

Learning and Development Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Reading Borough Council's position on learning and development of its employees. The Council recognises our employees are our most valuable resource and the key to our success. The Council is committed to becoming an employer of choice and a great place to work and learn. Personal and professional development for all employees is a key element in developing RBC and its workforce to meet the strategic goals of the organisation and achieve customers' expectations in service delivery.

This policy has been developed in line with the Council's overall vision, reflects our Team Reading values and People Strategy and aims to ensure best quality, value for money learning and development opportunities.

2. Purpose

This Learning and Development (L&D) policy describes the responsibilities of individual employees, Line Managers, Organisational Development (OD) and Learning Team members and our Corporate Management Team in implementing key aspects of the L&D policy and is intended to guide them in meeting these requirements and responsibilities.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Council on a permanent, fixed term or temporary contract regardless of role, location or length of service. This policy does not form part of your terms and conditions of employment. It is intended to act as a general framework only and may be varied in any way and at any time where the Council deems it reasonably necessary.

This policy does not apply to agency members of staff or self-employed contractors.

4. Policy Statement

The Council aims to foster a high-performance culture. To achieve this, we strive to provide each member of staff with clear performance objectives, on-going coaching, feedback and personal development opportunities.

The Council is committed to providing L&D opportunities that are strategic, measurable and effective so that every employee is enabled to achieve their personal and organisational objectives and reach their full potential. To fulfil this commitment the Council has a range of L&D opportunities that enhance the capability of its employees based on their learning needs and aligned to the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to deliver the Council's strategic goals

Workplace learning agreement with Trades Unions

The policy is endorsed by the Council's recognised Trades Unions. The Council works jointly with the Trades Unions to reinforce the importance of learning in the workplace.

This policy refers to learning which is accessible to all employees, for work and for life; including those who may have been traditionally excluded from learning. Learning should be flexible and responsive to the needs of learners. Learning is about working together to meet a collective need – be it in the workplace, or in society.

5. Responsibilities

The Human Resources and Organisational Development service (HR & OD) has the responsibility for ensuring the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy. Any queries or concerns on the application or interpretation of this policy can be discussed with HR & OD

Corporate Management Team (CMT) is responsible for:

- Providing the appropriate mechanisms for employees' development needs to be discussed, recorded and provided
- Ensuring this policy is implemented across the Council
- Promoting a culture of continuous learning
- Evaluating the impact of the policy
- Setting strategic objectives for the OD & Learning team
- Agreeing overall funding for L&D including championing use of the Apprenticeship Levy

Organisational Development & Learning (OD & Learning) are responsible for:

- Commissioning, designing and delivering OD and Learning solutions that develop the behaviours, competencies and capability required for ongoing organisational success aligned to agreed corporate priorities
- Upskilling employees to lead and manage effectively across the Council including change management
- Maximising performance from employees at all stages of their career through ongoing L&D
- Promoting learning opportunities to target audiences and providing advice and guidance
- The evaluation of corporate learning programmes, and reporting this to CMT on at least an annual basis
- OD & Learning corporate budget management and reporting to CMT on at least an annual basis to agree L&D priorities for the forthcoming year
- Ensuring records of centrally arranged learning events are kept and updated by the HR and OD Administration Hub including mandatory corporate training and behavioural development programmes delivered by the team

- Provide assistance to line managers to enable them to effectively evaluate learning needs at a team and directorate level

All managers are responsible for:

- Supporting staff to access appropriate learning opportunities and providing clear objectives for applying the learning to practice
- Encourage staff to prioritise learning and development within their role and ensure attendance on booked learning events
- Ensuring fair and equitable access to learning opportunities
- Ensuring all new staff complete the Council's corporate induction and local inductions during their probation period
- Holding regular discussions and reviews with their team members on their L&D progress and creating development plans for team members
- Prioritising the use of Apprenticeship Levy funded development to meet medium-longer term learning and capability needs
- Ensuring all staff undertaking apprenticeship programmes are provided with the 20% off the job learning requirement
- Promoting the use of the Council's learning management system (eLearning) and on-line library as the first point of contact for skills development
- Ensuring employees hold valid qualifications and certificates where the need for learning is mandatory
- Provide on the job learning for employees within their team/department
- Adherence to L&D budgets managed locally at directorate level

All employees are responsible for:

- Self-assessment of their competencies against their job description and person specification to support creation of personal development plans
- Maintaining and providing evidence of learning ensuring all mandatory training is completed and kept up to date
- Committing to learning opportunities and completion of all learning requirements for a programme including qualification programmes
- Spending time on their own self development
- Undertaking continuous professional development (CPD) where it is a requirement of their membership of a professional organisation or registration
- Taking ownership and having a proactive approach to identifying their development including in discussions with their manager and creation of their personal development plan

Trades Unions are responsible for:

- Encouraging non-traditional learners to return to learning including access to the national Learning at Work programmes and branch organisations
- Provide Union Learning Representatives (ULRs)/Lifelong Learning Advisers (LLAs)). Their role is set out in the Employment Act 2002 and includes:

- identifying learning or training needs

- providing information and advice about learning or training
- promoting the value of learning and training
- consulting the employer about implementing such activities

Professional membership fees

One set of professional fees can be reimbursed where the department's management team considers membership of a professional body is essential or strongly desirable for the role.

Fees may also be payable where an appropriate level of membership is required for an employee who is undertaking training for a professional qualification.

Time for learning

The Council is committed to ensuring employees have reasonable and planned paid time from work to attend work-related learning identified and agreed as either individual or team development needs to support the corporate priorities.

All apprenticeships have a national requirement for 20% "off the job learning" within the employee's contracted working hours; this does not have to be time spent out of the workplace. The OD & Learning Team can provide advice on what activities constitute "off the job" learning.

Study leave for other qualifications should be proportionate to the length and requirements of the course. Guidance is available from the OD & Learning Team.

Travel expenses

Travel expenses incurred in relation to external learning events are funded from the employee's team budget and can be claimed in line with the Council's Reimbursement of Expenses Policy. Mileage to attend training courses where the employee has to travel using their own car can be claimed at the training rate of 24p per mile.

Combating inequality

The Council is committed to working to ensure that policy and practice relating to L&D reflects an equal entitlement to access learning and tackles traditional barriers to learning. Where possible L&D programmes will take account of general employee working patterns. The Council works with Trades Unions and learning providers to identify and address any barriers to equality in access to learning including physical access, and flexibility in learning materials and delivery.