



# Learning & Development

## Employee Procedures 6.1

Human Resources  
January 2026

Version	Author	Date	Changes made
1		Feb 2001	Policy launch
2	Zoe Ormerod	October 2025	To reflect People Strategy, commitment to LEAF value of Learning, and to support the Growth & Goals conversations with a fair and consistent way of considering learning requests. Increase in the threshold when the 'payback clause' applies from £500 to £1,500 recognising cost of living increase since policy launch.

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy outlines the approach to Learning & Development (L&D) at NFDC, ensuring all employees have access to opportunities that support their growth, and contribute to the strategic aims within our Corporate Plan.
- 1.2 NFDC is committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning in line with our LEAF learning value, and our People Strategy theme, 'Grow'. We firmly believe that having the best staff, who are well-supported, is key to delivering the best outcomes for our residents.
- 1.3 This approach will also see us best placed to negate national recruitment issues, an ageing workforce, fast moving technology, and skills gaps in some professional areas for new and existing staff.

## 2. Individuals Affected

- 2.1 All employees of NFDC.

## 3. Learning and development methods

- 3.1 We support the development of our employees through a range of methods, starting with a robust induction and then throughout employment. This may be compliance training, structured training, both generic and professional (one-off or longer term), eLearning, leadership and management development, apprenticeships, informal learning and free learning opportunities, coaching and mentoring.

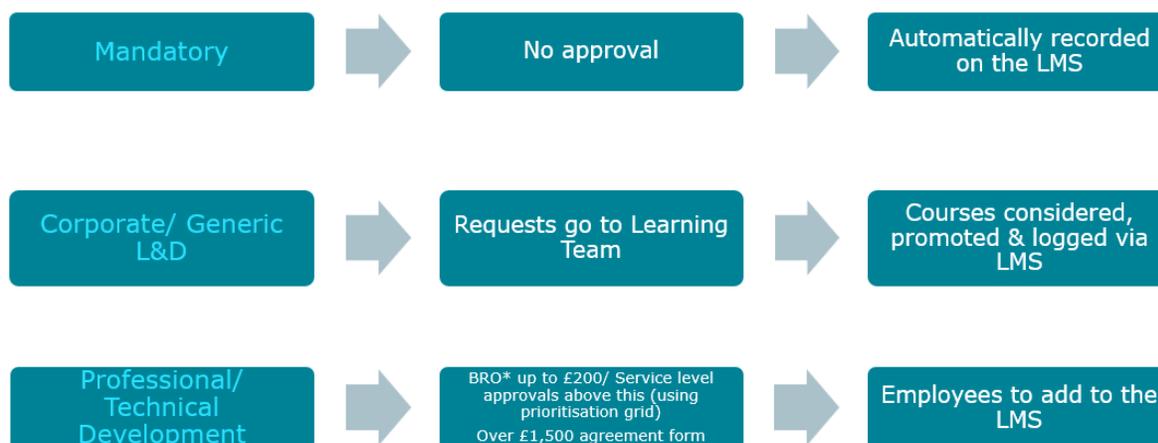
## 4. Identification & consideration of Learning and Development needs

- 4.1 Our Growth and Goals conversations are designed to discuss all elements affecting employees at work, with growth as a key element to this. Our **Growth and goals conversations** SharePoint page offers tools and techniques for discussing learning and development.
- 4.2 Mandatory training is set corporately, and is added to the Learning Management System (LMS), this is completed by eLearning or toolbox talks, and the corporate LMS is updated accordingly
- 4.3 If there are any learning and development needs discussed at these meetings, they will fall in to either corporate/generic or professional/technical areas, and a L&D consideration Form should be submitted by the line manager for any development the manager feels

should be supported. The Form can be found on the **Growth and goals conversations** SharePoint page.

## 5. Funding and approval

- 5.1 Corporate/generic requests will be managed by the corporate Learning Team, via a corporate MS List from all completed forms, and agreed training will be funded from the corporate training budget. Details of courses will be added to the LMS for colleagues to book on to.
- 5.2 Professional and technical needs will be funded within Service and Directorate training budgets. Outside of budget responsible officer approval (up to £200 per head), will go to Service/Senior Manager for consideration at Directorate meetings, via Directorate MS List from all completed forms. All directorates will follow a fair and transparent method for reviewing and approving all these requests. Training will be prioritised according to Strategic Fit/Relevance and Expected Outcomes. Requests will be considered at regular intervals throughout the year, to support the management of budgets. Whether approved or declined, rationale will be given. Once completed, this triggers a response to the request back to the manager and the employee.
- 5.3 If a professional/technical request is approved, training should be booked within the service, and the employee is responsible for updating the LMS with the course details (under 'my learning' - 'external learning').
- 5.4 If declined, the manager and employee should discuss alternative options at the next Growth & Goals conversation.
- 5.5 The diagram below shows how our different strands of learning work:



\* Budget Responsible Officer

## 6. Repaying fees and expenses

- 6.1 If the training is £1,500 or more, the employee will be required to accept the payback terms, shown below. The appropriate Senior/Service Manager may reduce or waive the full payback costs at their discretion.

*I agree to complete the approved learning & development activity and agree with the following conditions :*

*Payback period – On completion of the agreed supported learning/development activity, I must work for the Council for 2 years. If I leave before completion of 2 years, I agree to pay back the following proportion of fees and expenses (by deduction from salary if necessary) – (except if the reason for leaving is due to Pregnancy, Long term Ill-health, Compulsory Redundancy or death).*

*Up to one year -100%*

*Between one to two years - 50%*

*Two years and over - NIL*

*If I fail to show satisfactory progress in my studies, the appropriate Service Manager may withdraw the Council's sponsorship and, in the case of lack of diligence, may request that any expenditure be refunded.*

*If I voluntarily withdraw from this learning/development activity, or leave the Council's employment part way through a qualification course, then I will be liable to pay back, at the appropriate Service Manager discretion, any expenditure already incurred by the Council for that particular activity.*

*I give my manager permission to obtain information on my progress on this activity, by contacting the provider during my period of study.*

*If during the course of the 2 year post completion period, New Forest District Council ceases to exist as a sovereign authority, the conditions as above will transfer to any new authority taking over the NFDC administrative area until confirmed otherwise.*

- 6.2 It should be noted that grading of posts will be unaffected by the learning intervention, full or part, unless the Contract of Employment specifically includes provision for a change to the grade/post or the post is designated a career grade.
- 6.3 Note: If a new employee wishes to continue learning and development commenced with a previous employer, then it is important that the employee is made aware at interview stage that this would be subject to Service Manager approval.

## 7. Costs that may be covered

- 7.1 If it is agreed to support your learning, the council will contribute in full or partially to the following:

- 7.1.1 Learning/Development cost, including any associated exam or membership required.
- 7.1.2 Essential Approved Textbooks (those which the provider specifies in advance as being essential) and which should be purchased by the learner. The Council reserves the right to retain any of the above books for its continued use. (Other books required for reference purpose or as optional background reading and recommended by the course provider should be borrowed from the Public Library or College Library.
- 7.1.3 Public transport rate covers actual costs incurred. (2nd Class rail fare or cheap day return- rail warrants are to be used for this purpose).
- 7.1.4 For daily travel from home to attend a course, including one day, day release or block release courses, the principle applies that you shall be deemed to have to meet, at your own expense, the cost of travel from home to base and return each working day. Therefore, this cost must be deducted from the cost of travelling to college and return home in order to arrive at the additional cost, which may be claimed.
- 7.1.5 Where you are travelling by car, please refer to Forestnet for the current rates.
- 7.1.6 Where more than one officer is attending the same venue at the same time, you should give consideration to sharing transport in order to minimise costs wherever possible.
- 7.1.7 Reasonable costs where accommodation is required as part of a residential course.
- 7.1.8 Equipment – No financial assistance will be made for this where it is customary in the profession or trade for an individual to provide it.
- 7.1.9 Examination failure – This will mean that you are allowed a second attempt, which may be at your own cost if lack of diligence is confirmed by the college. Failure to pass the second time could result in council funding being withdrawn.

## 8. Time off for learning and development

- 8.1 The manager and employee should discuss the time out required for any learning and development identified and agreed. Generally, if the development is felt to benefit both parties and offer good return to the council, then reasonable time off will be given. Employees are also entitled

to leave with pay to sit approved examinations/tests. At the discretion of the Service/Senior Manager, additional leave, with or without pay, may be granted for final review in the period preceding the examination, according to the circumstances of each case.

- 8.2 Whilst generally learning and development matters will be considered as detailed above in this policy, outside of this, employees with 26 weeks service have a legal right to request time off for training relevant to their role formally once within any 12-month period. (This right does not cover pay for the time off or payment for the course). If the employee has undertaken any learning and development within the past 12 months, this will count as their request.
- 8.3 If an employee feels their request for time off has not been given fair consistent consideration, they may make a formal request for the time off. A member of the HR Advisory Team will meet with the manager to discuss and advise appropriately, ensuring the manager gives serious consideration to the request.
- 8.4 Within 28 days the manager will meet with the employee to discuss the request, it is not essential for an HR Advisor to be present at the meeting, however the employee has the right to be accompanied by an Employee Side Representative or workplace colleague. The aim of the meeting is to provide both sides the opportunity to discuss the request fully.
- 8.5 Within 14 days of the meeting, the manager will write to the employee to confirm their outcome of the discussion, giving clear reasons for their decision, as well as the right of appeal made clear.
  - 8.5.1 The outcome could be to accept, compromise, defer or decline the request.
  - 8.5.2 If it is agreed that the employee's hours or pay are to be varied on a temporary or permanent basis as a result of the decision, a contractual variation will be required in addition to the outcome letter, which should be requested via [hr.admin@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:hr.admin@nfdc.gov.uk)
  - 8.5.3 If it is declined, the business reasons for this should be explained. Possible reasons to decline could be:
    - Unable to reorganise work amongst existing employees
    - Detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand
    - Where the manager does not believe the training requested would help the individual to become more effective and productive at work
    - Planned structural changes within the service or council overall

- 8.6 Each request is considered on its own merit. Agreement to one employee's request does not set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted such time off.
- 8.7 Once a request has been submitted, the employee does not have the right to amend it. They may choose to withdraw their request, and if they fail to attend the arranged meeting (without good reason) the request will also be treated as withdrawn.
- 8.8 This decision of the meeting equates to Stage One of the council's grievance procedure. If an employee is not happy with the outcome, they can raise this as Stage Two of the grievance procedure.

## 9. Apprenticeships

- 9.1 Where an apprenticeship is a viable option of learning, consideration should be given to how the 20% 'off the job' time element is accounted for in the employee's working week. If it is thought to be an effective route to learning, and if approved by the Service/Senior manager, this should be discussed with the Learning team so that appropriate providers and further details can be established. Apprenticeship training costs are met from the Apprenticeship Levy, and whilst they still need to be considered with the same rigour as other development activities, they are not subject to the over £1,500 sign off. This is because they are funded from payments already made to the Government. Further details around apprenticeships are covered in employee procedure 6.3.

## 10. Queries

- 10.1 If you have any queries related to learning and development, please email [learning@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:learning@nfdc.gov.uk)