



# Learning and Development Policy

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## Rationale

The aim of this policy is to ensure that learning and development provision is planned, delivered, and monitored based on equality of access for all.

The policy supports the One Aberdeenshire Principles and enables Aberdeenshire Council Employees to be equipped with the right skills, knowledge, and abilities. This will help to support a consistent approach and ensure that Aberdeenshire Council provides the best possible service to colleagues, customers, and communities alike.

## Introduction

The key terms are defined as follows:

### **Employee Development**

Developing the skills, knowledge and abilities employees need to perform their current jobs effectively, develop their potential and respond to future changes. The purpose is to enable all employees to contribute fully to the achievement of The Council's priorities, aims and objectives and the implementation of its values.

### **Approved Training**

Training required by the organisation including health and safety, new policies and procedures, positive action to address inequalities in the workplace, and professional development (including some job specific training required by regulatory bodies).

### **Supported Training**

Learning activities that, while not essential for current work performance, aim to enhance an individual's knowledge, skills, or behaviours and may prepare them for future development opportunities.

## Strategy

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to supporting a workforce of lifelong learners within a learning organisation.

### Learning organisation

An organisation which places strong emphasis on employee development, innovation, and creativity. Where we can learn, individually and collectively, to more easily and more quickly anticipate small and large changes adapting how we work, constantly improving how we function.

More information on the [Learning Organisation](#)

### Lifelong Learning

The process of taking personal responsibility for gaining knowledge and learning new skills throughout life with the purpose of achieving personal fulfilment. This reflects the fact that, amid change, we need to continually update skills in the workplace to better equip employees.

Learning and Development opportunities are varied, and their use depends on circumstantial, individual, and organisational needs and finances.

## Identifying Learning and Development Needs

Learning and development needs arise at different levels (e.g. individual, team, service, and organisation) and at different times. It is recommended that opportunities be considered whenever they are identified.

It is expected that individual needs will be identified in a formal and regular manner through the implementation of the Council's employee review schemes.

- Personal Performance Plan (PPP) (all non-teaching employees below chief officer grade)
- Professional Development Review Scheme (for teachers and associated professionals)
- Chief Officer Appraisal

Whilst structured learning is still important consideration should be given to the 70:20:10 Model which strengthens the synergy between learning and working. Consider the most effective approach to development.

## 70: 20: 10

- **70%** - On the job experience (zig zag/executive stretch opportunities, work shadowing, secondments, problem solving, challenging tasks, other roles and responsibilities, reflection)
- **20%** - Guided learning (buddies, Coaching and Mentoring colleagues in the workplace, after-action reviews, giving and receiving feedback etc.)
- **10%** - Formal Learning (ALDO, Workshops/seminars (inhouse and external), Self-Study, Qualifications (SVQ, college/university courses) etc.

## Types of Learning and Development

### **Mandatory Training**

Mandatory training is compulsory training determined as essential for the safe and efficient delivery of services for all employees (this may also include Elected Members). Mandatory training will be agreed by the Senior Leadership Management Team.

### **Highly Recommended/Essential Training**

These courses provide the skills and knowledge providing a greater understanding of the job role, increasing confidence in the ability to do the job correctly displaying the required professional behaviours. Highly recommended/Essential training will be agreed within the team/service.

## **Induction**

This encompasses both new starts and people changing jobs within the Council.

Initial impressions are formed during the first weeks of employment. All employees should undertake a well-monitored induction process that includes information about Aberdeenshire Council, their Service, location, and job.

All new permanent, temporary, and fixed term employees with a contract (or cumulative service) of 12 months or more should complete the Corporate Induction Course on ALDO as soon as possible.

## **Job Related Competencies**

To provide the best possible service to the public it is essential that employees' competencies reflect the aims and values of Aberdeenshire Council as well as the detailed knowledge of their own area of work (including compliance with statutory obligations i.e. health and safety).

## **Job Related Qualifications**

Assistance (financial and other) will be given to employees undertaking approved qualification-based courses. Assistance may be given for undertaking supported courses.

## **Pre-retirement Training**

The Council provides a corporate [Pre-retiral Course](#) which employees have the opportunity to attend during their last five years of employment should they so wish. This course is bookable on ALDO. Separate [Pre-retiral](#) information is also available on ALDO.

## **Internal Training Provision**

Most virtual and face-to-face learning and development events are booked through ALDO (Aberdeenshire Learning and Development Online)

To find course descriptors, dates and to book a place log on to [ALDO](#)

For any queries relating to training courses, problems accessing the information, requesting log in details for ALDO, or difficulties booking a place on a course, email [training.courses@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:training.courses@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

## **External Training Provision**

Nominations to attend external courses or to study further or higher education courses at colleges or universities should be considered by each Service.

It will be the responsibility of the Head of Service or nominated officer to ensure the Repayment Undertaking Form is completed by the employee. The form should be retained on file within the employee's service.

For both internal and external training, the Line Manager must agree to the employees' participation/attendance at any development activity prior to any event.

Support will normally be given unless the employee's absence would result in operational difficulties.

## **Responsibilities**

Several groups are identified as having responsibility over learning and development opportunities. These include:

### **Employee Responsibilities**

Identify learning and development needs through PPP, PDRS, 1-1, Supervision etc.

Participate fully and positively in any learning and development activity (including pre and post activity discussions).

Reflect on how the activity can be applied in current and future activities.

Undertake any training as required by job role/service.

Monitor time and effort put into learning and development with a view to getting the right balance between work and private life and promoting employee health and wellbeing.

### **Line Manager Responsibilities**

Discuss with each employee (prior to undertaking any activity) the objectives of the activity and how this is expected to change their knowledge, skills and attitudes/behaviour and can improve the way things are done.

Discuss with the employee (after undertaking the activity, or at regular intervals throughout an extended period of learning and development) any new skills or knowledge acquired and how these can enhance work performance and any follow up action required.

Ensure before any employee is permitted to enrol for a further or higher education course both parties are aware of their responsibilities as outlined in Types of Learning and Development section.

Ensure that any identified training is undertaken within required timescales.

### **Learning and Development Responsibilities**

The provision of learning and development (either directly or through external partners) arising from corporate initiatives or management requirements.

Advising on learning need analysis, development of learning plans, training providers, and learning methodologies.

Supporting the development of learning opportunities relevant to service need.

Providing a programme of development support accessible to all employees.

The provision of an eLearning platform – ALDO (Aberdeenshire Learning and Development Online).

Contribute as members of working groups throughout the Council and beyond.

For more information visit the [Learning Zone](#)

### **HR Manager Responsibilities**

Liaising with Service Directors/Heads of Services on corporate learning and development needs and programme implementation.

Line management of the corporate Learning and Development Team development provision to ensure best value.

Supporting the strategic management team in developing an appropriate Aberdeenshire culture and climate.

Make recommendations to the strategic management team about appropriate levels of investment in learning and development.

### **Approved and Supported Training**

#### **Approved Training Definition**

This is training which is required by the organisation for an employee to have the correct level of knowledge and skills to be competent in their role. This may include a relevant qualification (some job specific training is required by regulatory bodies).

#### **Supported Training Definition**

Potentially covers a broad range of learning activities that are not essential for the job role, but which aim to enhance an individual's knowledge, skills, or behaviours in their current job, or in preparation for future development opportunities.

Any activity must be agreed with the line manager prior to commencing training.

### **Assistance available**

The level of assistance provided should be standard within each service and across the organisation.

### **Paid Leave of Absence**

Employees authorised for study requiring day release will be allowed paid leave during working hours to attend sessions held as part of the course. In addition, reasonable travel



time will be authorised where sessions commence during the working day. No travel time may be claimed where the actual attendance time and travel time does not exceed 7.25 hours per day.

Any leave approved beyond the limit stated above should be either part of annual leave entitlement, flexi-leave, or as unpaid leave of absence. Subject to negotiation, these arrangements may also apply for supported study.

Where the examination, assessment or first re-sit for an authorised course of study falls within normal working hours all employees will be entitled to time off with pay.

Any request for paid leave should be made via Employee Self Service, or by completion of the [Paid Special Leave Form](#).

Employees undertaking work towards the achievement of a vocational qualification will be given reasonable time to carry out work producing portfolios of evidence.

In cases where the study involves a residential element appropriate reimbursement of reasonable expenses will be made. (Reference should be made to Aberdeenshire Council's [Travel and Subsistence Policy](#)) No time off or payment in lieu will be granted for attendance at a residential weekend unless it forms part of an approved programme of support.

**In all cases this will be at the discretion of the Service.**

#### **Paid Leave for Supported Training**

If training is defined as being supported rather than approved, and day release includes an afternoon and evening session, **the employee will not be entitled to claim pay for evening hours and will not receive time off in lieu.**

For employees on flexitime, normal day release, (i.e. morning and afternoon) **sessions should be recorded as a standard day**, (i.e. 7 hrs 15 mins / 7.25 hours).

Where the study is held over an afternoon and evening session, the employee will be deemed to **'clock out'** at the end of their full, normal, working day. **No allowance will be made under flexi-time arrangements for evening sessions.**

Subject to negotiation and operational requirements, the Line Manager may grant time off with pay for the purpose of final revision prior to sitting examinations. The amount of time off will usually be limited to **one day** paid leave **per examination** up to a **maximum of three days**. Any leave approved beyond that limit should be either part of annual leave entitlement, flexi-leave, or as unpaid leave of absence.

Where the examination, assessment or first re-sit for an authorised course of study falls within normal working hours, all employees will be entitled to time off with pay.

For supported training, any time off for subsequent re-sits, shall be as annual, flexi or unpaid leave.

Any request for paid leave should be made via Employee Self Service, or by completion of the [Paid Special Leave Form](#).

**In all cases this will be at the discretion of the employee's Service**

## Financial Assistance for Approved Training

Subject to the production of **valid receipts**, employees participating in approved training, are entitled to the following from their Service's training budget:

- Course fees and other approved educational expenses.
- Travelling expenses. All travel requests to be made to the Corporate Travel Team to ensure employee costs are covered and ensure the best value option.
- Where textbooks are purchased in connection with an approved course of study. Reimbursement will normally come from service training budgets and the service may request the textbook be retained within the service as a resource once the employee has completed their course of study. For approved training 100% of the purchase price will be provided.

It should be noted that applications for financial assistance will generally be considered for **one year at a time**. There is **no automatic commitment** on the part of Aberdeenshire Council to **contribute towards future years' study**.

## Financial Assistance for Supported Training

Subject to the production of valid receipts, employees participating in supported training are entitled to 50% of the following from their own Service's training budget:

- Course fees and other approved educational expenses
- Travelling expenses. All travel requests to be made to the Corporate Travel Team to ensure employee costs are covered and ensure the best value option.
- Out of pocket expenses incurred at residential training courses in accordance with current rates.
- Where textbooks are purchased in connection with a supported course of study an invoice or receipt must be produced before any reimbursement can be made. Textbook reimbursement will normally come from Service training budgets. Where reimbursement is requested, the Service will reimburse **50% of the purchase price**. In return, Aberdeenshire Council may request that the textbook be retained within the Service as a resource once the employee has completed their course of study.

## Repayment of expenses

This section outlines the circumstances under which The Council reserves the right to claim repayment of all expenses paid to employees during a course of study.

This policy extends across **all employee groups** and applies to all learning and development activities where there is a potential cost implication to The Council.

The procedure covers circumstances where courses are not completed or where employment terminates by resignation, redundancy, ill-health or under The Council's disciplinary procedure.

**It is the responsibility of the employee's Service to ensure repayment of training expenses is undertaken as appropriate. Complete the [Employee Training Repayment Requisition Form](#).**

The policy will apply both when the **termination is during the period of study**, or for a period of **up to two years following completion of the activity**, in accordance with

While this part of the policy extends to all employees, each case will be considered in its own circumstances.

Circumstances that impact on the decision include:

- Termination of employment due to redundancy or ill-health.
- Where an employee has been unable to complete a course of study due to the exigencies of The Service, illness, or exceptional personal circumstances.
- Where an employee has been instructed by The Council to undertake a particular course of study.

Care must be taken to avoid any form of direct or indirect discrimination.

In normal circumstances, any expenses being reclaimed will be deducted from the employee's salary/wage or termination payment as agreed with The Service.

## **Other Financial Assistance**

There are other forms of support available which are provided by other organisations. For example:

### **Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)**

- Available to those over 16 years of age, resident in Scotland and have an income less than £22,000.
- Eligible employees may be able to access **up to £200** per year of funding to support their learning. For more information [SDS Individual Training Accounts](#)

## **Failure to Attend Learning Events**

Considerable inconvenience and cost can be incurred when participants fail to attend learning events both internally and externally.

To minimise this, nominated employees are requested, wherever possible, to:

Cancel course booking on ALDO (where appropriate) and give at least five working days advance warning of non-attendance for in-house events.

Comply with the booking conditions for externally run events.

In some circumstances the Learning and Development team may contact the delegate's Line Manager regarding the absence.

## **Learning Records**

It is essential, not least of all for legal reasons, that records be kept within Services for all learning and development activities undertaken by employees.

ALDO holds employee training records for all online courses and face-to-face courses booked through ALDO. Employees can access their own record of learning.

CPD and 'Other' learning can be recorded in ALDO under the 'My Learning' tab. This is the responsibility of the employee.

For more information this please contact: [aldosupport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:aldosupport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Care should be taken to ensure compliance with relevant Data Protection legislation. Further guidance can be obtained from your Data Protection Service representative or Data Protection Officer.

### **Evaluation of Learning and Development Activities**

It is imperative that The Council evaluates the investment in learning and development to assess achievement and improve future effectiveness. This will be achieved if the following procedures are adopted:

- An agreement between employee and Line Manager prior to the event on learning outcomes expected from the training event (this might arise through the PPP meeting or similar meeting).
- Links are made to the contribution of learning and development activities to the Services' achievement of its goals, targets, and performance indicators.
- When appropriate an immediate evaluation at the end of the event to check if initial learning outcomes were met.
- Post learning evaluation may be carried out to consider the impact of learning on performance/behaviour (this may be carried out as part of an PPP or similar meeting).
- Action takes place to implement improvements to learning and development identified during evaluation.
- Senior management's continuing commitment to learning and development is demonstrated to all employees.
- Teachers and associated professionals have their own Professional Development and Review Scheme to evaluate the effectiveness of training.

## Document Revision History

Document Revision History					
Rev No.	Rev Date	Summary of Changes	Reviewing Team	Contributors	Next Review Year
001	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2001	Creation of all documents			2012
002	31 <sup>st</sup> July 2012	Revision for Audit purposes – highlight of Supported Training or Approved Training and general update			2013
003	13 <sup>th</sup> September 2013	Links updated			2015
004	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2015	Format updated			2017
005	20 <sup>th</sup> April 2017	Update to procedure			2019
006	13 <sup>th</sup> December 2019	Update to procedure			2022
007	15 <sup>th</sup> August 2022	Update – Employee Training Repayment Requisition Form			2023
008	6 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	Format/structure update			2024
009	7 <sup>th</sup> August 2023	Update – Mandatory and Highly Recommended definition			2024

