

Learning and Development Policy

February 2024

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1. Aim

This policy sets out the Council's approach to learning, training and development. It aims to support employees and managers to identify and meet development needs which will enable them to flourish and deliver effective services and develop their careers at Bury Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all full and part time Council employees, whether on a permanent or temporary contract.

Within some services, Council staff work alongside employees from other organisations and may participate in joint learning and development initiatives. However, employees not directly employed by the Council must follow their own organisational policies.

3. Principles

In-keeping with the LET'S Do It! Strategy, the Council seeks to maintain the following key principles:

- ensure all employees receive an appropriate induction and annual employee review
- support employees to complete any mandatory training that is essential to their role
- record and evaluate completion of employee development and training
- effectively identify workforce development needs and agree training where appropriate, in support of an individuals' performance in their current role and wider career development within the Council
- ensure access to learning and development is fair, inclusive and appropriately measured in the context of maintaining service effectiveness

In return, employees are expected to make the best use possible of any learning interventions, then apply their new knowledge, skills or behaviours in the workplace.

When identifying employees' learning, development and training needs in the light of the Council's priorities, two processes are vital:

- corporate, departmental and service level planning
- ongoing performance management which addresses development needs through structured employee reviews and 1-to-1 meetings

In applying this policy, the Council will have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and provide for good relations between people of diverse groups, in particular on the grounds of the protected characteristics recognised in our Inclusion Strategy.

4. Definitions and guidance

We recognise that learning and development can take many forms, with key definitions and guidance as follows:

Mandatory training

Mandatory training may be corporate, departmental or role specific. It must be completed and then refreshed in line with the defined timescales.

Agreed training and development

Training and development agreed by a line manager should not only add value to the employee's performance and future progression, but also support organisational goals and be cost effective. This may include training to enable continued registration within a professional field. Any agreed training or development should be documented in employee reviews or 1-to-1's.

Training courses, programmes of study and conferences

Training courses, programmes of study and conferences may be mandatory or agreed (providing the employee has completed all appropriate mandatory training). They may include accredited academic programmes such as degrees, post graduate degrees and courses with "blocks" of learning. Where there are a limited number of places available, allocation should be fair and inclusive.

Other forms of development

Alternative means of developing employees include, but are not limited to, work shadowing, deputising or undertaking temporary responsibilities, joining working groups, mentoring/training other colleagues, networking with relevant groups, on the job coaching, secondments and research.

E-learning

The Council provides a comprehensive library of e-learning courses via its Learning Management System (LMS). This can be linked to iTrent and completion rates/compliance reported upon.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are the Council's default delivery method for all accredited learning, but there will be exceptions where apprenticeships are not available. All apprenticeships must be co-ordinated and authorised centrally, with training costs being fully funded via the Apprenticeship Levy. Employees will need to agree to additional conditions to undertake apprenticeships.

Succession planning

Learning and development may be agreed with employees to support succession planning. Succession planning involves the upskilling of employees in order that they meet the essential requirements of a Job Description more senior to theirs in the service structure or to support horizontal movement. This type of training is classed as 'agreed training' and should not be mandated.

Eligibility to undertake succession-based development will be determined in a fair and equitable way - a pool of eligible roles will be determined. Normally, the criteria for determining the pool will be based on existing pay grades but where funding limits the availability of the development opportunity to suitably graded staff, an application process based on additional criteria will be used. The criteria determining eligibility for the opportunity will be published as part of the succession plan. The succession plan will be subject to approval from the Executive Director and provided to all employees in the service for their consideration prior to the development opportunity being allocated.

5. General conditions

- 5.1 The Council will take a blended approach to training delivery. Where there is identified risk of any training intervention adversely impacting equality, diversity and inclusion, reasonable alternative methods will be implemented.
- 5.2 Employees undertaking mandatory training should do so within normal working hours and are entitled to payment of normal earnings, all prescribed fees and other relevant additional expenses arising including travel expenses.
- 5.3 If attendance at agreed training courses will occur at a time outside of the individual's working hours, individuals will normally be entitled to be credited with the actual number of hours of attendance.
- 5.4 Employees undertaking agreed training will be entitled to payment of normal earnings, however payment of all prescribed fees and other relevant additional expenses may be full or partial. This is expected to be determined by negotiation between the employee and line manager prior to the agreement that the training is undertaken. The details agreed will be documented. If the agreed training is accredited the additional conditions set out below will always apply within the agreement.
- 5.5 For training which is neither mandated nor agreed, the Council does not provide any financial support or time off.
- 5.6 Funding to procure training or to pay associated joining fees and expenses will only ever be agreed where employees have completed all existing mandatory training and will never be granted retrospectively. Training should be approved by line managers and sign off from the Head of Service is also required where there is a substantial or significant commitment of time or cost involved. Decisions to approve training spend will be taken in the context of available moneys in service budgets.
- 5.7 Individuals who feel they have been unfairly refused access to training and development have the right to raise a grievance under the Council's Grievance Procedure.

6. Additional conditions for accredited courses (excluding apprenticeships)

The undertaking of accredited non-apprenticeship training will only be agreed where a relevant apprenticeship is not available/reasonable and where the training is necessary to serve the requirements of the employee's current role or will support succession planning.

The following conditions supplement the General Conditions set out above when the undertaking of accredited courses has been agreed:

- 6.1 Where the undertaking of recognised, relevant qualifications is agreed, employees may be given financial assistance to cover course costs and leave of absence to attend taught sessions, and if so, must sign a Learning Agreement which reflects this and records their agreement to the terms. Normal pay and leave will only ordinarily be given within normal working hours, and sessions taking place outside of these will be expected to be completed in the employee's own time.
- 6.2 Where the Council has financially contributed to the cost of accredited training, either in full or in part, pre-examination leave with pay will be granted on the basis of a maximum of two days per annum for the duration of the course. This leave must be granted, subject to the exigencies of the service, immediately prior to the appropriate examination/assessment to enable the employee to concentrate on revision. The Council will pay the cost of the first exam sitting - any re-sits will ordinarily be funded by the applicant and undertaken in the individual's own time. For employees required to attend training events outside of the borough, claims for meals may be made in line with Local Conditions of Service.
- 6.3 Employees are expected to undertake a reasonable proportion of course related personal study, assignments or projects in their own time. However, by agreement, some may be completed in paid work time. Managers are expected to be more generous for course work-based courses.
- 6.4 Fees in respect of exemptions and professional subscriptions are to be met at the individual's own expense.
- 6.5 Special leave provisions allow an individual to attend their own graduation ceremony in circumstances in which the Council has contributed financially towards the course fees and/or where the qualification is a requirement of the post.
- 6.6 Where an employee is undertaking studies leading to a recognised qualification, and where the Council has financially contributed to the cost of training, either in full or part, neither payment nor time should be awarded in recompense for any part of the taught element (tutored or online course

delivery) that falls in that person's own time.

- 6.7 The employee must remain in the service of Bury Council for a period of two years from the first of the month following the date on which the employee completed the course of study. If the employee does not comply with this requirement, he/she will normally be required to repay the financial assistance granted on a graduated scale basis*
- 6.8 Where an employee, without good reason, fails to sit an examination within a reasonable period, or fails to show satisfactory progress with studies or discontinues the course, facilities granted under the scheme and the refunding of all or a proportion of the financial assistance granted by this Council will be required on a graduated basis*

**NOTE - 'Graduated scale basis' referred to above will be at the discretion of and as determined by the Head of HR, normally based on a reduction by an appropriate fraction for each month of satisfactory service since the successful completion of the course or final examination.*

An example of this would be:

- Training costs funded by council = £720.00
- If you voluntarily leave employment immediately following your last examination, you will be required to repay the whole sum of £720.00. For every complete month of service that you complete following your last examination, that fee will be reduced by 1/24th. So, for example, if you leave after:
 - 6 months – fee reduced by 6/24ths (£180 reduction) - £540 to repay
 - 12 months – fee reduced by 12/24ths (£360 reduction) - £360 to repay
 - 18 months – fee reduced by 18/24ths (£540 reduction) - £180 to repay
 - 20 months – fee reduced by 22/24ths (£660 reduction) - £60 to repay

- 6.9 When repayment of financial assistance is required, the Council may deduct the amount due out of any monies which may be due or payable or which thereafter becomes due or payable by the Council to the employee. In the event of no or insufficient monies being due to the employee by the Council, the employee will repay to the Council on demand, the outstanding amount or balance of the financial assistance which has been given (as determined by the Head of HR).
- 6.10 If, however, the Director of the employee concerned considers that there are mitigating circumstances concerning repayment of financial assistance, the Director of People and Inclusion shall determine whether the repayment of financial assistance should be waived.
- 6.11 Individuals who leave the authority for reasons of redundancy (whether compulsory or voluntary), or who have retired on the grounds of ill-health will not be required to repay the financial assistance.

7. Cancellation or non-attendance

It is an inconvenience and incurs cost when participants fail to attend learning events. This is for both internal and external events. Without a valid reason, we will charge a late cancellation fee to the service area.

For events run in-house where training has not been procured, we will not charge due to:

- family emergency
- illness
- the team needing critical or essential cover
- technical issues, for example, poor internet connection or equipment failure
- transport difficulties at short notice

For events run in-house where training has been procured, we reserve the right to charge the service area the cost of unfilled places resulting from attendee cancellation.

We are not in control of charges for cancellation of external learning events. The service area will pay the cancellation charges incurred.

8. Failure to make satisfactory progress

Training facilities shall be granted for a period which is long enough for an employee to demonstrate his/her ability to make satisfactory progress and/or to undertake any related examinations/assessments so that the failure of the individual to make progress can be tested against the original schedule of training which was agreed to by both the employee and the Council and in accordance with the individual learning agreement.

The Head of HR is authorised to determine on what basis, if any, there should be a continuance of facilities to an employee who has not made satisfactory progress.

Bury
Council