

**Health, Safety and Welfare Policy for
West Berkshire Council**

STATEMENT OF INTENT

West Berkshire Council (WBC) recognises and accepts its responsibility to provide a safe and healthy place of work for all employees, and others affected by its activities.

Under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 it is the duty of WBC as an employer to prepare, and revise when appropriate, a written health and safety policy for its employees. This Policy ensures all who may be affected by the work of the Council, so far as is reasonably practicable, are not exposed to hazards or related risk.

The Authority shall also follow a safety management system that provides guidance and direction to working safely, via the WBC Intranet. The system provides detail behind local arrangements such as work at height, lone working, stress, staff consultation, staff training, safe use of equipment and chemicals, and roles and responsibilities.

Subject specific health and safety policies, which support this general Health and Safety Policy statement, are available via the West Berkshire Council Intranet home page.

Underpinning the above, the Authority shall provide necessary training, instruction and resource to ensure a safe place of work. Through visible management action, appropriate conduct shall be second nature rather than imposed. Health and safety is everyone's responsibility, but management shall also demonstrate a progressive improvement in injury and ill health prevention. The goal shall be the prevention of accidents and causes of ill health at work, and allowing corporate aims and objectives to be met.

Suitable and sufficient risk assessment is essential for a safe and healthy place of work. Measurable benefit is seen from this process, and it demonstrates the commitment to staff well-being and proper attention to health and safety. This approach shall continue focusing on everyday good service management and provision.

Services shall adopt the Health and Safety Policy statement, ensuring ownership and measured improvement in local operating methods.

The Chief Executive, Elected Members and Corporate Directors of the Council give their full support to the above Statement of Intent, and the attached Health, Safety and Welfare Policy.

Signed:

Chief Executive
West Berkshire Council

Leader of the Council
Dated:

Health, Safety and Welfare Policy

It is the express policy of West Berkshire Council to ensure that:

- The place of work shall be safe and without risk to health, with proper facilities and arrangements for welfare and first aid.
- Safe systems of work shall be employed to preserve the health and safety of employees and customers who may be affected by our activities, within the environments we have responsibility for.
- Appropriate planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing of work activities shall be carried out, with hazards fully addressed through the risk assessment process.
- Health and safety performance shall be measured on a regular basis, to benchmark performance, to establish challenging targets, and to investigate and learn from all safety related incidents.
- Suitable and safe arrangements shall be in place for the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances, with suitable safety equipment and protective clothing made available.
- Appropriate information, advice, training and supervision shall be provided to ensure all persons under our control are fully aware of their responsibilities for all aspects of health and safety.
- Channels of communication shall be in place that encourage and permit employees, and their representatives as appropriate, to contribute in suggesting and implementing measures to protect the health and safety of everyone.
- Positive contributions to health and safety shall be recognised and rewarded, however, disciplinary procedures shall be applied where deliberate or flagrant breach of health and safety regulations, procedures or directions is evident.

ARRANGEMENTS

Subsequent 'arrangements' are the means whereby West Berkshire Council formally accept and enact their responsibility. The arrangements comprise policies, procedures and guidance compliant with nationally recognised standards, brought together within the 'Safety Management System'. Procedures covered include:

- Roles, Responsibility and Competency;
- Risk Assessment and Hazard Control;
- Accident Reporting, Investigation and Prevention;
- Appointment of Competent Contractors, their Monitoring & Control;
- Fire Prevention, Housekeeping and Safety Inspection, etc.

The Health, Safety and Welfare Policy shall be reviewed annually, with re-issue determined by changes in the organisation, Legislation or working practices.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility for discharging health and safety duties rests with the Employer. As such, the ultimate responsibility for proper management and review of health and safety rests jointly with the Chief Executive and elected members of West Berkshire Council. The principal responsibilities within West Berkshire Council include:

1. Chief Executive:

The Chief Executive shall ensure that the Health and Safety Policy remains an effective working document. In particular, the Chief Executive is responsible to ensure that:

- Leadership is shown on health and safety matters;
- The commitment to health and safety is translated into effective action;
- The Health, Safety and Welfare Policy is periodically reviewed in the light of current conditions;
- Adequate resources are provided to implement and maintain the effectiveness of the Councils Health, Safety and Welfare Policy

2. Elected Members

Elected Members (as employers of Council staff), shall ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, the organisation is a safe and healthy place of work.

They shall support the implementation of WBC Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and the Safety Management Strategy of the Council and ensure that:

- adequate resources are provided to implement and maintain the effectiveness of the West Berkshire Councils Health and Safety Management System.
- they monitor the overall Safety Management Performance of WBC by reviewing accident trends, compensation claims, compliance reports from the Health and Safety Team. Also, consider reports from our insurers, and consider complaints raised via consultation with employees and trade union representation.
- Elected members also work within the framework of the WBC Safety Policies as they apply to all Employees.

3. Directors and Heads of Service:

All Directors and Heads of Service are responsible to the Chief Executive for the implementation of WBC Health and Safety Policies.

To this end, they are required to ensure that:

- Responsible Persons are appointed, trained and given the necessary time and support they need to fulfil their role, in each of the services buildings, as regards compliance with the 'FLASH Form' Assurance system;
- Competent Persons are appointed, trained and given the necessary support to assist each Responsible Person;
- An adequate number of Risk Assessors are appointed and trained for their service area, and given appropriate time and resources to fulfil this role;
- Risk Assessments are undertaken, as appropriate, for those activities under their control and made available to staff members, and appropriate contractors;
- Appropriate preventative and protective measures (safe systems of work), arising from those risk assessments, are properly implemented;
- Service Area Contractors are initially vetted (as regards their competence in health and safety management) and regularly monitored on their performance, to ensure that all health and safety risks are adequately controlled;
- Managers in a supervisory role attend mandatory Health and Safety Training;

- Where appropriate Fire Wardens and Incident Control Officers are appointed, trained and supported;
- Where appropriate First Aiders are appointed, trained and supported;
- Where appropriate Manual Handling Risk Assessors are appointed, trained and supported;
- Where appropriate Display Screen Equipment Risk Assessors are appointed, trained and supported;
- An adequate number of staff are trained to use the Webrisk reporting system;
- All reportable accidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses within their areas of responsibility are centrally reported using West Berkshire Council's electronic incident reporting system (Webrisk);
- All staff attend mandatory Health and Safety training;
- All staff are properly inducted and trained upon the risk assessments pertaining to their work, so that they understand the necessary safe systems of working;
- Health and safety performance within their service is monitored, maintained and where possible improved;
- Opportunities to consult with staff upon Health and Safety issues are regularly created within staff meetings / briefings or, where not possible, via email dialogue;
- Work activities are regularly monitored by managers, team leaders or supervisors to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained by staff, volunteers or contractors.

4. Responsible Persons

The implementation of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 introduced the role of Responsible Person. West Berkshire Council has identified, authorised and trained suitable employees within Council buildings to enact this role. To ensure consistent application across the Directorates, Corporate Board has agreed that this role should fall to the most senior West Berkshire Council employee on each site / premise.

In addition the Council has extended the role of the Responsible Person to include oversight of issues relating to:

- Fire,
- Legionella,
- Asbestos, and
- General Safety and Health issues for each site.

The Council has developed a "Responsible Person" toolkit to help the Responsible Persons carry out their role, and through a Web based (Webrisk) reporting arrangement (the 'FLASH' form – Fire, Legionella, Asbestos, Safety and Health), to allow the Council to monitor the work of the Responsible Persons.

Responsible Persons must bring action items arising from quarterly Flash Forms to the attention of their Head of Service so that priorities can be agreed and the necessary resources found.

Responsible Persons should ensure that designated health and safety co-ordinators undertake regular workplace self inspection of WBC properties.

5. Managers

Managers hold a pivotal role in ensuring that all staff and volunteers receive both mandatory Corporate training on Health and Safety and then 'job specific' training, covering all appropriate risk assessments and 'local' arrangements for Health and Safety management within the building where they are based.

Managers must ensure all accidents/ incidents are reported (using Webrisk) and then fully investigated, to identify any errors which could be avoided in the future, or where further training needs or changes in the 'safe system of work' are necessary.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that any necessary additional risk control measures, identified by the initial risk assessment or a review of an existing risk assessment are implemented. If this involves additional resource then they will need to seek approval up to an appropriate higher level of their management structure. In the interim period they must keep the Responsible Person (for the appropriate building(s)) informed and their Head of Service.

Managers should regularly monitor their staff to ensure that safe systems of working are being followed and take any necessary actions where they are not.

Managers must ensure that staff receive and use any necessary personal protective equipment which is required for their job.

When undertaking return to work interviews, managers must assure themselves that staff are fit enough to continue their normal job of work safely e.g. are they continuing any prescribed course of medication which could affect their performance?

Managers must create opportunities for consultation about health and safety issues during individual One to Ones, Appraisal meetings and during collective team or staff meetings.

Managers must lead by example as regards creating the correct health & safety 'culture' within their service area.

6. Employees:

All Employees have clear legal responsibilities that include:

- Taking reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what your work activities - there are no exceptions to this, every employee has this duty;
- Working in a safe and proper manner at all times, in accordance with the health and safety training provided;
- Co-operating and complying with management instructions regarding statutory health and safety duties;
- Bringing defective equipment or dangerous situations immediately to the attention of Line Management;
- Never intentionally or recklessly interfering with or misusing anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare;
- Only undertaking tasks for which one is trained and competent to do, and observing all warning, restriction and emergency signs at all times.
- Reporting all accidents, dangerous occurrences and near misses to line management immediately so that they may be investigated as required to prevent reoccurrence;

- Remaining fully conversant with Fire and Emergency Evacuation Procedures at the workplace;
- Always using any safety equipment provided, as trained, and in a responsible manner at all times;
- Use, maintain and correctly store any Personal Protective Equipment or clothing issued to you.

Health and Safety Advice and Support:

Whilst Directors, Heads of Service and Managers are responsible for health and safety within their Service, advice and support on health and safety matters is available internally from Property Services and the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

The role of the Corporate Health and Safety Team includes:

- Assisting with development of corporate policies and procedures to promote effective health and safety compliance across the Council;
- Providing support and advice to the Councils Risk Strategy Group (RSG)
- Ensuring Responsible Persons will receive a full briefing upon the requirements of their role and the function of the 'FLASH Form' upon appointment;
- Ensuring the National principles of sensible risk management are followed throughout West Berkshire Council;
- Co-ordinating and implementing planned Health and Safety Audits to an agreed Schedule of Audits, and subject to other demands, undertaking unplanned Audits when complaints or events dictate;
- Investigating work environment complaints, making recommendations to improve working conditions;
- Investigating serious accidents and near misses, and provide action plans and advice to prevent re-occurrence;
- Undertaking a programme of Fire, Legionella and Asbestos compliance audits within the Council buildings portfolio, including schools.

The Role of Property Services is as follows:

- To ensure that suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment, Legionella Risk Assessment and Asbestos Risk Assessment for each WBC controlled building;
- To ensure that copies of specialist risk assessments (Fire, Legionella, Asbestos) are sent to and received by all Responsible Persons (RP's);
- Along with Corporate Health and Safety Team to provide technical guidance to RP's as regards any action plans within those specialist risk assessments;
- To arrange for routine re-assessment as necessary e.g. upon an agreed cycle or after significant structural or service changes within the building;
- To provide competent maintenance contractors to carry out required remedial works identified within risk assessment action plans;
- To provide competent maintenance contractors to carry out agreed remedial works upon any other H & S defects identified by the FLASH form reporting system;

- To manage the quality of all work undertaken by maintenance contractors which is required by health and safety regulations;
- To supervise and manage larger scale construction projects, or when the nature of the works involves high risk activities such as roof work, demolition, confined space work, or excavations on behalf of the RP;
- In partnership with the Health and Safety Team to monitor compliance with the current Construction (Design & Management) Regulations in relation to all construction projects undertaken on behalf of West Berkshire Council;

Consultation with Employees

Means of consultation on health and safety matters shall be provided:

- For all Employees at work;
- Through a range of Safety meetings at local, Service or Directorate level, including local Link Groups, and Safety Committees, and management meetings;
- Through the Risk Strategy Group (the RSG);
- Through the Joint Consultative Panel (the JCP);
- By appointment and encouragement of Safety Representatives by recognised Trade Unions, providing them with sufficient facilities and training for the role;
- By the creation of consultation opportunities within One to Ones, meetings, during Performance Appraisal or during team or staff meetings;
- In service areas where team/staff meetings cannot be held, the appointment of a health and safety co-ordinator will be the accepted means of consultation.

Reporting arrangements

The Council has in place Safety Committees for each Directorate, and a Safety Committee for Schools. These report in to the Risk Strategy Group, which in turn reports to Corporate and Management Boards. The Corporate Health and Safety Team will monitor the contents of the Policy and report to Corporate Board when necessary.

Communication of Policy

This policy shall be displayed at work locations as appropriate and be available via the WBC Intranet WebPages, being brought to the attention of employees at their initial induction, at any refresher safety training as appropriate, and upon revision of the Policy.

The underlying health and safety message shall be:

- A positive safety culture shall be encouraged within each Service, and senior management are required to enthusiastically lead this;
- Employees shall be actively involved in the decision-making process;
- A safe working environment requires dedicated and sustained effort from all.

The aim shall be for continuous improvement of health safety and welfare issues at West Berkshire Council.

Signed:

Chief Executive
West Berkshire Council

Leader of the Council
Dated: