

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY 2024



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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY DOCUMENT
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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY DOCUMENT

1. Introduction and General Responsibilities.

This Policy sets out the structures, standards and health and safety responsibilities of Officers and Elected Members of Reading Borough Council in relation to all work related physical and mental health risks.

These responsibilities also apply where the Council has direct management control over the day-to-day work activities of agency staff, interim staff and staff in the Borough's maintained schools. Where a contract is not in place, such as for volunteers, but the Council has control over their work activities then managers will need to ensure that they apply the same health and safety standards and controls as if the volunteers were employees.

Managers should read this Policy in conjunction with Code of Practice 017 The Management of Health & Safety at Work. [Health and safety | Reading](#)

Contractors

The Council expects that contractors working for it shall work to the same high safety standards as our employees and shall not put themselves, the Council's staff or members of the public at risk. In order that the Council can fulfil its non-delegable health and safety responsibilities whenever the use of contractors is being considered, an assessment of their health and safety capabilities will be made by looking at policies, procedures, risk assessments and their history of health and safety compliance.

Council Owned Companies

Where the Council is a contracting authority and/or owner (solely or jointly) of a trading company, then it sometimes retains a number of non-delegable health and safety responsibilities. These will be determined on a case -by-case basis by the Corporate Health & Safety Team.

The Council is mindful of any health and safety implications to the staff of the companies of any policies or significant decisions it may make, and as such will ensure that any health and safety implications are taken into account when making policy or significant decisions.

Health and Safety responsibilities in relation to Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) remain with the company, however they are supported in this by RBC's Corporate H&S Team.

Shared Service arrangements

Where the Council has established a shared services arrangement for the provision of services for RBC by a partner, it will still retain a number of non-delegable health and safety responsibilities. As such, it will ensure that the health and safety policies, procedures, systems and training of the partner provider are fit for purpose and being applied. This will be achieved by proportionate monitoring of the health and safety performance of the partner.

2.0 Levels of Responsibility for Health and Safety

Reading Borough Council is the ‘Responsible Person’ as defined under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 for ensuring that health and safety risks are effectively managed. To ensure that the Council can discharge its responsibilities, all staff and managers have been allocated duties that are proportionate to their level in the organisation.

Elected Members – The Council

The Leader of the Council holds the portfolio for health and safety.

The Personnel Committee has responsibility for approving the Health and Safety Policy following consultation with the Local Joint Trade Unions Forum.

Elected members should satisfy themselves that significant health and safety risks have been identified and are being effectively managed. Elected members should also consider any health & safety implications of decisions ensuring that health and safety controls are proportionate to the risk.

Corporate & Directorate Management Teams

Senior management teams are to ensure that health and safety risks are considered during the normal corporate risk management processes in that:

- There is a visible and active commitment to health and safety management.
- There is effective downward communication within their management structures.
- That health and safety management is integrated within business decisions.
- Appropriate action is taken to deal with any health and safety issues that they find or have been brought to their attention.

Level 5 Chief Executive and Executive Directors

Collectively and individually the Chief Executive and Executive Directors will take overall responsibility for this Policy and its implementation. Collective responsibility will be enacted through the Corporate Management Team who:

- Will decide upon strategy and policy, and strategic H&S risk based on advice from the Corporate Health and Safety Team.
- Will take an active leadership role in health and safety management.
- Will take appropriate action to deal with any health and safety issues that they find

or have been brought to their attention.

- Will ensure sufficient resources are in place to control health and safety risks.
- Will include appropriate health and safety risks in the Strategic Risk Register (Risk Management).
- Will support and monitor the safety performance of those reporting to them, in particular through the annual review and 1:1 system.

Level 4 Assistant & Deputy Directors and Directors – Levels 1 & 3 responsibilities plus:

- Will contribute towards the development of the Directorate Health & Safety Action Plan.
- Will take appropriate action to deal with any health and safety issues that they find or have been brought to their attention.
- Will ensure that all Health & Safety self-audits in their service areas are carried out annually.
- Will ensure that health and safety considerations are made during project planning.
- Will ensure that health and safety risks are considered during the business risk management process.
- Will ensure that suitable resources are available to enable the requirements of this Policy to be carried out within their areas of responsibility.
- Will ensure that suitable health and safety targets are contained within service plans.
- Will support and monitor the safety performance of those reporting to them, in particular through the annual review and 1:1 system.

Level 3 Service Managers – Level 1 responsibilities plus:

Authorisation to carry out certain Level 3 responsibilities may be made to one or more managers within the Service. The relevant Level 4 manager will make this decision based on the risks and responsibilities within the Service.

- Will take responsibility for the implementation of this Policy in the areas under their control.
- Will take appropriate action to deal with any health and safety issues that they find or have been brought to their attention.

- Will ensure that suitable health and safety targets are contained within annual reviews and 1:1's.
- Will carry out a Health & Safety Self-Audit of their area at least annually.
- Will liaise with the Corporate Health and Safety Team to ensure that the Council's safety policies and initiatives are appropriate to their area.
- Must refer any health and safety issues they are not authorised to deal with to the next level of responsibility.

Level 2 First line supervisors/managers – Level 1 responsibilities plus:

- Will implement this Policy, relevant Codes of Practice, risk assessments and Local Safety Practices in the area under their control.
- Will take appropriate action to deal with any health and safety issues that they find or have been brought to their attention.
- Will ensure that all staff within their teams have up to date health and safety training.
- Will ensure that health and safety work is prioritised to meet declared targets.
- Will support and monitor the safety performance of those reporting to them, in particular through the 1:1 and annual review performance management process.
- Will undertake safety inspections at appropriate intervals in the area under their control and will take action to correct problems identified.
- Will carry out and periodically review the risk assessments relevant to their section.
- Will establish and enforce safe systems of work for all tasks under their control.
- Will ensure that any statutory records that are required, are accurate, up to date and consistent.
- Will carry out investigations into accidents and incidents, when required to do so.
- Will ensure that new staff understand all relevant risk assessments, Codes of Practice and Local Safety Practices at a 1:1 meeting in the first four weeks of their employment and ensure that there are appropriate records of this are in place.
- Must refer any health and safety issues they feel they are not authorised or able to deal with to the next level of responsibility.

Level 1 All staff

- Must act in a manner to protect and promote their own health and safety and that of colleagues, members of the public and others.
- Must tell their manager about any issues that may affect their own personal physical or mental health and wellbeing or that of others.
- Must co-operate with the efforts of management to ensure effective health and safety.
- Must attend training provided, read documentation provided and put into practice all instruction intended to ensure effective safety.
- Must report all accidents/incidents, near misses and hazards immediately to their line manager.
- Must respect and make proper use of all equipment provided.
- Must wear all personal protective equipment (PPE) that has been provided.
- Must refer any health and safety issues they feel they are not authorised to deal with to the next level of responsibility.
- Must carry out any specific health and safety duties that have been allocated to them as part of the normal work activity. Where for any reason those duties cannot be carried out, they must report these issues to their line manager immediately.

3.0 Training

All new starters with the Council go through an induction programme. As part of the induction programme, managers will ensure their new member of staff understands the relevant risk assessments and any Local Safety Practices for their work. Staff will also be instructed in the fire safety, first aid and accident reporting procedures. This basic local induction covering the Council's safety practices and procedures must be carried out during the first four weeks of a new starter's employment. Information about the training is included on the RBC intranet for all colleagues except school staff; school staff are to book training through the schools' portal.

Training is refreshed every two years. However, specific skills-based training must be completed before an individual undertakes the work. Skills-based training will be refreshed or renewed as determined by industry best practice.

Level 1 Training

Whilst all staff have Level 1 responsibilities, employees at Levels 4 and 5 are not required to undertake Level 1.

Level 1 training is designed to inform staff about the practices and procedures contained within this Policy and to provide sufficient knowledge for them to be able to

carry out their work in a safe manner. The training must be completed within three months of starting a new job.

Within the first four weeks of employment, a new starter's supervisor will devise a health and safety training plan in consultation with them. A copy of this training plan must be retained. In devising the training plan, the supervisor, in conjunction with the new starter, will identify any health and safety training that is appropriate for the duties of the post.

The training plan will be tailored to each individual's specific post and it must contain every element of health and safety that they will need training in. The plan must also show:

- 1) All elements of the job that can be undertaken prior to training taking place.
- 2) The tasks that can only be carried out with supervision prior to training taking place.
- 3) Tasks that must not be carried out until training has been completed.

Level 2 Training

Health and safety training for Level 2 supervisors must be completed within three months of starting the job.

The training will consist of the Level 1 course, and a number of core modules that every Level 2 must undertake. Additional modules are available for specific tasks.

The mandatory modules that must be undertaken are 'Risk Assessment/Safety Inspection' and Accident Investigation'.

Level 3 Training

The health and safety training required for holders of Level 3 posts or those who have been authorised to carry out certain Level 3 duties, must be completed within three months of starting work.

Whilst this course will cover all necessary aspects of Health and Safety that Level 3 managers will need, they can take any of the other modules if they require further and specific knowledge.

Levels 4 and 5 Training

The training for Levels 4 & 5 is the one-day IOSH Leading Safely course (or equivalent).

Periodic briefings will be also given to keep senior managers apprised of developments. These briefings will also help to identify any trends across service areas.

4.0. Organisation.

The following section details how Reading Borough Council manages its health and safety responsibilities.

Corporate Health and Safety Board

The Corporate Health and Safety Board is responsible for coordinating improvements in the control of health and safety risks. The Board is made up of the Chairs of the Directorate Health & Safety Boards and Union Safety Representatives/Branch Secretaries and is chaired by an Executive Director appointed by the Chief Executive. It is the most senior point of consultation between unions and senior management on health, safety and welfare matters. The Board meets quarterly.

The Board reviews health and safety standards in the Council and produces monitoring reports to the Corporate Management Team (CMT). It also reviews this Policy to ensure that it remains relevant to the Council’s work activities and in particular it:

- Develops the Council’s health and safety performance management framework and plan and monitors performance against that framework and plan.
- Reviews the health and safety performance of the Directorates against agreed targets and their Action Plans.
- Advises the Directorate Health & Safety Boards on appropriate action to improve the health and safety performance of their Directorate and for significant matters, recommends to CMT initiatives to improve the health & safety performance of the Council.
- Examines reports on significant accidents and incidents and directs Services to resolve issues or risks or proposes actions to CMT.
- Considers the implications of legislative changes and general correspondence and advice from the Health and Safety Executive and other relevant agencies and ensures that any relevant changes to the H&S Policy, strategy and governance are made; escalating to CMT as required.
- Considers reports on corporate health and safety matters submitted by safety representatives or managers and ensures that suitable actions are taken to rectify any shortfalls.
- Ensures that minutes of the meetings are available to all Managers, Staff, and Union representatives detailing action points where necessary.

None of this detracts from the responsibilities of Levels 4 & 5 Managers and the Directorate and Corporate Management Teams to enact and monitor health and safety arrangements and in particular, to ensure that the requirements of this Policy are being fulfilled.

Directorate Health and Safety Boards

Each Directorate has its own Health and Safety Board, chaired by the Executive Director (or deputy as agreed in consultation with Chief Executive and Chair of the

Corporate Health & Safety Board). Service Managers and Union Safety representatives make up each Board. There will be sufficient representation from managers at Level 3 to ensure that all services are represented. The Chairs of these Board will be members of the Corporate Health and Safety Board. The Boards meet at least quarterly.

These Boards review safety matters of Directorate concern. In particular the Boards:

- Develop, drive and monitor a Directorate Health and Safety Action Plan (having regard to the priorities within the Council's Health & Safety Strategy).
- Present to the Corporate Health & Safety Board their Directorate Health & Safety Action Plan status, identifying any significant risks and demonstrating what action has been taken to control those risks.
- Recommend to their DMT initiatives to improve the safety performance of the Directorate.
- Review the Directorate's accidents, incidents and health and safety training.
- Establish and monitors a programme for Level 3 self-audits and risk assessments and will monitor the progress of actions needed to control significant risks.
- Receive reports from managers or Union Safety Representatives and offer advice or direction to resolve issues.
- Ensures that minutes of the meetings are available to all managers, staff, and Union representatives detailing action points where necessary.

Role of Trade Unions

Trades Unions have the following rights under health and safety legislation:

- To investigate potential hazards and dangerous occurrences.
- To examine the causes of accidents at work
- To investigate complaints relating to employees' health, safety and welfare at work
- To make representations to the employer about the above and other general matters affecting health, safety and welfare of employees
- To carry out inspections of the workplace
- To represent employees in consultations with the Health and Safety Executive, or other enforcing agencies and to receive information from the HSE.
- To attend Health and Safety Board meetings.

Union representatives sit on both the Corporate and Directorate Health and Safety Boards and participate fully in the discussion and decision-making process through these bodies. Union Safety Representatives are actively encouraged to carry out safety inspections and accident investigations, either independently or in conjunction with management. They should also be invited and involved in the annual health and safety self-audit process. In order to carry out the above functions an employer is

required to allow Union representatives time off with pay, suitable facilities and assistance.

Corporate Health and Safety Team.

The Corporate Health and Safety Team’s primary role is to provide assurance that, as an employer, Reading Borough Council complies with all relevant health and safety legislation and that the Council conducts its work activities in such a manner as to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees, customers, residents and visitors to Reading. It achieves this by providing training and technical advice, monitoring compliance and formulating and promoting the Council’s health and safety documented management system.

The Corporate Health & Safety Team will take the lead for all matters where there has been a serious injury to member of staff (e.g. RIDDOR reports), a work-related injury to a member of the public, a failure in health and safety process or risk control or where an enforcement agency is engaged in an investigation.

5.0 Documented Health & Safety Management System

The Council has developed a series of health and safety documented management systems.

Risk Assessment

Level 2 managers will carry out risk assessments and involve relevant staff in the process. See Code of Practice 027 below.

Risk assessments may be generic for low-risk areas (e.g. general office work). For other higher risk areas, a specific risk assessment must be carried out. Specific risk assessments can be for a particular task, job role or person. This includes where a member of staff has a disability or a pre-existing medical condition (and may be adversely affected by the work activity); or is a new or expectant mother; or has little experience and works in a high-risk area.

A specific risk assessment will be required where a customer has individual needs or challenges which present health and safety risks to either themselves, staff or others.

Whilst risk assessments are most frequently used to assess hazards that staff and others might experience during normal activities, managers will also need to risk assess activities that are less frequent but could still present significant risks. This could include office moves, changes to working patterns, major incidents and external inspections where staff health and wellbeing may be affected. Managers must ensure that suitable controls and support mechanisms are in place to reduce the risks to safety or adverse health or wellbeing consequences.

A Local Safety Practice will be prepared, based on the findings of risk assessments, when complex control measures are needed to reduce a significant risk of injury or loss (see [Health and safety | Reading](#)).

Risk assessments will be recorded by the person carrying them out and made available to staff and others by the relevant Manager. Risk assessments will be checked during the Health and Safety Self-Audits.

Risk assessments need to be reviewed when:

- A set period of time has passed. (At least annually).
- When new technology or ways of working affect the risk.
- When the risk materially changes.
- Following an accident or incident when the adopted methods of working were being followed.
- There are changes in legislation or guidance.

Local Safety Practices

Whenever a risk assessment has been carried out on a local work activity or on a piece of equipment and a significant risk has been identified which requires multiple controls to reduce the risk, then a Local Safety Practice (LSP) that sets out a safe system of work must be prepared. All staff shall be provided with copies of the LSPs that are relevant to their work area or activities. Suitable information, instruction or supervision shall be provided to enable staff to follow the adopted safe working practice.

LSPs will need to be reviewed during the risk assessment process (see [Health and safety | Reading](#)).

Codes of Practice

The Codes of Practice (CoPs) cover the main safety hazards faced by staff, visitors, contractors and members of the public arising from the work activities of Reading Borough Council. The CoPs are generic and provide information on how to control the risks involved within a particular activity.

Record Keeping

Adequate, accurate and consistent health and safety records shall be maintained. The Level 3 manager is responsible for ensuring that there are suitable and sufficient records of their team's activities. Records should be kept electronically and must be readily available and secure. The following records are required.

- a) All risk assessments relevant to the section. (NB When a risk assessment relates to an individual member of staff or customer, it should be kept securely.)
- b) All Local Safety Practices relevant to the section.
- c) Statutory and manufactures' recommended inspection records for fire safety, asbestos management, legionella control, electric and gas installations, portable appliance tests, lifts and lifting equipment, powered gates, local exhaust ventilation, work equipment and vehicles. (Note: Property Services

will hold many of these records when they are providing a planned preventative maintenance service).

- d) Records identifying the health and safety training received by every service/team member with dates and details. These should include acknowledgement by each staff member that he or she has seen and understood the relevant risk assessments, CoPs and LSPs. (Training course records should be sent to the Organisational Development Team to be recorded centrally or recorded directly on ITRENT).
- e) Copies of all self-audits and inspections carried out within the service/team.
- f) Records of all accidents and incidents reported within the service/team, together with investigation findings and records of remedial actions undertaken.
- g) Copies of any correspondence with the HSE or other enforcement authority relevant to the service.

6.0 Health and Safety Monitoring

A Health & Safety Strategy has been established to ensure that the Council achieves continual improvement in health and safety performance.

Each Directorate will develop their own specific targets that are included in a Health and Safety Action Plan. Service areas will incorporate these targets into their Service Plans as appropriate. Progress with the actions is monitored via the Corporate and Directorate Health and Safety Boards and the Corporate Management Team.

Managers will ensure that where their direct reports have specific health and safety duties these will form part of the normal annual review and 1:1 performance management process.

CMT reviews monthly reports on incident rates, completion of self-audits and the status of risk assessments.

Health and Safety Self-Audit – Service Managers

A health and safety self-audit system has been established in the form of a questionnaire and guide. Service managers (Level 3) must carry out an audit of each service area at least annually. Action plans shall be prepared to rectify any shortfall. Union Safety Representatives are encouraged to contribute to the audit process.

Audits programmes are monitored by the Directorate and Corporate Health and Safety Boards and the Directorate and Corporate management Teams.

Health and Safety Inspections – First Line Supervisors/Managers

A health and safety inspection is a physical inspection of the work area. A standard health and safety inspection form is available ([Health and safety | Reading](#)). Where the risk identified by the safety inspection is deemed to be sufficiently serious and it cannot be resolved, a report shall be made to the appropriate DMT and Directorate Health and Safety Board for resolution.

Accident/Incident and Near Miss Reporting, Investigation and Monitoring

All accidents/incidents and near misses shall be recorded. Service areas are responsible for reporting any accidents, dangerous occurrences or disease that are required to be notified to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) (*Refer to COP 001 – Accident Reporting*) [COP1 - Accident reporting | Reading](#)).

Managers will investigate all accidents/incidents and near misses to establish whether additional procedures are needed to prevent the likelihood of recurrence. Risk assessments, LSPs, training, instruction or levels of supervision may need to be reviewed following the investigation.

Periodically, managers must review the accidents and incidents that have occurred in their service areas to try and identify any trends. Where a trend has been identified, remedial action shall be instigated.

Accident/Incident statistics are reviewed at the Directorate and Council Health and Safety Boards and CMT.

Control of Contractors

As part of the normal contract monitoring, contractors at work will be checked regularly for safe working. Suitable Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) will be incorporated into the normal contract monitoring processes. The Council will stop the work if a contractor is found to be operating in an unsafe manner. (See [COP24 - Contractors | Reading](#))

Documentation

All Codes of Practice, forms and information sheets follow the numbering system below:

- 001 - ACCIDENT REPORTING
- 002 - BASIC CONSTRUCTION
- 003 – ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN
- 004 - CASH HANDLING
- 005 - CATERING
- 006 - CLEANING
- 007 - CONFINED SPACES
- 008 - CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH)
- 009 - DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT
- 010 - DRIVING VEHICLES AT WORK
- 011 - ELECTRICITY AT WORK
- 012 - FIRE SAFETY
- 013 - FIRST AID AT WORK
- 014 - HEALTH AND SAFETY IN OFFICES
- 015 - PERSONAL SAFETY& LONE WORKING
- 016 - LIFTING OPERATIONS AND LIFTING EQUIPMENT
- 017 - MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK
- 018 – NEW & EXPECTANT MOTHERS
- 019 - NOISE AT WORK
- 020 - PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT
- 021 – MANUAL HANDLING
- 022 – NON-EMPLOYEES
- 023 – AGENCY WORKERS
- 024 - CONTRACTORS
- 025 – WORKING AT HEIGHT
- 026 - WORKPLACE HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY
- 027 – RISK ASSESSMENT
- 028 - SHARPS
- 029 – COMMUNICABLE DISEASES
- 030 - EXCLUSION & INCIDENT LIST PROCEDURE
- 031 – FLEET MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES
- 032 – SMOKING AT WORK POLICY
- 033 – OPERATIONS IN OR AROUND FLOOD WATER
- 034 – STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT
- 035 - OFFSITE ACTIVITIES POLICY
- 036 - SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS
- 037 - SLIPS TRIP AND FALLS – INFORMATION SHEETS
- 038 - DISABILITY & HEALTH AND SAFETY – INFORMATION SHEETS
- 039 – ADVERSE WEATHER – INFORMATION SHEETS
- 040 - ADULT SOCIAL CARE – INFORMATION SHEETS
- 041 – PROPERTY MANAGEMENT – INFORMATION SHEETS
- 042 – RESPONDING TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Health & Safety Management

