

Learning and development policy

The councils reserve the right to revise, withdraw or replace the content of this policy at any time and to introduce new policies from time to time to reflect the changing needs of the organisations.

Introduction

1. The councils are committed to ensuring that service users receive a high quality of service provision from employees. They recognise that to achieve this it is important to train and develop all employees and councillors effectively. The purpose of this policy is to define the councils' commitment to learning and development; to define the employee's responsibilities in accessing appropriate learning; and to provide practical details required to enable all employees and councillors to fulfil their agreed training needs.

Aims of the policy

2. The policy aims to ensure that all employees and councillors have the necessary skills, knowledge, motivation, encouragement and support to be effective in their job roles and to develop their potential to the mutual benefit of the individual and the councils.
3. The councils are committed to ensuring all employees have equal access to learning and development opportunities in accordance with the equality in employment policy. The councils will monitor applications for training and promotion and the number of staff who receive it according to the employee's ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion/belief and age.
4. The councils will give agency staff appropriate health and safety training and any other reasonable training for them to carry out the requirements of their post.
5. The policy aims to ensure compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999.
6. The councils aim to:
 - develop the skills and capabilities of employees and councillors for the benefit of the councils and for their future careers
 - develop multi-skilled employees capable of operating flexibly and responding rapidly to changes in organisational needs or skill requirements

- promote team work within service areas and across professional and technical boundaries
- provide a range of learning opportunities, e.g. coaching, secondments and self-learning materials
- continue the commitment to achieve nationally recognised development standards
- give all employees an opportunity to request development opportunities
- ensure the learning and development needs of each employee are assessed on an ongoing basis and formally assessed at least annually via the performance review process
- determine corporate learning and development priorities according to need and resources available, matching needs as closely as possible to the knowledge and skill requirements of the job and the perceived future needs of the councils
- evaluate learning and development activities against agreed objectives

Responsibilities

Management team

- ensures that the profile of learning and development is kept high across the councils, is adequately resourced and clear priorities are identified
- ensures that management team, heads of service, managers and employees demonstrate their personal commitment to maintaining and developing their knowledge and skills by participating in appropriate learning and development
- ensures that outcomes of learning and development are evaluated and contribute to the performance and corporate capability of the councils
- ensures that learning and development fits within corporate strategies
- ensures that learning and development is managed as part of the overall Human Resources Strategy

Shared HR Business Partner (learning and development specialist)

- produces harmonised corporate training programme for both councils that identifies learning and development needs and specifies what options are available to meet those needs
- evaluates learning and development undertaken against the councils' objectives
- communicates learning and development opportunities available to employees and councillors

- ensures that trainers are competent, experienced in the area in which they are giving training and effective communicators
- co-ordinates service team training plans
- develops the councils' training resources
- co-ordinates individual development plans in order to achieve consistency of approach and standards
- evaluates training to ensure cost and service effectiveness, acting where necessary to implement improvements to learning and development as a result
- ensures training is recorded on HR Pro
- produces an annual training report to management team, identifying the resources that will be used to meet learning and development needs within agreed priorities

Heads of service and line managers

- develop and implement service team training plans
- ensure that regular performance reviews are carried out for all employees in accordance with the councils' performance review scheme
- ensure all employees complete compliance training and any other reasonable training for them to carry out the requirements of their post at the time of their appointment, transfer or promotion
- ensure that the demands of a job do not exceed the employee's ability to carry out the work in a safe manner by taking account of their capabilities and level of training, knowledge and experience when allocating work. Additional training, including refresher training should be provided if needed. The risk assessment can be used to help determine the level of training and competence needed for each type of work
- complete an induction checklist for all new starters or employees promoted internally and return to their shared HR business partner
- ensure that all employees participate in compulsory training
- ensure that the learning and development needs of all staff are regularly reviewed against their targets and that these are reflected in an up-to-date individual development plan
- ensure that objectives are set for all learning and development actions, and evaluate the subsequent impact of learning and development on knowledge, skills, attitude and performance
- carry out personal coaching of employees and ensure that off and on-job learning and development activity is consolidated
- identify and provide opportunities for learning to be consolidated
- communicate relevant information to their team on a regular basis to enable them to do their jobs successfully, to understand the councils' objectives, and how they can contribute to the councils' success
- clearly define standards of performance
- develop their own knowledge and skills in areas that support the councils' objectives
- have managers with the necessary skills to manage and coach employees effectively, and who value their own development
- agree all training expenditure with the HR team

- ensure that employees attend training once booked

All employees

- be aware of the councils' learning and development policy and understand its implications
- maintain an up to date individual development plan
- discuss learning and development needs with their manager
- participate in all compulsory training
- seek opportunities for updating knowledge and skills and self development
- attend training once booked and to take opportunities subsequently provided to use the skills and knowledge gained to improve performance
- maintain the same level of conduct on training courses as expected when attending work
- understand that absence due to sickness on a day they are due to attend training must be reported to their line manager and a shared HR assistant
- understand that unauthorised absence from training will be treated as unauthorised absence from work
- need to get permission from their head of service if they need to cancel a learning and development opportunity at short notice i.e. within 48 hours
- need to update their line manager and the shared HR business partner responsible for learning and development of examination results, assessment reports and any proposed alterations to the approved course if they are undertaking a course.

Reimbursement of learning and development expenditure

7. The travel and expenses policy gives details of how employees can claim reimbursement for learning and development expenditure and is available on both intranets.
8. Employees are entitled to the following in relation to training courses:
 - paid leave
 - reimbursement of travel expenses

Financial assistance

9. The councils will meet the full cost of tuition fees, registration, exemption and examination fees and membership fees, for the duration of the course, when an employee is required to join a professional body in order to sit its examinations.
10. An employee who is obliged to attend a field course or residential period in order to comply with the regulations of the examining body may request financial assistance towards prescribed course fees and travelling expenses.

If out of pocket expenses are paid, these will be at the nationally agreed rates. Please consult with the relevant shared HR business partner to discuss this.

11. The councils will meet the cost of text books and other approved educational expenses such as materials for practical work, subject to the following conditions:

- they are an essential and integral part of the course, i.e. required by the college and are approved by the shared HR business partner responsible for learning and development
- the cost of reimbursement for text books shall not exceed £150 in any one academic year
- any purchased books or equipment are made available to other employees at the end of the course
- where an employee fails an examination at the first attempt and it is necessary to resit the examination or part or all of a course of study, the shared HR business partner responsible for learning and development, in consultation with the head of service, will consider an application for further assistance on its merits, having due regard to any exceptional circumstances, college reports and the ability of the individual to complete the course. In cases where approval is given, assistance will be granted in accordance with this scheme.

12. Additional financial assistance will not be given following a second unsuccessful attempt.

Repayment of course fees and associated fees

13. Where an employee has received any financial assistance towards fees in accordance with this policy they will be required to refund all or part of these fees if any of the following circumstances occur:

- failure to complete a course without good reason
- failure to show satisfactory progress in their studies
- failure to sit for an examination within a reasonable period
- in the event of an employee leaving either council within two years from the date the qualification is obtained they will normally be required to repay a sum equivalent to the course fees paid, reduced by one twenty-fourth for each completed calendar month of service from the date of completion of the course. This applies regardless of whether an employee leaves to join another local authority.

If an employee leaves either council due to voluntary or compulsory redundancy then they will not be required to repay any outstanding training fees.

14. Where repayment of financial assistance is required this will not include salary paid in respect of time spent at approved courses of study or the cost of materials that have been returned to the council.

15. No claim for the refund of financial assistance will be made if:

- an employee who dies in service
- an employee who is the subject of redundancy (including voluntary redundancy)
- an employee who retires on the grounds of ill health
- an employee who leaves due to pregnancy.

Recording time spent on external learning and development courses

16. If you are attending an off-site training course that is not part of a nationally recognised qualification, you should note the time you leave and return home. If your journey is longer than your usual commute the annualised hours you record that day will be the time you leave and return home minus your usual commute to work. For examples, if you leave home at 8.00am and your usual commute to the office is 40 minutes your start time will be 8.40am even if you begin the training course later than this.

17. If your journey is shorter than your normal commute you may record the actual time you start and finish the training course. For example, if you leave home at 8.00am, your usual commute is 40 minutes but you start the course at 8.20am you may record 8.20am on your annualised hours timesheet.

18. The time taken for a lunch break should be excluded from your total for the day. Please see paragraph 19 for training courses that lead to a nationally recognised qualification.

19. For attending courses that lead to a nationally recognised qualification, such as a degree, the maximum amount of time that can be claimed including travelling time, is either a standard day for full-time employees (typically 7 hours 24 minutes) or the employee's contractual hours for that day, whichever is less. Normal travelling time to and from work and the lunch break should be deducted from the time claimed.

20. Paid leave will be granted to employees to sit examinations which relate to their approved course of study. Paid leave will be granted for examination revision, subject to the manager being satisfied that the employee has made the best use of the available facilities for study. An employee should discuss the position with their manager to ensure that leave can be taken at the time requested without prejudice to the normal work of the team.

21. Revision leave can be for a maximum of two days per examination for the first attempt.

22. Revision leave can be for a maximum of one day per examination for the second attempt.
23. Where an examination is held in the afternoon and an employee has leave in the morning, such leave shall be counted within the approved pre-examination leave. No additional leave in lieu shall be granted if the examination falls on a day that an employee would not normally work or a day that is a discretionary or extra-statutory holiday for all employees.
24. All employees having leave for courses and/or examinations must use the leave for this purpose and should not be absent themselves from college or examinations, except for medical reasons, without prior consultation with their head of service. Failure to comply with this requirement may lead to withdrawal of training facilities.

Attendance at degree ceremonies

25. Employees wishing to attend an awards ceremony to receive their certificate at the end of a course of study should do so in their own time. Either annualised hours or annual leave may be used. Travelling expenses cannot be claimed.

Full time and block release courses

26. Where an employee is permitted to attend a full time course any travel and expenses will be reimbursed as follows:
- the HR team will decide whether or not it is reasonable for the employee to travel daily to college or take temporary lodgings near the college. Daily travel, where appropriate, and expense will be reimbursed as per the travel and expenses policy
 - employees in lodgings may claim travel expenses for the beginning and end of the term or period of block release, half terms and weekends actually travelled
 - the councils will not be responsible for any removal expenses incurred by employees moving to the course centre

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