### Royal Borough of Kingston health and employment policy statement

### What is the aim of the policy?

The aim of this policy is to set out the Royal Borough of Kingston's (RBK's) commitment to the promotion of the good health of its employees. It is intended that the policy will ensure that decisions on health and employment are in line with good practice. Accordingly, the policy sets out role responsibilities and expectations so that it can be consistently and fairly applied within the organisation. The overall policy is supported by procedures designed to realise its objectives.

### Who does the policy apply to?

This policy applies to the generality of RBK employees, irrespective of grade or position.

### Statement of policy

RBK is committed to promoting the good health of its employees and recognises its responsibility of care for them. RBK wishes to emphasise the importance of achieving good health and high levels of attendance in the provision of effective and efficient services.

### Health and safety

RBK fully recognises its statutory responsibilities under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and regulations made under the Act. In response to this a revised policy statement has been approved by the Council and issued to all existing and new employees.

### Pre-employment

The role of Occupational Health will be to provide medical advice upon the suitability of employment which is offered to prospective employees. The importance of the health of the workforce has been recognised by the Council in recent years by the support of initiatives to enhance the quality of occupational health advice.

A main function of the Occupational Health Unit is to assess whether or not prospective employees are medically fit to carry out the specific duties of jobs which they have been offered. In making this medical decision, the Occupational Health Unit has full regard to the physical and mental requirements of the post, and any potential hazards in the work environment, in relation to a prospective employee's medical history.

The aim will be to ensure that a prospective employee by taking up employment will not put their own health at risk by aggravating any pre-existing condition, nor place the health and safety of prospective colleagues or customers at risk.

In the case of prospective employees with disabilities, advice will be available from the Occupational Health Unit to ensure they are considered carefully to facilitate their employment wherever possible.

### Health promotion

The Occupational Health Unit provides a health promotion programme and advice. RBK recognises the importance of building upon the foundations which have been laid and considers that the demands staff face in the 1990s will make health issues all the more important.

Arrangements will be made to assess medically certain occupational health groups where potential risk to good health may occur. This will include, where applicable, vision and audiometric testing, immunisation programmes and other health checks.

Health education material held by the Occupational Health Unit will be publicised and made available to employees. Additionally, specific areas of health concern will be targeted for health promotion campaigns and when appropriate will link in with national health campaigns. Areas will include smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, stress, diet and eating disorders, looking after your heart, AIDS, and particular men's and women's health issues. Detailed policies and procedures have been developed about:

* AIDS and the workplace
* Smoking at work
* Alcohol and drugs at work

These policies will be monitored, reviewed and extended as the need is identified.

### Short-term and long-term sickness absence

Attendance is a vital factor in the efficient and effective operation of RBK, and it is recognised that high levels of sickness absence can lead to operational problems. However, RBK recognises that from time to time, employees will be prevented from attending work because of their own illness.

Procedures setting out required arrangements for notifying and certifying sickness absence are to be made to all employees. Employees will be notified of their individual entitlements to sick pay.

Managers have a responsibility of care for their employees. Accordingly, managers should maintain acceptable contact with an employee during periods of sick leave and enquire formally about an employee's wellbeing on return from sick leave.

Where appropriate, arrangements should be made to ease an employee back into their full duties after a period of sick leave.

Sickness absence is to be monitored and controlled at a local level by managers. Where repeated short-term absence reaches an unacceptable level, arrangements will be made to review formally the situation to consider appropriate action.

In the case of long-term sickness absence, referrals for medical advice from Occupational Health will normally be necessary. Procedures exist to ensure that such cases are fairly identified and managed sensitively with full regard to operational needs of the authority.

### What is the role of employees?

All employees are required to observe fully all health and safety at work requirements, and the notification and certification of sickness absence procedures.

Employees have a responsibility to take good care of their health for their own wellbeing, and to ensure that avoidable sickness absence is kept to a minimum. Employees are also encouraged to take advantage of facilities and health promotion information provided by RBK for employees.

### What is the role of managers?

Managers have a responsibility of care for their employees and accordingly should be considerate and sensitive when dealing with employees and their health. They should promote health campaigns and encourage employees to attend.

They should monitor absence at the local level and take informal and formal action where appropriate to control sickness absence.

### What is the role of the staff welfare officer and Occupational Health Unit?

The staff welfare officer will be available to provide an impartial and confidential service in response to employees' problems. This officer will, with the Occupational Health Unit, be responsible for planning, publicising and running a continuing programme of health promotion campaigns.

The Occupational Health medical adviser and nurse will provide medical advice with regard to medical clearance for potential employees, health assessments for employees in particular occupational groups, and individual long-term sickness cases.

### What is the role of Human Resources?

The Head of Human Resources will be responsible for:

* developing, maintaining and reviewing systems to assess the overall health of the organisation
* communicating the policy to all employees
* developing, maintaining and reviewing procedures to implement the aims of this policy

### What is the role of the trade unions?

The trade unions support this policy and will support health promotion activities. Trade unions will represent individuals or groups, where appropriate.