



Broxtowe  
Borough  
COUNCIL

# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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# **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

## **1. Introduction**

The Council is committed to the development of employees in order for them to carry out their role at the Council competently.

Learning and development will be closely linked to service delivery underpinning the Council's Corporate and Business Plans. The Council recognises that in order to deliver quality services to its customers and establish itself as an employer of choice it needs to continually invest in the development of its people to increase recruitment and retention, motivation, morale and job satisfaction of individuals and help them maximise their potential within and outside the organisation.

## **2. Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment of this policy has been undertaken to ensure that the implications of its introduction will not cause adverse impact or discrimination against different groups of employees with the organisation.

## **3. Objectives of Learning and Development**

The overall aims and objectives for learning development are:

- To enable the Council to attain its strategic objectives through investing in its employees
- To use the Apprenticeship scheme to fill skills gaps through recruitment and restructuring
- To promote equality of access to learning
- To encourage employees and to develop their skills and level of responsibility to the maximum of their potential
- To widen and update the skills profile of employees to maximise their versatility, employability and future job security
- To enable employees to raise performance, quality and customer service in pursuit of service excellence in order to ensure they have the right skills at the right time to deliver effective and efficient services.
- Promote work experience opportunities for the Community to address future skills gaps and provide early careers advice

## **4. Responsibilities for Learning and Development**

### **4.1 General Management Team**

- Set the strategic direction for the organisation

- Communicate the importance of and organisation commitment to learning and development
- Demonstrate their support by participating in and leading key learning and development activities
- Hold senior managers accountable for ensuring all their staff are appraised and have appropriate access to learning and development opportunities

#### 4.2 Human Resources Team

- Implement the People Strategy and Corporate Learning and Development programme in response to corporate initiatives and needs identified in Business and Personal Action Plans

#### 4.3 Learning and Development Team

- Champion employee development across the Council
- Ensure that mandatory learning and development requirements are identified, communicated and effectively organised by Managers through Annual Performance Appraisals, 121's and supervision meetings.
- Provide a range of other internal, external, online and blended learning and development interventions, resources and programmes enabling equality of access to learning for all.
- Ensure learning and development opportunities are cost effective and of benefit to the individual and the Council
- Administer the Learning and Development Budget in conjunction with the HR Manager and work with departments to utilise their own training budgets
- Evaluate and review the learning and development opportunities provided
- Lead on the Apprenticeship programme
- Identify and encourage Managers to consider Apprenticeships when vacancies arise
- Administer and maintain the Council's e-learning platform – the Broxtowe Learning Zone (BLZ), updating and refreshing mandatory courses.

- Link in with the Council's commitment to Health and Wellbeing by facilitating and supporting learning in these areas.

#### 4.4 Managers

- Induct new employees/employees new to a post and provide feedback and coaching on immediate work progress
- Ensure that mandatory learning and development requirements are identified, communicated and effectively organised through Annual Performance Appraisals, Probationary meetings, 121's, supervision meetings and supporting action plans.
- Encourage and support staff to be proactive about their self-development at work and facilitate reinforcement and application of learning in the workplace
- Monitor and ensure prompt compliance with mandatory learning and development and deal with issues of non-compliance
- Be aware of equality and diversity issues and how they impact on learning and development opportunities
- Liaise with Learning and Development Team to consider filling vacancies with Apprenticeship roles
- Consider Apprenticeship roles as part of any restructure
- Consider Apprenticeships for internal employees to address skills gaps
- Positively support the Work Experience Programme

#### 4.5 Employees

- Demonstrate commitment to and take personal responsibility for their own learning and development, not least when participating in Performance Appraisals and Performance Review meetings
- Undertake their mandatory learning and development promptly
- Repay fees and learning and development expenses as specified in this policy.
- Actively participate in Annual Performance Appraisals, 121's and supervision from Line Managers.

## **Trade Union Learning Representatives**

Trade Union Learning Representatives will support the learning and development of their members by providing advice and guidance on learning and assisting members with their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Signposting Members to the Union's portfolio of courses which may include literacy and numeracy.

## **5. Training Courses**

Any employee who has at least 26 weeks' continuous services has the legal right to make a request in relation to study or training and to have that request considered. The Council has a duty to consider any request but it is not legally obliged to automatically agree to a request to pay for the training or to pay for time off.

### **Types of courses:**

#### **5.1 Apprenticeships**

The opportunity to use the Council's Apprenticeship Levy funding should always be explored in discussions with the Learning and Development team prior to any other courses being considered (see the Apprenticeship Strategy document). The Council has already committed substantial funds to the Apprenticeship Levy and any underspend is claimed back by the Government.

#### **5.2 Corporate Learning and Development**

The Learning and Development Team will organise learning and development opportunities for employees across all directorates of the Council this includes induction, employee relations and other topics relevant to employment.

#### **5.3 Job specific/Technical learning and Development**

The employee and their line manager will work together to identify learning and development opportunities to enable employees to develop and increase the knowledge and skills so that they may competently carry out their role at the council. This may include on-the-job learning and development, work shadowing, coaching and mentoring, online and e-learning programmes and attendance on informal and formal training events, briefing seminars and conferences. This may also include blended learning.

Some of these activities may not have a direct cost, but it should be noted that there will be an indirect cost in relation to officer time and this should be recognised and built into work schedules.

Employees should submit written requests for no cost learning and development to their Line Manager in line with local departmental procedures and they should not book their place on any course or event until they have received approval from their manager to take the time off.

Some of these activities may have a cost. All applications for paid learning and development must be submitted on form LD1 to the Line Manager and/or Head of Service for approval (where the funds are located within a service area budget) who will send it to the Department's Administrator for them to record necessary details and to the Learning and Development Team for their records. Applications for paid learning where funding is within the corporate training budget will be submitted to the Line Manager and/or Head of service on form LD1 for approval, and also approved by the HR manager.

No bookings can be confirmed until the expenditure and time off has been approved.

The Learning and Development team should be informed of all learning and development so that they can include the details on employee's personal record.

## **6. Heads of Service**

Heads of Service will be required to pay for job specific learning and development from their service area budget.

## **7. Professional Qualification Courses**

In some instances, it may be appropriate for an employee as part of their job to undertake a formal qualification which is essential to their profession and role within the Council. Support will not be given for qualification(s) of marginal value to the Council.

Before agreeing to a request for any professional learning and development the line manager must have a clear idea of the commitment required from the employee in relation to term dates, day and block release commitments, course workload and the examination schedule. The manager must have a discussion with the employee to confirm that the employee has the aptitude

and capacity to undertake the course and that the section can provide adequate cover when the employee is absent. The manager must also ensure that the employee understands their obligation regarding the Repayment of Fees and Expenses as detailed in section

The Corporate Learning and Development budget will pay for corporate learning and development courses and for professional courses of study leading to a qualification required for the employee's job role.

The Apprenticeship Levy should always be explored when considering Professional Courses.

### 7.1 Qualification courses

Once approval has been given to pay for an employee to attend a professional qualification course, agreement may be given to pay for course related expenses which could include but is not restricted to:

- Course fees
- Registration fees
- Examination fees
- Reasonable expenditure on books and other essential equipment

The employee will be required to sign a Learning Agreement form LD2.

### 7.2 Repayment of course expenses

If an employee leaves the Council within 2 years of completing their professional training qualification and they take up a new post, they will be required to repay the courses fees and any related expenses. The repayment will pro-rata dependent on the length of time that has passed since course completion. The exceptions are if the employee is dismissed due to redundancy or ill health and all Apprenticeship Levy funded training.

Repayment is also required if an employee fails to show satisfactory progress and fails an examination or fails to attend an examination or leaves the course.

The Head of Service, following discussions with the HR Manager, may approve payment for the re-sitting of examinations where the failure or unsatisfactory progress has been due to exceptional circumstances and the employee has otherwise been making satisfactory progress.

The Council will reclaim 100% of any assistance given where the employee leaves during the course.

Repayments will exclude the salary paid in respect of the time spent studying.

Recovery of the costs will be made through a payment plan agreed with the employee.

The employee will be required to sign a Learning Agreement form LD2 agreeing to these conditions before course expenditure is approved.

## **8. Financial Assistance**

### **8.1 Loans for Learning**

Loans for Learning are available to employees to undertake courses of study that would not normally be supported as an essential requirement of their current job at the Council. A loan for learning is interest free and available at the discretion of the Council's HR Manager subject to sufficient funding being available.

A Loan for Learning Application form LD3 should be submitted to the HR Manager.

The full repayment of the loan would normally be required over a 12-month period from the date of the loan by monthly deductions directly through Payroll.

If an employee in receipt of a loan terminates their employment with the Council before the loan is repaid, the remaining loan must be repaid in full. Recovery of the loan will be made through a payment plan agreed with the employee.

## **9. Additional levels of assistance**

### **9.1 Payment and Expenses**

Employees attending an approved learning and development activity are entitled to receive payment of normal earnings whilst attending the event. When attending training courses outside contracted working hours, part time employees should be paid on the same basis as full-time employees.

Claims for expenses should be made in the usual way as per the Travel and Subsistence Policy.

## 9.2 Revision and Examination Leave

Paid examination leave will be granted to enable employees to sit examinations or tests as part of their approved course of study.

In addition, paid leave will be granted to enable the employee time to prepare for the examination or test. The time granted will be double the duration of the examination or test and should normally be taken within the period of two weeks prior to the examination or test. Equivalent time may also be granted to employees taking courses which depend on continuous assessment as opposed to examination as per the Leave Policy.

Generally speaking, coursework should not be undertaken in works time.

## 10. Investing in the future workforce

The Council will be proactive in helping people within the community improve their job prospects and employability. We will work with schools, colleges and universities to provide work experience placements to students to give them a greater insight into the work and services provided by local authorities and potential career options.

We will also work with partners to offer work trials and experience to residents of the borough under local and government programmes and initiatives.

## 11. Coaching and Mentoring

In June 2020, the Council introduced an Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 to outline its commitment to its employees. The overall aim is to: 'enable Broxtowe Borough Council to meet current and future organisational aims and objectives through the recruitment, development, and retention of a well led highly skilled, flexible and motivated workforce supported by well-aligned strategy and processes, and full use of new technology.'

As part of the strategy, a key area of focus is developing our approach to coaching and mentoring. The HR Manager will implement this via one on one Coaching sessions with Heads of Service and Senior Managers to facilitate, encourage professional growth and development, particularly in the area of leadership skills, enhancing leadership capacity and strategic management.