

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



Statement of Intent

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

Full compliance with legislation is the minimum standard to achieve. This 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 work safely. The system provides detail behind local arrangements such as staff consultation and training, safe use of equipment and chemicals, and roles and responsibility, etc.

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 prevention of accidents and causes of ill health at work.

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 attached Safety Policy statement, ensuring ownership and measured improvement in local operating methods.

The Chief Executive and Chief Officers 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:

15/10/2007

31/10/07

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 others who may be affected by our activities, within the environments we have responsibility for.
- Appropriate planning, organising 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 prevention and reporting
- Contractor control
- Fire Prevention, Housekeeping and Safety Inspection, etc.

Content shall be reviewed annually, with re-issue determined by changes in Legislation or working practice.

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 with the Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council. Specific responsibilities within West Berkshire Council include:

1. Chief Executive:

West Berkshire Council 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:

- The commitment to health and safety is translated into effective action
- The Safety Policy is periodically reviewed in the light of current conditions
- Adequate resources are provided to implement and maintain the effectiveness of the Council's Health and Safety Policy

2. Directors and Heads of Service:

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

In particular, Heads of Service and other officers in a supervisory capacity are responsible for the health and safety of Employees within their jurisdiction.

To this end, they are required to ensure that:

- Risk Assessments are undertaken for those activities under their control
- Appropriate preventative and protective measures are implemented
- A systematic approach to health and safety is adopted which identifies objectives and sets priorities
- 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.
- As an area of potentially high risk, Service area contracts are suitably managed and the health and safety issues are controlled (see relevant contractor control section of safety management system)
- Health and safety performance is maintained and where possible improved
- Any decisions taken relating to health and safety are being implemented promptly
- Arrangements are regularly monitored and reviewed to achieve progressive improvements
- Appropriate health and safety instruction, information and supervision is provided

- Employees are trained in appropriate safe working methods
- Work activities are regularly monitored to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained
- Employees with designated health and safety roles are given appropriate time and resources to enact that role

3. 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 you do or do not do - 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

In addition,

- 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

4. Responsible Persons

The implementation of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in October 2006 introduced the role of Responsible Person. West Berkshire Council must identify, authorise and train suitable employees within Council buildings to enact this role.

The legislation is very clear that this has to be an individual who is either:

- The employer in control of the workplace;
- The person with overall management responsibilities;
- The occupier of the premises; or
- The owner of the premises (e.g. an empty building).

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.

More specific guidance on the role of the 'Responsible Person' can be found in the relevant Safety Management System guidance (Fire Management).

Training is available via the Social Care Training team.

5. Safety Representatives and Safety Co-ordinators:

These share the common aim of ensuring a safe place of work. These persons are:

- Whom health and safety responsibilities are delegated, or
- Whom volunteer for the benefit of their team/area

The role is vital to ensure two-way communication is maintained from the highest management level, to where risk itself is evident, (and back again).

As such, senior management with primary health and safety responsibilities shall allow such persons appropriate time, training and resource to enact the rôle.

6. Incident Control Officer and Fire Wardens

These are specific roles to enable the safe and prompt evacuation of West Berkshire Council controlled buildings and support the Responsible Person in discharging their legal duties.

Individuals must be suitably trained in the site / premise emergency evacuation procedures and are responsible for undertaking regular fire safety checks of the working environment.

More specific guidance on the roles can be found in the relevant Safety Management System guidance (Fire Management).

Training is available via the Social Care Training team.

7. First Aiders

West Berkshire Council shall ensure appropriate first aid cover for staff if they are injured or become ill at work.

First Aiders are responsible for attending relevant First Aid training to attain the relevant qualification, providing first aid commensurate with their training, and promoting their ability at work via Notice Boards and appropriate signage.

More specific guidance on the role can be found in the relevant Safety Management System guidance (First Aid Arrangements).

8. Specific to Elected Members:

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

- They shall help support and implement the Safety Policy and strategy of the Council.
- Members shall also work within the framework of the Policy as it applies to all Employees.

9. 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 from the WBC internal Safety Advisor Team. Key areas which the Safety Team focus include:

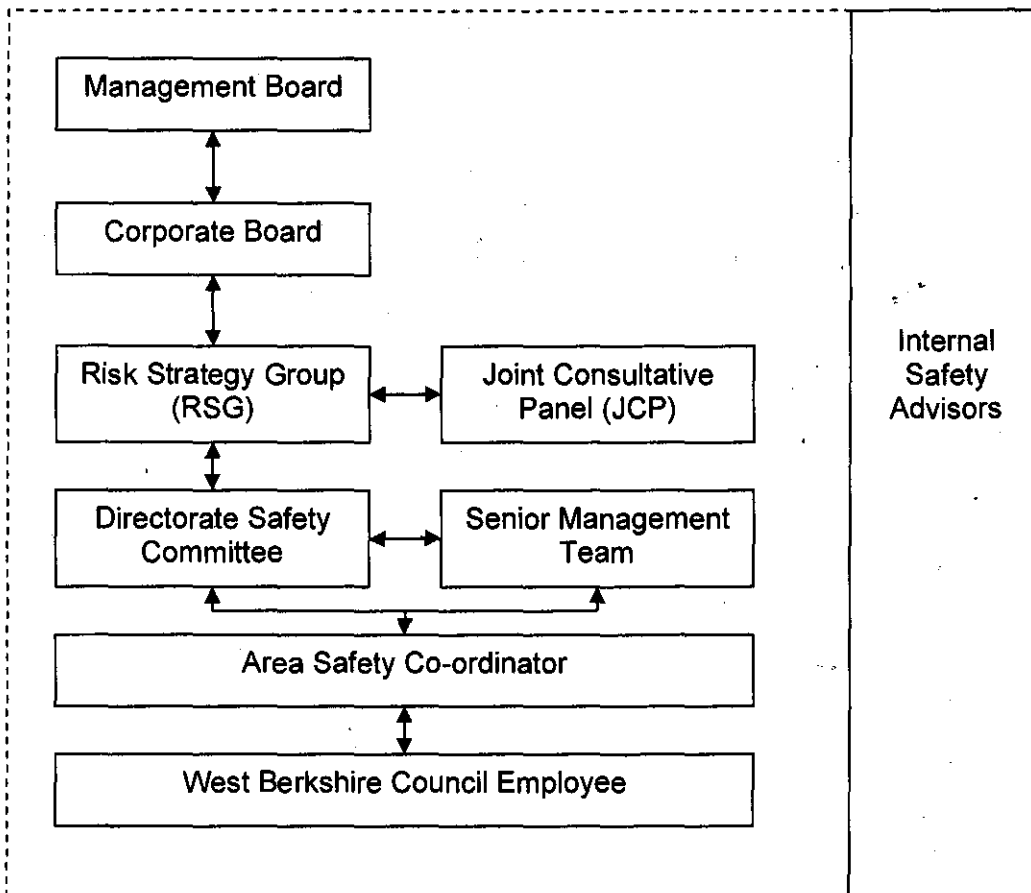
- Assist with development of corporate policies and procedures to promote effective health and safety compliance across the Council
- Provide support and advice to the Councils Risk Strategy Group (RSG)
- Co-ordinate and implement planned Health and Safety Audits to an agreed Schedule of Audits, and subject to other demands, undertaking unplanned Audits when complaints or events dictate
- Investigate work environment complaints, making recommendations to improve working conditions
- Investigate accidents and provide action and advice to prevent re-occurrence
- Undertaking a programme of Fire, Water and Asbestos compliance audits within the Council buildings portfolio

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 appointment and provision as above of Representatives of Safety where no Union Safety Representatives are in place

Reporting arrangements



Communication of Policy

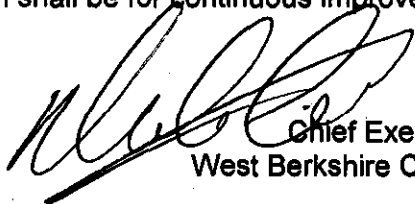
This policy shall be displayed at work locations as appropriate, being brought to the attention of employees at their initial induction, at any refresher safety training as appropriate, and upon revision of the Policy.

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 support 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 and safety at work.

Signed:



Chief Executive
West Berkshire Council



Leader of the Council

Dated:

15/10/2007

31/10/07