

Learning and Development Strategy

1. Commitments

We will:

- Ensure that the purpose of all learning and development is to by equip our employees with the knowledge, skills and experience to fulfil individual and organisational needs and ambitions.
- Ensure that we are guided by our values when supporting, enabling and developing learning and development strategies and interventions.
- Promote the development of a learning culture that is owned by all, regardless of their status or position.
- Support both managers and employees to identify learning and development needs, along with ensuring that individuals own their individual development plans according to their specific needs and aligned with the strategic plans of the council.
- Enable learning and development interventions that use a variety of different means, including formal training, on-the-job learning, coaching and mentoring, learning from others, etc.
- Maximise use of the Apprenticeship Levy to deliver learning and development.
- Provide quality, cost-effective and relevant learning and development opportunities, designed to enrich individual and organisational skills, knowledge and behaviours.
- Embrace and design innovative and flexible learning and development opportunities.
- Support the creation of career pathways based on skills development and role profiles.
- Create, promote and foster an organisational environment that values development, diversity and opportunities for all employees.
- Support teams to ensure that they are aware of how future changes to the internal and external environment may impact development needs.
- Ensure the quality and effectiveness of learning and development interventions through thorough evaluation.
- Prioritise use of the corporate training budget according to council priorities, based on our corporate plans, our key performance indicators, and our requirement for longer term workforce sustainability.

- Develop talent pathways into the council by working with schools, colleges and universities, and by providing work experience or other similar opportunities to relevant groups or individuals.

We will support the creation of high performing teams by:

- Enabling a culture that is shaped by our values.
- Developing strategic learning and development plans that are aligned to the needs to the organisation, with both a current and future focus.
- Supporting the development of all people managers through a range of learning and development interventions, including developing an Enabled Manager programme to allow simple self service and self development options.
- Supporting all people managers to participate in effective performance management using the Annual Conversation process, involving the setting of meaningful objectives, providing effective feedback and cocreating individual development plans.
- Promoting the use of the Performance Conversation Framework.
- Encouraging people managers to participate in formal management and leadership development programmes.
- Developing aspiring leaders.
- Ensuring that all people managers listen to and engage with their team members to promote organisational effectiveness and cross team integration.
- Focussing on individual needs to ensure the most relevant and required skills are developed, keeping future organisational needs in mind.
- Supporting the creation of career development plans to ensure long term workforce sustainability.
- Encouraging protected learning time (equivalent to two days per year, pro rata for part time employees, to be used flexibly).
- Developing an effective induction and onboarding experience for new starters, in conjunction with a supportive probationary period, to ensure quick integration and settling into the organisation.
- Developing mandatory training programmes to ensure compliance with essential legislation and policies.

We will ensure equality of opportunity in relation to learning and development:

- All employees will be supported and encouraged to commit to their own learning and development throughout their time at Lancaster City Council.
- Learning and development opportunities will be designed with flexibility to reflect the various working styles in operation.
- A learning culture will be promoted where all employees value both their development and that of their colleagues.
- An understanding of the wide variety of learning and development opportunities available, that go beyond traditional training courses, will be promoted.
- Ensuring that learning and development is self directed by the learner where at all possible, where employees are empowered to take charge of their own learning needs and learn at their own pace, according to their own needs and in a style that suits them.

2. Values

Our values of Pride, Ownership, Working Together and Ambition are central to the way we work and how our decisions are made. Values discussions are built into our Performance Conversation Framework and inform objective setting and development plans, aided by an Assessing Impact self-assessment tool.

Any decisions made in relation to learning and development will be guided by Our Values.

3. Induction and Onboarding

Every new starter will receive a comprehensive induction, designed to meet the needs of the individual, the role undertaken and the service area. The purpose is to help new starters settle quickly into their role and become a high performing contributor to our work as soon as possible.

Onboarding starts from the moment an applicant accepts a job offer, and support will include a suite of elearning modules, the allocation of a 'buddy', a socialisation event, opportunities to understand our work, our priorities, our culture, and our values. Support will also be provided to develop any required role specific skills as part of a structured plan.

4. Our Performance Conversation Framework

The Performance Conversation Framework is comprised of four conversations to help individuals and teams to work at their best through:

- Annual Conversations
- One to One Conversations
- Team Conversations
- Performance Improvement Conversations

The purpose of which is to ensure that individual and team performance is aligned to Our Values and our corporate plans, with a key focus on delivering great outcomes for our residents, businesses and communities, while ensuring that our employees feel valued, motivated and engaged. When regular discussions take place, development needs are naturally identified, and this forms the basis for how we identify and prioritise learning and development.

Please refer to our Performance Conversation Framework for further information [Annual Conversations and Managing Performance](#)

5. Leadership and Management Development

We are committed to ensuring that all of our people managers have the skills, knowledge, and ability to perform well in their roles and create a shared culture informed by our values. We will do this by:

- Leadership and management development programmes
- In house networks
- Coaching and mentoring opportunities
- Action learning sets
- Enabled Manager programme of self-directed learning and support.

We are also committed to developing the next generation of people managers and will develop aspiring manager programmes to meet this need.

6. Learning and Development Interventions and Opportunities

We are committed to providing a broad range of relevant learning opportunities that are flexible and tailored to individuals' needs according to their preferences. In line with our hybrid working practices, we will encourage an ethos of learning anywhere at any time. This makes learning and development more accessible and is better suited to the time and resource constraints of a modern and flexible organisation.

Although structured learning, in the form of training courses, is still valuable, there are many other ways that learning and development can be achieved and are proven to be more effective in improving performance. These can include:

- Problem solving
- New and challenging tasks within an existing role
- Taking on new responsibilities
- Reflection
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Shadowing
- Work experience
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Action learning
- Learning in networks
- Volunteering

We will also provide a curated selection of more traditional learning and development opportunities such as training courses and elearning courses.

7. Volunteering

The council's Employee Volunteering Policy provides an opportunity for employees to volunteer with local organisations, and will provide up to two working days leave on a time match basis, ie where an employee volunteers in their own time, the council will allow the same paid time off during work to volunteer, up to a maximum of two days.

As well as local organisations benefitting from the skills and experience of our employees, it is also an opportunity for employees to develop their own skills, knowledge and experience.

Please see the Employee Volunteering Policy for further details [Employee Volunteering Opportunities](#)

8. Coaching and Mentoring

We recognise that to be a dynamic workplace where our people are trusted and motivated to do their best work, coaching is a critical skill for all of our people managers. The aim is to achieve optimal performance and improvement at work by creating an environment where employees are given the opportunity to work out for themselves the problems or challenges they face and to discover the options and strategies to overcome them. It is a one to one process that aims to deepen learning and support individuals to unlock their own potential.

We will:

- develop a coaching culture by training our people managers to use a coaching approach in their day to day management, and
- develop of pool of trained and qualified coaches who will be available to coach employees who request it.

Mentoring is different to coaching and involves the creation of a relationship with a more experienced colleague (the mentor) who will share their knowledge with, and support the development of, a less experienced colleague (the mentee). There is also the opportunity for the more experienced colleague to learn about and understand the perspectives of less experienced colleagues, which is a development opportunity for them too.

We will:

- encourage a mentoring culture, and
- offer training and development opportunities for people who are interested in mentoring colleagues

9. Health and Safety

We are committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment, where risks are assessed, and appropriate training is identified and delivered as a result. The HR and OD Team will support managers to develop service and role specific health and safety learning programmes.

We will also continue to deliver our Wellbeing Strategy [Staff Wellbeing and Inclusion](#)

10. Evaluation of Learning and Development

To ensure that learning and development significantly contributes to the improvement of performance and the achievement of corporate ambitions and strategies, as well as providing value for money, employees and approving managers will be required to be clear on the expected learning outcomes prior to any intervention. They will need to consider how the learning and development will contribute to an improvement in the workplace, and ensure that time is spent following an intervention to reflect on how the new learning can be applied and shared with others where possible.

We will also ensure that feedback about learning and development is gathered during our engagement surveys and exit interviews.

11. Reward and Recognition

We encourage employees to participate in learning and development opportunities and take the view that providing learning opportunities is a mutual benefit: employees benefit at the same time as the council as an organisation, and both grow.

We also encourage all employees to celebrate the growth and development that they have experienced; this can be via the recognition wall, the Staff Weekly, the Staff Conference or via team celebrations.

It is also important to acknowledge the continued impact of the development on both the individual and the council to ensure that the learning is embedded. It is therefore crucial that opportunities are provided for employees to use their new skills, knowledge and expertise.

12. Classification and Prioritisation of Learning and Development

Learning and development will be prioritised from a budget and time perspective according to the below order:

1. **Mandatory training**

This is top priority learning and development that is critical to the safe and legal operation of the work of the council and will include training relating to legislative compliance such as data protection and health and safety obligations.

2. Corporate training need

This is learning and development that is related to the delivery of the council's key strategies or commitments, and can include topics such as customer service, carbon literacy, IT training to support the introduction of new software, etc.

3. Learning essential to perform effectively in job role

This is learning and development that is required to ensure that a person can perform effectively in their job role. It will normally be linked to the job role profile/description, a service plan, or an individual in role performance objective.

In the circumstances set out in points 1,2 and 3, employees will be allowed paid time off to attend training, and the council will pay course fees, assessment or examination fees and (there may be a contribution agreed towards the funding of) course materials. Subsistence and travel expenses will need to be met from existing service budgets and paid in line with existing guidance – [Exchequer Services: Travel and Subsistence Expenses](#). There is no provision within the Corporate Learning and Development budget for such expenses.

Study leave to prepare for exams that are funded by the council will be allowed and this will be agreed with line managers based on the operational needs of the service area. Half a day of study leave per exam is suggested, which will only apply to first attempts.

4. Learning to enable personal or professional development

This is learning and development that will allow a person to develop in their role but is not completely essential to ensure effective role performance. It may be linked to personal or career development, or be linked to an extra role (beyond the main requirements of the role) performance objective.

In these circumstances, there will be a discussion about costs and fees, paid time off work and travel and subsistence, with a view to supporting the individual to develop. There may be a requirement to use some or all of the Protected Learning Time (see section 16) to undertake the learning. An agreement will be made and recorded.

13. Annual Team Development Plans

Services are required to produce Annual Team Development Plans, identifying learning and development needs and classifying them according to this policy, in order to access funding from the Corporate Learning and Development Budget. Plans will need to be submitted by the end of March each year.

Support will be available from the HR and OD team where required.

14. Apprenticeship Levy Funding

Apprenticeship Levy funding can be used to upskill existing employees and are a cost-effective way of allowing individuals to gain valuable skills and knowledge that are job/role specific. It is protected funding that can only be used for Apprenticeship Standards which range from Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) to Levels 6 and 7 (degree and postgraduate degree level). Learning can be a mix of learning in the workplace and off the job training, and they culminate in a qualification being awarded.

Managers and employees are strongly encouraged to consider Apprenticeship Levy funded training when considering options for learning and development.

Employees are not required to repay funding costs should they leave their employment for any reason, regardless of the classification identified in section 12.

An Apprenticeship Strategy is being developed to provide further information, but the HR and OD Team can provide help, advice and support to enable use of the funding prior to this.

15. Corporate Learning and Development Budget

The Corporate Learning and Development Budget is held by the HR and OD Team and will be used to fund training and development according to the priorities in section 12. For applications to be considered there needs to be a business case presented, along with an Annual Team Development Plan in place. Financial support offered will be at the discretion of the Chief Officer, People and Policy, and will take into account the following:

- The amount of budget available
- The potential benefits to the organisation following the development
- The other reasons for the request
- Recruitment and retention issues

Applications for funding from the Corporate Learning and Development Budget should only be made where there is support from the line manager, in the case of individual learning, and from the Chief Officer responsible for the particular team, in the case of funding Annual Team Development Plans.

There is no provision within the Corporate Learning and Development Budget for expenses relating to travel and subsistence.

16. Continuing Professional Development*

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an ongoing process to maintain and develop skills, knowledge, competence and experience. All employees are expected to keep up to date with developments and best practice in their area of work. It can be a requirement for some professional bodies to maintain corporate membership.

We will support employees where possible with CPD but the above classification and prioritisation of learning and development (section 12 above) remains in place where an employee is required to hold corporate membership of a professional body. It is expected that CPD budget requests will generally fall within the 'Learning to develop personally or professionally' category.

*Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) training for qualified drivers is an exception to this provision. This only applies to those employees who are required to drive a lorry, bus or coach as an essential element of their role. This training is classified as Mandatory.

17. Professional Fees

Professional fees relating to membership of a professional body are not normally paid by the council. The full rules are set out in the [Employee Expenses and Benefits Guide](#), which is available on the Exchequer Services/Payroll section of Sharepoint.

18. Protected Learning Time

As a council we are committed to developing a learning culture and employees are entitled to 2 days per year to devote to learning and development (pro-rata for part time staff) that is not mandatory training or learning essential to perform effectively in job role, as set out in section 12 above.

Employees can choose how to use this time, in agreement with their line manager, and it can be used as two full days to attend a training course, or in smaller units of time for self-guided learning.

This time will need to be recorded on a Protected Learning Time Log.

We also encourage teams to protect some working time to come together at a development event or activity. Examples may include a team building event, attending a conference together, attending a training course, or designing a bespoke learning opportunity such as visiting key sites in the district or sharing learnings from working at the council. Managers have the discretion to organise team events as required, but a minimum of two days per years is recommended in addition to the two days for individual learning time.

Please note that these provisions do not guarantee that funding for training courses will be available from the Corporate Learning and Development Budget.

19. Repayment of Learning Costs and Fees

We appreciate that extenuating circumstances may sometimes arise which results in employees not being able to attend a training course that they have booked onto. Where this situation occurs employees need to discuss the reasons with their line manager and as much notice as possible needs to be given to the Learning and Development Team so the place can be offered to another employee. It may be necessary to recharge the cost of the individual place to the service or team where at least two working days notice has not been given. This applies to any category of training.

There will be no requirement for employees to personally repay any costs associated with learning and development that fall within the categories of Mandatory Training or Corporate Training Need as detailed in section 12 above, or any learning and development funded by the Apprenticeship Levy.

Other learning and development incurring a cost to the council (excepting costs relating to travel and subsistence and salary paid in respect of time off to undertake the training) will be required to be repaid under certain circumstances as follows:

a) Where employment terminates, under any circumstance, during training or within 3 months of the date of completion of training, you will be required to repay the full cost of any funding provided by the Council towards the training.

Where employment terminates, under any circumstance, between 3 months and 6 months of completion of the training, you will be required to repay 75% of the cost of any funding provided by the Council towards the training.

Where employment terminates, under any circumstance, between 6 months and 9 months of completion of the training, you will be required to repay 50% of the cost of any funding provided by the Council towards the training.

Where employment terminates, under any circumstance, between 9 months and 12 months of completion of the training, you will be required to repay 25% of the cost of any funding provided by the Council towards the training.

Once an employee has completed 12 months service from the date of completion of the training, they will not be required to repay any of the costs of the training should their employment terminate, under any circumstance.

The Council reserves the right, in accordance with this agreement, to require the employee to repay the Council for the training costs by deducting them from their final salary payment.

b) Where facilities are granted under this Scheme to enable an officer to acquire a recognised qualification and the officer's employment is terminated, under any circumstance, before completing the whole or a defined part of the qualification, the Council shall be entitled to claim repayment on the lines of paragraph a).

c) If, without good reason, an employee fails to sit for an examination within a reasonable period, or fails to show satisfactory progress in their studies or discontinues their course, the Council may withdraw the facilities granted under this scheme and they may be required to repay the costs of the training as determined by the Council. Individual circumstances may be taken into account.

d) In the event of unsatisfactory progress in a course of study, the Council will determine the level of financial assistance and other support granted to enable progress to be made.

Employees will be made aware of the above conditions and will be required to sign a Training Funding Agreement before the commencement of any funded development.

20. Roles and Responsibilities

HR and OD:

- Keeping this policy up to date
- Working with subject matter experts to develop corporate wide training that is in line with corporate priorities
- Prioritising the spend of the Corporate Learning and Development budget
- Supporting services to create Annual Team Development Plans based on corporate plans and strategies
- Provide tools and guidance to allow for the effective evaluation of Learning and Development
- Curation of Learning and Development programmes and resources
- Developing and overseeing coaching and mentoring programmes
- Ensuring equal access to learning and development opportunities

Managers:

- Promoting a learning culture
- Supporting individuals to create their own development plans that align to team and corporate priorities
- Encouraging use of Protected Learning Time
- Ensuring that the Performance Management Framework is implemented

- Developing Annual Team Development Plans that prioritise the safe and legal operation of their services
- Working with the HR and OD Team to identify training providers
- Working with training providers, with support from the HR and OD Team where appropriate, to develop learning and development opportunities to enable teams to be high performing
- Undertaking pre and post development conversations to ensure learning outcomes are clear and how learning will be used
- Ensuring a thorough induction is designed and implemented for each new starter
- Ensuring equal access to learning and development opportunities
- Ensuring any learning or development is cost effective

Employees:

- Accepting responsibility for creating and implementing personal development plans
- Talking to line managers about learning and development needs
- Planning how to apply new learning or knowledge to work
- Committing to sharing knowledge and experience with their team
- Providing honest and constructive feedback following learning and development interventions

Document Control:

Version no.	Effective Date	Reason	Review due