



Learning and Development Policy and Procedures

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Department for People



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1. Introduction

This policy sets out the conditions by which learning and development is provided within the Department for People. This policy replaces the Department for People 'Professional Development Application Process and Study Leave Policy', details from which can be found in Appendix 1. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the corporate policy on 'Study Support for Post Entry Training' found on the intranet [here](#).

2. Background and Legislation

National Joint Council for Local Government Service (Green Book) Part 3 supports the training and development of employees and provides support for employees undertaking examinations. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires employers to take account of the particular training needs of disabled employees.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all members of staff employed directly by Southend Borough Council within the Department for People. We also apply these principles where possible to external partners, such as external social care providers and foster carers.

4. Principles

The Workforce Commissioning Team aim to provide learning and development across the Department for People according to the following principles:

- 4.1 The Department is committed to providing equal opportunities for all employees to undertake learning as defined in this policy. Learning opportunities are open to all full or part time employees irrespective of their position, grade or job role. Particular working arrangements and work locations will also be taken into consideration, together with the employee's circumstances outside work. Employees with additional requirements in respect of their circumstances (including funding and time off), are encouraged to discuss these with their manager before deciding whether or not to undertake a course. These requirements should be included in their application where all reasonable requests will be considered.
- 4.2 Where a member of staff is in a fixed term post for reasons determined by the Department, it will be for Group Managers to decide what learning and development is made available to them. Where employees are in temporary posts as a conscious career choice, for example, where social workers have chosen to work via an agency, all learning and development, with the exception of mandatory training, should be restricted until the member of staff assumes a permanent role.
- 4.3 All employees should have the opportunity to identify and discuss their learning and development needs as part of the annual Performance Management process. Learning needs should be identified and shared with the Workforce Commissioning Team to inform the annual employee development programme for the Department.

- 4.4 Supervision should support employee development throughout the year and actively discuss learning needs identified in the performance management process. Where employee development is identified through supervision, those needs should also be shared with the Workforce Commissioning Team to enable support in line with the principles of this policy.
- 4.5 All learning and development activity should be planned in accordance with the applicant's service plan and team objectives.
- 4.6 Impact measures should be outlined in the [QA1 Forms](#) and clearly aligned to corporate aims, departmental service objectives, team plans, employee performance and/or support outcomes for people who use our services.
- 4.7 Learning and development will be commissioned to achieve value for money and identified learning objectives to maximise resources, support the learner and impact service performance.
- 4.8 If requests for learning and development exceed what can be supported, the following options will be explored:
- A selection procedure will be applied where applicants will be prioritised according to the principles set out in this policy and with reference to training records, where possible.
 - The applicant will be invited to part or fully self-fund.
- 4.9 The ultimate responsibility for development lies within the partnership created between the individual and their immediate manager. Managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is applied within their own area. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy should be discussed with Workforce Commissioning prior to any action being taken.

5. Role of the Workforce Commissioning Team

The remit of the Workforce Commissioning Team is to support the development of the workforce across the Department for People so that employees can maximise their contribution to the organisation and provide better outcomes for those who use our services.

The work of the team involves bringing each aspect of the 'Workforce Cycle' (planning, recruitment, induction, performance management, learning and development and impact evaluation) into a coherent whole that responds to legislation, national initiatives, local priorities, corporate aims and departmental objectives. The success of the team is determined by its delivery of cost effective workforce development that has tangible impact and outcomes for the workforce and the people who use our services. Specific support from the Workforce Team for learning and development across the Department is outlined in sections 6 – 15 of this policy.

6. Performance Management

There is a corporate expectation that the performance management cycle runs from April to March each year. Every employee should have an annual performance review beginning in April or May which details learning needs to support service priorities and corporate aims. These needs should be sent to the Workforce Commissioning Team by the end of June each year to inform the Department's annual training programme running from October to September.

Learning and development needs will usually be identified from an employee's initial performance review and on-going supervision. As part of the performance management process, every employee should receive monthly supervision lasting 90 minutes. This should confirm direct links between the gaps in key skills, knowledge and abilities essential for effective performance now or in the future and identify the requirement for funding. When identifying needs, managers and employees should discuss the following:

Learning and Development Value Measures:

1. Why is the development activity essential for the employee to do their job?
2. Consider whether it is essential for the service or the Council to meet a statutory duty
3. How will it make a tangible difference to the effectiveness of a service e.g. improve service delivery, flexibility and efficiency, result in better quality and expertise, improve technical or supervisory leadership?
4. How does it provide the skills and knowledge to enable the attainment of corporate or service aims which would not otherwise be achieved?
5. Is it essential to gain entry to more advanced training in order to obtain the above benefits in the future?

The outcomes of these measures should form the basis for all developmental applications

7. The Learning Cycle and Evaluation

Employees who wish to attend a learning activity or undertake a targeted learning programme will discuss the intended benefits (outlined in the [Learning and Development Value Measures](#)) in advance with their manager to ensure meaningful links are made to their performance management process.

All employees are required to take part in an evaluation process to provide evidence that the Learning and Development Value Measures are met. This process captures employee's learning objectives, anticipated practice change and measures their subject knowledge before and after learning. They will also complete a [Learning Action Sheet](#) which aims to capture the most relevant parts of the learning to enable transfer of that learning back into the workplace to support and enable practice change. This should benefit the staff member, colleagues, managers and the service.

Managers and employees should also use supervision as a supportive opportunity to reflect on learning and skills gained from every learning event and how these can be applied and demonstrated through practice. To complete the process, a [Learning Assessment](#) will be issued one month after the learning activity. Best practice would be for discussions to occur prior to the completion of Learning Assessments (using the Learning Action Sheet); although where discussion is not possible this should not delay returns. Once these have been conducted, staff will receive certificates of attendance/completion. Managers will also receive a summary of practice change as a result of the training they have supported to demonstrate return of investment and therefore appropriate use of training funds.

8. Budget allocations

A budget for learning and development within the Department for People is held centrally by the Workforce Commissioning Team. Particular allocations for each service area are identified and the Team will provide annual reports to Managers to demonstrate how much has been spent in their team or service and on which activity. Managers will also be sent an annual update every February/March on the outcome and impact of their team's learning needs as identified through the performance management process that year. This should help inform the learning needs for the next performance cycle year, which should begin every April.

9. Commissioning

Learning and development across the Department is provided in different ways. Most activity provided by the Workforce Commissioning Team is commissioned directly by the team, following consultation with service areas, and much of this is included in the annual employee development programmes for internal and external staff. These programmes also direct staff to learning and development provided by the corporate Development Team or other providers which can meet certain identified learning needs within the Department.

Where learning needs are identified in-year, the Workforce Commissioning Team will require the following forms to be completed:

- [Form QA1 External Development Application](#) Form to be completed to commission additional training and development or fund external courses or conferences that service areas have identified as meeting a particular need.
- [Form QA1 Development Request Form](#) required for the Workforce Commissioning Team to commission specific group training requests from senior managers.

10. Induction into the Department for People

All new starters will be provided with a comprehensive induction programme provided by the Council's Corporate Induction training and through the Department for People's Induction Framework developed and regularly monitored by the Workforce Commissioning Team. Line managers are responsible for ensuring full use is made of the documents within the framework to support staff induction.

Links to Corporate Induction, the Induction Framework for the Department, and the Assessed and Supported Year (ASYE) for NQSWs are provided below:

<http://seattle/Pages/TrainingandDevelopment.aspx#performance>

<http://seattle/people/SitePages/Induction.aspx>

http://www.southend.gov.uk/info/200448/workforce_development/506/asye

11. Mandatory Training and Development

All new employees are required to undertake equality and diversity training as part of their corporate induction. Basic training in data protection, safeguarding and health and safety are mandatory for all staff. This training is mainly provided via e-learning, although a blended approach (e-learning and face-to-face) is taken where mandatory training is required at a more advanced level for certain roles.

12. Role Specific Learning

Where possible, role specific learning will be provided via the annual [Departmental employee development programme](#) or met through qualifications, external courses or conferences. Employees and managers are encouraged to identify learning that meets the purposes of the role and realises practice improvement (see [Learning and Development Value Measures](#)) as an ongoing process, so learning activities will be commissioned in-year to meet this need, or funding provided to support external events that meet specific requirements.

13. Professional Development

Professional development relates to specific qualifications that meet learning needs for a particular role. Most professional development will involve nationally recognised qualifications at Levels 1 to 8. Examples of qualifications that are currently funded by the Department include QCFs (formerly NVQs), Foundation or full BA or BSc Degrees, ILM courses at Levels 2, 3, 5 or 7, various modules at Masters Level and stages of a PhD. There are specific requirements to meet in order to secure support for professional development, and further guidance can be found in Appendix 1.

14. Shadowing, mentoring and coaching

Shadowing, mentoring and coaching are all forms of development that should support individual employee development. These approaches can be effective both for those that are shadowing or being coached or mentored, and development for staff that are being shadowed or providing coaching or mentoring. Used effectively, these approaches can provide staff with access to skills, knowledge and experience that might otherwise not be available. They can be an effective alternative to formal training, and help prepare individuals to take on different areas of responsibility or wider roles and thereby support career development and succession planning within the Department. Please approach the Workforce Commissioning Team if you would like support in establishing shadowing, mentoring or coaching in your team or service area.

15. Bookings

The Workforce Commissioning Team aims to provide a simple booking and evaluation process. This is currently administered via the Southend Training Network, which is part of the Schools Learning Network. All bookings can currently be made via workforcecommissioning@southend.gov.uk

In order to secure training, employees need to demonstrate that they have agreement from their line manager to undertake the learning activity and provide evidence that the [Learning and Development Value Measures](#) have been discussed. With this agreement, line managers should provide a commitment to support employees with the necessary time or associated costs (please see section on travel and course materials below). For bookings that relate to professional development, please see Appendix 1.

Notification of a cancellation or postponement should be given to Workforce Commissioning as early as possible. Where cancellation or postponement is unavoidable, a suitable replacement delegate should be proposed by the line manager if this would benefit the team or the individual's development in line with performance management processes. As places on our programmes are offered to external partners at a charge, it is important for us to receive cancellation notification as soon as possible to enable us to offer spare places to partners where possible.

16. Training Records

All training records pertaining to the Department for People will be maintained by Workforce Commissioning and can be accessed on request. Managers will be sent an annual update every February/March on the outcome of their team's learning needs as identified through the performance management process that year. This should inform the value and impact of agreed training that year and help managers to identify learning needs for the next performance cycle year, beginning every April.

17. Travel expenses

Travel expenses will not normally be reimbursed where the course is available locally. Where the course unavoidably incurs travel expenses, details should be provided to the manager at the initial meeting. Such travel expenses will normally need to be met via the individual team budget, not from the central Department for People learning and development budget.

18. Course materials

Employees will not normally be reimbursed for the cost of text books and other materials, especially if there are alternative means of acquiring necessary information to complete the course. However, the Workforce Commissioning Team will consider requests on a case-by-case basis.

19. Equality Analysis

Southend Borough Council will ensure that, in accordance with the provisions of the Equal Opportunities Policy, all employees are trained and supported to develop their skills in order to satisfy statutory and regulatory requirements, professional standards, apprenticeship agreements, Investors in People Standards, vocational qualification requirements, health and safety legislation, and all other organisation and service priorities.

Representatives from across the workforce within SBC contributed to this policy, as did partners of SBC from regional local authorities. Whilst there is no evidence at this stage of this policy having an impact on protected groups as defined by the 2010 Equality Act, this will be reviewed annually or more frequently if required.

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Appendix 1:

Professional Development Application Process and Study Leave Policy

The principles within the Learning and Development Policy apply to the provision of Professional Development. However, this appendix provides additional specific information that applies specifically to professional development:

Eligibility

There is a requirement that applicants have a contract of employment that will extend at least two years beyond the completion date of a course. If they leave the employment of the Council within those two years an employee may be required to refund a proportion of the financial assistance received (see table on page 11).

Financial assistance

Applications for financial assistance for courses up to £2,000 will be funded if authorised by their Team Manager. When completing their application form applicants should ensure that they explain fully their reasons for applying and the link to their PMR, as well as the benefit to their team or service.

Where the training has been identified as a requirement or service need i.e. where applicants will be required to undertake a particular role or deliver a service for the Department e.g. Best Interest Assessor (BIA), Practice Educator (PE) or Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) qualification training, applications for financial assistance will be funded if authorised by their Service or Group Manager.

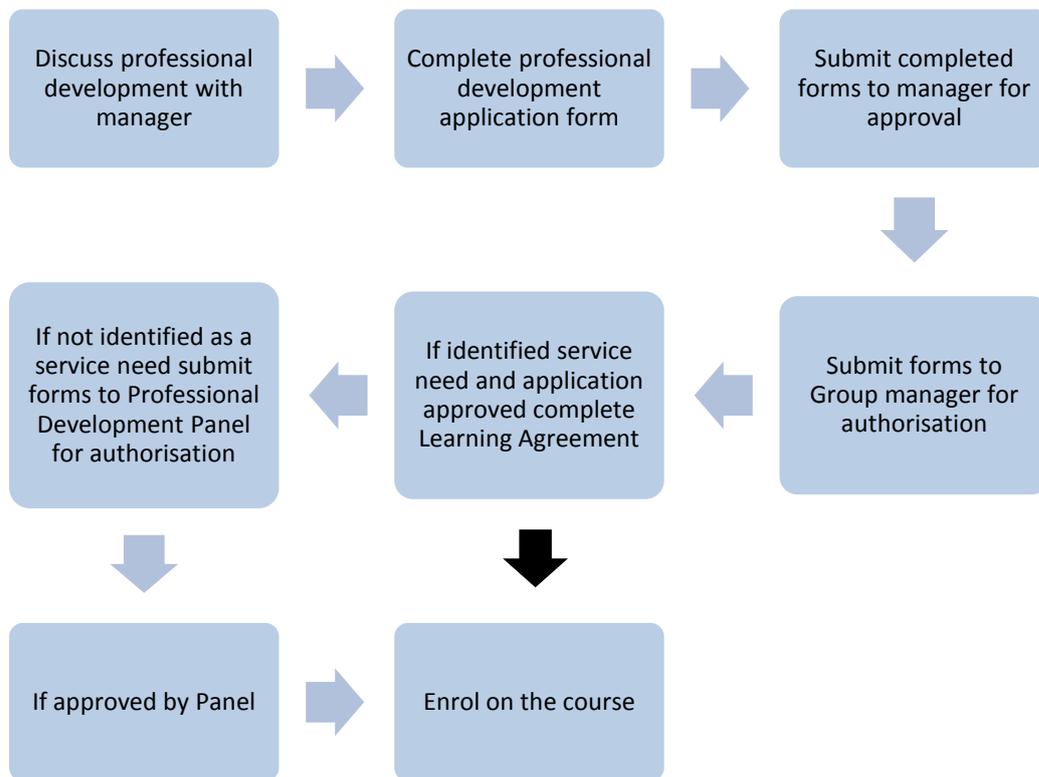
Exceptional Funding

Where the training has not been identified as a requirement or statutory service need, applications will be treated as 'exceptional funding'.

Applications for financial assistance for courses greater than £2,000 (such as the K101: An Introduction to Health and Social Care or other qualifying training) will be funded if authorised by a panel of Group Managers from across the Department for People and will only be submitted to the panel on the recommendation of the applicant's Group Manager. The participant will be required to submit a short presentation to the panel explaining what the benefits to the organisation will be if the programme is funded.

Application procedure

There is a timetable for applications for professional development which links the PMR process to assist with workforce planning. Applicants are encouraged to submit applications for funding by June for courses starting in September or October for courses starting in January. See the application flowchart:



Professional Development Panel

The panel, which will be made up of Group Managers from across the Department for People, will meet twice a year e.g. June for courses starting in September and October for courses starting in January.

The panel will agree the criteria for authorising applications for exceptional funding with reference to the [Learning and Development Value Measures](#)

Learning Agreement

If applicants are given financial assistance and/or release from the workplace in order to undertake a course of study, they will be required to sign a Learning Agreement. This should be completed and submitted with the application for funding.

Study support

In general study leave is usually half a day per final examination or assignment/ dissertation and can vary from course to course. A minimum of one day and a maximum of three days per year are available. The number of days will be linked to the number of credits awarded for the modules studied. For example:

- One day for every 40 credits for an undergraduate programme (usually a maximum of 120 credits per year).
- One day for every 20 credits for a postgraduate or Masters programme (usually a maximum of 60 credits per year)

Cancellations/re-sits/re-submissions

Registration, tuition and examination fees for approved courses will be paid directly to the course provider. Fees for cancellations or re-sitting examinations will be the responsibility of the employee and subsequent attempts at modules with release for study and financial assistance will be at the discretion of the Group Manager or Head of Service and will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Failure to complete the programme

Where an employee, without good reason, fails to sit for an examination within a reasonable period, fails to show satisfactory progress in their studies or discontinues the course, the Council may withdraw the facilities granted. They may also require a proportion of the financial assistance to be refunded. This will be determined on individual circumstances.

Consideration will be given to employees who are unable to complete the course due to circumstances beyond their control e.g. ill health.

Employment after completion of the course

Where an employee leaves the service of the Council within two years of the date of the completion of a qualification course (as shown on the course completion certificate) they will be required to refund a proportion of the financial assistance received in accordance with employment completed. Please see the table below:

Months service following course completion	Amount repayable by employee
Up to 6 months	100%
6 months - 12 months	75%
12 months - 18 months	50%
18 months - 23 months	25%

The Council reserves the right in these circumstances to deduct the amount repayable from the employee's final salary. If the final salary payment is not sufficient to meet this debt, the employee will be required to repay the outstanding balance to the Council and repayment plans can be negotiated with the Finance/Payroll section. The final decision on whether to impose the repayment will be made by the relevant managers within the employee's service area, in consideration of all circumstances.

Appendix 2:

External Course and Conference Application Process and Policy

The principles within the Learning and Development Policy apply to the provision of external learning and development.

Eligibility

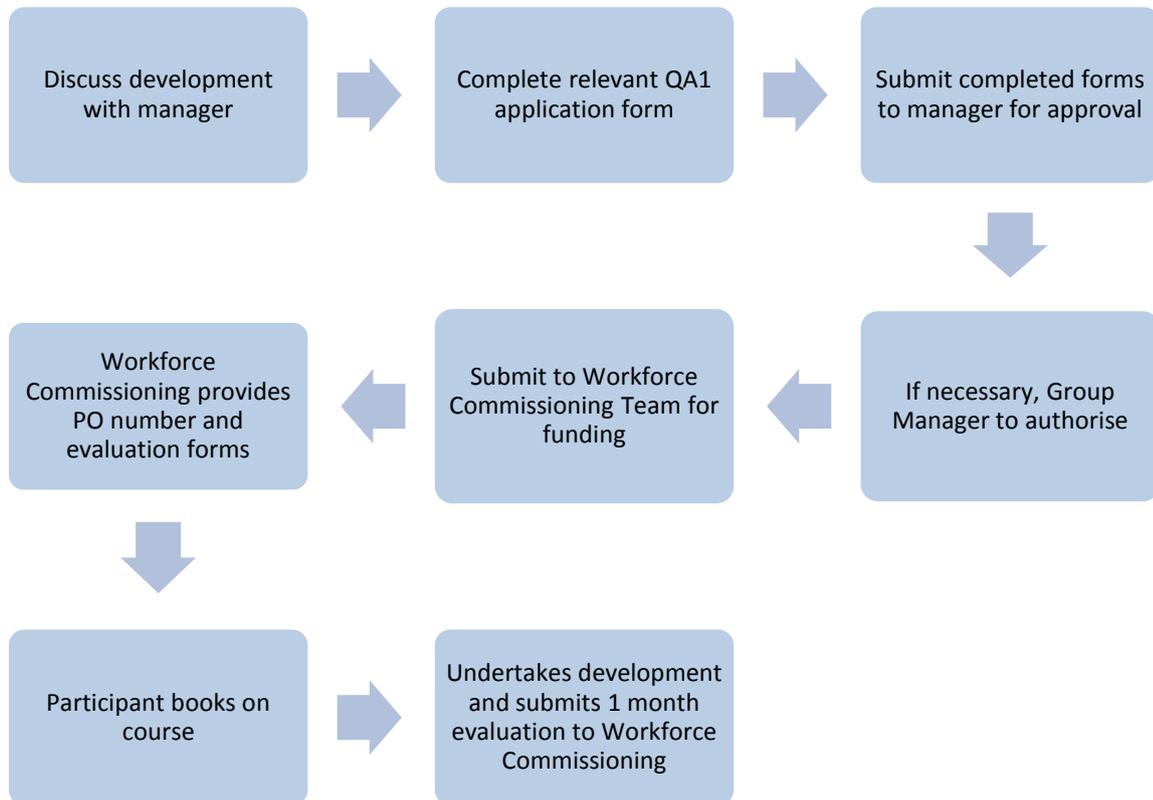
1. Places will ordinarily be limited to one person per team to attend an external course or conference.
2. Where there is more than one application per team, discussion with the Line Manager will take place to consider how:
 - a) Learning could be shared with the wider team through participation by one applicant who feeds back to other team members. This in itself provides an additional development opportunity for that participant
 - b) Where more than one participant requests the development and it is not appropriate for one to feedback, it will be for the GM of the service area to authorise more than one participant to attend
 - c) Where applicable, consideration needs to be given to how external training that is suitable for more than one participant can be commissioned in-house.
3. The [Learning and Development Value Measures](#) to be discussed and agreed with the applicant's Line Manager to ensure funding is appropriately provided and that knowledge and skills are brought back into Southend Borough Council to benefit the team and inform performance.

Financial Assistance

1. External learning provision that comes under £350 and has been approved by the line manager will be supported by Workforce Commissioning with the completion of the [QA1 External Development Form](#) or the information that this requests in an email.
2. External applications exceeding £350 per person, or where the development request relates to more than one participant, will require sign off by the Group Manager. There will be an expectation that the Eligibility Criteria above have been considered.

Application Procedure

All requests received via the QA1 External Development Application form for external conferences and external courses must expressly link to the applicant's PM review and supervision processes to support initial learning and development need and the implementation process after attendance.



Non-attendance & Cancellations

1. If participants are unable to attend they should:
 - a) Look to find a suitable replacement, or
 - b) Provide adequate notice to the external training provider (in line with their cancellation policy) in order not to incur cancellation charges

2. Where participants do not comply with the provider's cancellation policy and have not informed Workforce Commissioning in good time and a cancellation fee is incurred, this charge will be applied to the participant's team and not paid by Workforce Commissioning.

Failure to complete Evaluation Process

If an employee fails to actively demonstrate return on investment in terms of how they have shown application of knowledge and/or skill through the evaluation process, they may have future applications to attend external events refused.