



**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 Learning and 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, nationality, 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

## **Minimum standards**

- All new employees and those new to a role, team or service across the Council will have access to a Council Employee Induction as well as a local Induction process that will allow them to settle into their appointment
- All employees will be encouraged to take accountability for their learning
- All learning and development contributes to the Council Strategy and the Council Plan, and any Directorate Area/Service-specific and partnership working objectives

## **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 Strategy and Plan. These documents articulate aspirations for the Council and are regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect any changes in circumstances or priorities. Organisational level learning and development needs are expressed through the Learning and 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.

### **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.

## **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) via face to face delivery, Teams/Zoom platforms and approved video content
- Seminars (including CPD)
- Conferences
- Briefings/workshops (e.g. skills updating, changing legislation)
- Mentoring/coaching
- Secondments
- Partnership and multi-agency training

## 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 Learning and 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.

### Financial arrangements

Requests for learning that incur a direct cost will need to be submitted to the Learning and Development team via the external training request form on the Service Desk portal. Assistant Director approval will also be required for all requested spend.

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

- 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.
- The training is either a statutory, mandatory or legislative requirement, in order to meet the needs of the individual's job requirements.

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 Learning and Development team via the forms on Service Desk, either:

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

Or

[Specialist internal training delivery](#)

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

## **Course Fees**

Your tuition, registration, examination (for first attempt only) fees, are paid for all approved courses. This does not include the payment of residential fees where they form part of the requirement of your course including travel and must be met by your departmental budget code.

If a course of study is being repeated for any reason, then financial support in full or in part is only given if it is justified and after approval by your Assistant Director.

Your examination fees and expenses are paid for the first attempt only at each stage. Reimbursement of fees are only made after approval of your Assistant Director.

If you fail to complete all the required aspects of your course or discontinue your course, then your financial assistance will be withdrawn. If you fail your course and then re-sit the following year, you may be expected to pay any fees yourself.

## **Annual subscriptions**

The cost of an annual subscription (e.g. industry publications or resource sites) is not met by the centralised learning and development training budget and must be met by your departmental budget code.

The annual membership subscription of a technical or professional organisation is paid only where it is a requirement to hold membership in order to take any qualifying examinations and is only paid for the length of your course. Your membership will not be paid after you have achieved your qualification or where you need to gain practical experience before you can achieve full corporate membership.

Subscriptions are not paid if you have to repeat a year of study in full in order to re-sit an examination unless prior agreement has been given by your head of service. Subscriptions are not paid if you choose to undertake a qualification as a method of upgrading your membership.

## **Travel**

The cost of travel is not met by the centralised learning and development training budget and must be met by your departmental budget code.

You can get travel warrants from the creditors team and these are the preferred method of paying for travel. You need to use, and claim for, the cheapest method of transport. This includes using any special rail fares that have been negotiated by course organisers. Where practicable you should share transport with colleagues. Before making a journey make your manager aware of your travel arrangements. Your manager can then make any necessary authorisation.

If you choose to use your own transport even though cheaper alternatives are available, you **MUST** claim in accordance with Medway Council's travel and subsistence policy.

All expense claims are made through the payroll system using the normal expense claims form attaching all receipts. The form should be signed by the person within your service with responsibility for authorising such expenditure.

## **Resources to support learning and development**

A corporate centralised training budget is held by HR and administered by the Learning and 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. There are certain services which are excluded from the centralised learning and development budget, as these services have a protected, ring-fenced budget which is managed locally

Each learning and development activity is recorded under the respective directorate to ensure that there is no overspend and that each directorate is receiving its share of learning and development investment throughout the year.

## **Printing of training materials**

To reduce our carbon footprint and to reduce the overall cost of printing, it is the responsibility of the employee to print any training materials required on the day of training (only if this has been identified as a requirement in the joining instructions). These will be sent to each delegate prior to the start of the course via the electronic calendar invitation sent by Learning and Development.

## **Pre-reading materials**

It is the responsibility of the delegate to have read any pre-course reading materials. Failure to have completed this task may result in the delegate being denied a place on the course. This is at the discretion of the training provider.

## **Apprenticeship Academy**

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 Learning and Development team, prior to seeking other options. The use of our Apprenticeship levy funds for the upskilling of existing staff secures significant savings against the corporate training budget. The use of Apprenticeship Levy funds is the preferred training option for the Council. The Apprenticeship Levy fund is managed by the Apprenticeship Academy.

## **Volunteers and work experience**

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, related 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.

The centralised training budget is unable to support paid training needs for work experience participants, unless this is part of a formal programme placement i.e. student social workers.



## **Refreshments**

Medway Council does not supply refreshments for any corporate course or training delivered. It is the responsibility of the delegate to make plans to bring enough refreshments for the duration of the course.

## **Protected learning time**

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

Additionally, new managers will receive a minimum of a half-day protected learning time in their first two weeks in a new role, to absorb the information on the Leadership and Management pages on MedSpace eg: performance management, inclusive leadership and neurodiversity.

## **Probation**

Only essential training necessary for fulfilling the job criteria will be considered during a staff member's probationary period.

## **Climate change**

In April 2019, Medway Council declared a climate change emergency and developed an action plan to ensure we play our part in addressing the climate emergency.

The Learning and Development team are supporting this commitment through, but not limited to:

- running virtual training courses where possible to reduce travel and transport use and costs.
- sending electronic course notes/literature to reduce carbon footprint and to reduce the overall cost of printing.

## **Study, revision and examination leave**

Paid time off work for study may be given for all courses requiring exams to be taken.

Paid time off work for study must be agreed with your line manager and/or head of service before commencing the course.

Paid time off work/study leave must not exceed 36 days per year (equivalent to one day per week for an academic year).

You are expected to attend the centre nearest to your home or place of work, subject to its suitability and availability.

If you start working for Medway Council during an academic year and are already studying for a course you may, where it is practicable, be able to complete the year of your existing course at your current centre. Any further attendance must be at a centre agreed by Medway Council.

For some courses, you may need to attend short residential blocks and these will be supported as part of your course. If your course includes a residential element, discuss this with your line manager and include this information on your application form.

Course attendance out of normal working hours is in your own time and no time off in lieu or other allowances are made for such time. If you work part-time and attend an approved training qualification course outside your contracted daily hours you are paid on the same basis as full-time staff i.e. plain rate during normal working hours, any attendance outside of normal working hours is in your own time. If on flexi time, credit hours can be given.

If you are undertaking an apprenticeship programme all work required for the fulfilment of the course must be completed in your working hours and your line manager will have agreed to this time being given to you at the outset of the programme. This is in order to be compliant with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules on the use of Apprenticeship Levy funds.

### **Revision Leave**

The granting of paid leave of absence applies to those employees who are studying for a professional qualification or taking exams for the first time, the criteria being as follows:

- Total of 3 days paid leave of absence where the course is of one year or less in duration.
- Total of 5 days paid leave of absence where the course is longer than one year in duration.
- Up to 3 additional days may be granted prior to intermediate examinations by your Assistant Director.

### **Examination leave**

Leave with pay is granted to enable you to sit approved examinations. This includes the day of the examination and any necessary travelling time.

Where it is unreasonable for you to travel on the day of your examination, an overnight stay may be approved. This also applies if you have to make a return journey between your examinations that take place on consecutive days.

This also applies if you are sitting professional interviews/tests of competence or an associated final examination in order to gain full membership of a recognised professional/technical body (if this is a requirement for your job role).

### **Monitoring your qualification**

Qualification training must be carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure it is meeting personal needs and to review the employee's performance. This is an excellent opportunity for the employee to discuss with their line manager how they can apply what they have learnt on the course to their work.

Course evaluation takes place between the employee and their line manager, or another nominated person at regular intervals. It is suggested that these reviews take place at intervals of no more than six months. An evaluation session should take place when the employee has received their end of year result or when the qualification is received.

## **Learning Agreements**

A Learning Agreement has been created with our Legal team, to help protect the Council's training budget and ensure that it is used for employees who are motivated and committed to developing their skills and knowledge to enhance their work performance, for the benefit of not just themselves, but their work team and service area.

Learning Agreements will be issued for each qualification (except apprenticeship programmes) an employee undertakes where the total cost of the course is £2000 or more, or whereby the total number of qualifications being undertaken equals £2000 or more.

A Learning Agreement will be issued to an employee at the line manager's discretion, should the value of the qualification be less than £2000.

The Learning Agreement will be required to be signed by the employee, undertaking their agreement to the following conditions:

The employee will repay back the financial costs of the qualification, paid by the Council, if they leave the Council's employ, either before completing the whole of the qualification, or within two years of securing it, on the below sliding percentage scale.

0-12 months	100%
Within 12-18 months	50%
Within 18-24 months	25%

Any costs to be charged to a leaving employee will be notified to them and be administered through either the payroll process or by express agreement, an invoice will be issued for the outstanding amount and a repayment plan agreed.

## **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, if the course was booked through the portal.

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

Managers are responsible for recording and maintaining accurate training records for their staff through the PDR process.

## **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. Learning and Development identify the corporate mandatory training requirement, 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 work 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 PDR process. 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. Where there is an apprenticeship standard that meets the requirements, the use of our Apprenticeship Levy funds is the option we would progress. Where the needs cannot be met by an apprenticeship programme, an application for an external course will need to be made.

### **(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 Learning and Development to action.

## 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 Learning and Development Strategy is prepared every 3 years, and reviewed annually during this period. The review will take account of strategic imperatives.

### (b) Service managers

- 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.

### (c) Line managers

- Line managers are responsible for helping their employees to identify opportunities to meet their learning and development needs via the induction process, 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 the 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 behaviours.
- 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](mailto: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.
- Employees are responsible for the printing of any documents required for training.
- Employees are responsible for any pre-course reading prior the training date.

#### **(e) The Learning & Development team**

- The Learning and 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 Learning and Development team will provide to each Assistant Director, on a monthly 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. This is provided to the relevant HR Business Partner to discuss with the AD.
- The Learning and 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 Learning and Development team will evaluate all corporate training events to ensure needs are met and value for money is achieved.
- The Learning and Development team will report to CMT on the corporate programme of training activities and levels of attendance.
- The Learning and 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 will promote, oversee and monitor Medway's member development strategy and programme.

## **Reviewing and updating the policy**

The Learning and Development team is responsible for ensuring that the Learning and Development Policy is up to date and that the learning and development provision is monitored to ensure it continuously supports the organisation.

## **Supporting documents**

- [Performance Development Review Template \(Appendix one\)](#)
- [Learning Agreement template \(Appendix two\)](#)

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