

HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIC FORUM

DISCUSSION - MEMBER DEVELOPMENT/ DELIVERING MORE FOR LESS LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Member Development

Over the last few years, in liaison with the Democratic Services Manager, we have been working closely with the Member Development Group and more recently, with Group Leaders. This was to improve councillor development arrangements and to increase the engagement of the activities that are arranged.

The aim of these changes was to provide a service that:

- Is flexible and meets the varying needs of all members
- Provides new members with an overview of the council and information about further development opportunities
- Enables existing members to update and expand on existing skills and knowledge
- Ensures the budget is used fairly and effectively

Some of the **key changes** have included:

- Member development programme
- Process for arranging member development and allocating the budget
- Supported open learning sessions (including evening sessions)
- One to one IT Training
- Member specific e-learning programmes
- Bite size evening workshops
- Library of member specific resources
- Laptops for short-term loan
- Personal development folders
- Redesign of the member induction
- Senior officer buddies for new members
- Member development newsletter
- Accreditation for prior learning questionnaires
- Development of Member Development pages on the Intranet and the Council's website

However, as outlined in various external assessments, including Investors in People (June 2008), IDeA Peer Review (2009) and Use of Resources, the response to this has been very poor and there are clearly areas where further improvements are required.

In response to feedback from the Use of Resources assessment last year, the following actions were agreed and are currently being implemented:

- Programme of core member development activities outlined
- Update personal development plan questionnaire to accommodate both new and more experienced members.
- Member development plan arranged based on information provided by personal development plans.

- New and existing Members provided with updated personal development questionnaire.
- New Members welcome evening
- New members provided with details of support and activities available

Providing More for Less Learning and Development

Over the last few years we have been working in an environment where we are increasingly required to provide more for less.

Some of the implications this has had on general learning and member development include:

- Year on year reductions to learning and development budgets
- Time constraints to attend training, due to workload/other commitments
- Cancelled activities (and wasted training investment), due to other priorities
- Reduced hours in the learning and development team
- Reduced or no backfill to support people who attend training
- New and/enhanced skills required e.g. time management, stress management, coping with change, leadership
- De-prioritisation of learning and development activities
- Reduced capacity in the learning and development team
- Increased delivery of in-house training

To ensure that we are as effective as possible in this environment and that we optimise the resources that we have, the learning and development function regularly reviews the services we provide for our colleagues across the Council, including Member Development.

If we are to achieve our objectives, as outlined in the People Strategy (in alignment with the Corporate Plan), we need to be very clear about where and how we focus our limited resources.

The key activities for the learning and development function can be classified as follows:

1. Provide strategic direction for learning and development at the Council
e.g. Investors in People, Skills pledge, Skills for Life, Lifelong Learning, Succession planning, Career Development, Leadership and Management Development, Open and flexible learning
2. Develop and maintain the learning and development infra-structure
e.g. Learning Management System, Appraisals process and competency frameworks, Learning libraries, Budget distribution and bidding process, Evaluation, Learning and Development records, Database of providers
3. Manage and co-ordinate corporate learning and development activities
e.g. E-learning catalogues, Core programmes for officers and members, Mentoring & coaching arrangements, Skills Audit, liP Assessments, Career Development interviews and workshops, Supported open learning sessions (static and mobile), 1:1 training, Workshop design, E-learning design
4. Act as internal consultants for service specific activities
e.g. Regulatory training, Team building, Training support for resolution of employee relations issues, Identify and take advantage of funding opportunities

Some examples of how we have been providing more for less are outlined below:

More	Less
E-learning, when appropriate e.g. legislative, IT, refresher, processes	Travel costs, room/venue costs, consultant costs, backfill, forgotten knowledge i.e. it is usually available after completion to refresh knowledge
Develop in-house e-learning programmes	Consultancy costs (although these are negated by internal costs of developing internal officers' skills, keeping knowledge updated and their time to develop programmes)
NHDC officers trained as mentors & coaches	Consultancy costs (although these are negated by cost of internal officers' time)
Mentoring and coaching	Irrelevant subject matter covered than other training methods i.e. the focus is on the individual's needs, room/venue costs, forgotten knowledge due to buy-in, time to do
Trained internal facilitators/trainers	Consultant costs (although these are negated by internal costs of developing internal officers' skills, keeping knowledge updated and their time to develop and deliver programmes)
One to one briefings "Just in time"	Forgotten learning, wasted learning, irrelevant subject matter (although these are negated by internal costs of developing internal officers' skills, keeping knowledge updated and their time to develop briefings)
Provide training in partnership with other councils	Consultant costs (although these are negated by internal costs of co-ordinating programmes and liaising with other partners)
Provide flexible methods of learning and development e.g. books, CDRoms	Costs of other more expensive methods e.g. workshops, mentoring.
Funding opportunities	Internal budget required

Ongoing Challenges and Risks

The requirement for more public sector savings are anticipated and these are likely to have a further impact on learning and development. There will be an even greater requirement to provide more for less. However, in addition to the implications outlined in the previous section, this is not without its challenges and risks.

Increased in-house delivery of Workshops

Part of the reductions to the Learning and Development Budgets for 2010/11 learning and development budgets are based on an increased number of workshops being delivered by internal officers, including HR.

In addition to other reductions in the learning and development budgets, the proposal is for further internal delivery to support year on year efficiencies, achieving a total of £10,000 in 2014/15.

Expanding on the breadth of subject areas that training can be provided in-house for, in many cases, will require considerable time and money invested into subject training. There is also usually a requirement for extensive experience, research and monitoring in order to maintain the knowledge required to provide a credible and reasonable quality workshop.

Capacity issues are also likely to increase with further staff cuts. For example, since this proposal, the Employee Relations Manager's and Officer's posts have both been cut. The knock-on effect is that the HR/Learning and Development officers who will deliver some of the additional workshops, now have other additional responsibilities.

Reduced or no Succession Planning / Career Planning

Learning and development activities for current service needs are usually a higher priority than succession planning and/or career development. This impact is that staff may not have the required skills for future services e.g. IT, Business and Marketing.

There may not be any successors for some key posts and difficult posts in the future, which could have an impact on services and incur high recruitment and/or consultancy costs e.g. planning, accountancy, legal.

Central Government Policy

The final report of the Leitch Review of Skills, was published on 5th December 2006.

The review sets out a compelling vision for the UK. It outlines that the UK must urgently raise achievements at all levels of skills and recommends that it commit to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020. It states that responsibility for achieving ambitions must be shared between Government, employers and individuals.

Local government are expected to take a key role and in February last year, NHDC signed up to the Skills Pledge. To meet the terms of the pledge we had to outline an action plan. A reduction in budget and capacity will have an impact on the implementation of this plan.

CPD, Regulatory and Legislative Requirements

Many professional officers have CPD requirements in order to retain their accreditation e.g. environmental health, legal.

Regular updates are required to ensure that regulatory/legislative requirements are adhered to. This is particularly important for officers in knowledge based services, such as legal, who need to maintain and update their learning in order to provide accurate advice. Other examples RIPA and PACE refreshers in various services e.g. Housing and Environmental Health Services.

The corporate (mandatory) part of the learning and development budget funds essential health and safety training, that we are advised is required to meet our regulatory requirements. This is already in excess of £4k for 2009/10 (as of Oct 09) and is a considerable proportion of the total budget available (usually £27k). Although the efficiency proposal is to provide some health and safety training in-house, this will not reduce these costs; this training must be provided by accredited training organisations e.g. St John's Ambulance Service and Herts Fire & Rescue Service.

There are also some officers who have specific training included in their contracts e.g. accounts. There also existing commitments to programmes which span over several years e.g. housing, environmental health, accounts.

New Ways of Working

In addition to the general requirement for partnership working, there is increased emphasis and new skills required to support the proposals from Pathfinder e.g. outsourcing, centralisation, joint working. In some areas there is an increased demand for business skills e.g. planning, land charges.

Restructure and Change

The restructure and increasing pace of change will increase learning and development requirements e.g. combined roles, acting up, new and multi-skilled posts etc. There is also an increasing requirement for skills to cope with and manage change.

Reduced Benefits of Investing in People

NHDC has been reaccruited with the liP standard 4 times since 2000. The outcomes from these assessments have clearly demonstrated that investing in our people's learning and development has helped us to continuously improve.

Some of the obvious benefits of this investment are:

- Customer Satisfaction - helping employees become customer focused enabling organisations to effectively meet customer needs.
- Improved motivation leading to increased productivity - through employees' personal development, motivation is improved. This leads to higher morale, improved retention rates, reduced absenteeism, readier acceptance of change and identification with the organisations goals beyond the confines of the job.
- Reduced costs and wastage - skilled people are more likely to examine their work to contribute towards reducing costs and wastage.

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