

Policy – Learning and Development

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Version control

This document is subject to regular review due to legislative and policy changes. The latest versions of all our publications can be found on our website. Before contacting us about the content of this document, we recommend that you refer to the most recent version on the website and any relevant guidance.

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Notes / changes
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Introduction

The Councils Corporate Plan 2012-2017 lays out the Councils vision and our strategic objectives. This policy will set out Learning and Development's approach in supporting the achievement of those objectives through developing our workforce. Our Organisation Development (OD) Framework sets out how OD will support the development of the workforce from recruitment through performance appraisal and talent management. Through an annual performance appraisal all staff will identify their development needs that will help them to meet the objectives agreed, to deliver in their job role.

Aim

This document will demonstrate Denbighshire County Councils commitment to develop its workforce to achieve the objectives of the organisation and how it will plan, deliver and evaluate learning and development opportunities provided.

Objectives

- Denbighshire County Council recognises the valuable contribution that effective and structured Learning and Development makes to the achievement of the Council's objectives. This policy will describe how Learning and Development will contribute to that achievement.
- To enable the Authority to provide quality services through its most valuable resource; a competent, well-informed workforce.
- To set out the approach that is taken in the delivery and evaluation of Learning and Development within Denbighshire County Council.
- To clarify the expectations of both employees and managers with regard to their responsibilities for learning and development within Denbighshire County Council.
- To explain how learning and development needs will be identified by the business through work with the HR Business Partners and, through the staff performance appraisal process using the competency framework.
- To clarify how learning and development will be supported by making the best use of the intranet and technology.
- To comply with the Government initiative of allowing employees time to train.

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Application/Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all Denbighshire employees with complete equality of opportunity to meet their individual needs and the corporate aims of the Authority. The policy will be the responsibility of the Organisational Development (OD) Manager who will monitor the application of the policy. Any appeals with regard to the policy should be made to the OD Manager.

Requests for training from agency workers should be considered by the Line Manager based on individual circumstances.

It is the aim of the Council to make learning and development accessible. Where employees are highlighted as requiring adjustments to carry out/complete a course, every effort will be made to ensure that these needs are met.

In considering training for their business areas, line managers should take into account employees who are absent from the workplace (e.g. those on adoption/maternity/paternity/parental leave, sickness absence etc.) to ensure that they are offered the opportunity to attend where appropriate.

Analysis of needs

The learning and development needs of new employees will be assessed, initially within five months of appointment and annually thereafter at the individual's performance appraisal. A development action plan will be agreed between the manager and the employee and this will be fed into the Trent system for identification of training by the Corporate Learning and Development specialist. This information will inform the annual training plan.

Any training plan and proposed learning event must be appropriate to the level and status of the post occupied, or that likely to be occupied by the employee in the foreseeable future. Learning and development is to be based on the Authority's objectives and on an assessment of each employee's present and potential contribution to their achievement. The granting of leave of absence for all learning events is subject to the adequate maintenance of the Council's services. Learning/development plans are to be flexible to

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meet organisational/legislative changes. Based on the assessment of corporate, departmental and individual training needs, the Organisational Development Team in conjunction with information generated through Trent via the performance appraisal process will draft an annual Authority training/development plan.

Provision of learning and development

There will be a dedicated annual budget for the provision of learning and development for each department. Managers and employees will jointly ensure that development action plans are adhered to as far as is reasonably possible subject to the adequate maintenance of the Council's services and the available finance.

Evaluation of learning and development

Managers will ensure return on investment in learning and development by carrying out the described evaluation process laid out in the Pre-training evaluation form and Post-training evaluation form. Managers will be responsible for evaluating how the development of people is contributing to the service objectives of the section and department through regular one to one meetings with individuals. Corporate analysis of such information will be the responsibility of the Organisational Development Manager, ensuring that the Authority gets maximum benefit from the resources devoted to learning/development.

Following all internal learning events, employees will be requested to complete a satisfaction form so that on-going evaluation and adjustment to courses where necessary can be made.

Records of learning and development

Records of learning events attended and qualifications achieved by individuals will be maintained through the Trent system as follows;

- Corporate courses – by Strategic HRA's
- Departmentally organised corporate courses – through strategic HRA's
- Individuals attending college or university qualification courses/external commercial courses/seminars/conferences – by individuals through self-service in Trent.

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Induction

New entrants

All managers will carry out a thorough service specific induction with new entrants (including fixed term and temporary employees) to include an introduction to the department and provide relevant information to help the individual's integration into the authority.

Transferred employees

It is equally important that employees who transfer from one department to another or who significantly change duties are correctly inducted into their new posts. They will receive a description of their new job content and role in contributing to the achievement of service objectives; the expected performance related to their new post; any changes in their terms and conditions and any different health and safety legislation applicable to their new post. The service specific induction will ensure any service related information is given to a transferred employee.

Business critical courses

Some courses must be attended by all employees and/or managers. They are business critical because they have been deemed as essential to the functioning of the authority or to meet the authority's legal obligations. It is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that they and their staff attend such courses. This includes any e-learning courses.

Conditions of release for approved qualification courses

Guarantee of service

Before granting leave of absence and/or financial assistance to study for approved qualifications, the Authority require from any employee a guarantee of service after completion of some training courses. The completion of a Learning Agreement is required for this purpose.

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Continuance of financial support

The continuance of the next stage of study will only be granted if the employee has passed the appropriate examination and has made satisfactory progress. Where it appears that the employee is making no real attempt to complete the course or otherwise not making the expected progress, then s/he will be asked for an explanation by the Head of Service. If dissatisfied with the response, the Head of Service may withdraw continuing financial support and time off, and may require repayment of the course fees.

Examination "re-sits"

Employees who are unsuccessful in their first attempt at obtaining an approved qualification will only be authorised a second attempt if it can be shown that they made reasonable progress during their studies for the first attempt, subject to the approval of the Head of Service. Any further attempt will, other than in exceptional circumstances, be at the employee's own expense.

Examination results

All employees who have undertaken examinations under the post-entry training scheme will ensure that Trent is updated through self-service. Where this is not possible, Human Resources should be informed upon receipt of examination results.

Refund of financial assistance

The Authority may require the refunding of all or part of the financial assistance given if an employee:

- a) fails to sit for an examination within a reasonable period
- b) fails to show satisfactory progress in his/her studies
- c) discontinues his/her course
- d) leaves the employ of local government

This will be determined by case (see Denbighshire County Council learning agreement)

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Earnings

Under Section 63D of the Employment Rights Act 1996' employees have the right to request time off to train. This right to unpaid leave is available to all employees with a minimum 26 weeks service, providing it supports the development of skills relevant to the job role. In its commitment to achieving the corporate aims and objectives, the Council may provide time off with pay, see below for details.

Full normal earnings will be paid for attendance at full time, day release and short courses leading to approved qualifications. This will also be the case for approved attendance at courses and seminars that do not lead to a qualification.

Time off work allowance

The number of days required for the purpose of study should be agreed in advance with the Line Manager in accordance with the requirements of the individual programme of study. Further guidance is provided below based on the type of study, see also the 'Examples' shown.

E-learning

Time will be allowed, within working hours, for the completion of any mandatory e-learning. E-learning which is not mandatory, but is considered beneficial to the individual's existing role or future development (as identified in a performance appraisal) may also be conducted within working hours, with the joint agreement of the employee and his/her manager.

If it is agreed between the individual and his/her manager that there is a valid reason why e-learning cannot take place within working hours, approval may be granted for the training to be completed at home or in a library. This is subject to agreement being provided beforehand, based on the duration of the modules in question.

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Attendance at courses

Paid leave of absence may be allowed for events taking place during normal working hours, i.e. pre-course interviews, course attendance, study for examinations, examinations, attendance at related graduation and award presentation ceremonies.

If attendance requires additional time to the normal standard day e.g. for travelling purposes, the actual time taken may be claimed up to the maximum working day i.e. 12 hours.

However, if an employee is required to attend meetings/conferences/seminars that require early starts and/or late finishes which may exceed the 12 hours working day, they may claim in excess of 12 hours providing that this has been agreed with the line manager prior to accumulating the time.

If the course begins part way through the working day and continues into the evening, or takes place exclusively in the evening, depending on the requirements of the department, it may be agreed between the manager and the employee for the employee to:

- work the morning and claim TOIL for the extra hours or
- not work the morning, attend the course only and claim a standard working day of 7.24 hours (7.40 decimal hours)

Where paid leave is allowed, attendance at an event is treated as attendance on duty. This applies equally to part-time employees and those on shift work that attend learning events outside their normal working hours who will be given the equivalent time off in lieu.

Absence because of sickness must be reported and if necessary certified.

Unauthorised absence from an event will be treated as unauthorised absence from duty.

There is no automatic allowance in terms of pay or time off for attendance at courses or other learning events taking place over a weekend unless the person's normal working week includes a Saturday or Sunday. Exceptions to this will be decided by discussion between the Head of Human Resources and the appropriate Director or Head of Service.

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Study leave –Where it is a condition of the qualification

Subject to the requirements of the department and at their discretion:

Any prescribed time away from work for study, portfolio building etc., demanded by awarding bodies as an essential element of courses e.g. as a condition of qualification, will be met, subject to written proof of the requirements being supplied to the person's line manager.

Study leave – Where it is not a condition of the qualification

Any negotiable time away from work for study, portfolio building etc., will be met on a 50/50 basis i.e. 50% the employee's time and 50% the Authority's time. This will also be subject to written proof of the requirements being supplied to the person's line manager.

Examples

Traditional college based qualification courses with no study leave requirements	A maximum of 3 normal working days per academic year at the discretion of the department for pre-exam study.
Distance Learning	As for college based plus residential elements taking place on working days
Work based N.V.Q.'s (with no prescribed time away from work for study, portfolio building etc. it is usually expected that this is carried out within the workplace)	day per level per year for levels 1, 2 & 3. days per level per year for levels 4 & 5 in addition to any time required to attend events addressing related training needs and assessment time.
Examination resits	No allowance

Time off for Welsh lessons

The Council supports and encourages employees to learn Welsh and as a result will grant time off for employees to attend Welsh lessons during the working day.

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Where Welsh language is a requirement of the role and the employee is unable to attend Welsh classes during the working day, the Council will provide funding for the employee to attend evening classes to learn Welsh. Employees will not be reimbursed for the time taken to attend Welsh classes in the evening.

Managers have a responsibility to monitor the progress and improvement of employees attending Welsh classes where Welsh language is essential to the role. Should an employee's language skills not be improving over a set period of time then it may be necessary to refer to the Capability policy.

Financial assistance

Membership fees

When a course of study cannot be pursued without membership of the applicable professional institution, membership fees will be paid for the normal duration of the course. Should the person fail to qualify at the first attempt, payment of the membership fees to enable subsequent attempts will be at the discretion of the Head of Service based on individual circumstances.

College fees

Fees, including those for registration and examination, will be paid in full if relevant to and a requirement of the employee's present post, or necessary to the future needs of the department and/or future work of the employee within the department. Payment for field trips will be subject to separate approval by the employee's Head of Service.

Books

Should specific books be required, they will only be purchased if there is no copy already available in the particular directorates/department library. Books are to be returned to the library in good condition when a course is completed. If the employee wishes to keep the book s/he will purchase it from the authority at the original price.

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Equipment and stationery

If these are necessary to the course and not available within the authority, these will be paid for in full.

Thesis/Project expenses

Full details must be provided beforehand to the employee's Head of Service. These will be considered on merit to determine the most cost effective method of production.

Travel expenses

A “learning event” is defined as:

- a) Seminar or conference
- b) workshop
- c) A course of study, requiring day release facilities to attend college/university etc.
- d) Attendance at “interviews”, which are an integral requirement of the course syllabus
- e) Attendance at examinations
- f) Attendance at graduation/presentation awards, following successful completion of a course of study

When claiming mileage for attending a course or event business mileage rates apply. For the purpose of calculating mileage, there is a requirement to deduct the normal home to work mileage from the total business mileage incurred. Please see Flexible Working Guidance for Managers and Employees for further information.

Where the employee is attending a residential course, then no allowances will be paid during the period of attendance, unless the vehicle is used in connection with the course and specifically authorised.

Incidental travelling expenses (car parking fees, toll charges, taxi fares etc.), should be itemised separately. See the Pay section within the Pay and Rewards pages on the intranet for further details relating to additional payments. Where the training includes accommodation and meals, then such allowances are not claimable.

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Accommodation

Where accommodation charges have to be arranged separately by the employee, please refer to the Pay and Reward pages on the intranet for permitted accommodation rates.

Where an employee is able to stay with relatives, then only expenses actually incurred may be claimed, in accordance with the above guidelines.

Useful information

Competency framework: Refer to The Learning Hub on the intranet

Guidance for managers: Refer to the intranet Human Resources/Guidance for line managers/Learning and development