

North West Charter on Elected Member Development

Charter Process

Level 1, Level 1 Review and Level 2

Jan 2012

NORTH WEST CHARTER

on

Elected Member Development

Municipal Journal and North West Employers

We believe that at the heart of any authority dedicated to meeting the needs of its community will be a commitment to the development of its elected members. Members will be supported and assisted in playing their vital role in modernising local government.

Signing up to the principles of the Charter commits the authority to work towards expressing their commitment in practice by implementing the five key points of the Charter.

- Having a statement of intent
- Ensuring that all members are made aware of learning and development opportunities
- Having a process to identify individual development needs which involves members
- Having an officer allocated to assist members and groups in identifying needs and providing information on resources
- Having a strategy to meet the training and development needs of elected members

Signed by Chief Executive: _____

Signed by Leader: _____

Signed by Chair of
Employers' Organisation _____

History of the Charter and Member Development Strategy

During 1999 the Employers' Organisation agreed a regional strategy on member development. The strategy was crafted by the regional task group which was made up of seven elected members who contributed not only their expertise but their energy and enthusiasm. The three elements of the regional strategy are:

- **gaining commitment**
- **regional provision**
- **involving members**

The concept of a charter was born out of a desire to encourage commitment to member development and to reward those authorities who have demonstrated that commitment. The North West Charter on Member Development will provide tangible evidence of an authority's commitment to long-term investment in the development of its elected members.

The ethos of the Charter is built around the third element of the regional strategy "**involving members**" in their own development. One of the ways of doing this is having a Member Development Group made up of members from all the political groups plus an officer/s responsible for member development. One of the other things that as assessors we hope for, but something which is difficult to measure, is enthusiasm demonstrated by the members and the officer(s). If you have it you're half way there!

The Charter operates at two levels, similar to the Investor in People Award. Firstly, authorities sign a declaration to show their commitment to the principles of the Charter; secondly, following external assessment, authorities are awarded the Charter to show they have demonstrated their commitment in practice and have all the required elements in place.

We are particularly pleased that the Municipal Journal shares our interest in member development and they support the initiative by awarding a special merit prize at our celebration events.

These guidance notes have been prepared to help authorities working towards the Charter understand the process. They will give an indication of the evidence which would support an application for a Charter.

Appendix 1

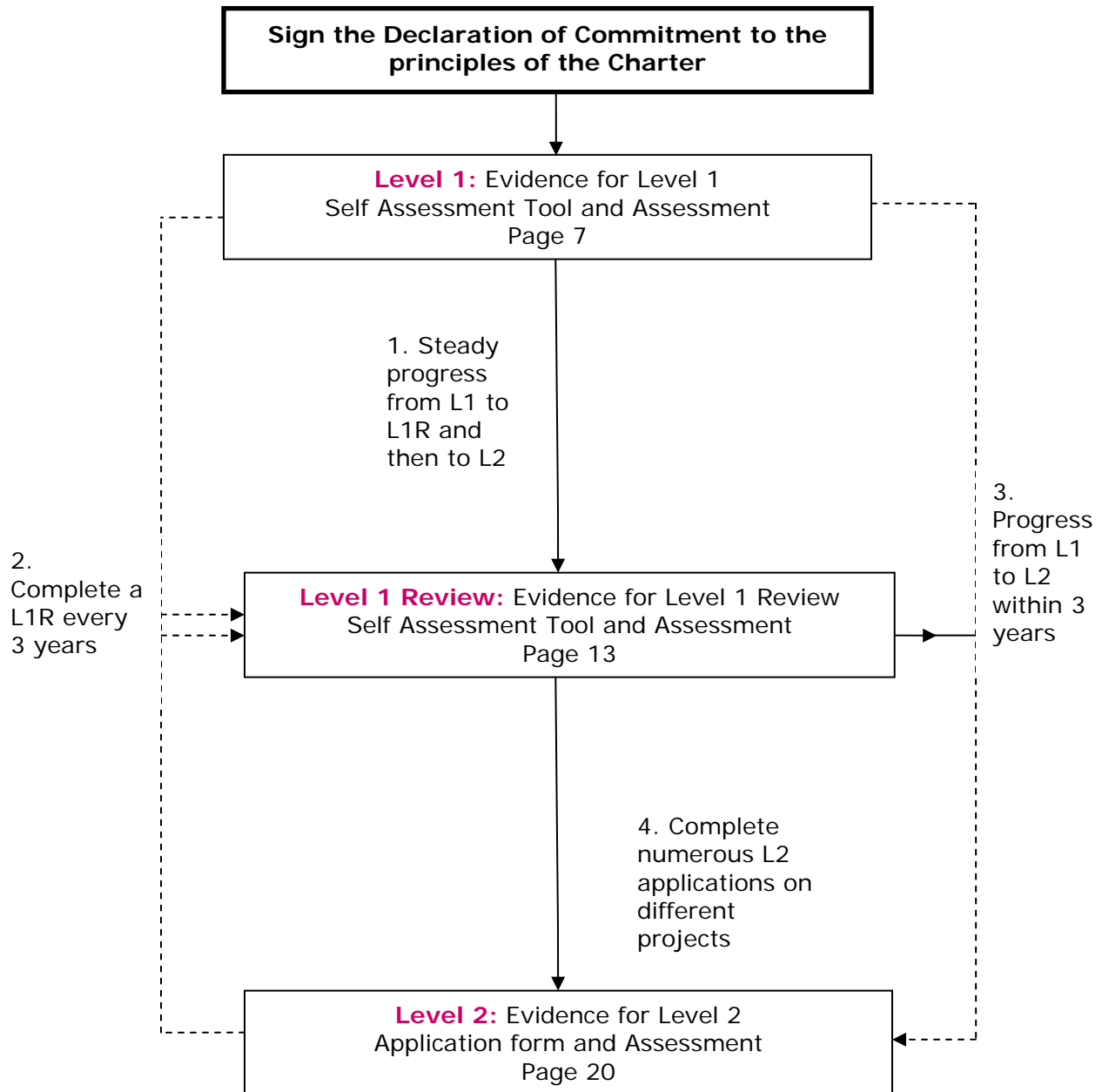
Each authority will have its own approach to developing members, with some having a long tradition of providing excellent development opportunities, and others just starting.

However, irrespective of the starting point, authorities can still sign up by giving their commitment to the principles contained within the Charter. There is no time limit between declaration and assessment. Whilst some authorities may be ready now, others may need time to put the elements in place. The intention of the Charter was to encourage the development of a learning culture, not a quick fix, and therefore Charters will be awarded annually. In addition to the guidance notes, information and advice is available from North West Employers and you can call Lorna Krisson on 0161 214 7121, or e-mail lornak@nwemployers.org.uk.

Using This Booklet

This booklet has been designed to help you and your authority explore and progress through each level of the Elected Member Development Charter. The content of this booklet covers all three levels of the Charter; Level 1, Level 1 Review and Level 2. It outlines each process for each level, explains the steps involved to work towards receiving an award and supporting information.

The Overall Process



There are four options:

1. Progress from L1, to L1R and L2 taking no longer than 3 years gap between each award.
2. Complete a L1R every 3 years to maintain Charter status.
3. Progress from L1 to L2 within 3 years of receiving L1 award.
4. Complete different applications to receive multiple L2 awards.

Charter Process Level 1

Charter Level 1

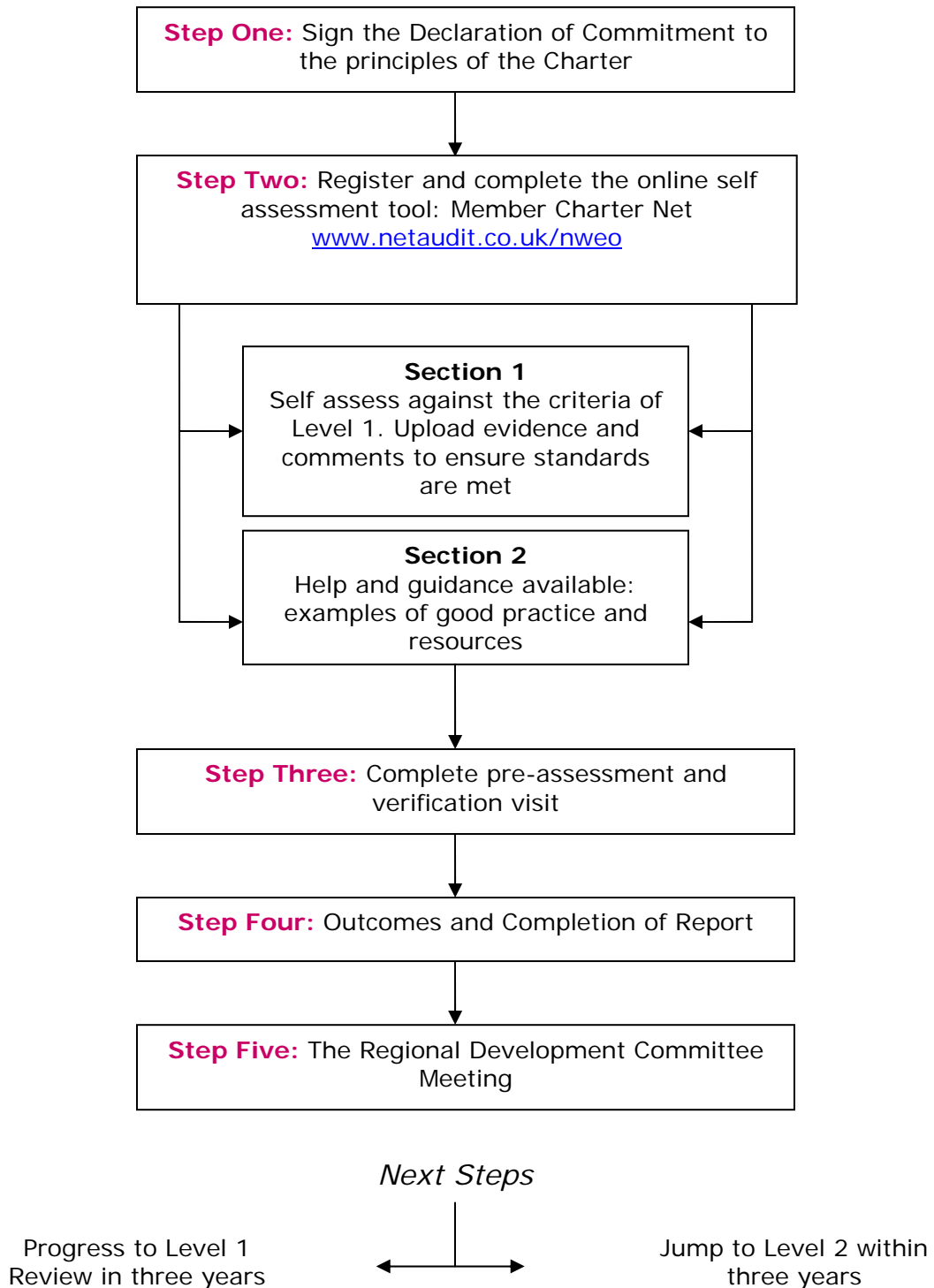
Are You Ready?

Before applying for Level 1, reflect on the following questions to gauge whether you and the authority are ready to begin the process of the Charter assessment.

- Is the council committed to supporting member development and can you evidence this?
- Do you have a member development strategy which is designed and endorsed by members?
- Do you address the personal development needs of individual members with approximately 50% or more of members completing a personal development plan?
- Do you use this information to help establish your training and development approach?
- Do you evaluate all training and use this to inform improvements in your approach?
- Is there officer support allocated to help facilitate and manage?

Charter Level 1

The Level 1 process concentrates on ensuring the **fundamental** methods to aid **member development** are apparent within each authority assessed.



Level 1 Process

Step One

Sign the Declaration of Commitment

Authorities need to sign the Declaration of Commitment to the principles included in the Charter; both the present Leader and Chief Executive must sign the Declaration. This is an important first step as it is intended to promote a healthy discussion on the authority's needs and intention in terms of member development. When you return your signed Declaration, it will be signed by the Chair of the Employers' Organisation and returned to you.

To request a Declaration of Commitment, or for a discussion around the principles of the Charter please contact Lorna Krisson by telephoning 0161 214 7121.

Step Two

Register to the online Member Charter Tool

Each authority needs to complete a pro-forma to register to the online Member Charter Tool. The electronic pro-forma can be found at:

www.nwemployers.org.uk

- ↳ Learning and Sharing Skills
 - ↳ Councillor Development
 - ↳ North West Development Charter
 - ↳ Charter Standards and Process
 - ↳ Level 1 and 1 Review

Once completed, it can be sent to Lorna Krisson by emailing lornak@nwemployers.org.uk. A project for your authority shall then be set up and you shall receive instructions on how to access the tool.

There are four key functions of the tool:

- a) Self Assessment – authorities mark themselves against suitable criteria which incorporates commitment and function of uploading evidence
- b) Action Planning – online planning and reporting function using a traffic light rating against all criteria, help to focus on achievements and prioritise activity

c) Peer Assessment – North West Employers will provide support, as well as volunteers from the region, to oversee the progress and undertake assessment, both face-to-face and remotely via the tool

d) Help and Guidance – each criterion has a description of the type of evidence that is required – under the 'I' button. Examples of good practice, resources and links to national / local websites

Section 1 Work through each criterion marking yourself at a suitable level of achievement. Upload suitable evidence to support your opinions and write comments to expand or use for action planning purposes.

Section 2 Use the 'I' button to learn more about the criterion, find out more about suitable evidence and example resources.

Step Three

Complete Pre-Assessment and Verification Visit

After you have completed all the criteria, the tool says you have achieved at least 50% of the overall standard, and feel you have everything in place then contact:

Lorna Krisson

Knowledge and Network Assistant

E: lornak@nwemployers.org.uk

T: 0161 214 7121

You will be removed access on a temporary basis while we explore the evidence you have uploaded. Once feedback has been given we shall then support your needs and how best to complete the assessment process on an individual basis. An elected member from the Regional Development Committee and an officer from North West Employers will undertake the assessment visit/s. The visit will be in part to check that the authority meets the standards, but also an opportunity to discover different approaches which can be shared as good practice.

Step Four

Outcomes and Completion of Report

The assessors will write a report that will go to the Regional Development Committee or Executive Board for approval.

Step Five

The Regional Development Committee Meeting

The Committee can:

- Confirm successful attainment against the standards
- Defer awarding status and suggest a plan of action to meet the Level 1 standards

Once awarded, a Celebration Event takes place to celebrate authorities' achievements. Additionally, a special merit prize shall be awarded by the Municipal Journal to give one authority an exemplar award.

Level 1 Charter has a lifespan of three years, after which authorities will be asked to submit evidence of how they have sustained and further developed their commitment to member development by undertaking Charter Level 1 Review. Authorities can also progress straight to Level 2 Charter within three years after receiving the Level 1 Award.

How the Assessment Visit Will Run

1. Each visit will include one elected member from the North West Employers Regional Development Committee or Executive Board and an officer from North West Employers.
2. The visit will be arranged in advance and will last for approximately half a day. An officer from North West Employers will liaise with the relevant officer from the authority to make the arrangements.
3. A room and refreshments will need to be made available for the assessment team.
4. During the visit the assessment team will want to speak to:
 - The Leader (or Deputy)
 - The Chief Executive / Chief Officer
 - Leader of the Opposition Group
 - Chair or Portfolio Holder
 - Chair or Member of the Training Group
 - A Newly Elected Member
 - Three randomly Selected Elected Members
 - An Officer/s Responsible for Member Training
5. The interviews are timetabled in 30-45 minutes slots. The interviews can be conducted individually or in small groups based on your requests.
6. At the end of the visit the assessment team will produce a report for the next meeting of the Regional Development Committee. The authority will be advised of the decision immediately after the Committee meeting by telephone and will receive written confirmation and copies of the report.
7. If the assessment team or Regional Development Committee feel that some elements of the evidence are incomplete then the authority will be advised and will be given the opportunity to complete the evidence and be assessed again.
8. If the authority is successful then they will be awarded the Charter and invited to the Celebration Event.
9. Authorities can be assessed at any time during the year, however the Celebration Event is only held once a year.

What We Will Look For in the Level 1 Assessment

During the assessment visit, there are some key areas that we shall be looking for, to take away examples and draw best practice from:

- Commitment to member development demonstrated at all levels across the council
- Members take their development seriously and engage in development available
- Individuals' needs are considered and fed into the overall development strategy with 50% of members completing a PDP
- Dedicated support is provided to co-ordinate and communicate member development activities
- Development activities are evaluated with feedback into overall strategy
- Appropriate resources are allocated to meet development needs

Charter Process Level 1 Review

Charter Level 1 Review

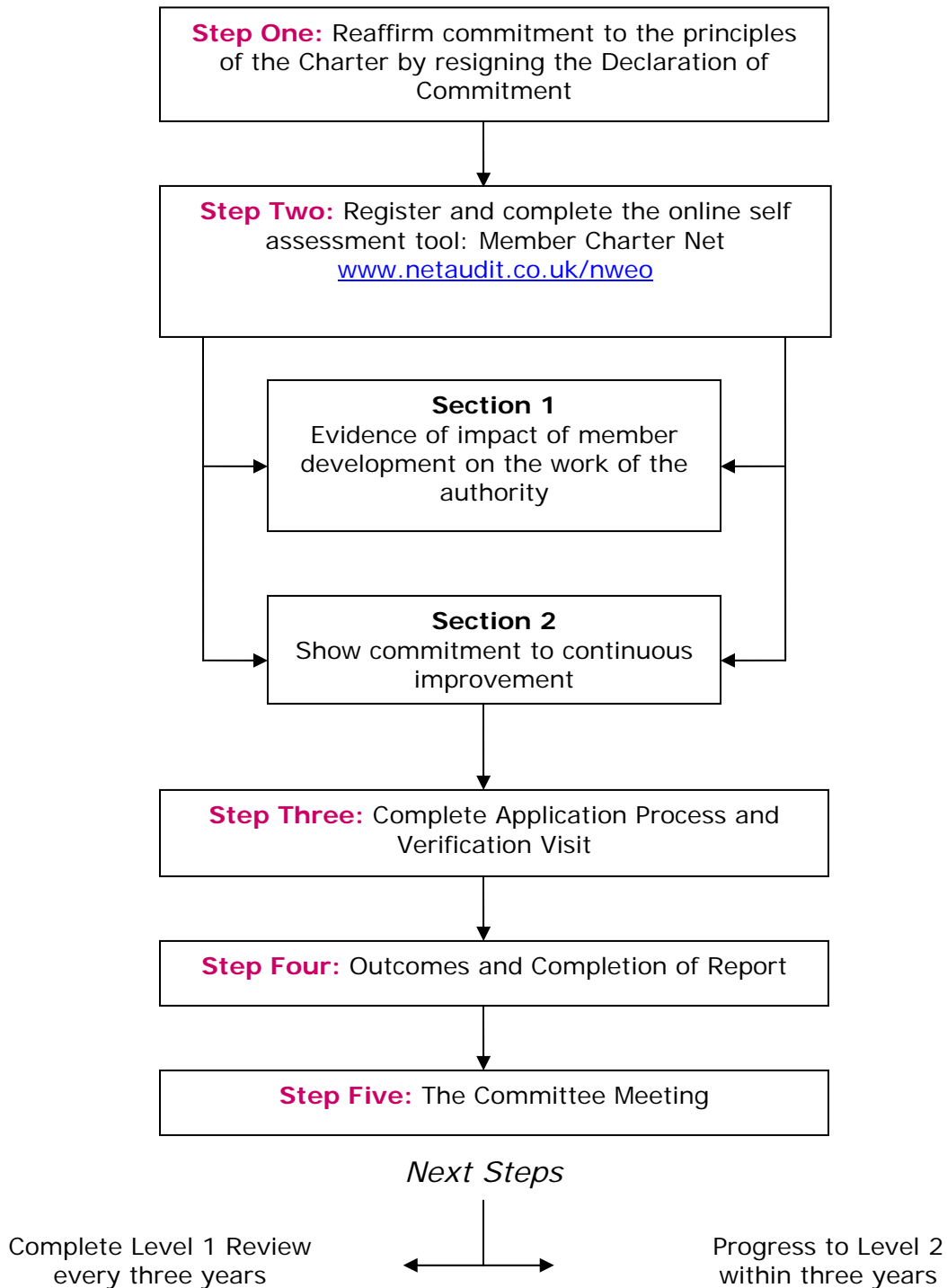
Are You Ready?

Before applying for Level 1 Review, reflect on the following questions to determine whether you and the authority are ready to continue the process of the Charter assessment.

- Is the authority still committed to member development?
- Do members take a lead in promoting development?
- Have at least 75% of members got personal development plans?
- Member development continues to be supported by an appointed officer/s?
- Has the strategy been reviewed at least twice in the last three years?

Charter Level 1 Review

The Level 1 Review process focuses on ensuring the **continued** achievement of supporting **member development** within each authority assessed.



Level 1 Review Process

Step One

Resign the Declaration of Commitment

Authorities need to sign the Declaration of Commitment to the principles included in the Charter; both the present Leader and Chief Executive must sign the Declaration. When you return your signed Declaration, it will be signed by the Chair of the Employers' Organisation and returned to you.

To request a Declaration of Commitment, or for a discussion around the principles of the Charter please contact Lorna Krisson by emailing lornak@nwemployers.org.uk or by telephoning 0161 214 7121.

Step Two

Register to the online Member Charter Tool

Each authority needs to complete a pro-forma to register to the online Member Charter Tool. The electronic pro-forma can be found at:

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Once completed, it can be sent to Lorna Krisson by emailing lornak@nwemployers.org.uk. A project for your authority shall then be set up and you shall receive instructions on how to access the tool.

There are four key functions of the tool:

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c) Peer Assessment – NWE will provide support, as well as volunteers from the region, to oversee the progress and undertake assessment, both face-to-face and remotely via the tool

d) Help and Guidance – each criterion has a description of the type of evidence that is required – under the 'I' button. Examples of good practice, resources and links to national / local websites

Section 1 Work through each criterion marking yourself at a suitable level of achievement. Upload suitable evidence to support your opinions and write comments to expand or use for action planning purposes.

Section 2 Use the 'I' button to learn more about the criterion, find out more about suitable evidence and example resources.

Step Three

Complete Verification Visit

After you have completed all the criteria, the tool says you have achieved 100% of the overall standard, and feel you have everything in place then contact:

Lorna Krisson

Knowledge and Network Assistant

E: lornak@nwemployers.org.uk

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You will be removed access on a temporary basis while we explore the evidence you have uploaded. Once feedback has been given we shall then support your needs and how best to complete the assessment process on an individual basis. An elected member from the Regional Development Committee and an officer from North West Employers will undertake the assessment visit/s. The visit will be in part to check that the authority meets the standards, but also an opportunity to discover different approach which can be shared as good practice.

Step Four

Outcomes and Completion of Report

The assessors will write a report that will go to the Regional Development Committee or Executive Board for approval.

Step Five

The Regional Development Committee Meeting

The Committee can:

- Confirm successful attainment against the standards
- Defer awarding status and suggest a plan of action to meet the Level 1 Review standards

Once awarded, a Celebration Event takes place to celebrate authorities' achievements.

Level 1 Review Charter has a lifespan of three years, after which authorities will be asked to re-join the tool where their previous application will be available to review and update. Authorities do have the option to progress on to Level 2 within three years after achieving Level 1 Review.

How the Assessment Visit Will Work

1. Each visit will include one elected member from the North West Employers Regional Development Committee or Executive Board and an officer from North West Employers.
2. The visit will be arranged in advance and will last for approximately half a day. An officer from North West Employers will liaise with the relevant officer from the authority to make the arrangements.
3. A room and refreshments will need to be made available for the assessment team.
4. During the visit the assessment team would like to speak to:
 - The Leader (or Deputy)
 - The Chief Executive / Chief Officer
 - Leader of the Opposition Group
 - Chair or Portfolio Holder
 - Chair or Member of the Training Group
 - A Newly Elected Member
 - Three randomly Selected Elected Members
 - An Officer/s Responsible for Member Training
5. The interviews are timetabled in 30-45 minutes slots. The interviews can be conducted individually or in small groups based on your requests.
6. At the end of the visit the assessment team will produce a report for the next meeting of the Regional Development Committee. The assessment team will inform the authority of their decision as soon as possible prior to the Committee meeting. Shortly after the Committee meeting, the authority will receive written confirmation and copies of the report.
7. If the assessment team or Regional Development Committee feel that some elements of the evidence are incomplete then the authority will be advised and will be given the opportunity to complete the evidence and be assessed again.
8. If the authority is successful then they will be awarded the Charter and invited to the Celebration Event.
9. Authorities can be assessed at any time during the year, however the Celebration Event is only held once a year.

What We Will Look For in the Level 1 Assessment

During the assessment visit, there are some key areas that we shall be looking for, to take away examples and draw best practice from:

- Continued commitment to member development demonstrated at all levels across the council
- An established member development strategy to support organisational needs and overall strategy
- Clarity of subject area and methods of delivery based on member needs assessments
- 75% of members complete a PDP
- Clear communication strategy which supports member development
- A method of evaluating learning and development activities and continuous improvement

Charter Process Level 2

Charter Level 2

Are You Ready?

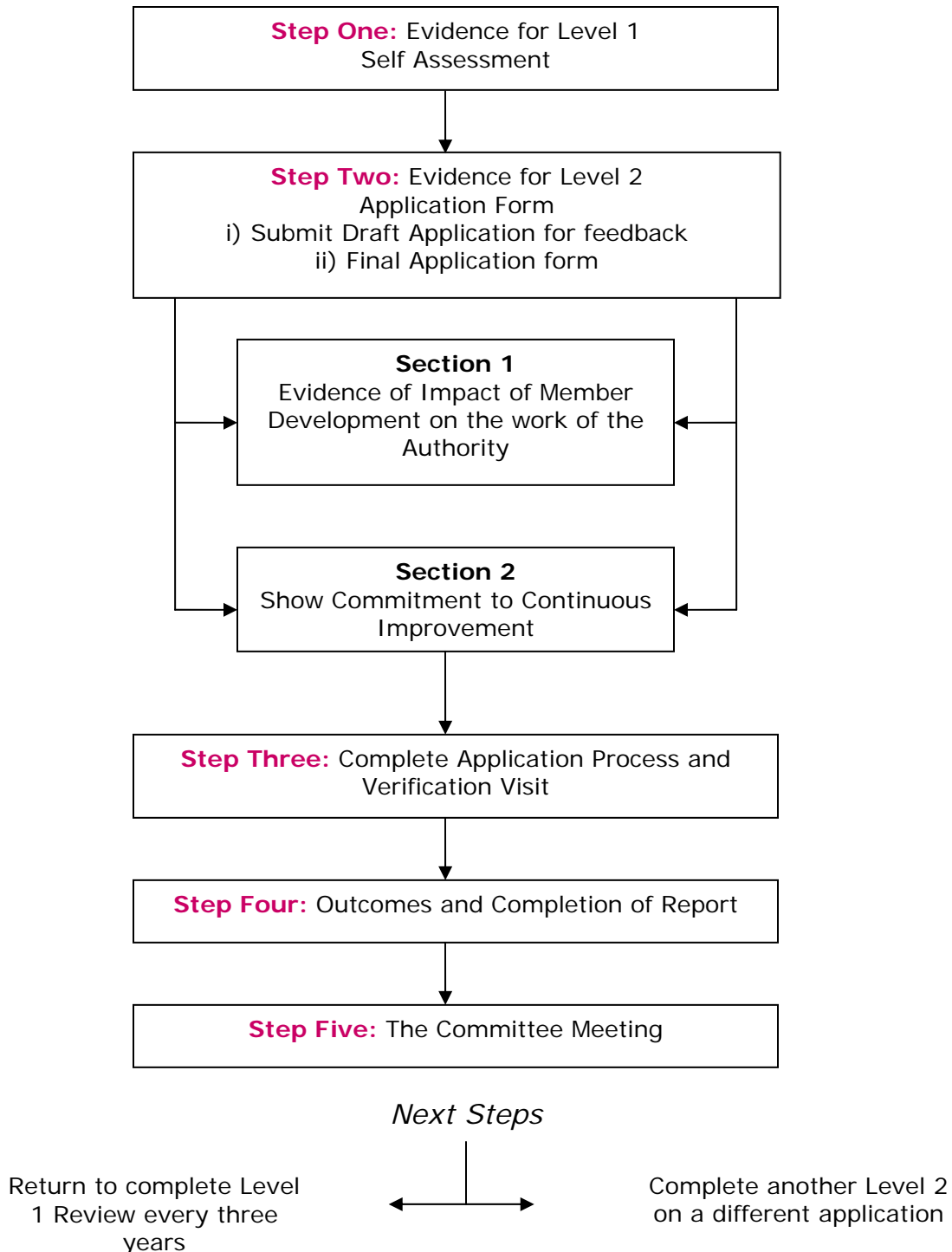
Before applying for Level 2, reflect on the following questions to gauge whether you and the authority are ready to begin the process of Level 2 Charter assessment.

- Has the authority got an embedded culture in the organisation that is supportive of member development?
- Does the authority and its officers have the additional skills and capacity to deal with the more flexible criteria and format in Level 2?
- Has the authority looked at the level and quality of available evidence before choosing the topic for the application?
- Has the authority considered whether it will have sufficient evidence of outcomes available by the assessment date?
- Have you got other departments, services and partners involved?
- Have you got political buy-in from all parties?

Charter Level 2

The Level 2 process concentrates on the **impact**, but there is also the opportunity to briefly showcase **continuous improvement**.

If the authority wants to apply for Level 2, the process is as follows:



Level 2 Process

Step One

Evidence for Level 1 or Level 1 Review: Self Assessment

Undertake a self assessment to check that you have maintained your charter status. Provide evidence under each of the five key points, with a storyboard to tie the points together.

There will be a pre-assessment visit to verify this evidence. This will be a meeting for three elected members and an officer from the authority and will take around 1½ hours (preferably members who are not directly involved in member development or part of the Executive/Cabinet).

If the authority was re-accredited for Level 1 or Level 1 Review the previous year then this self assessment stage is not necessary, please jump to Step Two.

Step Two

Evidence for Level 2: Application Form

Complete the Charter Review Application Form (see page 29).

Does your entry show:

- Section 1 The impact of member development on the work of the local authority and the community.
- Section 2 That the authority is committed to continuous improvement in member development?

Section 1: Provide evidence of impact of member development on the work of the local authority

There are three main sections on the application form:

- **Issue** for the authority and community: what was the community issue that you decided to tackle eg Corporate Parenting, Neighbourhood Working, Recycling, Communicating with hard to reach groups using IT and Transformation Agenda.
- **Member learning and development:** what took place and how did this link to the issue? Did the learners learn what was

expected, how did it all link to the corporate priorities, did you make any changes to anything because of the review?

- **Overall impact** on the community, the members and the authority: what changed in the community because of the member learning and development? What did the authority learn from the whole process?

Section 2: Show commitment to continuous improvement

The authority will also be expected to show their commitment to **continuous improvement** in member learning and development.

- Demonstrate progress on the 'continuous improvement' issues identified at the original assessment - evidence from Level 1 Award.
- Review processes for member development, eg Member Development Group to review strategy and agree new priorities.
- Can clearly articulate where the authority wants to improve their practice in the future.

Step Three

Complete Application Process

The electronic application form can be found at:

www.nwemployers.org.uk



Once completed, it needs to be sent to Lorna Krisson by emailing lornak@nwemployers.org.uk.

After the application form has been received North West Employers will arrange an initial discussion with the authority. If there is sufficient evidence from the form, then North West Employers will proceed to arrange an assessment visit. If there are queries arising from the form then North West Employers may need to get a better understanding or more information from the authority.

An assessment visit will be arranged to verify the evidence provided in the application form. An officer and an elected member from North West Employers will act as assessors. The assessors may ask to

interview members of the public or people from outside bodies as well as elected members and staff. Each assessment process will be agreed with the authority and will be designed around the specific project.

Step Four

Outcomes

The assessors will write a report that will go to the Regional Development Committee or Executive Board for approval.

Step Five

The Committee Meeting

The Committee can:

- Confirm successful attainment against the original standards.
- Defer awarding status and suggest a plan of action to meet the Level 2 standards.

Once awarded, a Celebration Event takes place to celebrate authorities' achievements. Additionally, a special merit prize shall be awarded by the Municipal Journal to give one authority an exemplar award.

Support Offered by North West Employers

Throughout your Charter process we are dedicated to providing support and guidance. We offer:

- Guidance prior to application to assess 'readiness' for progressing your project to Level 2 Charter Status
- Workshops and sharing events with other authorities working towards Level 2
- Peer support from authorities who have been awarded Level 2

If you require any further support or have any ideas that would be useful for the whole region then please do let Lorna Krisson know by emailing lornak@nwemployers.org.uk.

What We Will Look For in the Level 2 Assessment

Charter Level 2 does not have set criteria like Charter Level 1. Level 2 looks at whether the authority can demonstrate that the community has benefited from member development on a specific area. Each application for Level 2 is different, and therefore the assessment will be tailored in each case. However, there are some general things the assessors are looking for in Level 2. This is a guide to what is required to make a successful Level 2 application, under three headings:

- What we are looking for with the project or example
- What we are looking for with the use of evidence
- What we are looking for in the community and authority impacts

What we are looking for with the project or example

The application demonstrates that:

- The work done relates to an issue that directly affects the community, and (ideally) is recognised by the community.
- Development of members has been explicitly targeted to address the member development needs identified around the community issue.
- Members recognise which elements of learning and development were directly related to the issue.
- Members can identify changes in their skills, knowledge and expertise on the issue before and after member development took place.
- There has been an improvement on the community issues, and there are clear links between the member development done, and the outcomes, which are recognised by members themselves.

What we are looking for with the use of evidence

- Statements and assertions must be backed up by evidence, including references for the sources of evidence.
- A range of different types of evidence is provided from a range of different sources, e.g. a mix of examples or case studies, statistics, and documentary evidence, including material from members, officers, residents, and partners.
- Evidence is provided for the situation for the authority and the community before the work took place, and afterwards.

Appendix 1

- All evidence provided stands up to a reasonable challenge from someone not involved in the work.

What we are looking for in the community and authority impacts

- Community and authority outcomes have been experienced by the community, and (ideally) are recognised by the community.
- Any changes to strategy, policy, procedures and structures have led to a practical difference for the community.
- The impacts are advanced enough to have resolved the original issues, or can be shown to have achieved significant milestones.
- Outcomes described in the application are recognised by a range of stakeholders.

CHARTER PROCESS LEVEL TWO APPLICATION FORM

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE ON-LINE FORM

1. The Application Form will begin with the first field highlighted. Please treat all fields as case sensitive and use upper and lower case as appropriate.
2. Use the TAB key to move through the fields. *(This key is situated above the Caps Lock key and is usually marked by two horizontal arrows pointing in opposite directions).*

NOTE:

Submissions should be sent to **lornak@nwemployers.org.uk**

Should you experience any difficulties in submitting this form, please contact Lorna Krisson on 0161 214 7121.

CHARTER REVIEW PROCESS APPLICATION FORM

About You and Your Organisation – to be completed by an officer on behalf of the organisation. (Members **do not** need to complete individual copies)

| | | |
|---|------------|---------|
| Name of your Organisation Please ensure that this is correct as this name will be used on all PR and event related materials | | |
| Title | First name | Surname |
| Designation | Department | |
| Department address | | |
| Telephone | Fax | |
| Mobile | E-mail | |
| Charter awarded in year: | | |

General checklist for organisations

Does your entry show:

- 1 The impact of member development on the work of the local authority and the community?
- 2 That the authority is committed to continuous improvement within member development?

Description of your organisation

Please give a brief description of your organisation; for example, number of members, political make-up of the authority, aims and objectives of the authority.

| |
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Section One - Authority and the Community

In completing this section we have some materials that may be to use to you in our 'Helping You on Your Way' section on our website. We have the 'Making a Difference' evaluation toolkit, 'North West Charter Level 2 Case Studies' booklet containing first-hand accounts from councillors and officers, as well as some useful documents from other authorities who have completed the process.

www.nwemployers.org.uk

- ↳ Learning and Sharing Skills
 - ↳ Councillor Development
 - ↳ North West Development Charter
 - ↳ Charter Standards and Process
 - ↳ Helping You on Your Way

1. Issues for the authority and community

- What were the issues for the community and your authority that you wanted to tackle at the beginning? Please give evidence of these issues, as experienced by the community.

Note: For guidance on what we mean by 'evidence', please refer to 'Practical Lesson No 1' on page 10 of the toolkit.

2. Member learning and development

- Describe the member learning and development that took place in relation to these community issues, eg workshops, mentoring, video, role play, project work.
- How was the learning and development designed to meet the member learning and development needs.
- How did you ensure the quality of the learning intervention?
- Tell us about what people learnt with a clear 'before and after' picture e.g. Before learning I could not do 'X', and I did not do 'Y'. Then I had 'Z' learning and development (based on my needs assessment). This then enabled me to take 'X' actions, which have helped recycling in 'Y' ways.



3. Overall Impact

- Describe the overall impact on the community, the members and the authority.
- What changed in the community because of the member learning and development?
- What did the authority learn from the whole process?



Note: If you didn't have a clear idea about the outcomes until after the development had taken place, then tell us about the learning that emerged – check the 'Suck it and see' section on page 27 of the toolkit.

Section Two – Continuous Improvement

Continuous Improvement

Give examples of how the authority is committed to continuous improvement with member development.

- In reviewing the evidence from your last assessment visit, what have been the most significant improvements?
- What are your aspirations/hopes for the next three years?