

Learning and Development Policy



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South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

The Council recognises that its people are its greatest asset. To deliver high-quality services and meet future challenges, we are committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning and development. This policy sets out our approach to supporting employees in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to perform effectively and progress within the organisation.

Our approach is fair, equitable, and transparent, ensuring that the needs of employees remain central while balancing these with the operational requirements of the Council.

Policy	Learning and Development Policy
Policy Author	HR Team – PSPS Limited
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Policy Sign-off	Head of Paid Service (at SHDC – in consultation with Portfolio Holder)

Learning and Development Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines the Council's approach and responsibilities for Learning and Development (L&D). Learning and Development refers to any activity designed to enhance employees' effectiveness in their roles by improving or updating their knowledge, skills and capabilities. This may include secondments, workplace shadowing, attending conferences or seminars, networking, coaching, and mentoring.

The Council is committed to investing in the continuous professional development of its workforce. We achieve this through a blended approach to learning, aligned with its Workforce Development Strategy.

Our goal is to continually raise the standard of service we provide. We believe that effective Learning and Development is essential to achieving this ambition and to meet our strategic objectives.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to:

- Ensure all employees have access to learning and development opportunities that enhance performance and career progression.
- Align learning initiatives with organisational priorities, workforce development strategy and statutory requirements.
- Promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in all development activities.
- Support organisational resilience and adaptability through a skilled workforce.
- Provide clear guidance on responsibilities, funding, and conditions for training.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Council. It does **not** apply to agency workers, self-employed contractors, or consultants.

Where Council staff work alongside employees from other organisations, joint learning initiatives may occur; however, non-Council employees must follow their own organisation's policies.

Equality, Inclusion and Accessibility

The Council is committed to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity.
- Ensuring all learning opportunities are accessible to employees with disabilities or additional needs.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to training delivery, materials, and venues. Employees should inform their manager or the L&D team of any accessibility needs in advance.

Legislation and Linked Policies

Compliance with statutory and legal requirements underpins all Learning and Development activities within the Council. Every training initiative, whether mandatory or agreed, is designed to ensure adherence to relevant legislation, safeguard employees and service users, and maintain organisational integrity. This ensures learning supports a safe, inclusive, and legally compliant working environment.

Legislation

- Learning and Skills Act 2000
- Equality Act 2010.
- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR)
- Employment Rights Act 2025
- Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009

Linked Policies

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Recruitment & Selection Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Workforce Development Strategy
- Grievance Policy
- Probation Policy

Commitment

The Council is committed to developing a highly skilled workforce as outlined in its Workforce Development Strategy. We will:

- Allocate resources for learning and development equitably.
- Support employees to perform effectively and deliver high-quality services.
- Review departmental learning needs annually through the L&D Evaluation Framework.

Benefits of Training

Learning and development provide:

- Improved service quality.
- Enhanced organisational capability to achieve strategic goals.
- Increased skills and confidence among employees.
- Evidence that employees are valued.
- Compliance with legal and statutory requirements.

Key Principles

The Council seeks to maintain the following principles:

- Ensure all employees receive an appropriate induction and annual review
- Support employees to complete mandatory training essential to their role
- Record and evaluate completion of development and training
- Identify workforce development needs and agree training where appropriate to support performance and career development
- Ensure access to learning and development is fair, inclusive, and balanced with service effectiveness

Employees are expected to make the best use of learning opportunities and apply new knowledge, skills, and behaviours in the workplace.

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1. Types of Learning and Development

We recognise that Learning and Development can take many forms. The Council supports a blended approach, combining a range of methods such as e-learning, face-to-face training, on-the-job learning, coaching, mentoring and work-based experience, to ensure flexibility, accessibility and alignment with organisational priorities. Key categories are outlined below:

Mandatory Training

Mandatory training may be corporate, departmental, or role specific.

- It must be completed and refreshed in line with defined timescales.
- Completion rates are monitored via the Learning Management System (LMS) and reported to senior management to ensure compliance.
- Mandatory modules are essential for maintaining organisational standards, legal compliance, and a safe working environment.
- Cybersecurity and ICT safety training are also mandatory and delivered via designated e-learning platforms.
- Where service areas have additional qualification requirements linked to statutory or specialist operational duties, these form part of the mandatory learning requirements for the role.

E-learning

The Council provides access to a central Learning Management System (LMS) hosting:

- Mandatory courses
- Internal training modules
- Links to recommended external e-learning resources

Employees are encouraged to explore additional e-learning opportunities to support their development. People Managers should promote engagement with e-learning during performance and development conversations. (LMS)

Agreed Training and Development

Training and development agreed by a line manager should:

- Add value to the employee's performance and future progression.
- Support organisational goals and be cost-effective.
- Include training required for continued professional registration where applicable.

All agreed training should be documented in employee reviews or one-to-one meetings.

Training Courses, Programmes of Study, and Conferences

These may be mandatory or agreed (subject to completion of mandatory training). They include accredited academic programmes such as degrees, postgraduate courses, and block learning. Where places are limited, allocation must be fair and inclusive.

Other Forms of Development

Alternative development methods include:

- Work shadowing
- Deputising or temporary responsibilities
- Joining working groups
- Mentoring or training colleagues
- Networking with relevant groups
- On-the-job coaching
- Secondments
- Research

Development Programmes

Structured development programmes are designed to support leadership, management capability, and professional growth.

- Programmes are developed in response to business needs and workforce priorities.
- Examples include leadership academies and management programmes.
- Participation may be by nomination, application, or identified through performance reviews.
- The L&D team coordinates design, delivery, and evaluation, ensuring programmes remain relevant, inclusive, and aligned with strategic objectives.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The Council supports professional qualifications where:

- The qualification is mandatory for the role and required to meet service-specific professional or regulatory standards.
- Outcomes cannot be achieved through internal training.
- It is identified as essential during performance reviews or development planning.

In addition, all employees must engage in ongoing CPD appropriate to their role and service area. CPD activity and outcomes will be discussed during annual appraisals, recorded appropriately, and used to evidence continued professional competence and compliance with service-specific requirements.

Funding will not be provided for qualifications unrelated to the current role or pursued solely for personal interest.

Employees seeking professional qualifications must submit a Training Agreement Form via the HR portal for approval.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are the Council's default delivery method for accredited learning, funded via the Apprenticeship Levy.

- Apprenticeships can upskill existing staff or support new entrants.
- All apprenticeships must be authorised centrally and align with role requirements and strategic needs.
- Managers must confirm levy availability with the L&D team before progressing.
- The L&D team manages the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account and ensures compliance.

Service-Specific Training

Where training needs are unique to a service area:

- People Managers are responsible for sourcing suitable providers, coordinating logistics, and ensuring alignment with service objectives.
- Budget approval must be confirmed before committing to training.
- The L&D team provides guidance on procurement and quality assurance.

Other Development Opportunities

Learning is not limited to formal courses. Alternative methods include:

- Work shadowing
- Deputising or temporary responsibilities
- Joining working groups
- Mentoring or training colleagues
- Networking with relevant groups
- On-the-job coaching
- Secondments
- Research

The Council also supports core skills development (e.g., literacy, numeracy) and promotes access to First Aid training, recognising its importance for workplace safety. Employees holding a valid First Aid at Work (FAW) certificate may be eligible for a small monthly allowance.

Succession Planning

Learning and development may be agreed to support succession planning, enabling employees to meet essential requirements for more senior or alternative roles.

- Eligibility will be determined fairly, with published criteria and approval from the Executive Director.
- Succession planning development is classed as 'agreed training' and should not be mandated.

2. Responsibilities

To ensure effective implementation of this policy, the following responsibilities apply:

Senior Leadership

Senior leaders are responsible for:

- Championing a learning culture that values continuous improvement and evidence-based practice.
- Strategic alignment: ensuring L&D plans align with the Workforce Development Strategy and organisational priorities.
- Resourcing: allocating fair and sustainable resources for learning, including support for statutory and safety-critical training.
- Governance and assurance: overseeing compliance (e.g., mandatory/statutory training), reviewing annual L&D evaluations, and monitoring risk areas.
- Fair access and transparency: setting expectations for equity, inclusion, and accessibility across directorates and modelling the desired behaviours.

Managers

Managers are responsible for;

- Induction and onboarding: ensuring every new starter receives an appropriate induction and timely access to mandatory training.
- Needs identification and planning: using one-to-ones and appraisal to identify learning needs, document agreed development and align PDPs to service priorities.

- Time and access: enabling employees to take protected time for learning; communicating attendance to the team and arranging cover.
- Inclusion and accessibility: ensuring fair access to opportunities and arranging reasonable adjustments to delivery, materials, or venues as needed.
- Compliance oversight: monitoring mandatory training completion and addressing non-completion promptly; utilising LMS reports where applicable.
- Pre- and post-activity support: setting objectives, holding post-learning reviews, and coaching staff to embed new skills in the workplace.
- Career development and succession: supporting progression, succession planning, and access to accredited learning where appropriate.
- Quality and feedback: reviewing learner feedback, escalating issues to L&D, and capturing impact (e.g., changes to practice, KPIs, or service outcomes).

Employees

Employees are responsible for;

- Completing mandatory training within required timescales and keeping certifications up to date.
- Identifying self-development needs and opportunities through performance reviews, one-to-ones, and ongoing reflection.
- Actively participating in learning activities (including pre-work and follow-up tasks) and applying learning in their role (“transfer of learning”).
- Maintaining and updating their Personal Development Plan (PDP) and recording completed learning in the LMS where required.
- Providing feedback and evaluations to support continuous improvement of learning provision.
- Flagging accessibility needs early so reasonable adjustments can be made.
- Complying with policy and funding conditions, including any training agreements attached to accredited learning or apprenticeships.

HR / Learning and Development Team (L&D)

The L&D Team is responsible for;

- Provision and systems: maintaining the LMS, publishing joining instructions, and keeping the course catalogue current.
- Design and sourcing: designing or procuring learning that meets organisational needs and accessibility standards (e.g., alternative formats).
- Apprenticeships & funding: coordinating apprenticeships, managing the Apprenticeship Levy, and advising on funding routes and training agreements.
- Advice and guidance: supporting managers and employees with policy interpretation, pathways (e.g., CPD, qualifications), and reasonable adjustments.
- Evaluation & reporting: monitoring participation, mandatory compliance, and outcomes; analysing feedback; and reporting completion and impact metrics.
- Quality assurance: working with subject matter experts to ensure accuracy, relevance, and integrity of content; addressing issues promptly.
- Data and records: maintaining accurate records for audit and compliance (e.g., H&S, safeguarding, regulatory requirements) in line with data protection.
- Capability building enabling managers to support transfer of learning (e.g., toolkits, conversation guides, action plans) and sharing best practice.

3. Strategic Alignment

Learning and Development activities are aligned with the Corporate Strategy, Workforce Development Strategy, and Annual Service Plans to ensure training supports both individual growth and organisational priorities.

The L&D team works closely with senior leaders and managers to ensure initiatives contribute to:

Building workforce capability in priority areas.

Supporting leadership development and succession planning.

Enhancing service delivery and customer outcomes.

Promoting a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

4. Identification of Training Needs

Training needs will be identified through:

- Annual appraisals and one-to-one meetings.
- Questionnaires and feedback.
- Legislative changes, new systems, or equipment.
- Complaints, accidents, or professional errors.
- Requests from employees or managers.
- Corporate priorities and service-level planning.
- Annual skills scans and service-level gap analyses to identify current and future competency requirements, inform development planning, and support succession and workforce planning across each service area.

5. Planning and Delivery

Learning plans will be developed at corporate, service, and individual levels, linked to strategic objectives and budget planning. Delivery methods include:

- Formal qualifications.
- E-learning and digital platforms.
- Workshops, seminars, and conferences.
- Coaching and mentoring.
- Secondments and partnership training.
- Development programmes

6. Coaching and Mentoring

Managers are encouraged to adopt a coaching style of leadership and provide mentoring to share knowledge build capability and foster a culture of continuous improvement. Coaching is available through the Council's emerging coaching pool; mentoring is provided internally by experienced staff.

Coaching

- Coaching is a structured process where a coach works with an individual to help them achieve specific goals.
- The coach supports the employee by using tools and techniques to clarify objectives and develop strategies for success.
- Coaching is accessible through our coaching pool, and investment in coaching support for individuals is determined based on need.

Mentoring

- Mentoring involves a more experienced person acting as a role model and guide to support another employee's development.
- Mentors are drawn from within the organisation and share their experience, knowledge, and insight to help others grow professionally.

7. General Conditions

- Mandatory training must be completed during working hours with pay and expenses covered.
- Agreed training attracts normal pay; costs and expenses require prior approval.
- Sessions outside working hours are normally completed in personal time.
- Funding is only approved where mandatory training is complete and prior authorisation obtained; retrospective funding is not permitted.
- Employees who believe access to training has been unfairly refused may raise a grievance.

All employees must complete mandatory learning within set timeframes to ensure compliance with Council policies, government guidelines, and statutory obligations. Exceptions or delays must be communicated to senior management with a clear rationale and an agreed plan to achieve compliance.

8. Protected Learning Time

The Council supports employees to engage in at least five days of learning per year. New managers receive half a day of protected learning time in their first two weeks to access leadership resources.

9. Study Leave

Employees undertaking approved qualifications that include formal exams are granted paid study leave for;

- The day of the exam
- Additional preparation – typically up to half a day per exam subject to manager approval and operational requirements

Approvals for study leave are at the discretion of the people manager and should consider:

- The relevance of the qualification
- Team load, workload and business needs
- The employee's performance and commitment to the course

Where additional time is needed, employees may request unpaid leave or use annual leave, subject to approval.

Employees approved for external qualifications may also receive time off for day-release courses and up to one day of study leave per exam (agreed in advance).

10. Short Courses and Workshops

For approved short courses and workshops, the Council will provide:

- Paid leave for the event.
- Course fees, travel expenses, and subsistence in line with Council policy.

11. Funding and Learning Agreements

Annual Training Plans and Budgets

People Managers will undertake annual reviews to set individual objectives and identify training needed to deliver the team's Annual Service Plan. Training needs identified must be submitted as part of the team's annual training budget request, including:

- Nature of training and target audience
- Classification (mandatory, essential, desirable, corporate priority)
- Estimated costs
- Whether the Apprenticeship Levy could fund the training

The L&D team will compile submissions into an organisational training plan and budget report for Senior Leadership review and approval. Final decisions will be communicated back to teams.

Apprenticeship Levy

The Apprenticeship Levy and Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account are managed by the HR – L&D team. Managers must confirm levy availability and L&D approval before progressing with apprenticeship opportunities. Once approved, the employee and manager liaise with the provider on programme details; L&D completes required documentation and cohort setup in DAS.

Accredited Courses (Excluding Apprenticeships)

Accredited non-apprenticeship training will only be agreed where a relevant apprenticeship is not available, and the training is essential for the role or succession planning. Financial assistance may include course costs and leave for taught sessions if a Learning Agreement is signed. Normal pay applies only to sessions within working hours; others should be completed in personal time.

The Council covers the first exam sitting and may grant up to two days paid pre-exam leave annually. Funding may be considered where:

- The qualification is mandatory for the role; or

- Outcomes cannot be achieved through internal training; or
- The qualification is identified as essential in PDR/development planning.

Funding will not be provided for qualifications that are not directly relevant to the current role or pursued solely for personal interest/future aspirations outside scope.

Repayment of Fees and Transferability

Employees must remain in service for 24 months following course completion. If they leave before completing this period, they will be required to repay 1/24th of the total course cost for every month of the 24-month period that they do not complete.

Examples:

- Leaving with 24 months remaining: repay 24/24 = 100%
- Leaving with 12 months remaining: repay 12/24 = 50%
- Leaving with 0 months remaining: 0% repayable

The Council may, at its discretion, waive or reduce any repayment requirement in other exceptional circumstances, for example where employment ends due to organisational change, significant caring responsibilities, or other circumstances beyond the employee's reasonable control.

If funded learning is delivered under a **Learning Agreement**, the agreement remains valid and transferable if the employee moves to another role within the Partnership; repayment continue terms remain unchanged.

Local exception (if applicable): *If leaving exclusively to join PSPS, no fees are repayable.*

Repayments may be deducted from final salary where applicable. If funds cannot be recovered this way, a repayment plan can be arranged (typically up to 12 months). If repayment fails, the Council may initiate debt recovery processes.

Failure to Pass / Exam Resits

Where an employee fails to pass required examinations or assessments:

- The Council will normally fund the first resit where performance and engagement have been satisfactory.
- Subsequent resits or additional costs may be charged to the learner unless a business-critical justification is approved by the Head of HR and Organisation Development.
- Decisions will consider performance, course relevance, operational needs, and fairness.

12. Cancellation or Non-Attendance

Failure to attend learning events causes inconvenience and incurs costs for the Council. Where there is no valid reason for non-attendance or a late cancellation, a cancellation fee will be charged to the relevant service area.

Persistent non-attendance may be addressed through performance management processes, as it

impacts role effectiveness and compliance with mandatory requirements.

Where an employee refuses to complete mandatory training without reasonable justification, this may be treated as a conduct issue and managed under the Council's disciplinary procedure, as failure to comply with statutory or organisational requirements can constitute misconduct.

13. Evaluation of Training

All L&D activities should be subject to appropriate evaluation to ensure they meet intended objectives and deliver value. Evaluation will consider:

- Records of all training will be maintained in personnel files.
- Employees provide feedback on training effectiveness.
- Annual reporting to senior leadership on training activity and evaluation outcomes.
- Evidence of impact on service quality, operational performance, and tenant satisfaction will be captured and incorporated into the Council's evaluation framework, annual reporting, service reviews, and continuous improvement activity.

Responsibilities:

Managers:

- Review learning outcomes during one-to-ones/PDRs.
- Capture demonstrable impact, behaviour change, and next steps.
- Escalate issues or concerns to L&D for review and action.

L&D Team:

- Monitor participation and mandatory compliance through the LMS.
- Analyse learner feedback and impact indicators.
- Report completion and impact metrics annually to Senior Leadership and cascade findings to departments for accountability and improvement.

14. Failure to Make Satisfactory Progress

Training facilities will be provided for a period sufficient for an employee to progress and complete required examinations or assessments.

- For in-house training delivered by the Learning and Development team, the Head of HR and Organisational Development may determine whether training facilities should continue and on what basis, considering circumstances, learner engagement, agreed reasonable adjustments, and organisational requirements.
- For external courses or qualifications, decisions regarding continuation or withdrawal will rest with the relevant Head of Service, in consultation with HR, considering operational needs, budget implications, fairness, and the terms of any Learning Agreement.

All decisions will be documented and communicated to the employee and manager, including next steps and any implications for funding or repayment.

15. Appeals Process

If an employee believes a training request has been unfairly refused, they may appeal by submitting a written request to their Assistant Director within 10 working days of the decision. The appeal will

be reviewed in consultation with HR. Employees retain the right to raise a formal grievance if dissatisfied with the outcome.

16. Data Protection

All training records, including completion data and evaluation feedback, are stored securely in compliance with UK GDPR and the Partnership's Data Protection Policy. Access is restricted to authorised personnel for legitimate business purposes only. Employees may request a copy of their training record via the HR portal.

17. Monitoring and Review

Compliance is monitored via the LMS. Effectiveness is assessed through feedback and annual reporting. The policy is reviewed every four years or earlier if required.

18. Contact Queries

For queries regarding Learning & Development, please contact the HR Learning & Development Team at HR@pspsl.co.uk