

Boston Borough Council

Learning and Development Manual 2015

Table of Contents

1.	The range of learning and development opportunities	2
1.1.	Types of learning and development activity	2
1.2.	Drawing on the expertise and experience of others	2
1.3.	Processes by which people learn	2
2.	Responsibilities	3
2.1.	The individual	3
2.2.	Line managers	3
2.3.	Senior Management.....	3
2.4.	The People Services function	3
3.	Links to other HR policies and initiatives	4
3.1.	Supporting individuals and managers identify learning differences	4
3.2.	Performance review and review process	4
3.3.	Basic Skills	4
3.4.	Vocational training.....	5
3.5.	Induction	5
3.6.	Capability.....	5
4.	Planning learning and development.....	6
4.1.	Identifying development needs	6
4.2.	Organisational learning and development.....	6
4.3.	Learning and development plan	6
5.	Access to training and development	7
5.1.	Entitlement to development support	7
5.2.	Equality of opportunity	7
6.	Resources for training and development	7
6.1.	Budget for learning and development	8
6.2.	Time allocation for learning and development	8
7.	Qualifications.....	8
7.1.	Funding of training/ further qualifications.....	8
7.2.	Study and exam leave	10
8.	Monitoring and evaluation	10
8.1.	Monitoring	10
8.2.	Evaluation.....	10
8.3.	Evaluation at Service Level.....	11

Boston Borough Council

1. The range of learning and development opportunities

1.1. Types of learning and development activity

There are many different types of activity that contribute to an individual's personal development, and individuals are encouraged to consider the range of opportunities available to them.

Some activities are undertaken with the specific aim of enhancing skills and/ or imparting information. Examples of these include attending a seminar or training course, reading, work-shadowing and mentoring.

Other activities offering the potential for development may arise in the course of normal work activity. Examples of these include being involved in a project where the individual acquires new skills or knowledge or discussing how to deal with a particular problem with a colleague. In these situations, learning is far greater where the opportunity is identified in advance, with attention drawn to identifying the generic skills or general principles and considering how they may be applied in other similar situations.

Such opportunities may present themselves by way of secondments which would enhance individual's skills/ experience and/or knowledge and improve their contribution to our activities. Individuals organise these, demonstrating and Secondments should be organised by the individual, following approval by their Head of Service through the training request process which would set out Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely objectives for the project/ secondment. Following the secondment a written report to demonstrate learning, as well as cascading information to colleagues, should be presented to their Head of Service/ line manager, as appropriate. The secondment may be within local government, other public body or the private sector in the UK. A Director, the Chief Executive or a Head of Service may also nominate an individual for secondment.

1.2. Drawing on the expertise and experience of others

Where possible, development activities will draw on the knowledge and skills of our staff. This has the advantage of allowing advice, guidance and on-the-job training to be given in a way that is directly applicable to the work context, and highly relevant to the post holder. Various people may be involved in supporting the development of others; in particular their line manager, colleagues, networking contacts, mentors etc. Development by these means may take many forms, including, for example, one-to-one discussions, seminars, secondments, hands-on demonstrations and coaching.

1.3. Processes by which people learn

There are various ways in which a person might learn, for example by listening, reading, observing or seeking feedback. We encourage individuals to recognise the

Boston Borough Council

different means by which they learn and make best use of those which suit to their own style of learning. Individuals/ managers and L & D professions need to be aware of individual's preferred learning style when identifying potential learning requirements.

2. Responsibilities

2.1. The individual

The process of learning and development is most effective when each individual takes responsibility for his or her own learning. This includes taking an active role in planning one's own personal development, undertaking agreed development activities, and evaluating the effectiveness of these.

2.2. Line managers

Line managers are responsible for implementing this policy on learning and development.

Specifically, their role is to ensure that the learning and development needs of their staff are identified, taking account of both individuals and groups, and that these are appropriately addressed. Line managers have an important part to play in encouraging/ facilitating people's involvement in learning and development activities, both as participants or organisers, and in providing guidance/ feedback with regard to the skills and knowledge required for their current role.

2.3. Senior Management

Senior management is responsible for actively encouraging learning and development as a means to enable us to meet our business objectives, and for ensuring that resources are made available for this purpose.

2.4. The People Services function

The People Services function has a facilitation role in relation to learning and development.

This includes:

- providing the tools to support learning and development (for example, the performance review process);
- advising and encouraging individuals and those with line management;
- responsibilities about learning and development matters;
- coordinating the delivery of certain learning and development activities that are organised centrally, in-house;
- managing the centralised budget for learning and development and ensuring consistency of allocation;
- maintaining records with regard to the development of our staff; and

Boston Borough Council

- preparing organisation wide training needs analysis via Service Development Plans and an annual training plan.

3. Links to other HR policies and initiatives

3.1. Supporting individuals and managers identify learning differences

During the corporate induction meeting between the new member of staff and the Learning & Development Co-ordinator a learning difference screener is completed to help identify any additional support that may be required.

We will work with individuals to support learning differences, For those members of staff who are already aware of their specific requirements, procedures and support will be put in place as recommended by occupational health or access to work as necessary

3.2. Performance review and review process

The performance review process is an important part of our approach to learning and development.

It involves annual meetings, with updates between individuals and their line managers, to discuss and review the post holder's work activities and their personal development, and to plan ahead for the future. For operational employees the review may be less formal and take the form of a brief job chat. They should be completed on a one on one basis to encourage individual opinion and contribution. The performance review meetings provide the time and space to identify development needs, plan how these should be addressed and evaluate the effectiveness of development activities undertaken previously. Templates & guidance notes are available via Alfresco, document management system. They are there as a prompt and guidance and it is up to the individual manager to use as they feel fit. Our policy on learning and development is therefore closely related to that of the performance review process.

3.3. Basic Skills

All employees who are recruited by us and who do not already hold a GCSE grade A to C in English and Maths or equivalent, will be invited to undertake a basic skills assessment in each of these subjects. Depending on the results, individuals will be invited to attend basic skills training provided locally.

This will not affect the recruitment process or hinder their prospects of retaining their position but is intended to support employees in achieving basic literacy and numeracy skills and will help to highlight any special needs that an employee might have in relation to reading and writing.

Boston Borough Council

Managers fully support and encourage this process and time off in lieu will be granted for all basic skills training which takes place out of their normal hours of work.

3.4. Vocational training

For all whose position does not require pre-formal qualification, they will undertake vocational training. Generally this will apply to operational roles such as parks and grounds or refuse and cleansing. Vocational training may be either a full apprenticeship or pure diploma depending on individual capabilities and the availability of government funding.

Employees will be made aware of this during the recruitment process via job advertisement and/ or job descriptions and will be discussed at interview.

This process will confirm/ demonstrate levels of competency in line with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines, good practice and also recognition for skills obtained/ achieved.

3.5. Induction

An effective induction process is important for settling new members of staff into our organisation, and ensures the smooth transition of those who move to roles in other departments/ teams

It involves both ensuring that the person has the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their role effectively and safely, and familiarising them with the detail of the work that they will be performing.

The induction process is made up of a variety of elements; site visits-to encourage the familiarisation of all our offices/ sites/ locations and facilities, e-learning corporate induction (enabling access to corporate information shortly after joining the authority) and tutored face to face health & safety training. Safeguarding & Equality & Diversity training is undertaken prior to employment except for those in an apprenticeship position as they may need additional support.

The line manager is responsible for monitoring the progress of the new member of staff, and for ensuring that any development needs are identified and met via the three and six monthly probationary reviews.

3.6. Capability

To enable the Council to provide a proactive approach to identifying and supporting those with different learning styles an Adult Specific Learning screener will be completed with all new members of staff, administered by People Services as part of the Corporate Induction discussion. Should an employee lack the knowledge, the skill or the ability to such an extent that they cannot carry out his/ her duties to the

Boston Borough Council

standard required, capability procedures may be introduced and learning and development may be provided in an attempt to improve performance.

4. Planning learning and development

4.1. Identifying development needs

Development needs may be identified at several levels: those that apply to the organisation as a whole, those at a group or team level and those which apply to a particular individual (or group of individuals). Mechanisms are in place to identify learning and development needs at each of these levels (as described below), and collectively these are summarised in our learning and development plan.

4.2. Organisational learning and development

Organisational learning and development objectives are identified by People Services in consultation with senior management. This involves analysing the service development plan. These plans have been compiled by the senior manager taking into account external and internal influences, including new legislation that may affect our performance. An example of organisation-wide development needs would be a requirement for more advanced IT skills brought about by a new system, or the need for greater awareness of equal opportunities issues across the organisation.

At team level, information is gathered from a variety of sources to identify training and development needs common to a group of staff. As above, responsibility for this lies with People Services and line managers, in consultation with senior management. Sources of information used for this purpose are likely to include performance review process, discussions with line managers and staff – both formal and informal, findings from the annual staff survey and team plans with regard to existing local priorities.

At an individual level, the performance review process is the main vehicle for recognising and planning learning and development. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that individuals training needs are followed through.

4.3. Learning and development plan

Senior managers will produce a costed learning & development plan for their service area in conjunction with their service development plan ready for the new financial year. Discussions with people services will take place in January to assist with this process as well as a practical managers training session to be facilitated by Business Transformation taking place during February.

Boston Borough Council

People Services will produce a costed learning and development plan at the beginning of every new financial year, once all service development plans have been received and analysed. This will summarise the development needs across the authority as a whole, for particular groups or teams, and for individuals, based on the variety of information sources set out in 4.1 and 4.2 above. The learning and development plan will be submitted to the Corporate Management team for approval in May

5. Access to training and development

5.1. Entitlement to development support

The extent to which a learning and development activity can be supported by us will depend on a number of factors including:

- the relevance of the development need to achieving the strategic plan;
- financial costs;
- hidden costs – including, for example, the amount of work time required to complete the development activity;
- any additional cover required and impact on colleagues;
- the amount of development support that it is reasonable for any one member of staff to undertake in a given period;
- availability of funds in the learning and development budget; and
- parity with similar applications.

5.2. Equality of opportunity

We seek to ensure that development opportunities are available for all.

This principle does not, however, imply an automatic right of individuals to particular development activities or a right to undertake development actions within specified periods of time.

Line managers are responsible for ensuring that the development needs of all staff are given fair consideration and that the needs of staff employed on a part-time or short-term basis are addressed equitably.

6. Resources for training and development

Boston Borough Council

6.1. Budget for learning and development

The budget for learning and development is managed by the Head of HR & Transformation and is based on requirements put forward from senior managers along with organisation, group and individual training needs.

6.2. Time allocation for learning and development

Learning and development activities will usually take place during work time and agreed costs will be reimbursed.

Learning and development activities that are encouraged by us but not essential may take place during work time, or may involve study in the participant's own time, during evenings and weekends.

Where learning and development takes place in normal work hours, cover will be arranged where necessary.

Part time colleagues who work additional hours to participate in learning and development activities outside of their usual pattern of work (but within normal work hours) will usually be able to agree time off in lieu.

7. Qualifications

7.1. Funding of training/ further qualifications

Where a member of staff wishes to undertake a qualification, they, or their line manager, should bring this to the attention of People Services.

This should be discussed as part of the performance review process and then the individual is asked to complete an application stating how the qualification will benefit his/her department and the organisation as a whole. S/he will also be asked to supply further details about the proposed development activity including all costs.

The line manager and/ or senior manager will be asked to comment on the desirability of a proposed course or qualification taking into account the following criteria:

- staff development that is necessary in order to do a job; or
- where there is a high level of demonstrated benefit to the organisation;
or
- staff development where there would be some benefit and where staff might be given some support to recognise this;
- development that is principally about personal development/ interest, where there is little or no direct benefit to us.

Boston Borough Council

Any funding will largely be dependent on the extent of demonstrated benefit to us and will determine whether it could be supported to a greater or lesser extent.

Requests for training and qualifications need to be made separately for each year of study and will be considered by the Head of Service and Head of HR & Transformation. Applications for any support must be given to People Services by 31 March each year for study taking place in the following operating year, and before a commitment to fees is made. A decision on support after the first year of study will be contingent on budget availability and evidence of satisfactory progress from the Institution.

Staff will be required to sign a learning agreement which sets out principles of repayment. Should they:

- leave our employment through resignation or dismissal during the study year – the full cost must be repaid;
- leave our employment within 24 months of the completed course or study year repayment will be calculated as 1/24 of the total cost for every month not worked within the 24 month period of completion ;
- fail to complete the study or sit any required examinations within a reasonable timescale - the full cost of the funding must be repaid;
- fail exams that have been financially funded by us - they will be required to fund any exam re-sits and attend any college days or similar in their own time.

Staff members are expected to update their line manager and People Services on their progress during their performance update meeting and should notify them immediately of any issues affecting the potential completion of their study including non attendance. A copy of certificates or confirmation of completion of each study year should be forwarded to People Services, to be placed in their personal file.

Staff are expected to provide their own textbooks if these are not included as part of the course fee.

A contribution towards time to attend a course and/ or course exam fees may be agreed where training is not directly relevant to the individual's job. Individuals will be required to self fund/use flexi for all associated time and costs.

In cases where the funding criteria are not fully met or part funding provided by us, but a case for personal development can be made, an interest free career development loan can be requested. The loan is intended to meet course fees up to the maximum amount allowable for interest free loans set by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Boston Borough Council

Employees will be required to sign an undertaking to repay the loan directly from their pay over a twelve month period or the duration of the course whichever is the lesser period.

7.2. Study and exam leave

Employees may be permitted to take up to 0.5 days paid leave for the purposes of exam study in any year when undertaking long-term study leave funded by us. Any additional time required must be taken as annual leave or unpaid leave. Where an individual is undertaking a formal qualification primarily in their own time, we will consider applications for paid study and exam leave. The timing and amount of leave allowed for these purposes is at the discretion of the relevant director/ senior manager in consultation with People Services, and we may exercise our discretion and impose a maximum on that which may be taken in any one year.

An individual who wishes to take study leave should provide their line manager and head of service with details of the course for which they wish to study and his/ her reasons for the application for study leave. Documentary evidence of examination dates or college workshops may be required.

In considering applications, the manager will need to be reassured that adequate alternative arrangements for office cover etc can be made.

8. **Monitoring and evaluation**

8.1. Monitoring

Individual members of staff should maintain brief records of development activities in which they have been involved. These records should be referred to during the performance review meeting. The feedback sheet attached to the training request form can be used to assist with this process.

For any in-house training, "happy sheets" will be completed to gather views and feedback on the training including the method of delivery, quality of the course, suitability of the facilities etc.

8.2. Evaluation

Learning and development activities will be evaluated, in respect of their effectiveness from both an organisational and a personal perspective. There are several ways in which this can be done.

The performance review process is the primary means of evaluating learning and development of all types. The individual and their line manager should use the performance review meeting to evaluate the extent to which agreed development

Boston Borough Council

activities have achieved the intended objectives and, where necessary, plan the next steps. Unplanned development opportunities that arise in the course of normal work activity should also be reflected upon in order to identify how this might improve future work activities.

8.3. Evaluation at Service Level

Every year, each SMT member will evaluate the impact of learning and development undertaken in their service over the previous 12 months. This evaluation should include consideration of what learning and development had the most and least impact and why, as well as the service benefits achieved and should be recorded on the service development plan.