Bullying and harassment:

- DACHS employees, officer level employees, non-heterosexual, and employees based at Bennett Road score lowest feeling confident to raise issues of bullying and harassment if I experience this or witness someone else experiencing this.
- Employees at Bennett Road score higher for experiencing and witnessing bullying and harassment.

Opportunities to progress:

- Employees with a disability score lowest for having the same opportunities to (62%) progress as their colleagues compared to a survey score of 75%.
- Bennett Road and employees who are transgender/non-binary score lowest in terms of agreement that they have the opportunities to develop and grow in their roles.

Leadership:

- DEGNS score lowest for leadership by Senior leaders being positive as a Directorate, with officer, team leader, Bennett Road, employees with a disability and transgender/nonbinary employees scoring noticeably lower here too.

Collaboration:

- Senior Managers score higher by far than all other groups on collaboration for the benefit of customers.

There is much to celebrate from the 2023 Staff Survey with many positive results and comments. There are some areas where improvements are needed, and these are broadly the same 4 areas that we focused on last year (workload and priorities, pay and benefits, senior leadership impact and behaviours/values). Looking at both the statistical results and the thematic analysis of comments taken together, the recommendation is that these remain the priority areas for action. In addition, it is proposed that a fifth area be included related to IT.

3.7 Actions:

Focus area	Actions
<p>Workload and priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the visibility of support for line managers to carry out effective 1:1s and annual reviews – focussing on tools and techniques eg prioritisation planning, time management etc • ADs & managers to be supported when reviewing team structures and roles to address excessive working hours and processes that are inefficient. • Identify ways in which RBC can support individual and team resilience and continue to signpost help and support eg employee assistance provider, tools and learning opportunities that address issues such as stress management • Invite staff to take part in a focus group to understand in more detail the issue of workload pressures and potential solutions
<p>Pay and benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to ensure current benefits are well publicised across the workforce (including those not at the Civic) • Provide clarity to employees on the job evaluation process and structure. • Continue to benchmark RBC salaries with other councils and ensure controls over the use of market supplements and honoraria are up to date. • Develop a ‘Personal and Career development’ workshop to support progression – signposting support and development opportunities including digital skills
<p>Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to increase visibility of senior leaders eg via circulating chairing of Team Talk and the All Staff briefings and attendance at team meetings • As part of the forthcoming service planning process, for leaders to actively consider priorities and workloads for their teams

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leaders to attend 'Allyship' training – part of our I&D action plan- to give a positive message staff to call out poor behaviours when they see them • Launch the 360 pilot programme to support increased self-awareness by leaders of their leadership impact.
Values/ Behaviours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue (and enhance) regular, online/face-to-face all staff briefings including a 'spotlight' session to showcase the work of teams around the Council, to breakdown silos and create a 'one-council' ethos. • Continue to promote existing staff groups eg the Staff Ambassadors Group; staff disability forum etc and encourage more staff to join. Support the development of further staff groups. Develop a mechanism for staff groups to report back to CMT once a quarter/6 monthly so that senior leaders hear from staff how they are feeling. • Provide confidential mechanisms for employees to feedback/call out poor/negative behaviours not aligned to Team Reading values.
ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased promotion of Face to face training/online sessions made available for staff on SharePoint and Office 365 applications (in addition to self-guided eLearning). • Regular promotion of Service Now and how to seek support for IT systems. • Specific communication and progress reporting of new printer agreement/contract

3.8 Next Steps

Action:	Lead:	Timing:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate action plan to be shared with staff 	HR&OD	By the end of September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the insights and the cohort analysis will be shared with Senior Leadership Group 	AD HR&OD	15 th September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the insights and the cohort analysis will be shared with trades unions at the next JTUC 	AD HR&OD	20 th September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the insights and the cohort analysis will be shared with trades unions at the next Lead Member briefing 	AD HR&OD	26 th September
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plans to be shared with Team Reading Board and progress reported 	AD HR&OD	29 th September and all subsequent TRB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Myth Busting" communications (incl. on recruitment and pay) 	AD HR&OD	October/November

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group on workload issues and solutions to be run 	OD&L	October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full results for each ED area to be shared with each ED (broken down by AD area) 	SHR&OD BPs with EDs	September/October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate action plan to be shared at Team Talk with update on progress 	AD HR&OD	24 th October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plans for each ED area to be developed 	EDs	3 rd week of October
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDs to share action plans for their area with their teams and to update on progress end of January and April 	EDs	End of October/January and April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff survey action plan to be shared with Personnel Committee 	AD HR&OD	16th November
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six month update on progress to all staff 	AD HR&OD	January 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nine month update on progress to all staff – including ‘you said’ & ‘we did’ 	AD HR&OD	April 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the 2024 staff survey 	Chief Executive	June/July 2024

4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- An engaged workforce that feels valued is vital to achieving our corporate aims and objectives. The staff survey provides one mechanism to understand how our people feel about working for RBC, what is valued and where improvements need to be made.

5 Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1 None.

6 Community Engagement

6.1 Not applicable for this report.

7 Equality Implications

7.1 The cohort analysis helps us to identify differential impacts. The analysis from the staff survey has informed the Inclusion and Diversity strategy and plan.

8 Other Relevant Considerations

8.1 None.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 None.

10 Financial Implications

10.1 None.

11 Timetable for Implementation

11.1 The actions identified will be progressively delivered up to the next survey (due summer 2024).

12 Background Papers

12.1 There are none.




Appendices














1. Headline results and trends

Headlines from 2023 Staff Survey















Key:

Last year's figures are in brackets.

Trend:  +5% improvement.  -5% reduction  within 5% +/- of last year's results

MY JOB					
I enjoy my job:					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank/don't know	Trend
23.5% (25.8%)	64.4% (59.2%)	10.6% (12.9%)	1.5% (2.1%)		
I make a valuable contribution to the success of the Council by doing my job					
42.0% (40.9%)	53.8% (54.1%)	3.2% (4.2%)	1.0% (0.7%)		
I am clear what I am expected to achieve in my job					
32.7% (34.2%)	54.9% (54.1%)	11.0% (10.2%)	1.4% (1.5%)		
I have the ICT resources and equipment to do my job well					
20.4% (18.1%)	54.6% (53.3%)	19.8% (24.4%)	5.0% (4.2%)	0.14%	
My team work well together and support each other to do our jobs					
42.6% (40.8%)	43.4% (46.2%)	10.2% (11.2%)	3.8% (1.8%)		
I think my pay is fair given the responsibilities in my job					
5.9% (7.5%)	49.0% (45%)	34.6% (34.1%)	10.5% (13.3%)		
I think the rewards and benefits are fair in my job					
12.2% (12.5%)	64.7% (63.8%)	18.3% (18.8%)	4.9% (4.9%)		
I would recommend the Council to my family and friends as a great place to work					
9.9% (12.6%)	64.7% (56.6%)	20.7% (25.5%)	4.8% (5.3%)		
MY WELLBEING					
I feel respected, appreciated and valued for what I do at work					
18.9% (19.4%)	56.4% (52.9%)	19.4% (21.2%)	5.3% (6.4%)		
The organisation supports me to have a healthy work/life balance					
21.7% (19.3%)	54.9% (54.6%)	18.7% (20.6%)	4.8% (5.5%)		
I can access support if and when I need it					
18.6% (19.2%)	66.3% (63%)	13.3% (15.5%)	1.8% (2.3%)		
My line manager shows genuine interest in my wellbeing					
45.1% (44.2%)	41.8% (43.8%)	9.2% (9.2%)	3.9% (2.8%)		
My line manager supports me to work flexibly (location/times) where possible, in line with the needs of our customers and service delivery					
51.0% (45.8%)	41.5% (46%)	4.6% (6.1%)	2.9% (2.1%)		
I feel the pressure of work is manageable					

7.1% (7.6%)	60.2% (59.7%)	25.0% (25.5%)	7.7% (7.2%)		
Have you raised concerns about your workload with your line manager as part of your 1:1 and/or annual review?					
Yes	No	N/A			
29.5%	3.2%	67.3%			
Were those discussions helpful?					
53%	47%				
Are there things you do which you feel do not add value and we could stop?					
21.2%	78.2%	0.6%			
Do you feel confident negotiating deadlines with colleagues and managers to manage your workload?					
Yes	No	Blank			
85.6%	13.7%	0.7%			
I know what the four organisational values of Team Reading are					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank	
34.9% (27.1%)	58.8% (65%)	5.3% (5.6%)	1.0% (1.1%)		
My team live the Team Reading values in our work					
21.8% (18.3%)	62.9% (63.3%)	12.6% (12.5%)	2.7% (3%)	0.1%	
Reading Borough Council works as one, where teams collaborate for the benefit of our customers					
6.3% (6.4%)	48.2% (40.8%)	34.5% (34.2%)	10.9% (14.9%)	0.1%	
The Council is an inclusive organisation where everyone is respected and valued					
17.3% (11.4%)	60.2% (57.8%)	16.8% (21.7%)	5.7% (6.4%)		
I have the same opportunities to progress as my colleagues - NEW QUESTION					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
16.3%	58.9%	18.7%	6.0%		
The Council values having a diverse workforce – NEW QUESTION					
24.0%	69.8%	3.9%	2.2%		
I am treated with dignity by all - NEW QUESTION					
20.5%	60.5%	15.9%	3.0%		
There are opportunities for me to contribute my ideas					
23.7% (16.9%)	65.0% (64.6%)	9.2% (13.2%)	2.0% (3.9%)		
I am confident that my ideas are taken seriously and heard at the right level					
15.4% (13.1%)	58.5% (48.1%)	21% (28%)	5.2% (7.9%)		
I understand how my role supports the overall Council objectives					
26.5% (22.5%)	68.2% (66.6%)	4.2% (7.6%)	1.1% (1.7%)		
I have experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months					
4.3% (6.7%)	10.6% (13%)	39.8% (23.4%)	45.3% (33.5%)		
I have witnessed bullying or harassment at work in the last 12 months- NEW					
6.01%	16.06%	39.25%	38.69%		
I feel confident to raise issues of bullying or harassment if I experience this or witness someone else experiencing this					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank	

27.7% (21.8%)	56.2% (53%)	13.6% (13.5%)	2.7% (6.6%)		
If you have raised bullying and harassment at work in the last 12 months: I felt listened to and my concerns were taken seriously					
Yes	No	Not applicable	(blank)		
6.8% (7.3%)	5.0% (12%)	87.2%	1.0%		
I felt sufficient action was taken					
Yes	No	(blank)			
6.2% (5.5%)	5.7% (12.6%)	88.1%			
MY LINE MANAGER					
My line manager gives me clear feedback on my work					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
37.4% (40.2%)	47.1% (48.5%)	11.7% (9.6%)	3.8% (1.7%)		
My line manager supports me to fulfil my potential					
35.9% (35.3%)	48.0% (48.5%)	11.6% (14%)	4.5% (2.2%)		
My line manager sets clear priorities and objectives for me					
33.2% (38.5%)	49.6% (48.4%)	13.7% (13.6%)	3.5% (2.2%)		
I have regular 1:1s and an annual review					
39.4% (39.6%)	45.0% (43.9%)	10.2% (13.7%)	5.5% (2.8%)		
My 1:1s and annual reviews are constructive, and I can discuss the issues I want to raise					
37.9% (40.8%)	46.5% (45.9%)	11.5% (10%)	4.2% (3.4%)		
My line manager is approachable and supportive					
50.3% (49.8%)	40.5% (41.6%)	6.6% (6.9%)	2.7% (1.7%)		
I have confidence in my line manager's leadership skills					
44.4% (43.9%)	39.5% (40.8%)	11.0% (12.1%)	4.9% (3.2%)		
My line manager keeps me informed about changes at work and how they may affect me					
40.8% (41%)	45.0% (45.1%)	9.9% (11.5%)	4.33% (2.3%)		
My line manager keeps me informed about changes at work and how they may affect me					
40.8% (41%)	45.0% (45.1%)	9.9% (11.5%)	4.3% (2.3%)		
My line manager demonstrates the Team Reading values					
42.6% (41.3%)	45.5% (48.4%)	8.9% (8%)	2.9% (2.3%)		
I understand what the Council's priorities are					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank or don't know	
16.2% (16%)	61.9% (63.6%)	9.8% (11.5%)	1.4% (2.3%)	10.8% (6.6%)	
LEADERSHIP					
I have confidence in the leadership skills of senior leaders (Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Deputy and Assistant Directors, and Service Managers)					

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Blank/don't know	
8.4% (11.3%)	48.0% (43.3%)	14.9% (22.1%)	5.7% (8.1%)	22.9% (15.2%)	
Leadership by the senior leaders is positive and supportive					
10.3% (10.2%)	47.2% (42.7%)	16.1% (23.1%)	5.2% (8%)	21.2% (16%)	
I feel I receive sufficient communication to carry out my work effectively from the Chief Executive – reworded question					
8.2%	46.4%	14.4%	5.2%	25.8%	
I feel I receive sufficient communication to carry out my work effectively from Executive Directors – reworded question					
8.4%	44.1%	16.3%	4.2%	27.0%	
I feel I receive sufficient communication to carry out my work effectively from my Service Manager, Deputy Director or Assistant Director - reworded question					
16.1%	52.8%	12.7%	4.1%	14.4%	
Learning and Skills					
I have learning opportunities to develop and grow in my role					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(blank)	
18.4% (15.7%)	56.4% (57.4%)	20.0% (22.5%)	4.9% (4.5%)	0.3%	
I feel confident using the ICT systems and equipment needed for my job					
21.7% (17.7%)	60.1% (56.9%)	15.2% (21.6%)	2.8% (3.8%)		
I would benefit from training to get the most from our ICT systems and new technology					
12.9% (20.8%)	54.3% (48.1%)	28.9% (25.5%)	3.6% (5.7%)	0.3%	
OVERALL					
The Team Reading values are lived at Reading Borough Council and I see my colleagues practice them in their day-to-day work					
9.8% (10.2%)	65.4% (61.9%)	21.0% (22.9%)	3.8% (4.1%)	0.1%	
When making decisions and designing services at the Council, we fully consider the customers' perspective					
14.4% (13.6%)	58.1% (56.3%)	22.5% (24.8%)	4.8% (4.4%)	0.3%	
I feel proud to work for this organisation					
17.5% (17.8%)	65.9% (59.7%)	14.1% (18.2%)	2.5% (3.2%)		
I would still like to be working at the Council in a year's time					
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree		
29.5% (27.2%)	56.4% (53.9%)	11.2% (12.7%)	2.9% (4.4%)		
I believe action will be taken as a result of this survey					
8.8% (11.8%)	51.5% (46.1%)	28.4% (27.4%)	11.3% (13%)		

Personnel Committee

16 November 2023



Title	Review of the Council’s Employment Policies
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Kathryn Cook – Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Lead Councillor	Liz Terry – Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources
Corporate priority	Our Foundations
Recommendations	That Personnel Committee approve the following revised HR policies (detailed in Appendices A to C of this report): Additional Payments Breast Feeding Family Leave

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. A review of the Council’s employment policy framework is underway which aims to ensure that all employment policies are clear, easy to understand, up to date and reviewed regularly. This report presents 2 policies which have been reviewed and jointly agreed with the Joint Trade Unions. The Breast Feeding Policy is new. The Additional Payments Policy and Family Leave Policy have been updated to ensure content is easily understood and language is gender neutral.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 Good employment policies should support a culture based on trust, fairness and inclusion. They can also speed the decision-making process by ensuring that clear guidance is readily available to cover a range of employment issues. Further, they can assist in avoiding involvement with employment tribunal claims by providing guidance for managers that reflects accurately current employment law and good practice. It is therefore important that employment policies are clear, easy to understand, up to date and reviewed regularly.
- 2.2 ACAS Codes of Practice give authoritative advice in key areas of employment practice. A failure to follow the Code does not, in itself, make a person or organisation liable to proceedings. However, employment tribunals will take the Code into account when considering relevant cases. Tribunals will also be able to adjust any awards made in relevant cases by up to 25% for unreasonable failure to comply with any provision of the Code (by an employer or an employee).

3. Policies Covered Under This Review

- 3.1 All employment policies have now been reviewed by the HR and Organisational Development team and presented for approval to Personnel Committee, following

consultation and negotiation with the Joint Trade Unions. The policies included in this report are:

- Additional Payment Policy
- Breast Feeding Policy
- Family Leave Policy

3.2 Principles used for conducting this review

3.2.1 The policies have been written with the following principles in mind:

1. They must reflect current employment law and the ACAS Codes of Practice and/or guidance where relevant.
2. They must be easy to understand and written in plain English
3. They should be concise. Any information which is not germane to the operation of the policy has been removed. For example, management guidance notes are not included in the policies, but available separately.
4. There should be a consistency of approach across related policies (e.g. same period of notice given to employees to attend formal meetings where relevant)
5. They should use gender neutral language

3.2.2 All the Council's employment policies are reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation requires it.

3.3 KEY ISSUES AND CHANGES PROPOSED

3.3.1 The table below sets out in summary terms for each of the new and revised policies the issues which have been addressed together with additional key changes agreed with the Joint Trade Unions. Once the policy review is complete, hyperlinks will be added to the policies where they are cross-referenced with other policies.

Issues to be addressed
Additional Payment Policy (A)
This policy sets out the circumstances under which staff may receive additional payments for work they undertake and the conditions for the approval of these payments. This policy was initially approved by Personnel Committee in July 21 and minor amendments have been made to ensure content is easily understood.
Breast Feeding Policy (B)
Reading Borough Council is committed to creating an open and supportive culture and this policy explains the support available to staff who are breast feeding.
Family Leave Policy (C)
This policy was originally drafted in 2020 and covers family related leave. It has been updated to include gender neutral language.

3.4. PROCESS FOR AGREEING THE NEW AND REVISED POLICIES

3.4.1 The process for agreeing the policies with the joint trade unions has been as follows:

20 September 2023	Policies were uploaded to a SharePoint folder for union representatives to review, requesting comments to be added by 4 October 2023.
4 October 2023	First meeting with Trade Unions to discuss policies.
19 October 2023	Second meeting with Trade Unions to discuss policies.
2 November 2023	Third meeting with Trade Unions to agree policies.

3.4.2 A communications plan is in place to communicate the revised policies to managers and employees. This will include:

- News items on the intranet and iTrent Employee Self Service (the HR system used by all staff to book leave, submit mileage claims etc) to highlight the revised policies and who to speak to about any queries (i.e. their line manager or HR)
- Highlighted in the weekly email to all staff
- Strategic HR and OD Business Partners/HR Advisers highlight the revised policies and their implications (for staff and managers) when they attend department management team meetings and 1-1 meetings with managers.
- An email from HR to all line managers to highlight the new policies and explain the changes, and to ask that they discuss them with their staff in

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1 The new and revised HR policies help to ensure that the Council can meet its Corporate Plan priority, specifically ensuring that the Council is fit for the future.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications

6. Community Engagement

6.1 The Joint Trade Unions have been consulted on the revised policies.

7. Equality Implications

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out (see Appendix E) and has found no differential impact on any groups with protected characteristics. Some positive impacts have been identified.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Certain employment policies and procedures are specifically needed to comply with legal requirements, for example, a written health and safety policy. Even where a policy or procedure is not specifically required by law, employers often find it helpful to have a policy in place to provide clear guidance that reflects the legal framework for handling the issue in question and it also helps employees to be clear about the organisation's stance on a particular subject. The proposed policies presented in this review reflect current employment law and ACAS Codes of Practice and/or guidance where relevant.
- 8.2 The Council's Constitution confirms that Personnel Committee is responsible for determining the terms and conditions on which staff hold office. The proposed policies will therefore be presented to Personnel Committee for approval, following consultation and negotiation with the trade unions.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1. There are none.

Appendices

The report includes the following appendices:

- Appendix A: Additional Payments Policy
- Appendix B: Breast Feeding Policy
- Appendix C: Family Leave Policy
- Appendix D: EIA

Additional Payments Policy

November 2023



Document History	
Version	1.2 (see below)
Status	Draft for review
Date	August 2023
Target audience	All employees of Reading Borough Council with the exception of schools-based staff for whom alternative procedures apply
Ratification	None
Author	HR Advisory Team

Version control	Reviewers
Version 1.0	Initial draft – May 2021
Version 1.1	Final version agreed with Joint Trade Unions on 6 July 2021 and approved by Personnel Committee on 15 July 2021.
Version 1.2	Policy review – November 2023

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1. Objectives and scope

- 1.1. This policy sets out the circumstances under which staff may receive additional payment for work that they undertake and the conditions for the approval of these payments. These are set out in [Section 4](#) below.
- 1.2. This policy applies to all staff employed by the Council with the exception of school-based staff who will be covered by a separate model agreement for schools.
- 1.3. This policy has been approved by the Council's Personnel Committee and agreed with local trades unions. It is a disciplinary offence to attempt to deliberately circumvent this policy.

2. Background

- 2.1. Additional payments are made to staff for the following reasons:
 - 2.1.1. To compensate staff for undertaking all or some additional duties of another post ('acting up' - see [APPENDIX A](#));
 - 2.1.2. As a recognition of where the undertaking of additional duties has been particularly onerous;
 - 2.1.3. To recognise a particular piece of work or contribution above and beyond the scope of an employee's normal duties.
- 2.2. Honorarium payments normally continue to be made for the duration of the additional duties but can also be a single payment to recognise a discrete contribution.

3. Equal opportunity and equal pay considerations

- 3.1. Additional payments are included as part of the pay comparison undertaken in equal pay claims. Difficulties can arise where additional payments are made disproportionately to men rather than women for example, for which there is no 'objective justification' (i.e. there is no evidence of a linkage to criteria for calculation of such payments as set out in Council Policies). Under these circumstances such payments may be directly or indirectly discriminatory as there is no material defence to justify them.
- 3.2. A defence against claims for unequal pay (or discriminatory practice generally) can be mounted where:
 - 3.2.1. There is an objective justification for a payment (i.e. a clear and logical rationale).

- 3.2.2. The rationale for the payment is consistently applied and monitored.
- 3.2.3. The payments are equally applied in respect of assessment and application.

4. Definitions and Scope for additional payments

4.1. Acting up payments

- 4.1.1. Acting up payments are made when an employee is required to cover a higher graded post, in part or in their entirety, for a temporary period.
- 4.1.2. The value of the payment is determined in accordance with the Council's 'Acting Up' arrangements (see [Appendix A](#)).
- 4.1.3. The employee will receive payment for the acting up responsibilities from the first day that these are undertaken.

4.2. Honorarium payments

- 4.2.1. Honorarium payments are made when an employee is undertaking work on a project or discrete piece of work which would fall outside of the normal range of duties expected for their post. The payment will last for the duration of the project.
- 4.2.2. The level of payment made should be determined with regard to the level of responsibilities being undertaken and this should be determined through the Council's Job Evaluation Scheme. The employee will be paid an amount appropriate to the proportion of their time being spent working at this higher level on a monthly basis for the duration of the project / programme. For example, if the employee spends 10% of their time working at this higher level, they will receive a payment equivalent to 10% of the difference between the bottom of this grade and their current spinal column point (scp).

4.3. Other forms of additional payment

- 4.3.1. Where an employee has undertaken specific work which is within the expected range of their role, but the work has involved additional travel or hours worked, then providing prior approval is sought, normal overtime payments should be made. Alternatively, the employee may agree with their line manager to take time off in lieu (TOIL).
- 4.3.2. The range of payments that staff are eligible to receive for additional hours working can be found in the Council's overtime, working and standby / callout policies as applicable.

- 4.3.3. Where an employee is paid at RG5 or above, they will not normally be eligible for overtime payments (unless it is planned overtime - see [Overtime Policy](#)). Such staff will, on occasion, be asked to undertake work outside of their normal role (e.g. providing emergency support or assistance to the Council or its services etc) which is outside of normal acting up arrangements. Staff in these pay grades may be eligible for an honorarium payment (para. 4.2) consisting of a notional level of overtime calculated as 'x hours at scp 28'. This payment is not intended to compensate staff at this level for the hours actually spent on the work in question, but in recognition of the additional effort involved. The total amount of such notional payments shall be determined by the Assistant Director of HR & Organisational Development on a case by case basis and payment will be administered by the HR Payroll Team.

5. Making an application

- 5.1. Requests for additional payments should be made using the change to existing position form via DASH (Firmstep) on the intranet. An end date must be entered for the payment (the DASH form has a mandatory end/review date field).
- 5.2. Approvals for acting up or honoraria payments will go through the HR Controls process and must be signed off by the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development.
- 5.3. This process should be underway before acting up or project work begins.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

- 6.1. Additional payments will be monitored and evaluated by HR to ensure consistent application.
- 6.2. These monitoring arrangements will be underpinned by audit reports and spot checks carried out by the Council's Audit Team.

RBC ACTING UP ARRANGEMENTS

1. Introduction

1.1 Acting up arrangements can provide employee development opportunities and support the delivery of other objectives such as workforce planning, reshaping services or to maintain service delivery through providing cover for other staff who may be absent or temporarily diverted to other duties or roles. Possible examples are shown below.

2. Situations where acting up may be considered

2.1 The following are some examples where acting up may be considered. These examples are not exhaustive and may overlap:

- Covering for a vacancy pending completion of the recruitment process
- To provide cover for a vacancy pending a period of consultation during a reorganisation of a service area
- Long-term sick leave
- Maternity leave cover

3. Key principles

The following key principles should be observed –

3.1 The employee acting up should be rewarded in accordance with the principles of fairness and existing national agreements (see below).

3.2 Acting up is a voluntary act by a member of staff and no disadvantage should flow from an employee who declines an invitation to take part in such an arrangement

3.3 The process of identifying staff to 'act up' must be open and transparent consistent with the need to protect personal sensitive information.

3.4 Managers must ensure that they are not directly or indirectly disadvantaging or excluding a member of staff on the basis of their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, religion or disability, or any other protected characteristic.

3.5 If an acting up opportunity is identified or created, then the opportunity must be taken to consider all interested staff in the relevant service area with the requisite skills or aptitude.

3.6 The period of acting up should be clearly established at the outset and only varied following consultation with local trades unions (where the period exceeds 3 months) and agreement with the individual. Records should be kept of the arrangements and stored on the employee's personal file.

3.7 In identifying a member of staff to act up into a position or role, the sole determinator may not always be the same as when filling a vacancy on a substantive basis – for instance, when faced with more than one interested employee, the manager may weigh up a number of factors such as previously recorded development needs etc before coming to a final decision.

3.8 Managers must be prepared to be as open and honest as possible in providing explanations as to why an employee was not successful in obtaining an acting up role - providing such explanations in writing if requested.

3.9 It is important that managers keep acting up arrangements under review to ensure their continued effectiveness and the wellbeing of employees.

3.10 When establishing acting up arrangements, managers must assess the need for DBS or other checks (e.g. risk assessments) that may be necessary before the assignment can be confirmed.

3.11 A member of staff who is undertaking the full duties and responsibilities of the higher graded post (see 5.2 below) will be eligible for incremental pay progression in their acting role, as well as in their substantive post upon their return, subject to the conditions outlined in the Council's [Incremental Pay Progression Policy](#).

4. Trades union consultation

4.1 Managers should inform / consult on acting up arrangements with their local trades union representative before putting the arrangements into effect.

4.2 Arrangements will be:

- In all cases, notified to trades unions representing members within the service area
- The subject of prior consultation with the relevant trades union if the period of acting-up is to last in excess of a total period of 3 months in any 12 month period

4.3 The use of acting up arrangements shall be reported on a regular basis to Directorate Joint Forums.

4.4 The extent of the use of acting up arrangements shall be the subject of a report to the Council's Local Joint Forum as part of the annual staffing returns submitted to that body.

5. Calculation of acting up payments

5.1 Where an employee does undertake the full duties and responsibilities of a higher graded post, the employee receives payment for the entire period of time of the cover from the first day that the cover commences. If the employee is not fulfilling the full range of duties, then they will need to be working at the higher level for at least 4 weeks before qualifying for payment (see 5.3 below).

5.3 Where it is determined acting up responsibilities will be for a duration of more than 4 weeks, payment will commence at the first day of added responsibilities

5.2 The employee will receive the 'rate for the job' that they are covering if they are undertaking the full range of duties and responsibilities. This means that they will be paid at the first spinal column point (scp) of the grade of the post that they are acting up into (but see 5.1 above). If this scp is the same as their existing scp, then they will be paid at the next scp.

5.3 If the employee is not undertaking the full range of duties of a higher graded post, then an acting up allowance will be paid. The rate of the allowance will be calculated on the basis of the percentage difference between the first point on the grade of the higher graded post and the employee's current salary equivalent to the percentage proportion of higher responsibility being undertaken (or the next scp of the higher grade if the employee is already on a scp equal to the start of the higher grade). For example, if an employee undertakes 50% of the duties of a higher graded post for a period of 6 consecutive weeks, then they will receive 50% of the difference between their current pay and the bottom of the higher grade for that period.

5.5 Authorisation of acting up payments will be made by Assistant Directors or above only.

5.6 Details of all acting up arrangements should be recorded on the employee's personal file held by the HR HUB.

5.7 Applications for acting up payments should be made via the appropriate process set out in the Council's 'Additional Payments Policy'.

ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS POLICY

Agreed between the Council and the recognised trades unions.

Signed:

Kathryn Cook	Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development
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Miriam Palfrey	Staff Side and Branch Secretary for Unison
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Kieran Magee	Joint Shop Stewards Committee and Branch Secretary/Convenor for Unite
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Alison McNamara	Education & Community Unions Panel and Branch Secretary for the National Education Union (NEU)
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Robert Stirling	Convenor for GMB
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Breast Feeding Policy

November 2023



Document History	
Version	1
Status	
Date	November 2023
Target audience	All employees of Reading Borough Council with the exception of Schools-based staff for whom alternative procedures apply
Ratification	None
Author	HR Employment Services Team

Version control	Reviewers

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Introduction

This policy explains the support available to staff who are breastfeeding.

Reading Borough Council is committed to creating an open and supportive culture. We recognise that on your return to work from maternity leave you may still be breastfeeding or expressing breast milk during the day to give to your baby later on, which also counts as breastfeeding.

We understand that for some, breastfeeding can be a difficult subject to discuss. However, we encourage you to ask for any support that you need at work to help you while you are on your breastfeeding journey.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for Reading Borough Council. This includes employees, part-time/ full-time/temporary, workers, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices.

Our commitment to you

Reading Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all line managers are provided with adequate guidance, enabling them to respect and act with sensitivity to support staff who are breastfeeding, .

Requesting support

If you are breastfeeding and require support at work, you are encouraged to speak to your line manager. If for any reason you are unable to approach your line manager, you can speak to HR .

We encourage you to be as open as possible about any help that you need to ensure that you are provided with the right level of support.

Any health-related information disclosed by you during discussions with your line manager or HR t will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

Should you feel that the policy is not being adhered to, please contact HR.

Working flexibly on a temporary basis

For employees eligible to request flexible working, who require a permanent change to working arrangements, we have a [Flexible Working Policy](#).

However, we recognise that for individuals who are breastfeeding, the option to work flexibly on a temporary (rather than permanent) basis may be appropriate. For example, this could include:

- working from home so that you can breastfeed your baby if you live close to your childcare setting;
- changing your start and finish times where you have an established breastfeeding routine; or
- taking more frequent breaks so that you can express milk.

If you feel that you would benefit from a temporary change to your working arrangement on an ad hoc basis because you are breastfeeding, you should discuss and agree this with your line manager in the first instance.

We will try to facilitate temporary flexible working arrangements wherever this is possible and will continue to review these to ensure that they meet your needs.

Private room

If you are pregnant or are breastfeeding, we will look to provide access to a private clean room in the workplace or close by, which includes somewhere to rest and can be used to express milk, breastfeed and change your baby in private.

Please note, toilets, cleaning cupboards, carparks are not suitable.

We will provide access to a fridge in which you can use to store your milk.

Please refer to appendix 1 check list at the end of this policy where the manager and employee will work together to establish specific requirements

Health and safety

It is vital that you let us know if your doctor, midwife or nurse has made any recommendations in relation to your health and wellbeing during your pregnancy or during the period following the birth of the baby.

Data protection

When dealing with any request for support under this policy, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with our [data protection policy](#) / [policy on processing special categories of personal data](#). In particular, we will record only the personal information required and keep the information only for as long as necessary.

Appendix 1

Breastfeeding Check List

Employee	
Manager	
Date	
Secure room name	
Secure room location	
Bookable	Yes/No
Fridge access	
Key required	Yes/No
Date and time required	
Does the manager need guidance from HR	Yes/No

List dates and times required in the below table

Employee signature

Manager signature

Date

Family Leave Policy

November 2023

Document History	
Version	1.4 (see below)
Status	Draft



Date	October 2023
Target audience	All employees of Reading Borough Council with the exception of Schools-based staff for whom alternative procedures apply
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Author	HR Employment Services Team

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Author	HR Employment Services Team

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Version 1.3	Final version agreed with Joint Trade Unions on 18 November 2020 and approved by Personnel Committee on 19 November 2020.
Version 1.4	

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1. Objectives and scope

1.1. The Family Leave Policy covers the following family related leave:

- Adoption Leave
- Foster Carer Support
- Maternity Leave
- Maternity Support Leave
- Parental Leave
- Paternity Leave
- Shared Parental Leave

2. Definitions

2.1 The following definitions are used in this policy:

- **"Adopter"** means the person with whom the child is, or is expected to be, placed for adoption, or, in a case where two people have been matched jointly, whoever has elected to be the child's adopter for the purposes of adoption leave.
- **"Matched for adoption"** means an adoption agency deciding that a person would be a suitable adoptive parent for a child either individually or jointly with another person. A person is notified of having been "matched for adoption" with a child on the date on which the person receives notification of the adoption agency's decision.
- **"Placed for adoption"** means placed for adoption under UK adoption laws, including placement with a local authority foster parent who is also a prospective adopter ("foster to adopt").
- **"Official notification"** means written notification, issued by or on behalf of the relevant central authority, that it is prepared to issue a certificate to the overseas authority concerned with the adoption of a child from overseas, or that it has issued a certificate and sent it to that authority, confirming, in either case, that the adopter is eligible to adopt, and has been assessed and approved as being a suitable adoptive parent.
- **"Mother"** means the mother or expectant mother of the child.
- **"Partner"** means the father of the child, or the person who, at the date of the child's birth, is married to, the civil partner of, or the partner of the mother or of the adopter at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain). This includes someone, of either sex, who lives with the mother and the child in an enduring family relationship but who

is not the mother's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

- **"Expected week of childbirth"** means the week, starting on a Sunday, during which the mother's doctor or midwife expects them to give birth.
- **"Qualifying week"** relates to Statutory Maternity Pay and it is the 15th week before the week in which the baby is due.
- A **"Week's Pay"** for working standard hours is the amount payable by the authority under a contract of employment. Where there are no normal working hours, a week's pay is taken from the average pay in the 12 preceding weeks. The calculation for other working patterns can be provided by Payroll.
- **"Maternity Support Leave"** is an entitlement of up to five days (37 hours) paid leave granted to the child's father, the partner, or nominated carer of an expectant mother, to be taken at or around the time of the birth, paid at the employee's usual rate of pay. There is no qualifying period of service required. If paternity leave has been taken, then there is no entitlement to maternity support leave or vice versa.
- **"Paternity Leave"** is available to the mother's partner, and to parents of adopted children or those in surrogacy arrangements if they have not taken their entitlement to adoption leave. It must be taken within 56 days of the birth or placement date. Employees can choose to take one working week, or two consecutive working weeks. The maximum amount of paternity leave is 10 working days, or the pro rata equivalent for part time staff, paid at full pay. If maternity support leave has been taken, then there is no entitlement to paternity leave or vice versa. There is no qualifying service required.
- **"Ordinary Parental Leave"** is an entitlement to up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave per child, for qualifying employees, who are the birth or adoptive parent of a child under 18 years of age. Employees must have at least one year's service with Reading Borough Council to qualify.

3. Data Protection

- 3.1. When managing an employee's leave and pay under the Family Leave Policy, the Council processes personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which an employee informs the Council that their plans to take leave under this policy is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing their leave and pay. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Council's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a

disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

4. Adoption Leave

4.1 Introduction to adoption rights and benefits

- 4.1.1. This section of the Family Leave Policy sets out the rights of employees to statutory adoption leave and pay.
- 4.1.2. An employee who adopts a child through an approved adoption agency is entitled to take up to 26 weeks' ordinary adoption leave followed immediately by up to 26 weeks' additional adoption leave. The maximum entitlement is therefore up to 52 weeks' adoption leave.
- 4.1.3. All employees who take adoption leave have the right to return to work at any time during either ordinary adoption leave or additional adoption leave, subject to the correct notification procedures being followed, as set out below.

4.2. Adoption Pay Entitlement

- 4.2.1. Employees with less than one year's continuous local government service are entitled to:
- i. Full pay for six weeks
 - ii. 33 weeks at the current rate of Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) or 90% of average weekly earnings if this is less.
- 4.2.2. Employees with over one year's continuous local government service are entitled to:
- i. Full pay for six weeks
 - ii. Half pay for 12 weeks, plus SAP (providing the employee returns to work at the end of adoption leave for a minimum of three months)
 - iii. 21 weeks SAP

4.3. Timing of adoption leave

- 4.3.1. Adoption leave can start on the day the child is placed for adoption or up to 14 days earlier. The employee should discuss the timing of their adoption leave with their line manager as early as possible.

4.4. Notice requirements

- 4.4.1. The employee is required to give the Council written notification of their intention to take adoption leave no later than seven days after the date on which notification of the match with the child was provided by the adoption

agency. Notice, which must be in writing if the Council requests it, must specify the date the child is expected to be placed with the employee for adoption and the date the employee intends their adoption leave to start. A parent in a surrogacy arrangement will need to inform their manager at least 15 weeks before the due date. The employee should complete the Adoption Leave Request Form and pass it to their manager. The line manager should immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the adoption details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Adoption).

- 4.4.2. The employee is permitted to bring forward their adoption leave start date, provided that they advise the Council in writing at least 28 days before the new start date or, if that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable. The employee may also postpone their adoption leave start date, provided that they advise the Council in writing at least 28 days before the original proposed start date or, if that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable. The employee must also, if the Council requests it, provide evidence of entitlement to adoption leave and pay by producing a "matching certificate" from the adoption agency.
- 4.4.3. Within 28 days of receiving the employee's notice of intention to take adoption leave, the Council will write to the employee confirming the latest date on which the employee must return to work after adoption leave.

4.5. Time off to attend adoption appointments

- 4.5.1. An employee adopting a child alone is entitled to take paid time off to attend up to five adoption appointments. Where an employee is part of a couple jointly adopting a child, the couple can elect for one of them to take paid time off to attend up to five adoption appointments. The other can elect to take unpaid time off to attend up to two adoption appointments.
- 4.5.2. The purpose of the appointment is to enable the employee (and their partner) to have contact with the child (for example, to bond with them before the placement) and for any other purpose connected with the adoption (for example, to meet with the professionals involved in the care of the child).
- 4.5.3. The appointment must have been arranged by or at the request of the adoption agency. The time off must be taken before the date of the child's placement for adoption with the employee.
- 4.5.4. The Council will ask the employee for proof of the date and time of the appointment and that the appointment has been arranged by or at the request of the adoption agency (for example, a letter or email from the adoption agency).
- 4.5.5. In addition, if the employee is adopting jointly, the Council will ask the individual to sign a declaration, to be submitted alongside the documentary evidence, confirming that they have elected to exercise their right to take time

off to attend an adoption appointment. The Council will ask for the declaration on the first occasion on which the individual asks for time off to attend an adoption appointment.

4.6. Rights during adoption leave

- 4.6.1. During ordinary adoption leave and additional adoption leave, all terms and conditions of the employee's contract except normal pay will continue. Salary will be replaced by SAP if the employee is eligible for it. This means that, while sums payable by way of salary will cease, all other benefits will remain in place. For example, annual leave and Bank Holidays will continue to accrue.
- 4.6.2. Employees are entitled to take accrued annual leave during a period other than adoption leave. In many cases, employees will still be able to take annual leave in the leave year in which it has been accrued and carry forward up to five days leave as normal. However, if adoption leave is taken for the majority or all of a leave year (which runs from April to March), the employee and their manager will need to discuss when this accrued annual leave is taken. This means that more than five days annual leave may be carried into the next leave year.
- 4.6.3. Bank Holidays are also accrued and can be taken outside adoption leave and do not have to be taken by a certain date. Employees are entitled to a paid day's leave for each of the Bank Holidays as they occur.
- 4.6.4. The paid adoption leave period is treated as pensionable service and the Council will continue to make contributions on behalf of the employee into the Local Government Pension Scheme (if appropriate). Deductions will be made from adoption pay and will be based on the adoption pay received rather than the employee's usual salary.
- 4.6.5. During unpaid adoption leave, as employee contributions will have ceased, it is not counted as pensionable service. Employees can choose to pay contributions whilst absent or elect to make up the deductions on their return to work. The Payroll team will contact the employee to discuss their options for pension contributions while on unpaid adoption leave. Adoption leave counts as continuous service in the calculation of extra leave, redundancy and sick pay entitlement. Employees will be entitled to any pay awards and annual increments which they would have received if they had been at work.

4.7. Contact during adoption leave

- 4.7.1. The Council will maintain reasonable contact with employees during adoption leave. This may be to discuss employees' plans for return to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease their return to work or to update them on developments at work during their absence.

4.8. Keeping-in-touch days

- 4.8.1. Employees can agree to work for the Council (or to attend training) for up to 10 days during their adoption leave without that work bringing their adoption leave to an end and without loss of a week's statutory adoption pay. These are known as "keeping-in-touch" days. Any work carried out on a day shall constitute a "keeping-in-touch" day. Employees will only be paid for the hours worked; this can be offset against any SAP claimed.
- 4.8.2. The Council has no right to require employees to carry out any work and employees have no right to undertake any work during their adoption leave.

4.9. Returning to work after adoption leave

- 4.9.1. The employee may return to work at any time during ordinary adoption leave or additional adoption leave, provided that they give the appropriate notification. Alternatively, the employee may take their full period of adoption leave entitlement and return to work at the end of this period. If the employee wishes to return before the full period of adoption leave has elapsed, they must give at least eight weeks' notice in writing to the Council of the date on which they intend to return. No notification is required if the employee intends to return to work at the end of their adoption leave.
- 4.9.2. The employee has the right to resume working in the same job if returning to work from ordinary adoption leave. If the employee returns to work after a period of additional adoption leave, they are entitled to return either to the same job or, if this is not reasonably practicable, to another suitable job that is on terms and conditions not less favourable. The employee's line manager should immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the return to work details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Adoption).
- 4.9.3. Failure to return to work by the end of adoption leave will be treated as an unauthorised absence unless the employee is sick and produces a medical certificate/self-certificate before the end of the adoption leave period. If an employee fails to return to work against expectations, the last day of service for payroll purposes is the last day of paid additional adoption leave to ensure that the employee receives all benefits they are entitled to receive.
- 4.9.4. If the employee decides during adoption leave that they do not wish to return to work, they should give written notice of resignation to the Council as soon as possible and in accordance with the terms of their contract of employment.

4.10. Transfer of adoption leave - Shared parental leave

- 4.10.1 Shared parental leave enables adopters to commit to ending their adoption leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work

early from adoption leave and opt in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date.

4.10.2 Employees can refer to the section on shared parental leave (section 10), where they will find full details of the eligibility requirements, as well as instructions as to how the adopter's adoption leave can be curtailed.

4.11 Parental Leave

4.11.1 All employees with parental responsibility for children are entitled to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each individual child before that child reaches the age of 18. For more information on parental leave please refer section 8.

4.12 Paternity Leave

4.12.1 An employee's partner (regardless of sex) can take paternity leave if they are not responsible for immediate care and do not take adoption leave. Please see the Paternity Leave section (section 9) for more information.

5. Foster Carer Support

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. This section of the Family Leave Policy sets out the Council's support for employees who are undertaking the care of a child/children under a foster-care arrangement with a local authority. This applies to staff who:

- Are applying to become foster carers or
- Are approved foster carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months) or are an approved kinship carer and have 12 months or more continuous employment service with the Council.

5.1.2. It is recognised that employees will have specific obligations towards the child/children in accordance with their arrangement with the local authority and that, in some cases, the child/children may require a high level of care.

5.1.3. This policy is intended to form part of the Council's overall family-friendly approach, and it attempts to strike a balance between the business needs of the Council and the needs of the employee to meet their care obligations.

5.2. Notification requirements

5.2.1. Employees who are intending to foster a child/children should give their line manager not less than four weeks' notice of their intention to train as a foster

carer. This is to ensure that their line manager and colleagues can provide them with support and encouragement ensuring confidentiality is maintained at all times. This also ensures that, should they wish to request any special leave to care for the child/children, their line manager has sufficient notice to make any necessary arrangements for cover. Requests made with less than four weeks' notice will not be unreasonably refused. Employees should complete the Foster Carer Leave Request Form.

5.3 Time Off

5.3.1 The Council values and will support foster carers and approved kinship carers by giving paid time off in any 12 month period as follows:

- Assessment and initial training period for approval as a foster carer – up to 3 days
- Attendance at panel for approval – one day
- Child review meetings, annual foster carer review meet and training - up to five days

5.4 Time off to care for new foster children (placement)

5.4.1 Foster carers may need to take time off work to help the child/children to settle into the new environment. This includes employees who are foster carers or family and friends' carers who are taking on the long term care of a child under a long term fostering arrangement

Employees who require time off to attend training or meetings, or to care for the child/children at the start of the foster-care arrangement may request special leave to do so. The request must be in writing and the employee must specify the period of time off that they require.

5.4.2 To qualify for time off staff members must:

- Have continuous service of not less than one year
- Provide notice of acceptance for placement
- Have not taken leave for child placement in the last 12 months

If the Council employ both carers then only one carer shall be entitled to receive this leave. In exceptional circumstances leave may be granted when the needs of the child requires both carers full time involvement, leave may be granted when the staff member is not the primary carer, Further guidance for the manager should be sought from Human Resources

5.5 Payment for Placement

5.5.1. Employees will be allowed up to five days paid leave for each placement (this may be one or more child at a time). Paid leave will be allowed for up to two placements (i.e. up to ten days) each year. The leave is an individual entitlement.

5.6. Additional time off/Working arrangements

5.6.1. **Time off for Dependants** - Foster carers are entitled to take reasonable time off during working hours under the Council's compassionate leave policy if caring for sick dependants (e.g. including where the child has been injured or assaulted) or following the breakdown of regular care arrangements (e.g. the regular childminder becomes ill or to deal with an incident in a period during which an educational establishment would have been responsible for the child).

The employee may be required to provide their line manager with medical evidence from the regular carer's GP or a letter signed by the childminder or regular carer.

Further information can be found in the [Compassionate and Parental Bereavement Leave Policy](#) on the Council's intranet.

5.6.2. **Parental leave** - All employees with parental responsibility for children are entitled to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each individual child before that child reaches the age of 18. For more information on parental leave please refer to section 8.

5.6.3. **Flexible working** - Employees who have parental responsibility for a child under the age of 17 (under the age of 18 for a child with a disability) have a statutory right to apply to work flexibly. Further information on flexible working can be found in [Flexible Working Policy](#) on the Council's intranet.

6. Maternity Leave

6.1 Introduction to maternity rights and benefits

6.1.2 This section of the Family Leave Policy sets out the rights of employees to statutory maternity leave and pay.

6.1.3 The Council recognises that employees may have questions or concerns relating to their maternity rights. The Council's encourages open discussion with employees to ensure that questions and problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. As the maternity provisions are complex, if an employee becomes pregnant, they should clarify the relevant procedures with their manager to ensure they are followed correctly.

6.2 Maternity Leave Entitlement

6.2.1 Pregnant employees are entitled to take up to 52 weeks maternity leave. This applies to all employees regardless of their length of service. This period of leave comprises of 26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) and 26 weeks

Additional Maternity Leave (AML). AML must be taken immediately after OML; there cannot be any gap between the two types of maternity leave.

- 6.2.2 Compulsory Maternity Leave - Employees may not work for the Council immediately after giving birth. Compulsory maternity leave lasts for two weeks following childbirth.

6.3 Notice of intention to take Maternity Leave

- 6.3.1 Maternity leave can start anytime from the 11th week before the baby is due. It is the responsibility of the employee to notify their line manager at least 28 days before they intend to take maternity leave. The line manager should immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the maternity details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Maternity).
- 6.3.2 Should the employee wish to bring their maternity leave start date forward for any reason, they are required to give at least 28 days' notice of the revised start date or, if that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable. The employee may also postpone their maternity leave start date, provided that they give at least 28 days' notice before the original proposed start date or, if that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 6.3.3 In the event that the employee gives birth **before the start date of their maternity leave**, or before they have notified the Council of a start date, their maternity leave period starts the day **after** the birth. The employee must notify the Council as soon as is reasonably practicable of the date of birth.

6.4 Maternity Pay Entitlement

- 6.4.1 Statutory Maternity Pay – Employees who have been continuously employed by Reading Borough Council for 26 weeks or more by the end of the qualifying week are entitled to receive 39 weeks Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP). The first six weeks are payable at 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings and the next 33 weeks are paid at SMP rate, which is revised in April each year.
- 6.4.2 Maternity Allowance - Employees with less than 26 weeks service by the end of the qualifying week are not entitled to receive SMP from the Council. Women who are not entitled to receive SMP may be entitled to claim up to 39 weeks Maternity Allowance (MA), which is available from the Jobcentre Plus office. Qualification for the Maternity Allowance is based on the individual's recent employment and national insurance records.
- 6.4.3 Occupational Maternity Pay - Employees who have more than one year's continuous local government service on the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) will receive maternity pay of six weeks at 90% of the normal average weekly earnings followed by 33 weeks at the statutory rate

(Statutory rate applicable if the employee has been continuously employed by Reading Borough Council for 26 weeks or more by the end of the qualifying week), plus 12 weeks half pay of the normal average weekly earnings. If the employee has not been continuously employed by Reading Borough Council for 26 weeks or more by the end of the qualifying week but has more than one year's continuous local government service on the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC), they will receive maternity pay of six weeks at 90% of the normal average weekly earnings, plus 12 weeks half pay of the normal average weekly earnings only, statutory payments will need to be claimed from the Job Centre using an SMP1 claim form completed by a member of the HR team. The 12 weeks half pay is due following the expiry of the first six weeks at 90% pay and is subject to the employee returning to work for three months at the end of the maternity leave period.

6.5 Maternity Pay Period (MPP)

6.5.1 Employees are entitled to receive SMP for 39 whole weeks. SMP is calculated, due and payable for whole weeks; it cannot be broken down into individual days. Employees may start claiming SMP on any day of the week. Therefore, if the employee starts receiving their SMP on a Tuesday, "weeks" within the Maternity Pay Period (MPP) will run from Tuesday through to the following Monday, and so on through the MPP.

6.6 Time off for antenatal care

6.6.1 Once an employee has advised the Council that they are pregnant, they will be entitled not to be unreasonably refused paid time off work to attend antenatal appointments as advised by their doctor, registered midwife or registered health visitor.

6.6.2 To be entitled to take time off for antenatal care, the employee is required to produce a certificate from their doctor, registered midwife or registered health visitor, stating that they are pregnant. Except in the case of the first appointment, the employee should also produce evidence of the appointment, such as a medical certificate or appointment card, if requested to do so.

6.6.3 Antenatal care may include relaxation and parent craft classes that the employee's doctor, midwife or health visitor has advised them to attend, in addition to medical examinations.

6.6.4 The employee should endeavour to give their line manager as much notice as possible of antenatal appointments and, wherever possible, try to arrange them as near to the start or end of the working day as possible.

6.6.5 An individual who has a qualifying relationship with the employee, which includes the employee's husband or civil partner and the father of the expected child, is eligible to take unpaid time off to accompany the employee at up to two antenatal appointments. The individual with the qualifying relationship should ask their employer for more details of the right.

6.7 Health and safety

- 6.7.1 Once an employee has notified their manager of their pregnancy, the manager should carry out a risk assessment to ensure that any risks or hazards have been identified. There is a specific risk assessment for pregnant workers. More information can be obtained from the HR Team or the Corporate Health and Safety Team.
- 6.7.2 Employees will continue to be employed in their existing jobs, unless the risk assessment identifies that the job is potentially unsuitable for them because it involves one or more risks either to the employee or the unborn child.
- 6.7.3 If risks are identified, then the following options apply:
- i. The manager needs to decide if the job can be altered to eliminate the risk
 - ii. If this is not possible then alternative employment may need to be considered. This would need to be a suitable alternative post at an equivalent grade and rate of pay.
 - iii. If these options are not possible, paid leave needs to be considered until the risks are eliminated or maternity leave starts, whichever happens first.
 - iv. If a suitable offer of alternative employment is refused, then the employee will be granted unpaid leave.
- 6.7.4 Consideration must be given to any health and safety implications for pregnant women, new mothers or breast-feeding mothers as identified in the Workplace Risk Assessment.

6.8 Occupational Health – Pregnancy Assessments

- 6.8.1 The Occupational Health Service is available to provide pregnancy assessments if required. The assessment, following a referral from management, would normally be when the pregnancy reaches 18 weeks, although this can be earlier if there are concerns. Whenever possible, the employee should take with them the pregnancy risk assessment, which should have been completed by their manager. Managers should make appointments through Occupational Health. This does not replace any appointments with a GP or midwife.

6.9 Sickness absence

- 6.9.1 If an employee is absent from work during pregnancy owing to sickness, they will receive normal statutory or contractual sick pay in the same manner as they would during any other sickness absence provided that they have not yet begun Ordinary Maternity Leave. If, however, the employee is absent from work due to a pregnancy-related illness after the beginning of the fourth week before their EWC, their maternity leave will start automatically. This will begin

on the day following notification of the sickness. If sickness is not pregnancy related this will be classed as sick leave and the period of maternity leave will start when it was intended.

- 6.9.2 If the employee is absent from work wholly or partly because of pregnancy during the four weeks before the EWC, they must notify the Council in writing of this as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 6.9.3 A decision may be made not to trigger the start of maternity leave if an employee is only absent for a short period of time and wishes to continue working.
- 6.9.4 If there is a miscarriage within 24 weeks of pregnancy, any sickness absence taken can be considered a 'pregnancy-related' illness.
- 6.9.5 While there is no statutory right to maternity leave, there is a protected period of 2 weeks after the pregnancy ends.
- 6.9.6 Any sickness absence during the protected period that is pregnancy related should be recorded separately from other sickness absence and should not count towards sickness triggers.

6.10 Rights during maternity leave

- 6.10.1 During Ordinary Maternity Leave and Additional Maternity Leave, the terms and conditions of the employee's contract except normal pay will continue. Salary will be replaced by maternity pay if the employee is eligible for it. This means that, while sums payable by way of salary will cease, other benefits such as holiday entitlement will remain in place.
- 6.10.2 Paid maternity leave and authorised unpaid maternity leave are regarded as continuous service and annual leave is accrued during that period.
- 6.10.3 Employees are entitled to take this annual leave during a period other than maternity leave. In many cases, the employee will still be able to take annual leave in the leave year in which it has been accrued and carry forward up to five days leave as normal. However, if maternity leave is taken for the majority or all of a leave year, e.g. April to March, the employee and their manager will need to discuss when this accrued annual leave is taken. This means that more than five days annual leave may be carried into the next leave year.
- 6.10.4 Bank Holidays are also accrued and can be taken outside maternity leave and do not have to be taken by a certain date. Employees are entitled to a paid day's leave for each of the Bank Holidays as they occur.
- 6.10.5 The maternity leave period is treated as pensionable service and the Council will therefore continue to make contributions on behalf of the employee into

the Local Government Pension Scheme (if appropriate). Deductions will be made from maternity pay and will be based on the maternity pay received rather than the usual salary.

6.10.6 During unpaid maternity leave, as employee contributions have ceased, it is not counted as pensionable service. Employees can choose to pay contributions whilst absent or elect to make up the deductions on their return to work. The Payroll team will contact the employee to discuss their options for pension contributions while on unpaid maternity leave. Maternity leave counts as continuous service in the calculation of extra leave, redundancy and sick pay entitlement. Employees will be entitled to any pay awards and annual increments (see appraisal scheme) which they would have received if they had been at work. Employees do not have to achieve another year's service before going on maternity leave for a second time.

6.11 Contact during maternity leave

6.11.1 The Council will maintain reasonable contact with employees during maternity leave. This may be to discuss employees' plans for return to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease their return to work or to update them on developments at work during their absence.

6.12 Keeping-in-touch days

6.12.1 Employees can agree to work for the Council (or to attend training) for up to ten days during their maternity leave without that work bringing their maternity leave to an end and without loss of a week's statutory maternity pay. These are known as "keeping-in-touch" days. Any work carried out on a day shall constitute a "keeping-in-touch" day. However, employees will only be paid for the hours worked; this can be offset against any SMP claimed.

6.12.2 The Council has no right to require employees to carry out any work and employees have no right to undertake any work during their maternity leave.

6.13 Returning to work after maternity leave

6.13.1 The employee may return to work at any time during Ordinary Maternity Leave or Additional Maternity Leave, provided that they give the appropriate notification. Alternatively, the employee may take their full period of maternity leave entitlement and return to work at the end of this period. No notification is required if the employee intends to return to work at the end of their maternity leave. If the employee wishes to return before the full period of maternity leave has elapsed, they must give 21 days' notice to return early, or if the original early return date is altered. Where the notice given is less than 21 days, the employee's manager may postpone the return to ensure 21 days' notice, but not beyond the end of maternity leave.

6.13.2 The employee's line manager should immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the return to work details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Maternity).

6.13.3 The employee has the right to resume working in the same job if returning to work from Ordinary Maternity Leave. If the employee returns to work after a period of Additional Maternity Leave, they are entitled to return either to the same job or, if this is not reasonably practicable, to another suitable job that is on terms and conditions not less favourable.

6.13.4 Failure to return to work by the end of maternity leave will be treated as an unauthorised absence unless the employee is sick and produces a current medical certificate before the end of the maternity leave period. If an employee fails to return to work against expectations, the last day of service for payroll purposes is the last day of their paid maternity leave, to ensure they receive all benefits they are entitled to receive.

6.13.5 If the employee decides during maternity leave that they do not wish to return to work, they should give written notice of resignation to the Council as soon as possible and in accordance with the terms of their contract of employment.

6.13.6 If the employee is a temporary or fixed term employee and their contract of employment expires during their maternity leave, this will end their employment as well as their maternity leave. They will continue to receive any Statutory Maternity Pay. The reason for the termination of the contract must not be related to the fact that the employee is pregnant or on maternity leave.

6.14 Parental Leave

6.14.1 All employees with parental responsibility for children are entitled to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each individual child before that child reaches the age of 18. For more information on parental leave please refer section 8.

6.15 Flexible Working Arrangements

6.15.1 Employees who have parental responsibility for a child under the age of 17 (under the age of 18 for a child with a disability) have a statutory right to apply to work flexibly. Further information on flexible working can be found in [Flexible Working Policy](#) on the Council's intranet.

6.16 Transfer of maternity leave - Shared Parental Leave

6.16.1 Shared parental leave enables mothers to commit to ending their maternity leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work early from maternity leave and opt in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date.

6.16.2 To be able to take shared parental leave, an employee and their partner must meet various eligibility requirements and have complied with the relevant curtailment, notice and evidence requirements. This includes the mother curtailing their maternity leave.

6.16.3 Please refer to section 11 on shared parental leave for full details of the eligibility requirements, as well as instructions on how the mother's maternity leave can be curtailed.

6.17 Maternity Countdown

As soon as the employee advises the line manager that they are pregnant	the line manager should carry out a risk assessment to ensure that any risks or hazards have been identified
18 weeks	Occupational Health pregnancy assessment should be done, if required, unless this has been undertaken earlier due to concerns.
15 weeks before baby is due	Qualifying week for statutory maternity pay. The employee must give at least 3 weeks' notice of intention to be absent. If the employee intends to start maternity leave 11 weeks before the baby is due, the manager should be told by now. <u>Formal notification/Request for maternity leave and pay</u> form should be completed and returned to the employee's manager. The line manager must advise HR through iTrent Manager Self Service.
14 weeks before baby is due	A copy of the MAT B1 (confirming the certificate of expected childbirth) should be given to the employee's manager. The MAT B1 must not be dated earlier than 14 weeks before the baby is due. The line manager must update iTrent Manager Self Service if needed.
11 weeks before baby is due	Maternity leave can start at any time from this week right up until the week before the baby is due (the employee should not go on maternity leave if they wish to exercise their rights to maternity leave and pay). Statutory Maternity Pay may be payable from the beginning of this week, provided that the employee is not working.
4 weeks before baby is due	If the employee is ill for a reason related to pregnancy at any time after the start of the 4 th week before the baby is due, this will automatically trigger maternity leave. If the sickness is not pregnancy related this will be classed as sick leave and maternity leave will begin when it was intended to.

7. Maternity Support Leave

7.1 The purpose of granting Maternity Support Leave is to help employees cope

with the birth of a new child, Maternity Support Leave will be treated separately from annual leave and is over and above Parental Leave and Emergency/Compassionate Leave.

7.2 Maternity Support Leave Entitlement

- 7.2.1 An entitlement of up to five days (37 hours) paid leave will be granted to the child's father, the partner, or nominated carer of an expectant mother to be taken at or around the time of the birth, paid at the employee's usual rate of pay. The equivalent proportion of paid time off will be calculated for part-time workers or those who do not work a standard five-day week work pattern.
- 7.2.2 There is no qualifying period of service to be eligible for Maternity Support Leave.

7.3 The nominated carer

- 7.3.1 A nominated carer is someone nominated by the expectant mother as their primary provider of support at or around the time of the birth. In many cases, such care and support would be provided by the father; however, the role may otherwise be fulfilled by a relative or someone who has a caring relationship with the mother and/or child.

7.4 Applying for Maternity Support Leave

- 7.4.1 Anyone wishing to request maternity support leave should do so through their manager using the request form attached. As much notice as possible should be given to allow for any necessary cover to be provided.
- 7.4.2 When making a request for leave, a copy of the expectant mother's MAT B1 form (maternity certificate) and written notification from the mother declaring that the employee is the primary carer should be attached to the authorised request form.
- 7.4.3 If the employee is not the primary carer or another employee has applied for paternity leave for the same expectant mother, then a request for this leave will be refused.
- 7.4.4 A maximum of up to ten days maternity support leave will be granted in any 12-month period. This would cover the support required by two expectant mothers.
- 7.4.5 It is for each employee to decide how much leave they take and when, but this must be agreed with their manager. No payment will be made for any untaken maternity support leave.

8. Parental Leave

8. Introduction to "ordinary" parental leave

- 8.1.1 Employees are entitled to up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave per child if they are the birth or adoptive parent of a child who is under 18 years of age. To qualify for ordinary parental leave, employees must have completed at least one year's continuous service with Reading Borough Council.
- 8.1.2 "Ordinary parental leave" should not be confused with shared parental leave. Shared parental leave enables employees to commit to ending their maternity or adoption leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work early from maternity leave and opt in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date. Please refer to section 10 and 11 of this policy for information regarding shared parental leave.

8.2 Rights during ordinary parental leave

- 8.2.1 During ordinary parental leave, the employee will remain employed, although pay and most contractual benefits will be suspended. The right to accrue annual leave and Bank Holidays will remain in place. Certain other terms of employment will also remain in force.
- 8.2.2 The parental leave period is unpaid and, as such, an employee's contributions have ceased into the pension scheme. An employee should contact the Payroll team if they wish to make up the contributions.
- 8.2.3 Employees who fall sick during a period of parental leave and who give the Council the relevant notification shall be entitled to pay under the sickness scheme for the period covered by a doctor's certificate. This period shall not count towards their parental leave entitlement.
- 8.2.4 During parental leave employees will be entitled to the implied obligation of trust and confidence, and any terms and conditions of employment relating to:
- notice of termination;
 - redundancy compensation; and
 - disciplinary or grievance procedures.
- 8.2.5 Employees taking ordinary parental leave will be bound by the implied obligation of good faith, and any terms and conditions of employment relating to:
- notice of termination;
 - disclosure of confidential information;
 - the acceptance of gifts or other benefits; and
 - participation in any other business.

8.3 Conditions of ordinary parental leave

8.3.1 An employee may not exercise any entitlement to ordinary parental leave unless they have complied with any request made by the Council to produce evidence of parenthood or parental responsibility. This could be in the form of a birth certificate or adoption papers.

8.3.2 The employee must give proper notice of the period of leave that they propose to take. This notice must be given to the Council at least 21 days before the date on which leave is to start and must specify the dates on which the period of leave is to begin and end. An employee wishing to request parental leave should do so to their manager using the request form.

8.3.3 Parental leave may be taken:

- As a single block of up to 18 weeks
- As a minimum of 1 week's leave period unless the employee's child is disabled in which case it can be taken in days
- In patterns which provide a part-time or reduced hours working arrangement for a period of time equivalent to taking 18 weeks leave as a single block

8.3.4 Parental leave may be granted to employees who have not given the required notice in special circumstances at the discretion of their Assistant Director. This discretion will not be unreasonably withheld.

8.3.5 Where the employee is the non birthing parent of the child in respect of whom the leave is to be taken and they request ordinary parental leave to begin when their child is born, their notice must specify the expected week of childbirth and the duration of the period of leave. The employee must give this notice at least 21 days before the expected week of childbirth.

8.3.6 Where the ordinary parental leave is in respect of an adopted child and is to begin on the date of the placement, the employee's notice must be given to the Council at least 21 days before the beginning of the week in which the child is to be placed for adoption, or as soon as is reasonably practicable thereafter. It must specify the week in which the placement is expected to occur and the duration of the period of ordinary parental leave requested.

8 Postponement

8.4.1 If it is considered that an employee's absence would unduly disrupt the service delivery or operation of the employee's work area, then the leave can be postponed for up to three months, or more than three months in exceptional circumstances.

8.4.2 Every attempt should be made to avoid postponement of parental leave. The postponement must be discussed with the employee with a view to coming to agreement over alternatives. These might include:

- A different pattern of leave – part-time rather than full-time.
- Alternative dates within the three month period.

8.4.3 Following this consultation, and not more than 7 days after the employee's notice period was given to take leave, the employee will be given notice of the postponement, which states the reasons for it and specifies the date on which the agreed period of leave will begin and end.

8.4.4 Postponement cannot be used where employees have requested that parental leave is taken:

- Following Maternity Support Leave – the unpredictability of childbirth timing may have implications for notice. It is recommended that employees expecting to take maternity support leave should discuss likely requirements for parental leave at the same time
- Following Maternity Leave – where a mother takes a period of parental leave following on from maternity leave, they will need to be informed that, where parental leave is taken as a block of leave, an employee does not have to refund the half-pay element of occupational maternity pay, unless they do not return to local authority employment for a period of at least three months after the end of the parental leave period.
- At the time of adoption – at times prior to adoption where the parent is required to be at home by the adoption process, or following adoption leave.

8.5 Return from ordinary parental leave

8.5.1 If an employee takes an isolated period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less, they are entitled to return to the same job they were doing before their absence.

8.5.2 They can also return to their previous job if they take a period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less following on immediately from a period (or consecutive periods) of maternity, adoption, paternity and/or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the same child) that did not last more than 26 weeks.

8.5.3 An employee is entitled to return to their previous job or, if that is not practical for the Council, to another job that is both suitable and appropriate in the circumstances, if they:

- take a period of ordinary parental leave of more than four weeks; or

- take a period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less following on immediately from a period (or consecutive periods) of maternity, adoption, paternity and/or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the same child) that lasted more than 26 weeks.

9 Paternity Leave

9.1 The Council's Paternity Scheme enables the mother's partner (including those in same sex relationships) to assist at crucial times during pregnancy and childbirth. There is no qualifying service for this leave.

9.1.2 Paternity leave is available to parents (regardless of sex) of adopted children if they have not taken their entitlement to adoption leave (see section 4 of the Family Leave Policy).

9.1.3 Paternity leave is available to employees (regardless of sex) in surrogate arrangements if they have not taken their entitlement to adoption leave.

9.1.4 This leave differs from maternity support leave and is not in addition to it. If maternity support leave has been taken, then there is no entitlement to paternity leave or vice versa.

9.2 Ordinary paternity leave entitlement

9.2.1 Employees can choose to take one working week, or two consecutive working weeks paid ordinary paternity leave. Therefore, the maximum amount of paid paternity leave is ten working days; this is for those who work full-time on a standard five-day week work pattern. For part time staff, the working week will be the contracted hours e.g. if the employee works Monday to Wednesday this equates to their working week.

9.2.2 Ordinary paternity leave is paid at employee's full pay.

9.3 Timing of paternity leave

9.3.1 The leave is to be taken by the employee after the birth of the baby or placement of child and can commence on either:

- The actual date of birth, date of placement or date child arrives in the UK (overseas adoptions)
- An agreed number of days after the birth or after the date of placement
- An agreed number of days after the expected week of childbirth

9.3.2 Leave must finish within 56 days of the birth (or due date if the baby is early) or placement date.

9.3.3 The employee can choose how much leave they wish to take, and when, but this must be agreed with the manager. While the requirements of the section must always be considered, a measure of flexibility should be applied, to ensure that the needs of both parties are met wherever possible.

9.3.4 No payment will be made for any untaken paternity leave.

- 9.3.5 If an employee subsequently wishes to change the timing of the ordinary paternity leave, they must give 28 days' notice (unless this is not reasonably practicable).
- 9.3.6 If the baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy or born alive at any time but then dies, the right to take paternity leave still exists.

9.4 Taking paternity leave

- 9.4.1 Only one period of leave is available per pregnancy or adoption, irrespective of whether more than one child is born or adopted at a time.
- 9.4.2 Paternity leave must be taken in blocks of at least one working week.
- 9.4.3 Where the employee is taking two working weeks of paternity leave there can be no break between the two weeks.
- 9.4.4 Leave can start on any day of the week.
- 9.4.5 Paternity leave must be taken before any period of shared parental leave can commence.

9.5 Applying for statutory paternity leave

- 9.5.1 An employee who wishes to take paternity leave will be required to give at least 15 weeks' notice to their line manager to allow cover arrangements to be put in place. The employee should complete the Paternity Leave Request Form and give it to their manager. The paternity leave has not been agreed until the request has been authorised by the manager. Leave dates can be amended after the initial request – see 9.6.5 above.
- 9.5.2 An employee should request paternity leave by using the application form provided within this policy as soon as the mother receives their MATB1. A copy of the mother's form MATB1 or a copy of the matching certificate which confirms the expected placement date should be attached to the application. The line manager should immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the paternity leave details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Paternity).
- 9.5.3 In the case of a surrogacy arrangement, a parental statutory agreement which confirms that the employee has applied or intends to apply for a parental order in the 6 months after the baby's birth should be attached to the form.

9.6 Time off for Antenatal Appointments

- 9.6.1 Employees will receive paid time off to accompany a pregnant woman attending up to two antenatal clinics if they are:

- the baby's father
- the expectant mother's spouse or civil partner
- in a long term relationship with the expectant mother
- the intended parent (if they're having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement)

9.7 Time off for Adoption Appointments

9.7.1 Employees will receive paid time off to attend up to two adoption appointments after they have been matched with a child.

9.8 Shared Parental Leave

9.8.1 The employee and their partner may be eligible to take shared parental leave. Please refer to section 10 and 11 on Shared Parental Leave for more information.

10. Shared parental Leave – Adoption

10.1 Introduction to shared parental leave

10.1.1 This section of the Family Leave Policy sets out the rights of employees adopting a child to shared parental leave and pay. Shared parental leave is a type of leave that is available to employees having a child placed for adoption with them. It enables adopters to commit to ending their adoption leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work early from adoption leave and opt in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date. There is a separate section of the Family Leave Policy on shared parental leave for parents in a birth situation (section 12).

10.1.2 Shared parental leave should not be confused with ordinary parental leave, which is unaffected by shared parental leave. Ordinary parental leave is the entitlement to up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave. Please see the section on Parental Leave (section 8) for further information.

10.1.3 It is the Council's policy to encourage open discussion with employees to ensure that questions and problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. As the shared parental leave provisions are complex, if an employee wishes to take shared parental leave, they should clarify the relevant procedures with their manager or HR to ensure they are followed correctly.

10.2 Definitions

10.2.1 The following definitions are used in this section of the Family Leave Policy

- 10.2.2 "Adopter" means the person with whom the child is, or is expected to be, placed for adoption, or, in a case where two people have been matched jointly, whoever has elected to be the child's adopter for the purposes of adoption leave.
- 10.2.3 "Partner" means the person who is married to, or the civil partner or the partner of, the adopter at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain). This includes someone, of either sex, who lives with the adopter and the child in an enduring family relationship but who is not the adopter's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.
- 10.2.4 "Matched for adoption" means an adoption agency deciding that a person would be a suitable adoptive parent for a child either individually or jointly with another person. A person is notified of having been "matched for adoption" with a child on the date on which the person receives notification of the adoption agency's decision.
- 10.2.5 "Placed for adoption" means placed for adoption under UK adoption laws, including placement with a local authority foster parent who is also a prospective adopter ("foster to adopt").
- 10.2.6 "Official notification" means written notification, issued by or on behalf of the relevant central authority, that it is prepared to issue a certificate to the overseas authority concerned with the adoption of a child from overseas, or that it has issued a certificate and sent it to that authority, confirming, in either case, that the adopter is eligible to adopt, and has been assessed and approved as being a suitable adoptive parent.

10.3 Scope of shared parental leave

- 10.3.1 This section of the Family Leave Policy applies in relation to employees of the Council, whether they are the adopter or the partner.
- 10.3.2 The adopter and the partner should ensure that they are each liaising with their own employer to ensure that requests for shared parental leave are handled as smoothly as possible.

10.4 Amount of shared parental leave available

- 10.4.1 The amount of shared parental leave entitlement will depend on when the adopter brings their leave period to an end and the amount of leave that the other adoptive parent takes in respect of the child. Shared parental leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week. The employee can request to take shared parental leave in one continuous block (in which case the Council is required to accept the request as long as the employee meets the eligibility and notice requirements), or as a number of discontinuous blocks of leave (in which case the employee needs the Council's agreement). A maximum of three requests for leave per adoption placement (regardless of

the number of children who are placed as part of that placement) can normally be made by each adoptive parent.

- 10.4.2 The employee can begin a period of shared parental leave at any time from the date on which the child is placed for adoption (for adoptions from overseas, at any time from the date on which the child enters Great Britain) or, where more than one child is placed for adoption through a single placement, the date of placement of the first child (for adoptions from overseas, at any time from the date on which the first child enters Great Britain). However, employees should bear in mind that the adopter's partner will lose their entitlement to take up to two weeks' paternity leave following the adoption of the child if shared parental leave is taken first. The employee must take any shared parental leave within 52 weeks of the date on which the child is placed for adoption (for adoptions from overseas, within 52 weeks of the date on which the child enters Great Britain).

10.5 Eligibility for shared parental leave

- 10.5.1 For employees to be eligible to take shared parental leave, both adoptive parents must meet certain eligibility requirements.

10.6 Adopter's eligibility for shared parental leave

- 10.6.1 The adopter is eligible for shared parental leave if they:

- have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment by the end of the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or by the end of the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas) and remains in continuous employment with the Council until the week before any period of shared parental leave that they take;
- has, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child;
- is entitled to statutory adoption leave in respect of the child; and
- complies with the relevant adoption leave curtailment requirements (or has returned to work before the end of statutory adoption leave), and shared parental leave notice and evidence requirements.

- 10.6.2 In addition, for the adopter to be eligible for shared parental leave, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner in at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or the week in which the child enters Great Britain in relation to an adoption from overseas);

- have average weekly earnings of at least the [maternity allowance](#) threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks; and
- have, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the adopter, for the care of the child.

10.7 Partner's eligibility for shared parental leave

10.7.1 The partner is eligible for shared parental leave if they:

- have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment by the end of the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or by the end of the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas) and remains in continuous employment with the Council until the week before any period of shared parental leave that they take;
- have, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the adopter, for the care of the child; and
- complies with the relevant shared parental leave notice and evidence requirements.

10.7.2 In addition, for the partner to be eligible for shared parental leave, the adopter must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner during at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or the week in which the child enters Great Britain in relation to an adoption from overseas);
- have average weekly earnings of at least the [Maternity Allowance](#) threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks;
- have, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child;
- be entitled to statutory adoption leave or statutory adoption pay in respect of the child; and
- comply with the relevant adoption leave or pay curtailment requirements or have returned to work before the end of statutory adoption leave.

10.8 Notice requirements for shared parental leave

10.8.1 The notices that the adoptive parents must give to the relevant employer to be able to take shared parental leave are made up of three elements. They are:

- an "adoption leave curtailment notice" from the adopter setting out when they propose to end their adoption leave (unless the adopter has already returned to work from adoption leave);
- a "notice of entitlement and intention" from the employee giving an initial, non-binding indication of each period of shared parental leave that they are requesting; and
- a "period of leave notice" from the employee setting out the start and end dates of each period of shared parental leave that they are requesting.

10.8.2 The notice periods set out below (see Adopter's notice curtailing adoption leave, Employee's notice of entitlement and intention and Employee's period of leave notice) are the minimum required by law. However, the earlier the employee informs the Council of their intentions, the more likely it is that the Council will be able to accommodate the employee's wishes, particularly if they want to take periods of discontinuous leave.

10.8.3 Employees are advised that, if they have already decided the pattern of shared parental leave that they would like to take, they can provide more than one type of notice at the same time. For example, the adopter could provide an adoption leave curtailment notice, notice of entitlement and intention and period of leave notice at the same time. Similarly, the partner could provide their notice of entitlement and intention and period of leave notice at the same time.

10.9 Adopter's notice curtailing adoption leave

10.9.1 Before the adopter or partner can take shared parental leave, the adopter must either return to work before the end of their adoption leave (by giving the required eight weeks' notice of their planned return) or provide their employer with an adoption leave curtailment notice. The adoption leave curtailment notice must be in writing and state the date on which adoption leave is to end. That date must be at least:

- two weeks after the first day of the adopter's ordinary adoption leave period;
- eight weeks after the date on which the adopter gave the adoption leave curtailment notice to their employer; and
- one week before what would be the end of the additional adoption leave period.

10.9.2 The adopter must provide their adoption leave curtailment notice at the same time they provide either their notice of entitlement and intention or a declaration of consent and entitlement signed by the adopter confirming that their partner has given their employer a notice of entitlement and intention (see [Employee's notice of entitlement and intention](#) below).

10.10 Revocation of adoption leave curtailment notice

10.10.1 The adopter can withdraw their notice curtailing their adoption leave in limited circumstances. The withdrawal of an adoption leave curtailment notice must be in writing and can be given only if the adopter has not returned to work. The adopter can withdraw their adoption leave curtailment notice if:

- it is discovered that neither the adopter nor the partner is entitled to shared parental leave or statutory shared parental pay and the adopter withdraws their adoption leave curtailment notice within eight weeks of the date on which the notice was given; or
- the partner has died.

10.11 Employee's notice of entitlement and intention

10.11.1 The employee, whether the adopter or the partner, must provide the Council with a non-binding notice of entitlement and intention. The employee's notice of entitlement and intention, which must be in writing and provided at least eight weeks before the start date of the first period of shared parental leave to be taken by the employee, must set out the following information.

10.11.2 If the employee is the adopter, the notice of entitlement and intention must set out:

- the adopter's name;
- the partner's name;
- the start and end dates of any statutory adoption leave taken or to be taken by the adopter;
- the total amount of shared parental leave available;
- the date on which the adopter was notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or receives official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas);
- the date on which the child is expected to be placed for adoption with the adopter and the date of the placement, or the date on which the child is expected to enter Great Britain in relation to an adoption from overseas (although, if the child has not yet been placed for adoption or entered Great Britain, the date of placement for adoption or entry into Great Britain must be provided as soon as reasonably practicable after the placement or entry, and before the first period of shared parental leave to be taken by the adopter);
- how much shared parental leave the adopter and partner each intend to take; and
- a non-binding indication as to when the employee intends to take shared parental leave (including the start and end dates for each period of leave).

10.11.3 The adopter's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by them that:

- they satisfy, or will satisfy, the eligibility requirements to take shared parental leave;
- the information they give in the notice of entitlement and intention is accurate; and
- they will immediately inform the Council if they cease to care for the child.

10.11.4 In addition, the adopter's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by their partner:

- specifying the partner's name, address, and national insurance number (or declaring that the partner does not have a national insurance number);
- declaring that the partner satisfies, or will satisfy, the conditions set out above (see Adopter's eligibility for shared parental leave);
- declaring that the partner is married to, the civil partner of, or the partner of, the adopter;
- declaring that the partner consents to the amount of leave that the adopter intends to take; and
- declaring that the partner consents to the adopter's employer processing the information in the partner's declaration.

10.11.5 If the employee is the partner, the partner's notice of entitlement and intention must set out:

- the partner's name;
- the adopter's name;
- the start and end dates of any periods of statutory adoption leave or statutory adoption pay taken or to be taken by the adopter;
- the total amount of shared parental leave available;
- the date on which the adopter was notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or receives official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas);
- where statutory adoption leave was not taken, or is not to be taken, the start and end dates of any period in which statutory adoption pay is paid or payable;
- the date on which the child is expected to be placed for adoption with the adopter and the date of the placement, or the date on which the child is expected to enter Great Britain in relation to an adoption from overseas (although, if the child has not yet been placed for adoption or entered Great Britain, the date of placement for adoption or entry into Great Britain must be provided as soon as reasonably practicable after the placement or entry, and before the first period of shared parental leave to be taken by the adopter);

- how much shared parental leave the partner and adopter each intend to take; and
- a non-binding indication as to when the partner intends to take shared parental leave (including the start and end dates for each period of leave).

10.11.6 The partner's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by them that:

- they satisfy, or will satisfy, the eligibility requirements to take shared parental leave;
- the information given by the partner in the notice of entitlement and intention is accurate;
- they are married to, or the civil partner or the partner of the adopter; and
- they will immediately inform the Council if they cease to care for the child or if the adopter informs them that they no longer meet the requirement to have curtailed their adoption leave or pay period.

10.11.7 In addition, the partner's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by the adopter:

- specifying the adopter's name, address, and national insurance number (or declaring that the adopter does not have a national insurance number);
- declaring that the adopter satisfies, or will satisfy, the conditions set out above (see Partner's eligibility for shared parental leave);
- declaring that the adopter consents to the amount of leave that the partner intends to take;
- declaring that they will immediately inform the employee if they no longer meet the requirement to have curtailed their adoption leave or pay period; and
- declaring that the adopter consents to the partner's employer processing the information in the adopter's declaration.

10.11.8 Within 14 days of receiving a notice of entitlement and intention from the employee, whether the adopter or partner, the Council can request from the employee:

- in relation to adoptions within the UK, documentary evidence from the adoption agency of:
 - the name and address of the adoption agency;
 - the date on which the adopter was notified of having been matched for adoption with the child; and
 - the date on which the adoption agency expects the child to be placed for adoption with the adopter; and
- in relation to adoptions from overseas, a copy of the official notification; and

- whether a UK or overseas adoption, the name and address of the other adoptive parent's employer (or a declaration that the other adoptive parent has no employer).

10.11.9 The employee has 14 days from the date of the request to send the Council the required information.

10.12 Variation or cancellation of notice of entitlement and intention

10.12.1 The employee can vary or cancel their proposed shared parental leave dates following the submission of a notice of entitlement and intention, provided that they provide the Council with a written notice. The written notice must contain:

- an indication as to when the employee intends to take shared parental leave (including the start and end dates for each period of leave);
- details of any periods of shared parental leave that have been notified through a period of leave notice;
- details of any periods of statutory shared parental pay that have been notified in relation to periods where shared parental leave was not to be taken; and
- a declaration signed by the adopter and the partner that they agree the variation.

10.12.2 Any indication of leave intended to be taken that the employee provides in a variation of notice of entitlement and intention is non-binding until they provide a period of leave notice in relation to that period of leave. There is no limit on the number of variations of notice of entitlement and intention that the employee can make.

10.13 Employee's period of leave notice

10.13.1 To take a period of shared parental leave, the employee must provide the Council with a written notice setting out the start and end dates of each period of shared parental leave requested in that notice.

10.13.2 A period of leave notice must be given not less than eight weeks before the start date of the first period of shared parental leave requested in the notice. The notice may be given at the same time as a notice of entitlement and intention and can be a request for a continuous period of leave or discontinuous periods of leave.

10.14 Variation or cancellation of period of leave notice

10.14.1 The employee can vary or cancel their proposed shared parental leave dates following the submission of a period of leave notice, provided that they provide their employer with a written notice not less than eight weeks before any period of leave varied by the notice is due to commence. The written notice can:

- vary the start date or the end date of any period of shared parental leave or cancel a request for leave;
- request that a continuous period of leave become discontinuous periods of leave; or
- request that discontinuous periods of leave become a continuous period of leave.

10.15 Limit on number of requests for leave

10.15.1 The employee can provide a combined total of up to three “period of leave notices” or variations of period of leave notices per adoption, although the Council may waive this limit in some circumstances.

10.16 Continuous period of shared parental leave

10.16.1 If the employee submits a period of leave notice requesting one continuous period of leave, they will be entitled to take that period of leave.

10.17 Discontinuous periods of shared parental leave

10.17.1 The employee may submit a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave. For example, the adopter and partner could request a pattern of leave from their respective employers that allows them to alternate childcare responsibilities.

10.17.2 If the employee submits a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave, the Council, in the two weeks beginning with the date the period of leave notice was given, can:

- consent to the pattern of leave requested;
- propose an alternative pattern of leave; or
- refuse the pattern of leave requested.

10.17.3 If agreement is reached within those two weeks, the employee is entitled to take the leave on the dates agreed.

10.17.4 If no agreement has been reached within that two-week discussion period, the employee is entitled to take the leave as one continuous period of leave. In that event, the employee must choose a start date for the leave that is at least eight weeks from the date on which the period of leave notice was originally given. The employee must notify the Council of that date within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period. If the employee does not choose a start date within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period, the period of continuous leave will start on the date of the first period of leave requested in the period of leave notice.

10.17.5 Alternatively, if the Council has refused the request or no agreement has been reached during the two-week discussion period, the employee may withdraw a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave. The employee can withdraw a period of leave notice at any time on or before the 15th day after the period of leave notice was given. A notice for discontinuous leave that has been withdrawn before it is agreed does not count towards the total number of requests for leave that an employee can make.

10.18 Amount of shared parental pay available

10.18.1 Eligible employees will be entitled to receive occupational shared parental pay. The calculation of shared parental pay entitlement is based on the rest of maternity pay entitlement when maternity pay is curtailed. Whether occupational shared parental pay is payable will depend on the time maternity pay is curtailed.

10.18.2 Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay (ShPP) is applicable to employees as follows:

10.18.3 Employees with less than one year's service:

For an employee who has worked continuously for the Council for 26 weeks, by the beginning of 15th week before the EWC, there is an entitlement to 37 weeks ShPP and their average weekly earnings will need to be not less than the lower earnings threshold as applicable.

For employees who qualify for ShPP, they will receive:

- i. Full pay for four weeks
- ii. Followed by 33 weeks at ShPP.

10.18.4 Employees with at least one year's continuous service:

Employees with over one year's Local Government service are entitled to 37 weeks ShPP as follows:

- i. Full pay for four weeks
- ii. Followed by 12 weeks at the lower rate of ShPP. If the employee has also declared their intention to return to work, he /she will also receive 50% of their pay in addition to the ShPP for the 12 week period.
- iii. For the remaining 21 weeks, ShPP will be paid.

Any payment made to an employee under (ii) is made on the understanding that the employee will return to work for a period of at least three months. This period will start from when the SPL period comes to an end (i.e. on the day before the child's first birthday / first anniversary of the placement for adoption) regardless of whether the employee returns sooner and subsequently takes another block of SPL at a later date.

If the employee changes their mind and does not return to work for three months, then the monies paid out under (ii) will have to be refunded by the employee minus the ShPP.

10.18.5 Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay is available for a maximum of 37 weeks and is payable at the same lower rate of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), or 90% of the employee's average earnings, whichever is lower. ShPP can start on any day of the week.

10.18.6 Please note that in the event that both eligible partners are employees of the Council, the entitlement to occupational shared parental leave pay will be shared by the partners taking the leave depending on the timing of the weeks' leave taken by each partner.

10.19 Eligibility for statutory shared parental pay

10.19.1 For employees to be eligible for statutory shared parental pay, both adoptive parents must meet certain eligibility requirements.

10.20 Adopter's eligibility for statutory shared parental pay

10.20.1 The adopter is eligible for statutory shared parental pay if they:

- have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment by the end of the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or by the end of the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas) and remains in continuous employment with their employer until the week before any period of shared parental leave that they take;
- have normal weekly earnings for a period of eight weeks ending with the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or by the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas) of at least the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes;
- have, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child;
- are absent from work and intends to care for the child during each week in which they receive statutory shared parental pay; and
- are entitled to statutory adoption pay in respect of the child, but the adoption pay period has been reduced.

10.20.2 In addition, for the adopter to be eligible for statutory shared parental pay, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner during at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which the

adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas);

- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks; and
- have, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the adopter, for the care of the child.

10.21 Partner's eligibility for statutory shared parental pay

10.21.1 The partner is eligible for statutory shared parental pay if they:

- have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment by the end of the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or by the end of the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas) and remains in continuous employment with their employer until the week before any period of shared parental leave that they take;
- have normal weekly earnings for a period of eight weeks ending with the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or by the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas) of at least the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes;
- have, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the adopter, for the care of the child; and
- are absent from work and intends to care for the child during each week in which they receive statutory shared parental pay.

10.21.2 In addition, for the partner to be eligible, the adopter must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner during at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which the adopter is notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (or the week in which they receive official notification in relation to an adoption from overseas);
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks;
- have, at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or enters Great Britain if the child is being adopted from overseas), the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child; and
- be entitled to statutory adoption pay in respect of the child, but the adoption pay period has been reduced.

10.22 Rights during shared parental leave

10.22.1 During shared parental leave, all terms and conditions of the employee's contract except normal pay will continue. Salary will be replaced by pay under the Council's enhanced shared parental pay scheme if the employee is eligible for it.

10.22.2 This means that, while sums payable by way of salary will cease, all other benefits will remain in place. For example, holiday entitlement will continue to accrue. Pension contributions will continue to be paid during periods of paid shared parental leave.

10.23 Contact during shared parental leave

10.23.1 The Council reserves the right to maintain reasonable contact with employees during shared parental leave. This may be to discuss employees' plans for their return to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease their return to work or to update them on developments at work during their absence.

10.23.2 An employee can agree to work for the Council (or to attend training) for up to 20 days during shared parental leave without that work bringing the period of their shared parental leave and pay to an end. These are known as "shared-parental-leave-in-touch" (SPLIT) days.

10.23.3 The Council has no right to require employees to carry out any work and employees have no right to undertake any work during their shared parental leave. Any work undertaken, and the amount of salary paid for any work done on SPLIT days, is entirely a matter for agreement between employees and the Council.

10.23.4 The employee will continue to receive pay under the Council's enhanced shared parental pay scheme for any week during which they attend work for SPLIT days. The Council will also pay the employee an additional payment for each hour that they work during a SPLIT day.

10.24 Returning to work following shared parental leave

10.24.1 The employee has the right to resume working in the same job when returning to work from SPL where reasonably practicable (for instance due to organisational change it may not be) or to another job which is both suitable and appropriate and on terms and conditions no less favourable.

10.25 Returning to work early following shared parental leave

10.25.1 If the employee wishes to return to work earlier than the expected return date, they may provide a written notice to vary the leave and must give at least eight weeks' notice of their date of early return.

10.25.2 The Council does not have to accept the notice to return early but may do if it is considered to be reasonably practicable to do so. Such requests will not be unreasonably refused.

11. Shared Parental Leave – Birth

11.1 Introduction to shared parental leave

11.1.1 This section of the Family Leave Policy sets out the rights of employees to shared parental leave and pay. Shared parental leave enables mothers to commit to ending their maternity leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work early from maternity leave and opt in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date. There is a separate section of this policy on shared parental leave for employees who are adopting children (see section 10).

11.1.2 Shared parental leave should not be confused with ordinary parental leave, which is unaffected by shared parental leave. Ordinary parental leave is the entitlement to up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave. The Council provides a separate policy on ordinary parental leave.

11.1.3 It is the Council's policy to encourage open discussion with employees to ensure that questions and problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. As the shared parental leave provisions are complex, if an employee wishes to take shared parental leave, they should clarify the relevant procedures with the HR team to ensure that they are followed correctly.

11.2 Scope of shared parental leave

11.2.1 This section of the Family Leave Policy applies in relation to employees of the Council, whether they are the mother or the partner.

11.2.2 The mother and the partner should ensure that they are each liaising with their own employer to ensure that requests for shared parental leave are handled as smoothly as possible.

11.3 Amount of shared parental leave available

11.3.1 The amount of shared parental leave entitlement will depend on when the mother brings their maternity leave period to an end and the amount of leave

that the other parent takes in respect of the child. Shared parental leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week. The employee can request to take shared parental leave in one continuous block (in which case the Council is required to accept the request as long as the employee meets the eligibility and notice requirements), or as a number of discontinuous blocks of leave (in which case the employee needs the Council's agreement). A maximum of three requests for leave per pregnancy can normally be made by each parent.

11.3.2 The first two weeks following birth are the compulsory maternity leave period and are reserved for the mother. This means that the mother cannot curtail their maternity leave to take shared parental leave until two weeks after the birth and the maximum period that the parents could take as shared parental leave is 50 weeks between them (although it will normally be less than this because of the maternity leave that mothers usually take before the birth).

11.3.3 The mother's partner can begin a period of shared parental leave at any time from the date of the child's birth (but the partner should bear in mind that they are entitled to take up to two weeks' paternity leave OR one week's maternity support leave following the birth of the child, which they will lose if shared parental leave is taken first). The mother and partner must take any shared parental leave within 52 weeks of birth.

11.4 Eligibility for shared parental leave

11.4.1 For employees to be eligible to take shared parental leave, both parents must meet certain eligibility requirements.

11.5 Mother's eligibility for shared parental leave

11.5.1 The mother is eligible for shared parental leave if she:

- has at least 26 weeks' continuous employment ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth and remains in continuous employment with the Council until the week before any period of shared parental leave that they take;
- has, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child;
- is entitled to statutory maternity leave in respect of the child; and
- complies with the relevant maternity leave curtailment requirements (or has returned to work before the end of statutory maternity leave), and shared parental leave notice and evidence requirements.

11.5.2 In addition, for the mother to be eligible for shared parental leave, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner in at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth;

- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks; and
- have, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the mother, for the care of the child.

11.6 Partner's eligibility for shared parental leave

11.6.1 The partner is eligible for shared parental leave if they:

- have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth and remains in continuous employment with the Council until the week before any period of shared parental leave that they take;
- have, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the mother, for the care of the child; and
- comply with the relevant shared parental leave notice and evidence requirements.

11.6.2 In addition, for the partner to be eligible for shared parental leave, the mother must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner during at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth;
- have average weekly earnings of at least the [Maternity Allowance](#) threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks;
- have, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child;
- be entitled to statutory maternity leave, statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in respect of the child; and
- comply with the relevant maternity leave or pay curtailment requirements (or have returned to work before the end of statutory maternity leave).

11.7 Notice requirements for shared parental leave

11.7.1 The notices that the parents must give to the relevant employer to be able to take shared parental leave are made up of three elements. They are:

- a "maternity leave curtailment notice" from the mother setting out when they propose to end their maternity leave (unless the mother has already returned to work from maternity leave);
- a "notice of entitlement and intention" from the employee giving an initial, non-binding indication of each period of shared parental leave that they are requesting; and
- a "period of leave notice" from the employee setting out the start and end dates of each period of shared parental leave that they are requesting.

11.7.2 The notice periods set out below (see Mother's notice curtailing maternity leave, Employee's notice of entitlement and intention and Employee's period of leave notice) are the minimum required by law. However, the earlier the employee informs the Council of their intentions, the more likely it is that the Council will be able to accommodate the employee's wishes, particularly if they want to take periods of discontinuous leave.

11.7.3 Employees are advised that, if they have already decided the pattern of shared parental leave that they would like to take, they can provide more than one type of notice at the same time. For example, the mother could provide a maternity leave curtailment notice, notice of entitlement and intention and period of leave notice at the same time. Similarly, the partner could provide their notice of entitlement and intention and period of leave notice at the same time.

11.8 Mother's notice curtailing maternity leave

11.8.1 Before the mother or partner can take shared parental leave, the mother must either return to work before the end of their maternity leave (by giving the required eight weeks' notice of their planned return) or provide their employer with a maternity leave curtailment notice. The maternity leave curtailment notice must be in writing and state the date on which maternity leave is to end. That date must be:

- after the compulsory maternity leave period, which is the two weeks (or four weeks for factory workers) after birth;
- at least eight weeks after the date on which the mother gave the maternity leave curtailment notice to their employer; and
- at least one week before what would be the end of the additional maternity leave period.

11.8.2 The mother must provide their maternity leave curtailment notice at the same time they provide either their notice of entitlement and intention or a declaration of consent and entitlement signed by the mother confirming that their partner has given their employer a notice of entitlement and intention (see [Employee's notice of entitlement and intention](#) below).

11.9 Revocation of maternity leave curtailment notice

11.9.1 The mother can withdraw their notice curtailing their maternity leave in limited circumstances. The withdrawal of a maternity leave curtailment notice must be in writing and can be given only if the mother has not returned to work. The mother can withdraw their maternity leave curtailment notice if:

- it is discovered that neither the mother nor the partner is entitled to shared parental leave or statutory shared parental pay and the mother

withdraws their maternity leave curtailment notice within eight weeks of the date on which the notice was given;

- the maternity leave curtailment notice was given before the birth of the child and the mother withdraws their maternity leave curtailment notice within six weeks of the child's birth; or
- the partner has died.

11.10 Employee's notice of entitlement and intention

11.10.1 The employee, whether the mother or the partner, must provide the Council with a non-binding notice of entitlement and intention. This must be in writing and provided at least eight weeks before the start date of the first period of shared parental leave to be taken by the employee. It must set out the following information.

11.10.2 If the employee is the mother, the notice of entitlement and intention must set out:

- the mother's name;
- the partner's name;
- the start and end dates of any statutory maternity leave taken or to be taken by the mother;
- the total amount of shared parental leave available;
- the child's expected week of birth and the child's date of birth (although, if the child has not yet been born, the date of birth can be provided as soon as reasonably practicable after birth, and before the first period of shared parental leave to be taken by the mother);
- how much shared parental leave the mother and partner each intend to take; and
- a non-binding indication as to when the employee intends to take shared parental leave (including the start and end dates for each period of leave).

11.10.3 The mother's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by them that:

- they satisfy, or will satisfy, the eligibility requirements to take shared parental leave;
- the information they give in the notice of entitlement and intention is accurate; and
- they will immediately inform the Council if they cease to care for the child.

11.10.4 In addition, the mother's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by their partner:

- specifying the partner's name, address, and national insurance number (or declaring that the partner does not have a national insurance number);
- declaring that the partner satisfies, or will satisfy, the conditions set out above (see Mother's eligibility for shared parental leave);
- declaring that the partner is the father of the child, or is married to, the civil partner of, or the partner of, the mother;
- declaring that the partner consents to the amount of leave that the mother intends to take; and
- declaring that the partner consents to the mother's employer processing the information in the partner's declaration.

11.10.5 If the employee is the partner, the partner's notice of entitlement and intention must set out:

- the partner's name;
- the mother's name;
- the start and end dates of any periods of statutory maternity leave, statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance taken or to be taken by the mother;
- the total amount of shared parental leave available;
- the child's expected week of birth and the child's date of birth (although, if the child has not yet been born, the date of birth can be provided as soon as reasonably practicable after birth, and before the first period of shared parental leave to be taken by the partner);
- how much shared parental leave the partner and mother each intend to take; and
- a non-binding indication as to when the partner intends to take shared parental leave (including the start and end dates for each period of leave).

11.10.6 The partner's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by the partner that:

- they satisfy, or will satisfy, the eligibility requirements to take shared parental leave;
- the information given by the partner in the notice of entitlement and intention is accurate; and
- they will immediately inform the Council if they cease to care for the child or if the mother informs them that they no longer meet the requirement to have curtailed their maternity leave or pay period.

11.10.7 In addition, the partner's notice of entitlement and intention must include a declaration signed by the mother:

- specifying the mother's name, address, and national insurance number (or declaring that the mother does not have a national insurance number);

- declaring that the mother satisfies, or will satisfy, the conditions set out above (see Partner's eligibility for shared parental leave) and they will notify the partner if they no longer qualifies for maternity leave, statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance;
- declaring that the mother consents to the amount of leave that the partner intends to take;
- declaring that they will immediately inform the employee if they no longer meet the requirement to have curtailed their maternity leave or pay period; and
- declaring that the mother consents to the partner's employer processing the information in the mother's declaration.

11.10.8 Within 14 days of receiving a notice of entitlement and intention from the employee, whether the mother or partner, the Council can request from the employee:

- a copy of the child's birth certificate (or, if the child has not been born, a copy of the birth certificate within 14 days of the birth - if the birth certificate has yet to be issued after this period, a signed declaration stating the date and location of the child's birth will suffice); and
- the name and address of the other parent's employer (or a declaration that the other parent has no employer).

11.10.9 The employee has 14 days from the date of the request to send the Council the required information.

11.11 Variation or cancellation of notice of entitlement and intention

11.11.1 The employee can vary or cancel their proposed shared parental leave dates following the submission of a notice of entitlement and intention, provided that they provide the Council with a written notice. The written notice must contain:

- an indication as to when the employee intends to take shared parental leave (including the start and end dates for each period of leave);
- details of any periods of shared parental leave that have been notified through a period of leave notice;
- details of any periods of statutory shared parental pay that have been notified in relation to periods where shared parental leave was not to be taken; and
- a declaration signed by the mother and the partner that they agree to the variation.

11.11.2 Any indication of leave intended to be taken that the employee provides in a variation of notice of entitlement and intention is non-binding until they provide a period of leave notice in relation to that period of leave. There is no limit on the number of variations of notice of entitlement and intention that the employee can make.

11.12 Employee's period of leave notice

11.12.1 To take a period of shared parental leave, the employee must provide the Council with a written notice setting out the start and end dates of each period of shared parental leave requested in that notice.

11.12.2 A period of leave notice must be given not less than eight weeks before the start date of the first period of shared parental leave requested in the notice. The notice may be given at the same time as a notice of entitlement and intention and can be a request for a continuous period of leave or discontinuous periods of leave.

11.13 Variation or cancellation of period of leave notice

11.13.1 The employee can vary or cancel their proposed shared parental leave dates following the submission of a period of leave notice, provided that they provide their employer with a written notice not less than eight weeks before any period of leave varied or cancelled by the notice is due to commence. The written notice can:

- vary the start date or the end date of any period of shared parental leave or cancel a request for leave;
- request that a continuous period of leave become discontinuous periods of leave; or
- request that discontinuous periods of leave become a continuous period of leave.

11.14 Limit on number of requests for leave

11.14.1 The employee can provide a combined total of up to three period of leave notices or variations of period of leave notices per pregnancy, although the Council may waive this limit in some circumstances.

11.15 Continuous period of shared parental leave

11.15.1 If the employee submits a period of leave notice requesting one continuous period of leave, they will be entitled to take that period of leave.

11.16 Discontinuous periods of shared parental leave

11.16.1 The employee may submit a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave. For example, the mother and partner could request a pattern of leave from their respective employers that allows them to alternate childcare responsibilities.

11.16.2 If the employee submits a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave, the Council, in the two weeks beginning with the date the period of leave notice was given, can:

- consent to the pattern of leave requested;
- propose an alternative pattern of leave; or
- refuse the pattern of leave requested.

11.16.3 If agreement is reached within those two weeks, the employee is entitled to take the leave on the dates agreed.

11.16.4 If no agreement has been reached within that two-week discussion period, the employee is entitled to take the leave as one continuous period of leave. In that event, the employee must choose a start date for the leave that is at least eight weeks from the date on which the period of leave notice was originally given. The employee must notify the Council of that date within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period. If the employee does not choose a start date within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period, the period of continuous leave will start on the date of the first period of leave requested in the period of leave notice.

11.16.5 Alternatively, if the Council has refused the request or no agreement has been reached during the two-week discussion period, the employee may withdraw a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave. The employee can withdraw a period of leave notice at any time on or before the 15th day after the period of leave notice was given. A notice for discontinuous leave that has been withdrawn before it is agreed does not count towards the total number of requests for leave that an employee can make.

11.17 Amount of shared parental pay available

11.17.1 Eligible employees will be entitled to receive occupational shared parental pay. The calculation of shared parental pay entitlement is based on the rest of maternity pay entitlement when maternity pay is curtailed. Whether occupational shared parental pay is payable will depend on the time maternity pay is curtailed.

11.17.2 Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay (ShPP) is applicable to employees as follows:

11.17.3 Employees with less than one year's service:

For an employee who has worked continuously for the Council for 26 weeks, by the beginning of 15th week before the EWC, there is an entitlement to 37 weeks ShPP and their average weekly earnings will need to be not less than the lower earnings threshold as applicable.

For employees who qualify for ShPP, they will receive:

- i. Full pay for four weeks

- ii. Followed by 33 weeks at ShPP.

11.17.4 Employees with at least one year's continuous service:

Employees with over one year's Local Government service are entitled to 37 weeks ShPP as follows:

- i. Full pay for four weeks
- ii. Followed by 12 weeks at the lower rate of ShPP. If the employee has also declared their intention to return to work, they will also receive 50% of their pay in addition to the ShPP for the 12 week period.
- iii. For the remaining 21 weeks, ShPP will be paid.

11.17.5 Any payment made to an employee under (ii) is made on the understanding that the employee will return to work for a period of at least three months. This period will start from when the SPL period comes to an end (i.e. on the day before the child's first birthday / first anniversary of the placement for adoption) regardless of whether the employee returns sooner and subsequently takes another block of SPL at a later date.

11.17.6 If the employee changes their mind and does not return to work for three months, then the monies paid out under (ii) will have to be refunded by the employee minus the ShPP.

11.17.7 Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay is available for a maximum of 37 weeks and is payable at the same lower rate of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), or 90% of the employee's average earnings, whichever is lower. ShPP can start on any day of the week.

11.17.8 Please note that in the event that both eligible partners are employees of the Council, the entitlement to occupational shared parental leave pay will be shared by the partners taking the leave depending on the timing of the weeks' leave taken by each partner.

11.18 Eligibility for statutory shared parental pay

11.18.1 For employees to be eligible for statutory shared parental pay, both parents must meet certain eligibility requirements.

11.18.2 Mother's eligibility for statutory shared parental pay

11.18.3 The mother is eligible for statutory shared parental pay if she:

- has at least 26 weeks' continuous employment ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth and remains in continuous employment with their employer until the week before any period of shared parental pay that they get;

- has normal weekly earnings for a period of eight weeks ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth of at least the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes;
- has, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child;
- is absent from work and intends to care for the child during each week in which they receive statutory shared parental pay; and
- is entitled to statutory maternity pay in respect of the child, but the maternity pay period has been reduced.

11.18.4 In addition, for the mother to be eligible for statutory shared parental pay, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner during at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth;
- have, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the mother, for the care of the child; and
- have average weekly earnings of at least the [maternity allowance](#) threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks.

11.19 Partner's eligibility for statutory shared parental pay

11.19.1 The partner is eligible for statutory shared parental pay if they:

- have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth and remains in continuous employment with their employer until the week before any period of shared parental pay that they get;
- have normal weekly earnings for eight weeks ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth of at least the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes;
- have, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the mother, for the care of the child; and
- are absent from work and intends to care for the child during each week in which they receive statutory shared parental pay.

11.19.2 In addition, for the partner to be eligible, the mother must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner during at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth;
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold for any 13 of those 66 weeks;
- have, at the date of the child's birth, the main responsibility, apart from the partner, for the care of the child; and

- be entitled to statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in respect of the child, but the maternity pay period or maternity allowance period has been reduced.

11.20 Rights during shared parental leave

11.20.1 During shared parental leave, all terms and conditions of the employee's contract except normal pay will continue. Salary will be replaced pay under the Council's enhanced shared parental pay scheme if the employee is eligible for it.

11.20.2 This means that, while sums payable by way of salary will cease, all other benefits will remain in place. For example, holiday entitlement will continue to accrue. Pension contributions will continue to be paid.

11.21 Contact during shared parental leave

11.21.1 The Council reserves the right to maintain reasonable contact with employees during shared parental leave. This may be to discuss employees' plans for their return to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease their return to work or to update them on developments at work during their absence.

11.21.2 An employee can agree to work for the Council (or to attend training) for up to 20 days during shared parental leave without that work bringing the period of their shared parental leave and pay to an end. These are known as "shared-parental-leave-in-touch" (SPLIT) days.

11.21.3 The Council has no right to require employees to carry out any work and employees have no right to undertake any work during their shared parental leave. Any work undertaken, and the amount of salary paid for any work done on SPLIT days, is entirely a matter for agreement between employees and the Council.

11.21.4 The employee will continue to receive pay under the Council's enhanced shared parental pay scheme for any week during which they attend work for SPLIT days. The Council will also pay the employee an additional payment for each hour that they work during a SPLIT day.

11.22 Returning to work following shared parental leave

11.22.1 The employee has the right to resume working in the same job when returning to work from SPL where reasonably practicable (for instance due to organisational change it may not be) or to another job which is both suitable and appropriate and on terms and conditions no less favourable.

11.23 Returning to work early following shared parental leave

11.23.1 If the employee wishes to return to work earlier than the expected return date, they may provide a written notice to vary the leave and must give at least eight weeks' notice of their date of early return.

11.23.2 The Council does not have to accept the notice to return early but may do if it is considered to be reasonably practicable to do so. Such requests will not be unreasonably refused.

12 Care for Dependants

12.1 A **maximum of five days paid leave** in a year can be requested to care for dependants

12.2 Definitions

- **Immediate family member:** the employee's spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, child, sibling or grandparent.
- **Dependant:** the employee's spouse, civil partner, child, parent and any person who lives at the same house (other than as a lodger, tenant, boarder or employee) or someone who would reasonably rely on the employee for assistance or arrangements for care in the event of illness or injury.
- **Child:** son, daughter or ward, including step, adoptive and foster children.
- **Close relative or friend, who is not a dependant:** includes aunt, uncle, cousin, parent-in-law or a close friend.

For further details, please refer to Reading Borough Council's Compassionate and Parental Bereavement Leave policy [Compassionate and Parental Bereavement Leave](#)

13 Childcare for Staff

13.1 Kennet Day Nursery

The Kennet Day Nursery is a day nursery situated in the Civic Offices of Reading Borough Council. The nursery is also open to other public sector workers.

The nursery is open from 8am through until 6pm. There are also half day sessions available from 8am until 1pm and 1pm until 6pm.

The nursery offers breakfast, a mid morning snack, hot lunch and a hot or cold tea. They provide all formula milks for babies and only ask that parents provide nappies for their child.

At the nursery the children are divided into 3 areas:

- Minnows – 3 months to 18 months,
- Dragonflies – 18 months to 30 months
- Kingfishers – 30 months to 4 years old.

The staff at the nursery are very caring and committed. They have chosen to work with children as their vocation and are very passionate in ensuring that they deliver a high quality of care. The children each have a key person who forms a close bond with them and their family and will be responsible for feeding, changing and liaising with the parents.

They offer a fantastic range of activities and experiences for the children. This can range from painting, cooking, dressing up, sand and water, looking at the letters in our name and music and movement to name but a few. They go on outings to the market, the library or even the Hexagon to watch a show.

They work closely with the child and parents to settle the child into the nursery and offer home visits and lots of visits leading up to taking up a place. They will ease the transition for both parents and the child in order that both happy and ready for their exciting time with the nursery.

They do a lot of preparation for school. Again, this will involve working with both the child and their parents to talk about this important transition to ensure it is a smooth and happy one.

13.2 Other Childcare Providers

For information about other forms of childcare in Reading, please visit the Reading Borough Council website or contact the [Family Resource Centre UK](#).



ADOPTION LEAVE REQUEST FORM

Directorate: _____

Name: _____

Payroll reference no.: _____ Job title: _____

Adoption leave dates: From _____ To _____

I wish to receive my *12 weeks SAP rate/half pay rate which will be repayable if I do not return to work for a period of 12 weeks. Yes / No
(*delete as appropriate)

I do not wish to receive my *12 weeks at SAP rate/half pay rate until I return to work (contact Payments Section at that time). Yes / No
(*delete as appropriate)

Additional comments in support of your application:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please forward to your manager

Managers must immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the adoption leave details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Adoption).



FOSTER CARER LEAVE REQUEST FORM

Name:

Directorate:

Payroll reference no:

Position:

Location:

Foster leave dates: From: To:

Additional comments in support of your application:

Signed: Date:

Authorised by:

.....

Signed:

Name:

Position:

(manager)

Dated:

.....

.....

Please forward to your manager



NOTIFICATION OF MATERNITY LEAVE AND PAY

Directorate: _____

Name: _____

Payroll reference no.: _____ Job title: _____

Adoption leave dates: From _____ To _____

Length of continuous Local Government Service: _____

Date of commencement with Reading Borough Council: _____

Expected date of birth: _____

Form MATB1* attached / to follow (**delete as appropriate*)

I wish to take advantage of my entitlement to maternity leave and pay under Reading Borough Council's provisions for maternity leave.

I expect to commence my maternity leave on: (*give the date*) _____

Please tick the appropriate box:

- I do not wish to return to work; **OR**
- I wish to reserve the right to return to work

Request for pay: (*tick box*)

- I wish to receive my entitlement to SMP.
- I wish to receive my SMP plus 12 weeks half pay which will be repayable if I do not return to work for a period of 3 months or more; **OR**
- I wish to defer my 12 weeks half pay until I return to work and have the payment made to me once I have returned to work for a period of at least 3 months.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please forward to your manager

Managers must immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the maternity leave details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Maternity).



MATERNITY SUPPORT LEAVE REQUEST FORM

Directorate:

Name:

Payroll reference no:

Position:

Location:

Maternity support leave dates: From: To:

I hereby request paid maternity support leave of days

I am the *husband/partner/nominated carer of
whose MAT B1 maternity certificate is attached (*delete as appropriate*)

If you have been nominated as a carer, please include a letter from the mother authorising you to act as carer on their behalf.

Additional comments in support of your application:

Signed: Date:

Authorised by:

Signed:

Name:

Position: (manager)

Dated:

Please forward to your manager



PARENTAL LEAVE REQUEST FORM

Directorate:

Name:

Payroll reference no.:

Position:

Location:

Parental leave dates: From: To:

Additional comments in support of your application:

Signed: Date:

Authorised by:

Signed:

Name:

Position:
(*manager*)

Dated:

Please forward to your manager



PATERNITY LEAVE REQUEST FORM

Directorate: _____

Name: _____

Payroll reference no.: _____ Job title: _____

Paternity leave dates: From _____ To _____

I request paid paternity of _____ working weeks.

I am the *husband / partner (delete as appropriate) of _____
whose MATB1 maternity certificate is attached.

Additional comments in support of your application:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please forward to your manager

Managers must immediately update iTrent Managers Self Service with the paternity leave details (under the Absence section, select the employee's name and click on Paternity).



SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE NOTICE REQUEST (SPL1 FORM)

Section A: To be completed by RBC employee, wishing to take Shared Parental Leave (SPL)

Full Name _____

Employee no (on pay slip) _____

Directorate _____

Service / School _____

EWC date _____ Or baby's birth date _____

Matching date _____ Placement date _____

Start date of maternity / adoption leave _____

End date of maternity / adoption leave _____

Start date of maternity pay / maternity allowance / adoption pay _____

End date of maternity / maternity allowance / adoption pay _____

Number of weeks SPL available (50 max) _____

Number of weeks Shared Parental Leave Pay (ShPP) available (37 max) _____

My SPL will start on _____ and end on _____

I intend to take _____ weeks SPL and _____ weeks ShPP.

My partners SPL will start on _____ and end on _____

My partner intends to take _____ weeks SPL and _____ weeks ShPP.

Further information (if you are requesting discontinuous leave please specify the dates you wish to request below)

This is my first / second / third SPL notice request (delete as appropriate)

You have a right to submit three notifications specifying leave periods during the one year after the birth / placement of the child.

The start date of the first period of shared parental leave that you wish to take must be at least eight weeks after you have provided this notice. Shared parental leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week

Section B: Declaration to be completed by the employee

I confirm that I am sharing the childcare responsibility with the above mentioned qualifying partner during the SPL period and that the information given above is accurate;

I wish to curtail my maternity / adoption leave and pay or I have returned to work before the end of my statutory maternity / adoption leave period (if the RBC employee is the mother or adopter);

I will immediately inform the organisation if I cease to care for the child or if the child's mother informs me that they have revoked the curtailment of their maternity leave or pay period.

I understand that a false declaration will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Signed (employee) _____ **Date** _____

Section C: Declaration to be completed by the qualifying partner of the RBC employee

Qualifying Partner's Full Name _____

NI Number _____

Address _____

Employer's Name & Business Address _____

I confirm that all the information given in the above sections is accurate and that:

I satisfy the qualifying requirements for taking Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay;

I am the father/mother/adopter of the child or married to/the civil partner or partner of the above named RBC employee;

I agree to share with the above named RBC employee Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay;

I have curtailed my maternity / adoption leave and pay or returned to work before the end of my statutory maternity / adoption leave period (if the qualifying partner is the mother or adopter);

If required by RBC I will supply a copy of the birth certificate / documentary evidence of the name and address of the adoption agency within 14 days of the request;

If required, RBC can contact my employer to check eligibility.

I agree to RBC processing my information in relation to the administration of Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Leave Pay;

I will immediately inform my partner if I no longer meet the requirements to curtail my maternity / adoption leave and pay, if applicable, (if the qualifying partner is the mother or adopter);

Signed (partner) _____ Date _____

Section D: To be completed by the Line Manager within 14 days of receiving this request

Please tick as appropriate:

I accept the SPL notice request (all continuous leave notifications must be accepted)

I refuse the SPL notice request (discontinuous leave only). Please complete table below:

I am unable to accommodate your discontinuous leave request for the following business ground(s):

Please refer to section 5.6 in the SPL policy in the event that discontinuous leave has been refused.

I confirm an agreed modification to the original discontinuous leave arrangement requested.

The modified SPL dates are as follows:

SPL will commence on _____ and end on _____

I intend to take _____ weeks SPL and _____ weeks ShPP

Further information (if required) _____

Manager name _____ **Position** _____

Manager signature _____ **Date** _____

If the discontinuous shared parental leave request has been modified, the employee must sign below:

I agree to the modified SPL leave arrangement

Employee signature _____ Date _____

Please return this form to your HR contact to process and provide a copy of this form to the employee for their records.

FAMILY LEAVE POLICY

Agreed between the Council and the recognised trades unions.

Signed:

Sheila Smith	Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development
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Miriam Palfrey	Staff Side and Branch Secretary for Unison
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Kieran Magee	Joint Shop Stewards Committee and Branch Secretary/Convenor for Unite
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Alison McNamara	Education & Community Unions Panel and Branch Secretary for the National Education Union (NEU)
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Robert Stirling	Convenor for GMB
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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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