



Medway Council
Learning and Development Policy

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Medway Council

Learning and Development Policy

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this learning and development policy is to provide a framework to demonstrate Medway Council's commitment to its learning and development activities in a coherent and systematic way.

It describes:

- The purpose of learning and development within Medway Council
- The scope of the learning and development policy
- The council's learning and development priorities
- The mechanisms for identifying, planning and delivering the learning and development at organisational, service and individual levels
- Who is responsible for what?
- The resources to support learning and development
- How the results of learning and development are evaluated at organisational, service and individual levels
- Reviewing and updating the policy

This policy provides a public document that all employees can refer to as a guide to the council's approach to learning and development. It aims to ensure that learning and development actions are aligned with the goals of the organisation.

Purpose of learning and development

Our council plan sets out a vision for Medway – to be a city of learning, culture, tourism and enterprise and as a great place to live, work, learn and visit. Medway Council is committed to improving the quality of life for all Medway's residents. It places great importance on its dual role as both community leader and service provider - leading the transformation of Medway and providing high quality services for customers. As the workforce development function, we aim to support the council to achieve its priorities:

- Medway: A place to be proud of
- Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential
- Maximising regeneration and economic growth

People are a key driver for this success. We remain committed to being an employer of choice within the area and to continue to recruit competitively and demonstrate best practice in training and developing our people. As a community leader, we continue to set the highest employment standards and help generate economic success through encouraging a more skilled labour market.

The council recognises that its staff are the key to its success and all employees and members will be offered learning and development, in line with strategic and service objectives.

The council seeks to develop its employees and members so they have the skills and knowledge to do their jobs effectively now and in the future, to realise potential and continuously improve performance and service delivery.

Scope of the policy

This policy covers all learning and development activities. This refers to 'learning' activities from which there is a clear and visible transfer of knowledge and skill from the trainer to the trainee (e.g. a course) and 'development' which covers the complete spectrum of activities that help people learn in, and beyond, their current role.

This policy covers all employees of Medway Council including part-time and casual staff. Member development is dealt with within a specific member development strategy.

This policy also reflects the council's equal opportunities statement ensuring all employees regardless of race, colour, national, ethnic or social origin, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability or political or other personal beliefs are benefiting equally from learning and development opportunities.

Its aim is that all employees will be afforded equal access to learning and development, according to the needs of their job and the service priorities as outlined within the service plans. The procedure outlined within this policy is designed to ensure that equal access is achieved.

For the purpose of this document, 'equal access' refers to:

- Information relating to learning and development opportunities
- Selection for participation in learning and development opportunities
- Access to learning and development events

A systematic approach to learning

This policy endorses a four-stage approach to managing learning and development within Medway Council:

- Stage 1 - Identifying learning and development needs
- Stage 2 - Planning learning and development activities
- Stage 3 - Delivering learning and development
- Stage 4 - Evaluating learning and development investment.

Stage 1 - Identifying learning and development needs

Organisational level

Corporate and Directorate learning needs are identified in line with the review of the council plan and community plan. These documents articulate aspirations for the council across a period of 3 years and on an annual basis they are reviewed to ensure they reflect any changes in circumstances or priorities. Organisational level learning and development needs are expressed through the workforce development strategy. Annually the corporate management team meet to identify learning and development themes for the next 12 months to support key strategic imperatives. These should also focus on equipping the council to meet the challenges of the future.

Service level

Service level learning needs are initially identified at the time when the service plans are developed, and reviewed on a regular basis to establish any gaps between current and required skills or knowledge. These needs will be directly linked to the achievement of both the immediate and future service objectives.

Individual level

Each year managers carry out performance development reviews ('PDR') with all employees to identify individual learning and development needs and/or targets. In forming a picture of the learning needs they take account of the individual's level of performance, information about health and safety, quality and customer relations, and any information they have about changes to the individual's role in the next 12 months. Both parties agree actions needed and ensure they are carried out.

Employees have responsibility for identifying their ongoing learning needs, for discussion with their line manager through their regular 1:1 or supervision meetings.

When making decisions about support for identified learning and development needs, the primary consideration will be the needs of the council. It should also be recognised that this is likely to change and may include areas not specifically included within an employee's job profile. Any changes to job profiles will be carried out with appropriate consultation.

Stage 2 - Learning and development planning

Organisational level

A corporate learning and development plan is developed by the corporate management team and includes priorities for workforce development with clear links to the strategic imperatives affecting the work of the council. The plan will include expected outcomes and how the development will be managed and evaluated.

Service level

Every service manager is responsible for developing and approving a service learning and development plan. This should be done with the service management team and in conjunction with the stated objectives of the service plan. Each Assistant Director will then agree the service learning plans for their division through discussion with their directorate management team.

These plans are used as a basis for allocating resources at the budget planning stage. The learning plan includes details of how activities will improve service delivery, learning objectives, resources required, methods, and how these will be monitored and evaluated. The head of workforce development will draw down this information from the service plans on Pentana.

Individual level

As part of the PDR process and following the agreement of performance targets, the individual and their line manager agree targets, including the best/preferred learning methods to meet the needs of the employee. At each subsequent 1:1 or supervision meeting, they jointly review progress against the target plan and update it if necessary to ensure its continued relevance.

Financial arrangements

Requests for learning that incur a direct cost will need to be submitted to the workforce development team via the external training request form on the Service Desk portal. If the total cost is less than £500 approval can be given by the service manager. If the cost is higher than £500 Assistant Director approval will also be required.

The criteria for assessing individual training requiring funding from the corporate training budget is:

- a) The training must be shown to be necessary to effectively meet immediate strategic and service objectives within the required timescale and is of benefit to the career development of the individual.
- b) The training is of primary benefit to the career development of the individual and supports business and service objectives both in the short and long term.

All individual requests for learning will be submitted to service managers initially for approval. Where approval is not given, service managers should provide clear reasons for denying such applications. All employees will have the right to appeal against any decision made. Where a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached, it will be referred to the directorate management team. The decision of the directorate management team will be final.

Service specific training, requiring funding from the corporate training budget must be requested by the team or service manager to the workforce development team via the forms on Service Desk, either:

[External, training, qualification or conference](#)

Or

[Specialist internal training delivery](#)

The Workforce Development Officer with responsibility for supporting the requesting team, will respond and progress the enquiry.

Stage 3 – Delivering learning and development

This policy encourages the use of a variety of methods to meet the learning and development needs of individuals and teams and is particularly relevant when considering the needs of part-time, job-share and casual employees.

When choosing learning and development methods, the focus will always be on the outcomes in terms of improved performance, service delivery and personal development. The method of learning will be the most appropriate for any given individual, team or situation.

These methods may include:

- Formal qualification courses (including degrees, NVQs etc)
- E-learning
- Training courses (including internal and external courses)
- Seminars (including CPD)
- Conferences
- Briefings/workshops (e.g. skills updating, changing legislation)
- Apprenticeships
- Mentoring/coaching
- Shadowing/job rotation
- Secondments
- Partnership and multi-agency training
- Project work
- Collaborative learning (e.g. action learning sets)

Stage 4 - Evaluating learning and development investment

Evaluation of learning and development at an individual level will be carried out by the line manager during the 1:1 or supervision meetings. The evaluation discussion will review how the learning and development activity met the skills, knowledge or behaviour gaps and how the newly-learned skills, knowledge or behaviour can be utilised in the workplace.

Training courses are evaluated in two ways. At the end of the event, attendees are asked to complete a questionnaire to assess the course and their learning outcomes, which will facilitate the evaluation discussion with their line manager.

Information received from the evaluation questionnaire will be scrutinised by the workforce development team to ensure that the training was delivered in an effective way, meeting the expectations of the attendees. Any issues identified will be discussed firstly with the attendee/s and, where necessary, addressed with the training providers.

Learning records

Staff attendance on all corporate training courses will be recorded against individual training records on our database, ResourceLink, as well as on the external booking portal, iShare.

Responsibility for recording e-learning course training lies with the individual learners, as this is not a Medway Council system, and providers may change under procurement arrangements.

Learning priorities

(a) Induction

All new employees should receive induction training, regardless of whether they have transferred from another service or are new to the council. Workforce Development identify the corporate mandatory training, which is found on the induction pages on the intranet. Services are required to use the induction programme document and then add any service specific requirements, meeting the minimum requirements for employees within the area. This ensures that there is consistency across the organisation and baseline needs are met.

A record of the completed induction programme is to be kept by the line manager and HR must be advised that the new employee has successfully completed their induction and probation period. HR do not need to receive a copy of the completed induction pack when successful probation documents are submitted.

In addition, all new starters should have a PDR discussion with their line manager, within the first six months of holding their new job, which may invoke additional learning and development targets.

(b) Managers/supervisors

All managers and supervisors will receive a clear definition of managerial responsibilities from their line manager. Their learning and development needs will be identified using the relevant competency framework, through the PDR process and 1:1 meetings.

(c) Health and Safety

All staff (including agency staff, relief staff, volunteers and work placements) will be provided with training and development in line with corporate and service health and safety policies.

(d) Post-entry training and continuous professional development ('CPD')

Medway Council actively supports post-entry training and CPD. Staff identifying development that leads to a recognised qualification, relating to their work, can request approval from their line manager during the 1:1 or supervision conversations. Where there is a clear and direct relationship between their work and the proposed course, and where there is sufficient funding available or an apprenticeship programme which can be accessed via the Apprenticeship Levy, employees will be supported to study.

For approved courses, the council will pay the fees, examination fees, travel costs, and the cost of essential study materials. All claims must be in accordance with the post-entry training financial assistance scheme conditions, which are fully detailed on the intranet. Claims will only be met via the submission of a post-entry training expenditure request form, also accessible on the intranet.

(e) Member Development

All elected members will receive a clear definition of councillor roles and responsibilities. Their learning and development needs will be identified through the Member Development Advisory Group and passed to Workforce Development to action.

Resources to support learning and development

The corporate training budget was centralised in 2018 and is administered by the Workforce Development team. This whole council budget should cover the costs of priority needs relating to directorate and service plans, together with all statutory, mandatory and legislative training requirements for staff.

As an additional resource, the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy has afforded the Council the opportunity to meet some staff learning, development and career aspirations via the use of apprenticeship qualification programmes. Staff requests for qualifications will always be firstly checked for the availability of a suitable apprenticeship programme, by the Workforce Development team, prior to seeking other options. The use of our apprenticeship levy monies for the upskilling of existing staff secures significant savings against the corporate training budget.

Medway Council is committed to support each employee to engage in the equivalent of at least 5 days learning or development per year, in order to meet their mandatory and/or future learning and development needs.

Medway Council is committed to providing training from the corporate training programme to volunteers in order to improve their knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out tasks more effectively. Supervisors/Managers should consider each individual's training needs, relating to the tasks being undertaken. Supervisors/Managers should also consider the need and frequency in which the volunteers will be undertaking tasks to weigh up the effectiveness of providing formal training.

Roles and responsibilities

The development and maintenance of a culture of continuous development and improvement depends both on individuals taking responsibility for seeking and using development opportunities available to them; and managers at all levels recognising that the development of employees is intrinsic to their management role.

(a) Corporate management team (CMT)

- CMT will agree the learning and development needs for the organisation and these will be stated in the Medway Council Learning and Development policy.
- CMT is responsible for ensuring the Workforce Development Strategy is prepared every 3 years, and reviewed annually during this period. The review will take account of strategic imperatives.
- Directors are responsible for ensuring that the arrangements for the identification, planning, delivery and evaluation of learning and development needs are operating effectively in their directorates.

(b) Service managers

- Service managers are responsible for ensuring the service learning and development plan is prepared annually. The plan will take account of service learning objectives and strategic imperatives.
- Service managers are responsible for ensuring that all employees are given the opportunity to have their learning and development needs reviewed at regular intervals through the induction, the PDR and 1:1 or supervision meetings; and that they are trained effectively to meet current job requirements and future development potential.
- Service managers will ensure that the service learning and development plan is implemented and evaluated.
- Service managers are responsible for collating the requests for learning and development activities and bringing them forward for discussion and prioritisation at divisional management teams.
- Service managers will report on the service learning and development plan internally when reporting on the service plan.
- Service Managers are responsible for approving learning and development requests, submitted by staff in their service, via the Service Desk portal, to the value of £500.

(c) Line managers

- Line managers are responsible for helping their employees to identify opportunities to meet their learning and development needs via the induction processes, the PDR and the 1:1 or supervision meetings.
- Line managers are responsible for creating an environment that encourages self-development, continuous learning and the sharing of knowledge and skills amongst the individuals in their teams.
- Line managers are responsible for participating in the learning and development of individuals or teams as identified through the PDR, team meetings and the service learning plan.
- Line managers are responsible for evaluation of impact at individual and team level.
- Line managers are responsible for reviewing performance through the 1:1 or supervision meetings and helping employees to use the newly acquired skills, knowledge or behaviour.

- Line managers are responsible for monitoring the diaries of staff who are absent due to sickness, to ensure that their names are removed from any booked corporate training or development, by email to workforcedevelopment@medway.gov.uk; to ensure that their service is not charged for non-attendance. If the course is an externally run event, the training provider will need to be contacted separately.

(d) Employees

- Employees are responsible for identifying their learning and development needs and for seeking opportunities to improve their effectiveness and increase their potential, gaining approval from their line manager.
- Employees are responsible for booking corporate courses via iShare and for ensuring that any external learning or development requests are submitted via the External Training Request form on the Service Desk portal.
- Employees are expected to share their knowledge and skills with team colleagues.
- Employees are responsible for preparing and participating in the PDR process.
- Employees are responsible for preparing and participating in the 1:1 or supervision meetings and, with their line manager, evaluating the impact of any learning activities.
- Employees are responsible for undertaking immediate review of learning activity, for evaluation and for applying increased knowledge, skills and personal qualities developed through the learning activity.
- Employees are responsible for continuously developing and updating their professional skills and knowledge.

(e) Workforce Development

- The workforce development team will support the organisation to identify and organise cost effective methods to close any skills or knowledge gaps and meet strategic imperatives.
- The workforce development team will provide to each Assistant Director, on a quarterly basis, a summary of all expenditure planned and spent within their service areas; to ensure that expenditure is monitored in line with the service learning objectives and strategic imperatives.
- The workforce development team will commission a suite of events aimed at meeting organisation-wide current and future learning needs. These will be in some cases generic and open to the whole organisation or specific and targeted to meet unique service needs.
- The workforce development team will evaluate all corporate training events to ensure needs are met and value for money is achieved.
- The workforce development team will report to CMT on the corporate programme of training activities and levels of attendance.
- The Workforce Development team will maintain accurate records of employee attendance at corporate training activities.

(f) Employment matters committee

- Every year the employment matters committee will receive a full evaluation report on learning and development activities in the organisation and its contribution to the delivery of strategic and service objectives.

(g) Member development advisory group

- This cross-party group promote, oversee and monitor Medway's member development strategy and programme.

Reviewing and Updating the Policy

The Workforce Development team is responsible for ensuring that the learning and development policy is up to date and that learning and development continuously supports the organisation.

Supporting documents

- [Medpay policy](#)
- [Performance Development Review Template](#)